RaPAL

2019 Conference Edition

Improving literacy and numeracy

A fresh start

The report of the working group chaired by Sir Claus Moser

Independent panel report to the
Review of Post-18 Education and Funding

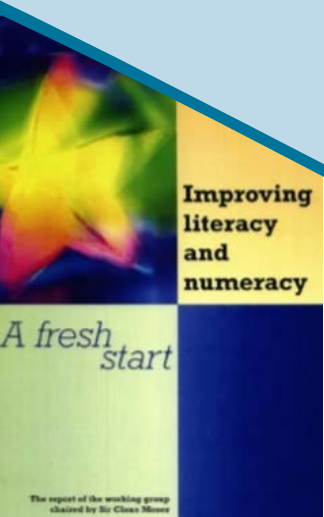May 2019

At school level, there have been some significant improvements in recent decades. A level 2 qualification – which within the academic/school-based route is equivalent to 5 'good' (grades A* – C or Level 4 – 9) GCSEs - is widely considered the minimum benchmark for employability in a range of productive occupations. Between 2005 and 201 the percentage of the cohort achieving Level 2 by age 19 rose from 67 per cent to 84 per cent and the percentage achieving Level 2 with English and Maths rose from 46 per cent to 69 per cent.[37]

There has also been a significant increase in the proportion of young people achieving a Level 3 by age 19: up from 43 per cent in 2005 to 58 per cent in 2017...

However at age 18, the starting age for our report the picture becomes very different. Figure 1.3 shows, in more detail, that progress for learners who do not complete their Level 3 by age 18/19 is virtually non-existent...
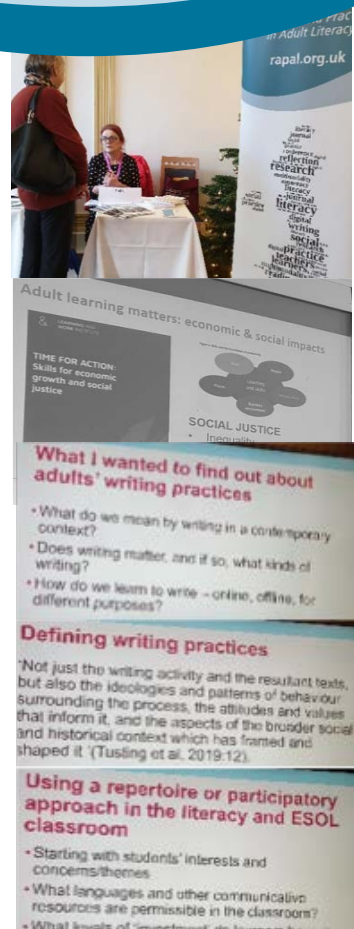
ENGLISH MATHS ESOL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND: THE FUTURE FOR ADULT BASIC SKILLS
Wednesday 4 December 2019

Westminster Kingsway College, London

#EMESOLConf @LearnWorkUK

A joint conference by

L&W LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE   UCU University and College Union

UCL Institute of Education   NATECLA   RaPAL

rapal.org.uk

Adult learning matters: economic & social impacts

TIME FOR ACTION: Skills for economic growth and social justice

SOCIAL JUSTICE

What I wanted to find out about adults' writing practices

- What do we mean by writing in a contemporary context?
- Does writing matter, and if so, what kinds of writing?
- How do we learn to write – online, offline, for different purposes?

Defining writing practices

"Not just the writing activity and the resultant texts, but also the ideologies and patterns of behaviour surrounding the process, the attitudes and values that inform it, and the aspects of the broader social and historical context which has framed and shaped it.' (Tusting et al, 2019:12).

Using a repertoire or participatory approach in the literacy and ESOL classroom

- Starting with students' interests and concerns/themes
- What languages and other communicative resources are permissible in the classroom?

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.

What we do

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

RaPAL Officers 2019 /2020

Chair	Tara Furlong
Secretary	Toni Lambe
Treasurer	Sarah Freeman
Journal Co-ordinator	Yvonne Spare
Production Editor	Claire Collins
Reviews Editor	Post vacant
Membership Secretary	Jo Byrne
Website Manager	Julie Collins
Regional Advocate Coordinator	Post vacant
Digital Media Lead	Jo Dixon

Editorial Information

The editorial group for 2019-2020 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers: Gwyneth Allatt, Angela Cahill, Claire Collins, Vicky Duckworth, Sarah Freeman, Tara Furlong, Toni Lambe, Sue Lownsbrough, Jonathan Mann, Juliet McCaffery, Mary-Rose Puttick, Anne Reardon-James, Yvonne Spare and Rachel Stubley.

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

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

Why not join us?

RaPAL Membership form

Help us to double RaPAL's membership in 2019/2020!

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

Members' benefits

Membership brings:
• three RaPAL journals per year
• discounted attendance at RaPAL events
• participation in the RaPAL JISClist

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

How to join

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

Your details

Full name: _____

Email: _____

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

Address: _____

County: _____   Postcode: _____

Country: _____

Mobile / work / home telephone numbers: _____

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

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

Fees 2019/2020

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

Digital editions

Individual membership

☐   £40 Full-time   ☐   £25 Low waged, unwaged or student

Institutional Membership

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

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

☐   Please tick here if you require an invoice

Contents

Editorial

Gwyneth Allatt, Georgina Garbett and Tara Furlong

Gwyneth Allatt is a Senior Lecturer, Course Leader and Admissions Tutor for the Certificate in Education and PGCE (Lifelong Learning) at the University of Huddersfield. Georgina Garbett is a PhD candidate and graduate research teaching assistant at Birmingham City University. Tara Furlong is Chair of RaPAL and Director of Designing Futures Ltd.

Welcome to Journal 99 which focuses largely, though not entirely, on the joint RaPAL, Learning and Work Institute, UCL Institute of Education, NATECLA and UCU conference held on December 4th 2019 at Westminster Kingsway College, London with the theme of 'No one left behind: the future for adult basic skills'. During the conference a variety of keynote speakers, panel discussions and workshops considered the current landscape of adult skills and ESOL, presented current research in the field and explored a range of practical approaches. This edition of the journal includes contributions from conference participants, alongside articles by Ben Perkins, Julia Olisa and Kat Goodacre, and a learner voice piece by Alec Taylor and Amanda Derry.

Stephan Evans, Learning and Work Institute, welcomes us to the conference edition with a keynote reflection on *Why we need a national mission for literacy and numeracy*. Different perspectives on these reflections are picked up and developed through the edition by panel contributors. **Alison Jones, GRETB**, travelled to the UK to offer an international perspective on negotiating local learner and curriculum responsive basic skills within apprenticeships in *From 0 to 90 in 4 years: Integrating literacy and numeracy support into apprenticeship training centres in Ireland*.

Ben Perkins, National Numeracy, looks at barriers created by attitudes surrounding learning maths in *The impact of attitudinal barriers on engagement with adult maths qualifications*; exploring the need for an open conversation about psychological and emotional factors in this area. He argues for the benefits of learners being encouraged to discuss their concerns and anxieties, and how this approach can help learners improve their capacity for developing their numeracy skills. **Gail Lydon, Education and Training Foundation**, in *My learners can do the maths but don't understand the questions. Can post-16 phonics approaches help (and not just in maths)?* recognises the difficulties experienced by maths learners, who, although able to perform the calculations, may face barriers to understanding presented by terminology and the wording of questions. She explores the use of phonics and other literacy strategies as ways of supporting learners to decode tricky maths questions.

Phonics is at the heart of **Tricia Miller's** *That Reading Thing, post-16 phonics – a 'both/and' approach to adult literacy,* which explains the basis and inspiration for the system combined with clear practical examples as an empowering tool for adolescent and adult learners. Learners are encouraged to 'figure out' how language works as a key to unlocking an ability to read a wider vocabulary. This holistic approach combines phonics with reading for meaning building on students' prior knowledge. **Vera Hutchinson, UCL IoE**, in *Writing and communicating in and out of the literacy and ESOL classroom* emphasises 'the multiplicities and changing complexities of adults' writing practices in the dynamic and overlapping domains of their lives' in tension with formal writing genres. Hutchinson argues that a 'repertoire approach' contributes to creating a safe space for learning in and out of the classroom. **Alec Taylor, learner, and Amanda Derry, WEA**, share experiences of creative writing as part of a Therapeutic Arts class in *I know why the caged bird sings*.

Julia Olisa and Kat Goodacre, Literacy 100, in *Literacy and homelessness: tackling the provision deficit* discuss a research project on the challenges faced by homeless people who wish to improve their literacy. They present the case for flexible and individualised provision, along with collaboration between service providers and specialists in the field, in order to create a more inclusive and effective approach. **Sam Duncan, UCL IoE**, in a reflective panel piece *Moser – 20 years on*, suggests a number of priorities for the future development of adult literacy, including improvements to teacher education and a renewed focus on research. She concludes with a challenge to all involved in adult literacy to play a role in moving provision forward.

Elizabeth Newton, University Centre Leeds, and Naeema Hann, Leeds Beckett University, in *Coaching for sustainable learning* report on a research project which explored the use of a non-directive approach to coaching with ESOL learners and the extent to which this might improve learner autonomy. Their findings suggest several positive outcomes for ESOL learning through the use of this particular model of coaching. **Alex Stevenson, Learning and Work Institute, and Karen Dudley, Learning Unlimited**, in *New resources and guidance for ESOL practitioners* also focus on ESOL provision in their contribution to the journal, explaining the background and rationale behind the development of a new suite of resources aimed at supporting practitioners working with learners who are 'new to ESOL'. The piece concludes with a very helpful link to the resources, which practitioners will be able to access from Spring 2020. **Nafisah Graham-Brown, NATECLA**, in her reflective panel piece *It's time for a renewed focus on adult basic skills of ESOL, English and Maths* focuses on ESOL provision and the strategies that NATECLA is proposing to meet the challenges of reductions in funding, falling participation and a general decline in focus on adult basic skills.

Catherine Paulson-Ellis, Sheaf Valley Education, provides the final keynote *From policy to practice: reflections on the interplay between policy-making and practice in post-16 education* discussing practical examples of 'why policymakers and practitioners seem to land in different places, even when they are talking about the same problems'. Finally, **Yvonne Spare, RaPAL,** reviews *The new apprenticeships: Facilitating learning, mentoring,*

coaching and assessing by Andrew Armitage and Alison Cogger, a guide to anyone involved in mentoring the new apprenticeships. **Tara Furlong, RaPAL,** closes with *News from the sector*, reiterating arguments for investment in adult literacies education, utilising 'literacy as social practice' perspectives, and inviting participation in the current celebratory RaPAL 100 project, which is mapping a patchwork of adult literacies provision across the UK.

This edition covers a variety of themes, therefore, but there is common ground in the way that practitioners and researchers report on exciting and creative work being carried out to meet the present challenges in adult skills and make recommendations to ensure its development. There is a clear sense of hope for the future, despite the many challenges. We hope you find the edition both enjoyable and inspiring.

Note from the Journal Coordinator

Yvonne Spare

Yvonne can be contacted on journal@rapal.org.uk

Welcome to this, our 99th edition of the RaPAL Journal. This is our conference edition, in which we publish some of the presentations and workshops from our joint autumn conference, especially for those of you who weren't able to make it to London on the day.

The main theme of the conference was looking back over the 20 years since the Moser Report 'A Fresh Start', and trying to look at what the future might hold.

This brings us to the exciting prospect of our 100th edition, due in the Spring/ Summer of 2020, which also happens to be our 35th year. This will be a major piece of research, to see if we can identify 100 centres providing classes of any type which include adult literacy teaching, across all the regions of the UK and Ireland. We welcome contributions from anyone interested in telling us about your provision, either by taking part in an interview or by completing a short online questionnaire.

For this project you can contact Sarah Freeman on 100@rapal.org.uk or myself on journal@rapal.org.uk, or look at our website www.rapal.org.uk for more details.

Any comments about this or other editions or ideas for future content can be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk and don't forget that most Journal editions contain articles by new writers. There are guidelines on our website on the Write for Us page and we offer as much support as you feel you need. We are also interested in hearing what you think about your Journal. There is a feedback section on the website so that you can comment on anything you have read in this or previous editions. Follow the link to our comments space at the bottom of the page, which needs the password that has been circulated with this edition. We look forward to hearing from you.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that the articles we publish are not necessarily representative of the views or position of the membership body, and we do not advocate any given course of action in any given context. We do, of course, support freedom of speech and of academic liberty, and the pragmatic achievement of objectives as a negotiated consensus.

Best wishes for 2020.

Yvonne

Why we need a national mission for literacy and numeracy
Stephen Evans

Stephen has been chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute since 2016, following two years as deputy chief executive, and is responsible for overall leadership of the organisation, looking to maximise its reach and impact. He joined from Working Links, where he was director of policy and strategy. Prior to that he was director of employment and skills at the London Development Agency, commissioning programmes and leading the work of the London Skills and Employment Board. He has also been chief economist at the Social Market Foundation, and spent six years as senior policy advisor at HM Treasury, working on policy to cut child poverty, increase employment and boost productivity as well as the independent Leitch Review of skills.

The fact we're still talking about the Moser Report some twenty years after it was published is testament to its power. It helped to raise the visibility of the importance of literacy, numeracy and other key skills, and underpinned the creation of the Skills for Life programme in England to give adults more opportunities to learn.

Twenty years on, the challenge remains. There are lots of ways to measure the numbers, but it's clear that many millions of people would benefit from improving their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. In many ways, the case for action has intensified. The internet is now a basic fact of life in accessing the labour market, public services, and community engagement. The minimum level of basic skills for finding and progressing in work continues to rise. Literacy and numeracy are key to democratic engagement and active citizenship. That's why I was pleased we were able to focus our annual English, maths and ESOL conference on what we should do next – what Moser might recommend if he were writing his report today.

For me, the starting point should be a national mission to give everyone the chance to improve their basic skills. Budget cuts have led to a 40% drop in the number of adults taking part in adult literacy and numeracy learning. Learning and Work Institute have argued for an additional £200m per year to reverse this decline. That needs to go on creating extra places for adults to learn, but also investing in the teaching profession – there were lots of calls at our conference for better support and sharing of best practice.

That national mission would need to be backed up by engagement with employers, community groups, local authorities and others – making learning a golden thread running through our communities and public services. That matters for engaging adults in basic skills learning too. In our annual survey, adults cite a range of barriers to learning, including fitting it around their work and home lives and the cost. But the biggest reason adults give for not learning is that they don't want to or can't see the need. That points to the need for a national and local engagement campaign to inspire adults into learning.

Lastly, I think we need to share the stories of people who have made that step back into learning and show the difference that improving their basic skills has made. I've seen this in our Festival of Learning award winners, with English, maths and ESOL provision helping people find work, change careers, help their children with their schoolwork, be more active in their communities, and much more besides.

A decade of cuts has taken its toll. But life-changing learning takes place every day. Working together, we can make the case for more investment that would make a difference to so many people's lives.

•

Stephen's conference presentation is available to download here and Alex Stevenson's accompanying presentation here.

9

From 0 to 90 in 4 years: Integrating Literacy and Numeracy Support into Apprenticeship Training Centres in Ireland

Alison Jones

Alison Jones originally qualified as a Latin teacher in the UK, but started working in the field of adult literacy on moving to Ireland in 1996. She has been working as an Adult Literacy Organiser in Galway for 10 years and since 2015 has been based in an Apprenticeship Training Centre, working to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of apprentices, among other projects. For additional information, comments and questions, contact alison.jones@gretb.ie

'Stop them failing!'

In September 2015, as one of two Adult Literacy Organisers working in Galway City, I was transferred to the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) Training Centre, charged with establishing a programme of literacy and numeracy support for apprentices. 'Stop them failing,' I was told, in stark terms, in relation to their theory papers, and I was welcomed by Training Centre management in a move that was considered long overdue.

Figure 1 GRETB Training Centre

The decision was guided by the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 (SOLAS, 2013), point 2.2, which aimed to 'devise and implement a strategy to promote literacy and numeracy across Further Education and Training.' A successful move would result in a system of support that would be sustainable and applicable to all apprenticeships in the Training Centre and, of course, one that would improve exam pass rates and reduce dropout rates. It was a progressive move on the part of GRETB; I was the only Adult Literacy Organiser working in a Training Centre anywhere in the country.

Now, in September 2019, literacy and numeracy support is very much part of the fabric of the centre, but now it is not only in Galway. From early beginnings in 2015, the support programme that was developed here has now been adopted by 90% of Training Centres in

the country in 2019. It is embedded into the apprenticeships of all kinds and apprentices see it as an intrinsic part of what is on offer.

In this article, I will chart the early stages of the programme, describe what the model looks like and how it works, and how it has been adopted nationally with the establishment of a Support to Apprentices Group.

Early stages

Learning the language of the Training Centres was the first step. What are 'phases' for example? 'Phase one' is 'on the job' and 'Phase two' is undertaken in a Training centre, a twenty-two-week block of theory and practice. I researched other integrating literacy models (Newbridge Youthreach, North Wall CTC), rang colleagues in other centres, and found a few models in existence in further education and training centres as documented by NALA (Chinnéide, 2013) but nothing that could simply be transferred here. More productive were my conversations with instructors and apprentices and I started to work with one group of motor mechanics to see exactly where the difficulties lay. I started to observe what could be done and what could work.

Figure 2 Motor Mechanic apprentices

Initial findings

After three months or so, the picture was clearer, the work was expanding and these were the findings:

- **Maths difficulties**: 1 in 4 (sometimes 1 in 3) out of a group of 14
- **Literacy** (reading comprehension primarily): 1 in 5 (though this figure is variable depending on the group)
- **Study Skills**: needed by all apprentices in each group
- Possibility for **support at Phase 1** (on the job) prior to arriving at a Training Centre
- **Literacy awareness** training for instructors and centre staff.

So, using this information and with the help and co-operation of the instructors, these five strands form the basis of the support programme, with the knowledge and experience of all working in this area enhancing the programme all the time.

The support to apprentices model

Currently there are five main areas of support as follows:

1. **Maths Support**

Specific, context related maths assessments are given to each group at the start of their course in the Training Centre. The results allow us to see not just *who* needs the support, but in *which specific area* it is needed in. It is forensic in its detail. (See Figure 3). Following this, a maths support class is offered to the apprentices who need it. Often these sessions are needed as 'warm up' classes, but in some cases, additional support is needed and this is given on a one-to-

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Names										
2	1. addition	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	2. addition	1		1		1	1		1	1	1
4	3. subtraction			1	1	1	1	1		1	1
5	4. subtraction			1	1	1	1	1		1	1
6	5. multiplication					1		1		1	1
7	6. multiplication										1
8	7. division			1	1		1	1			1
9	8. division			1	1			1			1
10	9. brackets	1		1	1	1	1		1		
11	10. problem solving			1	1	1	1	1			1
12	11. percentages			1	1	1	1	1			1
13	12. percentages			1	1	1	1	1			1
14	13. fractions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1
15	14. fractions			1	1						1
16	15. algebra	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1
17	16. squared numbers	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1
18	17. decimals			1	1			1			
19	18. area of a rectangle			1	1			1			1
20	19. angles in a triangle			1	1	1	1	1	1		1
21	20. circle		1	1		1	1	1			1
22		6	5	17	16	14	16	17	7	5	18

Figure 3 the maths results sheet showed both who needed help and what topic they needed help with

one basis. Attendance is voluntary, but the take-up is very good and even more in demand as exams approach! Classes are mostly held at the end of the day in order not to interfere with the regular classwork. A sympathetic and versatile maths tutor is a prerequisite, which I am very lucky to have here in Galway.

The apprentices themselves appreciate the streamlined, targeted maths classes, and are well motivated, as two of them stated recently:

> I kind of gave up on maths at school. Now I want to learn it because it means more to me. I can see why I need it.

> When you know what you're going to use it for, it makes more sense and it's easier to learn it.

2.   Literacy Support

Literacy skills are certainly at a higher level than those typically encountered in the Literacy Service, but difficulties do exist nonetheless. Most of these centre on reading comprehension, with course text books containing long, complex sentences, full of technical vocabulary. Instructors play a key role in identifying *who* needs help, and will send any apprentice who is struggling with this to meet with us for one or more sessions. However, to avoid feelings of stigma, the whole group is informed of the availability of this support and told how and why it is offered. It is presented in terms of *an opportunity*; this is their career after all. Apprentices then work with a literacy tutor on a one-to-one basis in the centre. Bespoke solutions are found as needed. Sometimes these involve different reading techniques or word attack skills, sometime how to create glossaries, or sometimes the apprentices simply need to know how to write good notes.

Figure 4 Student support room drop in service within the Training Centre. Technology is used, such as Quizlet, for creating flashcards or the Voice Recorder app, to record notes.

3. Study skills and study support

As a natural development from the type of literacy support outlined above, it soon became apparent that *all* apprentices would benefit from study skills, particularly in 'learning how to learn'. So, in conjunction with the Motor Mechanic instructors and their apprentices, a '*Study and Learning Guide'* was devised and piloted. This handbook is now used in every apprenticeship course in the Training Centre. It is an interactive workbook and is delivered over three forty-minute sessions to each group at the start of Phase 2. The workbook aims to establish motivation and identifies reasons for studying right at the start of the course. There are tips on how to prepare for exams, how to take notes and how to be organised when studying. Study support sessions after class are also offered.

Having a sense of purpose is key, as two learners attest:

> I never studied but now I study every day. Once you're interested, you want to study. It's like watching something you want to watch.

> I'm thinking how has this happened. It's going in and not out again. This is the first time that's happened to me.

4. Support at Phase One: a work in progress

With support now established in Phase 2 (in the Training Centre), it is obvious to offer support at an earlier stage as well in Phase 1 (on the job). So, at induction, when all new apprentices are registered in the Training Centre for the first time, they are given an informal assessment in maths and reading comprehension. Anyone who is worried about their skills' levels can then avail of a 'Maths for Trades' evening class, or a maths class in their local Adult Basic Education Centre. With apprentices attending Phase 2 in any training centre in the country, this is an ideal nationwide initiative, one that would mean that all apprentices in Phase 1 anywhere in the country would have had the chance to warm up and brush up ahead of time if they want to. This is something that is being developed currently.

5. Literacy Awareness Training

The key to the success of this programme is the relationship with the literacy staff and the instructors. Awareness training is offered and an Ideas booklet has been created, which is full of ideas and examples on how to adapt difficult texts or concepts to make them more accessible to those with literacy/ comprehension difficulties.

Most productive in this collaboration has been the adoption of technology enhanced learning. With the publication of the TEL strategy, and a clear drive for learners to be 'more engaged and achieving more in the learning process' (SOLAS, 2015), useful apps have been identified and are used in many different ways in all the craft apprenticeships. Electrical apprentices have created their own quizzes (see Figure 5) . The following videos describe this input:

Creating Dynamic Photographs for Mobile Learning: https://vimeo.com/321226754/8910ee69e9

Creating Quizzes for Formative Assessment and Class Revision: https://vimeo.com/321230991/d2b3e70388
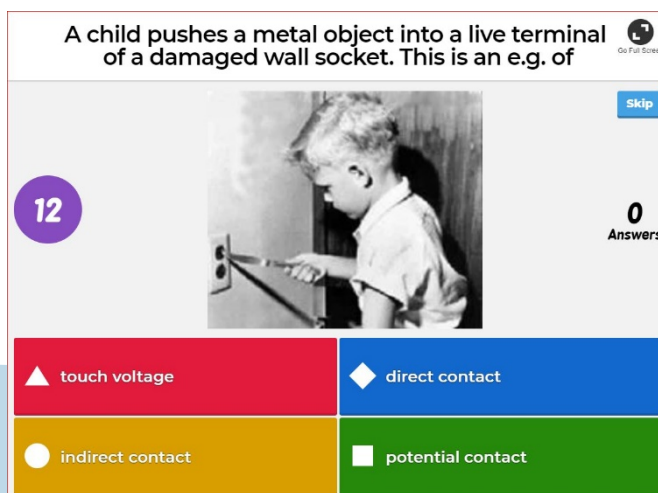

Figure 5 Screenshot from Electrical Kahoot

Results

But what about the actual exam results? There is statistical evidence to show that this multifaceted support is working. This is a snapshot from eight groups from the Motor Mechanic department, from four groups prior to support and four groups having received support. The figures are as follows:

	Average number achieving a Merit per class	Average number being referred (unsuccessful) per class
Four groups prior to support (October 2013-August 2015)	31.5%	31.25%
Four groups after receiving support (October 2015-September 2016)	79.25%	0%*

*no learners have failed in any of the four classes since the support was offered

The Support to Apprentices Group

With other Training Centres around the country being interested in the success of the programme, a Support to Apprentices group was established in 2017 as an informal network of practitioners to share good practice and resources.

The work of the group has evolved and developed since 2017. All sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs) have representation on the Support to Apprentice Group (SAG) and attend networking meetings on a regular basis. Membership of the group includes adult literacy organisers, assistant managers of Training Centres, Training Centre instructors and literacy tutors. The peer support and networking opportunities gained from attendance at these meetings has contributed to the development of the programme and resources available to all training centres. The Support to Apprentice Group

also offers advice, training and resources to centres considering introducing or expanding existing support to their apprentices. Collaboration between literacy staff and training centre staff continues to grow and is essential to the success of the initiative.

There is a wide-ranging sharing of materials and this certainly increases the potential to develop and improve resources for everyone to use as time goes on. A Moodle site has been created to store these resources electronically, with all involved being given access as desired. Similar results to those from the GRETB Training Centre are starting to emerge and more qualitative and quantitative results are available. For example, Shannon Training Centre compared one plumbing group who availed of study with one plumbing group who didn't attend and reported that where study and maths support was provided, merits

increased (from 42% to 50%) and referrals decreased (from 21% to 7%). Finglas Training Centre in Dublin also compared figures pre and post study, and found that referrals among plumbers dropped from 13% to 3.6% when the support service was introduced, with apprentices surveyed saying:

> … a very very helpful service that is definitely a great asset to all trainees.

> Study Skills was an essential part of the course as it helped me and others drastically with Maths or whatever we needed help with.

One instructor from the same centre reported:

> It should be a requirement to have this service for those with learning difficulties in every centre throughout the apprenticeship system as I have seen first-hand how much it really helps these students.

Conclusions and Observations

This has been and continues to be a thoroughly worthwhile programme and one that continues to develop apace. The support is holistic, as it is in Adult Basic Education, with self-confidence and self-esteem visibly improving alongside the results. Parents have contacted Training Centres to express their gratitude and apprentices certainly appreciate the support now available. The idea of learning has changed. As one said:

> School didn't mean much to me. But this is what I want to do and I want to learn it.

Further recognition came during European Vocational Skills Week, 2017:

The jury considers the effective method of improving literacy and math capabilities in apprenticeships a good practice. Remedying numeracy and language skills as soon as possible will foster participation in future schooling activities that are necessary for continued employability.

As such, this is a model that could work for any Further Education and Training course, using assessments that are devised in context, with the collaboration of all concerned, and with key skills placed at the heart of any support. Among the considerations for SOLAS, the Integrating Literacy and Numeracy Report (ICF, 2018) states that:

> Models are most effective when they reflect the needs of specific groups of learners, the characteristics of each programme and are rooted in the local context, building on existing infrastructure and capacity within the FET provider.

This is a model that we are proud to have developed here in Galway.

References

Chinnéide, B. N. (2013). *Integrating Literacy, Guidelines for further education and training centres.* Dublin: NALA.

ICF. (2018). *Integrating Literacy and Numeracy.* Dublin: SOLAS.

SOLAS. (2013). *Further Education and Training Strategy.* Dublin: SOLAS.

SOLAS. (2015). *Strategy for Technolgy Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019.* Dublin: SOLAS.

-

The conference presentation is available to download here.

The impact of attitudinal barriers on engagement with adult maths qualifications

Ben Perkins

Ben Perkins is Partner Support Coordinator for National Numeracy and leads on delivery of workshops and training around attitudes towards numeracy, confidence with numbers and overcoming maths anxiety. National Numeracy is an independent charity, set up in 2012 with a sole focus on numeracy skills in the UK. National Numeracy offers resources for both adults and children to help ensure everyone has the number skills they need for work and everyday life.

Introduction

Nearly 17 million adults in England have the numeracy levels expected of primary school children and around three quarters have skills below adult Level 2. Unlike literacy, numeracy levels have steadily been getting worse, not better (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011). Why might this be?

National Numeracy's work with adults has shown the impact of psychological factors in adult maths learning and has demonstrated that in order to engage adult learners with further maths learning the emotion associated with the subject must not be underestimated. We have developed an approach which is predominantly designed to reduce the anxiety associated with numeracy. The learnings from this approach can be used by tutors to support maths anxious students.

What attitudinal barriers prevent adult learners from engaging with maths learning?

National Numeracy's work has identified four main attitudinal barriers to participating in maths learning which learners commonly face:
- **Value:** Maths is useful in work and everyday life and there are real benefits to improving skills, although this may not be the same maths people associate with school experiences (National Numeracy, 2017); knowing this is important for generating motivation to learn.
- **Belief:** Many people think that they simply 'can't do' maths and that this means it isn't worth trying. This makes engagement with maths, and subsequently improving skills, less likely than when a growth mindset is employed (Dweck, 2008).
- **Effort:** Many adults interpret struggling and making mistakes as evidence that they are not good at maths. However, it is important to recognise that struggle with maths is universal. Developing resilience, which means a more positive response to negative situations such as mistakes, is important to aid learning (Johnston-Wilder, 2013).
- **Anxiety:** Maths makes some people feel anxious, and this leads them to avoid situations where they may have to use numbers (Chinn, 2012).

These four barriers mean that for many people skills-based interventions are not comfortable or are simply out of reach. These mindset barriers must be addressed before people are able to feel confident accessing existing programmes and qualifications. Without doing so, this unwillingness to engage can hold people back from qualifications which unlock the door to further progression.

How National Numeracy addresses attitudes towards numeracy to allow independent skills learning

National Numeracy has developed a unique approach to improving numeracy skills with attitudinal interventions at its core. Working in partnership with employers, particularly NHS Trusts, we have begun to roll out this approach and have reached more than 1500 individuals.

This approach uses a one-hour workshop which encourages people to explore and reflect on the way that they think and feel about maths. It is introduced before engagement with any skills learning and includes open discussion about people's experiences with maths as well as structured activities to break down preconceptions or myths about maths which may be holding people back.

After the session, participants are asked to use the National Numeracy Challenge for online, independent learning. Participants report feeling more at ease with maths learning and are often able to make significant improvements in their numeracy skills without any other intervention.

Key features for success

Experience has shown that it is unusual for adults to have had any open conversation about maths skills since school, and thus feelings have often been hidden. Most expect that they will be alone in their negative associations, and this generates a feeling of embarrassment. The sense of community created when peers are able to share their views in a supportive space becomes a key factor in overcoming anxiety. An acknowledgement of these feelings, rather than a criticism, delivered in a human and relatable way can have a powerful impact on people's understanding of their feelings. This helps them begin to challenge their previously unquestioned perceptions of their own ability.

Linking maths to everyday workplace experiences that have relevance for the learner is also an important feature for success. This is crucial as the vast majority of adults who have participated in National Numeracy's programme have said that their conception of maths learning is strongly evocative of school and classroom experiences, and that this triggers negative feelings as an adult. The impact of emphasising the relevance of everyday maths skills is often twofold. Firstly, it highlights the value of the subject in a way that people can see affecting their real lives. Secondly, it shows people that they have more skill than they thought as they realise that they already do many of the things that they have said that they can't do.

The impact of a "stepping stone" to Functional Skills

By addressing low confidence and skills, adults who have worked with National Numeracy have gone on to access Functional Skills qualifications despite expressing strong reservation about doing so before the intervention. Whilst it is difficult to quantify the exact numbers of learners who have made this step, the case study evidence is strong. For example:

- Mel, a healthcare professional from East Sussex, said she was unable to get her 'dream job' in nursing because of a fear of maths and poor skills. She failed her Functional Skills at first attempt. But by addressing her confidence and building foundation skills with the National Numeracy Challenge she was able to pass and has now started the Trainee Nursing Associate programme.

- Stuart, an office worker from Brighton, hated maths and felt that he could 'never get it' but by overcoming this fixed mindset he was able to pass a Functional Skills qualification as part of his NVQ.

- Amy, a distribution worker from Castleford, carried very negative associations with maths from school and did not want to revisit this, but the National Numeracy approach helped her take the steps she needed to start practising and she has now gone on to take and pass Level 2 Functional Skills maths.

These stories show the value of a confidence, attitudes and anxiety-centred approach to maths learning that is positioned before Functional Skills qualifications. Working with adults to understand and mitigate the impact of emotional and psychological factors in maths learning will enable a greater proportion of adults to feel able to access maths qualifications and benefit from further educational and professional opportunities.

References

Chinn, S. (2012) *Beliefs, Anxiety and Avoiding Fear in Mathematics.* Child Development Research 2012.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011). *Skills for life survey, a survey of literacy, numeracy and ICT levels in England.*

Dweck, C. (2008) *"Mindset and Math/Science Achievement."* Teaching & Leadership: Managing for Effective Teachers and Leaders

Johnston-Wilder, S. (2013) *"Measuring Mathematical Resilience: An Application of the Construct of Resilience to the Study of Mathematics."*

National Numeracy. (2017) *The Essentials of Numeracy: A New Approach to Making the UK Numerate.*

The National Numeracy Challenge is free at the point of access for students and tutors and is available online here: www.nnchallenge.org.uk/rapal

"My learners can do the maths but don't understand the questions." Can post-16 phonics approaches help (and not just in maths)?

Gail Lydon, MA, CTeach

Gail is the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Specialist Lead for maths and English. She has supported management and practitioners in the development of maths and English provision since 2000. She has worked in all sectors: work-based learning, further education, secure estate, and voluntary and community. Gail worked for a number of blue-chip companies before moving into teaching over 25 years ago - she describes this as the best career decision she has ever made.

Gail is passionate about lifelong learning and working to support her colleagues and learners in the post 16 sector. This is a two-way process as she continues to develop her own expertise through the generosity of the learners, practitioners, and teams she works with.

gail.lydon@etfoundation.co.uk
@greatlearn

Introduction

The Functional Skills maths content states:

> Problem solving should not seek to obscure or add additional mathematical complexity beyond the level of the qualification. Defining what problem-solving means in the context of examinations is challenging.
> (DfE, 2018a: 19)

During my time as a teacher and an ETF Regional Specialist Lead for English and maths I have spoken to many maths practitioners who have commented on their learners' inability to understand maths questions. This has arisen in both functional skills and GCSE classes. If the problem solving in functional maths doesn't add maths complexity, then where does the complexity come from? When the latest version of the functional skills English content was published in February 2018 (DfE, 2018b) and phonics was included at Entry level I wondered whether this was an opportunity not just for English/literacy teachers but for all of us supporting learners to add another tool to our toolbox. Perhaps I needed to look beyond the maths content of a question and investigate the reading and understanding of problem-solving question itself?

But once I started doing a little bit of research, I found that my idea wasn't very original. Back in 2004 National Strategies produced a study package for heads and teachers of mathematics named *Literacy in mathematics* (DfES, 2004) which is still available on the STEM website. Although this work was aimed at key stage 3 many of our post-16 learners are working at the same level as these school children. The materials look at how speaking and listening and writing can be used to support the development of mathematical

understanding. These materials could be useful as they refer to speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematical vocabulary. They focus on words in different contexts, and subject specific meanings. There is reference to the importance of opportunities to 'pronounce, explore and practice using new vocabulary'. Reading this last point, I thought 'phonics'! Could phonics be used to support my learners? I decided to look into the issue and continued to read around the subject.

Vocabulary (and context or lack of it)

Many maths teachers work with their learners to some extent on vocabulary. Dunston and Tymnksi (2013) suggest that maths vocabulary is developed through incidental learning and direct instruction but that some maths teachers do not recognise the need for direct instruction. Further, Dunston and Tymnksi recognise the misconceptions that teaching mathematical vocabulary in contexts can incur. An example is explaining acute angles through slices of pizza – resulting in learners concluding that a triangle with an acute angle would have a round edge. It is unlikely that a learner will pick up mathematical vocabulary in everyday life except when it has a different everyday meaning and hence further misconceptions. Here are some examples.

1. There are many ways of saying the same thing in mathematics for example: subtraction (minus, greater than, take away, fewer than, less than, decrease by, difference between).

2. Same words with different meanings in different contexts for example:

Word	Everyday usage	Mathematical meaning
average	Estimate a general standard	Used synonymously with arithmetic mean; for a set of discrete data this is the sum of quantities divided by the number of quantities
even	Level or smooth	A positive integer divisible by 2
face	Front of head from forehead to chin	One of the flat surfaces of a solid shape
root	Part of a plant below the earth's surface, which attaches it to the earth and carries nourishment from the soil to the plant	A value, which satisfies the equation which has been formed by putting an expression, containing one variable, equal to zero

3. Complex words not seen in everyday language

Word	Definition	Decoding
quadrilateral	a polygon with four edges (or sides) and four vertices or corners	Helping learners see the clues in the word itself.
triangle	a polygon with three edges and three vertices	Break into chunks • quad (4), tri (3), bi (2) • lateral – a side part of something • sector – a part of something
bisector	something that cuts an object into two equal parts	Word histories and discussing words can help learners not only remember terms but be able to use this information to tackle new vocabulary.

Chronology and tense

My reading has made me realise that phonics might be useful but it is only part of the story when supporting learners to decode maths questions. In my experience learners focus on the numbers when they see a question. Sometimes applying any mathematical technique they can think of and occasionally, and only by chance, do they pick the correct technique. Many of us as maths teachers focus on the numbers too – when we explain, we talk about the numbers rather than the meaning of the question. We talk about what the learner needs to do with the numbers. So, what can we learn from our English/literacy colleagues that will help us help our learners?

Barwell et al. (2002) state that vocabulary is not enough and suggest that mathematics puts together words 'in special ways' and that 'isolating' words can hinder understanding, hence the conventions governing how they are used also need to be considered.

Let's look at an example from NCETM (2019):

If the exchange rate is 1 Australian dollar for 37.02p, how much money would Amanda get for the A$48.65 she brought to England with her? (written in the subjunctive apparently).

If we remove what is irrelevant (find what is **relevant),** put the remaining information into chronological order (**organise**) then perhaps we have an easier version:

• Amanda has 48.65 Australian dollars.
• Every 1 Australian dollar is worth 37.02p.
• How much is Amanda's A$48.68 worth in English money (i.e. Stirling)?

Now of course the learner needs to **analyse** i.e. carry out a calculation. If I compare this process with work carried out in an English/literacy class it is similar to summarising a story

and interpreting text. I also need to separate main ideas and supporting details. As Benn (2004) notes, maths questions are 'more like poetry than prose'. So, should we consider maths problems as a genre and how we might support learners to access the genre. Again – what can we maths teachers learn from our English/literacy colleagues?

Susan Gerofsky (2004) suggests that many problem-solving maths questions follow a three-part structure:
- Set up – a scenario for the maths question
- Information - givens, operations
- Question - the goal(s)

This raises the question of why a maths question needs to be 'set up' – what is the purpose? The argument for these set ups is that they allow learners to practise and generalise. But for maths teachers the main question is how do our learners respond to this set up? According to Gerofsky, our learners suspend belief and pretend that this situation exists because the set ups tend to be unrealistic. Indeed, learners look for the numbers and 'throw away the stories' looking for the computation. To do this the learner needs to cope with the changes in tense and extraneous information which can distract. Gerofsky suggests that a question may not be realistic but may be being used to show a basic procedure which can be used over and over in different set ups.

Even the information given can be challenging, for instance the operations may not be stated. This is regularly cited to me by maths teachers as something their learners find challenging. Learners often know which operations should be used in a question because that is what they have been doing in class e.g. ratio. But in a test/exam they don't have this clue. The operations are not stated as this aims to assess whether a learner can 'develop models of real situations' (DfE, 2013).

A learner needs to decipher the question to understand what to do and what operations to apply. But it is important to recognise that problem-solving questions have different purposes. In an exam (summative assessment) the question aims to find out whether a learner has mathematical skills and can apply these skills to a specific standard. For example, GCSE maths has the following aims:

1. develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts
2. acquire, select and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems
3. reason mathematically, make deductions and inferences and draw conclusions
4. comprehend, interpret and communicate mathematical information in a variety of forms appropriate to the information and context.
(DfE, 2013)

In the classroom teachers may be using the question for learning, for preparation for summative assessment and/or for formative assessment. To do this we maths teachers use awarding organisation questions and we also develop our own questions but these follow the conventions used by the awarding bodies. These are the conventions maths teachers have successfully understood throughout their own maths learning journeys. We continue

to put maths into these unrealistic scenarios. They don't imitate life they imitate other maths problems. When we are familiar with genres we respond to them differently. I see evidence of this when working with teachers who are not maths teachers, parents as well as learners who themselves may not be familiar with the conventions of the maths question genre.

Looking at maths questions as a specific genre may be useful for those of us supporting learners. For example, many of the questions posed in exam papers are not in chronological order, they may be in a tense that makes them difficult to understand plus mathematical vocabulary can further confuse. This means that learners have a lot to remember. Perhaps part of the answer is for learners not to try to remember everything but to write it down in stages and to discuss with peers? Perhaps we also need to investigate vocabulary and tense along with chronology.

Ways forward

There is some evidence that 'mathematics presented out of context is harder to learn, less transferable and boring' (Benn, 2004: 100). But the questions our learners face are not always rooted in their experience and are not genuinely realistic. Real life is complex and the oversimplification of questions may well reduce the realism.

There are many facets to this discussion; this is the tip of the iceberg. For instance, the concept of representation that we expect learners to understand, e.g. that a line is a 1D shape but is always represented 2D on paper. These concepts must be explored by learners and not simply rehearsed. As maths teachers we are very familiar with this genre we must ensure that our learners are too.   As Stephen Pinker notes 'a ground rule when you solve a problem at school is to base your reasoning on the premises mentioned in the question, ignoring everything else you know.' (Pinker, 1999: 303).

This goes beyond being able to tackle maths problems but is central to the extension of mathematical reasoning. We must encourage the use of terms and research-based literacy strategies (Dunstone & Tyminksi, 2013). Swan (2005) highlighted the importance of using discussion to develop an understanding of maths. Perhaps discussion could also be used as a tool for understanding maths questions (whether we view them as a genre or not).

Phonics may be a useful tool in our teaching toolbox but perhaps needs to be used alongside a raft of creative approaches. Perhaps we could consider teaching maths problem-solving as a genre in English/literacy classes or can we work together? It might benefit us all.

References

Barwell, R., Leung, C., Morgan, C. & Street, B., (2002) *The language dimension of mathematics teaching.* Available from: https://bit.ly/35PhHIS (Accessed 2 December 2019)

Benn, R. (2004) *Adults count too: mathematics for empowerment.* Leicester: NIACE.

DfE, (2013) *Mathematics: GCSE subject content and assessment objectives.* Available from: https://bit.ly/2DzVSAT (Accessed 2 December 2019)

DfE, (2018a) *Subject content functional skills: mathematics.* Available from: https://bit.ly/2qbrjhX (Accessed: 2 December 2019)

DfE, (2018b) *Subject content functional skills: English.* Available from: https://bit.ly/2qds8XI (Accessed: 2 December 2019)

DfES, (2004) *Key stage 3 National Strategy: literacy in mathematics.* Available from: https://bit.ly/2R7SlC1 (Accessed: 2 December 2019)

Dunston, P. J., & Tyminski, A. M., (2013) *What's the big deal about vocabulary.* Available from: https://bit.ly/37WfIo0 (Accessed 2 December 2019)

Gerofsky, S. G. (2004) *A Man Left Albuquerque Heading East*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

NCETM (2019) *National Curriculum – reasoning and problem solving: key stage 3: mathematical content knowledge.* Available from: https://bit.ly/2DHW2Gp (Accessed 2 December 2019)

Pinker, S. (1999) *How the mind works.* London: Penguin

Swan, M., (2005) Standards Unit, improving learning in mathematics: challenges and strategies. Available from: https://bit.ly/2PiOEHh (Accessed 2 December 2019)

Post-16 phonics – a 'both/and' approach to adult literacy

Tricia Millar

Tricia Millar brings international expertise in training teachers, support staff and community educators in a shame-free approach to phonics for adolescent and adult learners both inside and outside the formal education system. She's the creator of 'That Reading Thing', a literacy programme for teens and adults and 'That Spelling Thing', a collaborative spelling tool for classroom teachers. She's one of the Post-16 Phonics Toolkit authors and worked on developing the Post-16 Phonics CPD. She's also a PD Lead and a mentor for the ETF's 'OTLA English' programme.

The roots of Post-16 Phonics

Phonics has been viewed as a 'skills approach' to adult literacy, reductive and disconnected from the realities of everyday social practices in which adults engage (Papen, 2005). Post-16 Phonics, however, has its roots in a very different view of readers and reading.

In the late 90s whilst doing youth work on Merseyside, I met a 16-year-old who couldn't read his own GCSE results. I was already aware of local secondary students who weren't thriving because of their reading but this one young man put me over the edge and I was furious on his behalf. He had been attending school since he was four years old! I was also frustrated because, despite being a secondary English teacher, I had no idea how to teach a teenager to read. During the ensuing search for help (in which the Basic Skills Agency and countless primary teachers told me there was no definitive answer to my question) I tripped over linguistic phonics.

I'd never heard of the reading wars.

Phonics (despite a degree in English Language) meant little to me.

What appealed was the linear and incremental approach which accurately reflected what I knew of the English language. I saw how youth workers and others with no teaching experience could pick it up quickly to work with young people outside the education system.

What didn't appeal was that it was geared to very young emergent readers. The angry and frustrated teens I was working with through a school for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties brought with them all sorts of knowledge and they didn't need to be reading: 'a fat cat did run up a hill'. They had a vast range of sight words and many had a latent ability to read and spell which they'd come to mistrust because of negative experiences in school. Shame-avoidance is a powerful motivator for not engaging in literacy when you've been bullied, mocked and deemed 'unteachable'.

Universally, they needed to discover how written language reflects what they say out loud – to connect their own voices, ears and eyes in a holistic approach to text. They needed to learn to listen while they were reading and use context to check for meaning. They'd given

up reading for meaning. They needed hope that they could gain power over English and stop feeling embarrassed by not being able to do what their peers seemed to do with ease.

I created 'That Reading Thing' (TRT) - so named because that's how the boys referred to it - to counteract that shame. TRT has several foundational principles which create a distinct pedagogy rooted in both person-centred youth work and linguistic phonics. 'That Spelling Thing' (TST) came about when youth workers had such success with 'written off' young people that schools asked for something to deliver in the classroom. The principles of both approaches are echoed in the Post-16 Phonics Toolkit (ETF, 2019):

- Guarantee that lessons are shame-free and that all error correction is positive but don't avoid correcting errors. There's far more sting in the ridicule from people outside a safe lesson.

- Take into consideration what students already know about both life and language. Leverage that knowledge for quick progress and growing confidence so they can apply it beyond the lesson.

  Students need to figure out the language, not be told about it. Activities like word puzzles facilitate that 'supported discovery' approach. Here's one for learners who mix up 'Tuesday' and 'Thursday'. Puzzles are a built-in safety net for spelling and examining the graphemes (spelling of a sound) also helps with reading.

- Talk about patterns rather than rules and be prepared to discover them together through sound and grapheme sorting. Focus on the logic of the language whilst acknowledging its rich and complex history. Example: Sorting the many graphemes for the /k/ sound. What's the most common way to spell the /k/ sound at the end of multisyllabic words? Is there a pattern for single syllable words?

 Sorting the grapheme <c> by the most common sounds it represents. Is there a pattern for reading a letter <c> as /s/? Empower your learners by developing a shared vocabulary for talking about reading and spelling unfamiliar words. A learner might ask, 'How do you spell the 'ee' sound in 'treat'?' just as we might ask ourselves how to spell the 'ee' sound in 'subpoena'. We're all somewhere on the continuum.
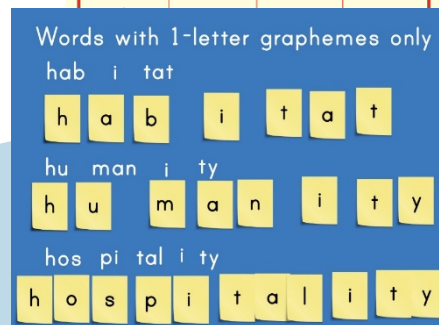
- Work from sound to print and tackle age-appropriate multisyllabic words from the beginning.

- Talk about the meaningful parts of words (morphology) when it's more helpful than phonics. For instance, a purely phonics approach might leave learners trying to remember how many m's are in 'tomorrow'. They still need phonics for the rest of the word, but the answer to the <m>/<mm> conundrum lies in morphology. The question isn't "how many m's in tomorrow?" but 'What does 'morrow' mean?" You can then relate it to 'today' and 'tonight'.

- Read authentic text. TRT students read text they wouldn't mind being seen with by their friends and it can be in any format.
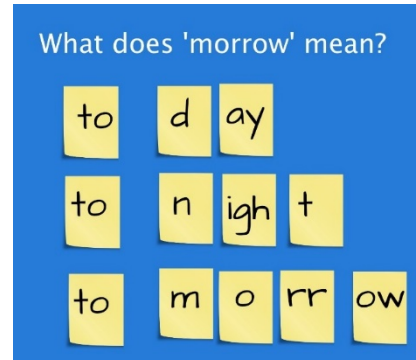
There are echoes of 'That Reading Thing' in Post-16 Phonics but the latter is the product of a team of experts from the field of adult literacy who ensured the toolkit wouldn't be a prescriptive programme but a collection of ideas to be put into practice by professionals. The accompanying training was likewise designed by people with a range of ideas about phonics and how it should be used in the field. The result is that, whilst TRT is rooted in skills and person-centred youth work, Post-16 Phonics intertwines skills and social practice approaches.
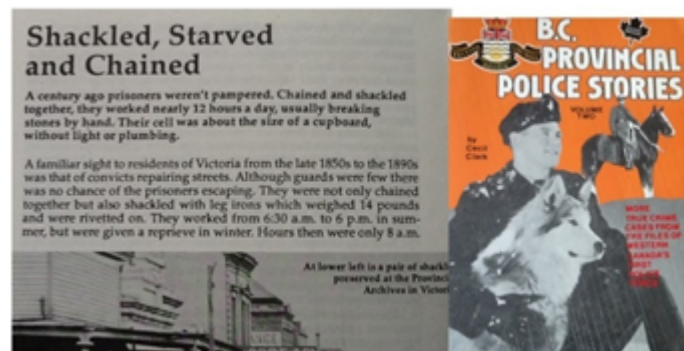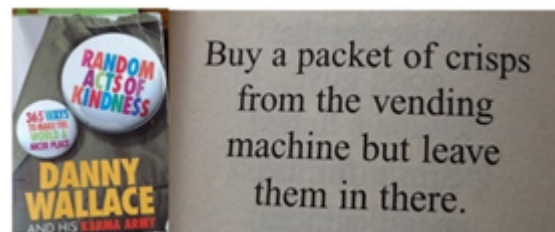
Phonics as a Skills *and* Social Practice approach

In *Adult Literacy as Social Practice*, Uta Papen writes:
> While the skills view highlights the technical and psychological side of literacy, the practices view draws attention to the social and cultural side of it. Where they differ most strongly is with regard to uniformity and diversity. The skills view claims that literacy is a uniform set of skills, while the practices view argues that literacy is not always the same, but differs enormously depending on its social and cultural context of use.

<div align="right">Papen, 2005:34</div>

These thoughts might still colour how people feel about phonics for adults but Post-16 Phonics doesn't fit this dichotomous view of literacy. In fact, in the target driven world of FE

where tens of thousands of students are resitting GCSEs and Functional Skills, tutors are under so much pressure to get their learners through tests, Post-16 Phonics has the potential to shine a light on reading and spelling as social practice. In the national CPD that accompanies the toolkit, we have significant conversations about what learner voice means in a class bound society.

We're proud to put learner voice first, by which we mean the learner's voice in their authentic accent. It doesn't matter whether the vowel in 'laugh' sounds like the one in 'cat' or the one in 'cart', we all need the <au> grapheme to spell what we say in our heads while we're writing. Received pronunciation can be helpful for talking about sounds but the learner makes the final decision according to what is helpful for them. Many UK English speakers don't say a clear long /ee/ sound at the end of 'taxi'. In 'That Reading Thing' trainings, Yorkshire tutors have said they're happy to think of the final sound in 'taxi' as /ee/ but Scottish tutors are not because they have a distinct sound that is part of the Scottish accent. That's the beauty of phonics. We can flex with the wishes of both tutors and learners.

For writing, we accept there's a 'standard written English' which is not the same as 'received pronunciation'. We don't ask learners to change the way they speak but we do ask them to be bilingual for writing and we let them know that no one (their tutors included) writes as they speak. Otherwise I'd write something like:

> I'ngunna show you a word puzzle.

instead of

> I'm going to show you a word puzzle.

Confident writers might have more experience writing for different audiences but we don't have 'correct speech', whatever that is, which perfectly matches 'correct written English'. We often discuss the connection between writing Standard English and getting a job, so I ask tutors to remind their students that if they become the bosses, they can set the culture of language in the workplace.

Intertwined approaches

Papen states that 'those who adhere to a skills view of literacy would support the need for schools and adult literacy classes to concentrate much of their work on the teaching of phonics' (2005:23).

In Post-16 Phonics, learners participate in activities which help them discover how to encode and decode English but those activities should be short and intertwined with the approaches that have always gone on in adult literacy. Learners gain a new way to look at and talk about the words you've written for them in a language experience lesson but it doesn't replace that rich activity. They also gain a safety net when reading text because you'll tell them any word that's beyond their current decoding skill, but you're still reading authentic text that interests your learners.

Learner-centred Post-16 Phonics lessons are infinitely diverse and differentiation for any learner is possible without infantilising or patronising them. Learners working at pre-entry might need the confidence to attack two and three syllable words using only the basic code (admit, upset, Atlantic) but Entry 3 vocational learners might want to master the <gm> grapheme in order to spell 'diaphragm' or the French graphemes <eu> and <age> in 'effleurage'.

**How are teachers experiencing Post-16 Phonics?**

Next year the last word will go to learners but this year it goes to the teachers. We'll let the teachers speak for themselves. Here's instant feedback from an ESOL tutor about using puzzles to delve into words with <ough>.

Catherine Lindsay @clindsayteacher · 4d
Used this puzzle approach today with E3 learners. To spell 'though', all they have to remember is TH + OUGH pattern. Then for 'thought', it's TH + OUGH +T 👍👍 They loved it! 😀
words #otlaenglish #phonics
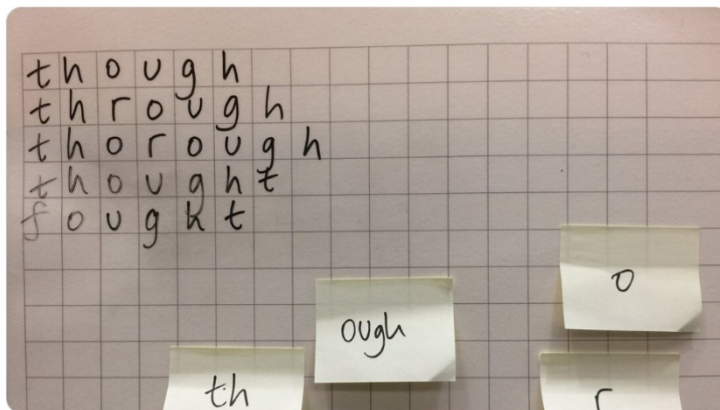
The following is from a teacher with a learner working at pre-entry who could attend only three more classes after our Post-16 Phonics training day. They had been working on word shapes and he had a reading vocabulary of about 12 words.

I thought you might be interested in how I got on with my non-reader today, armed with my post-it notes and a whiteboard! It was extremely empowering for him. He wanted to do it his own way and he took the lead. He loved the whiteboard and was happy to sound out the letters and point to the post-it notes. He couldn't believe how many words he could sound out and read. He told me how difficult it had been to sit in a class and not know the alphabet. The whole group told him how proud they were of him.

He wants to do some more tomorrow and he wanted to try and put a sentence together: 'Going to my car'. We also did 'upset' and his face was a picture when he realised he could read it.

Thank you so much for this; it was a real treat to watch him blossom and start to redefine himself.

References

ETF (2019) *Post-16 Phonics Approaches: A Toolkit* London: Education and Training
Foundation Available online:
https://api.excellencegateway.org.uk/resource/etf:3030

Papen, U. (2005). *Adult literacy as social practice: more than skills. New approaches to adult language, literacy and numeracy.* London / New York: Routledge

For definitions of terms, see *Post-16 Phonics Approaches: A Toolkit*, Education and Training
Foundation, 2019, p.18 Available online here: Bit.ly/Post16Phonics

https://thatreadingthing.com ● https://thatspellingthing.com ● @TRT_Tricia ● @spelling_thing

●

The conference presentation is available to download here.

Writing and communicating in and out of the literacy and ESOL classroom

Vera Hutchinson

Tutor, Post-compulsory PGCE English (Literacy and ESOL), UCL Institute of Education

This workshop was based on doctoral research into contemporary writing practices, exploring adults' understandings of their own writing practices and their perceptions of their development as writers. One small qualitative study, completed in 2017, involved interviews with 13 adults attending Level 2 Functional English classes (Ofqual, 2012) in an adult education institution in London. This was followed by a larger study, completed in 2019, with 17 Higher Education students studying at undergraduate and doctoral level. The research is broadly framed within the field of Literacy Studies (Rowsell and Pahl, 2015), with writing practices defined as

> not just the writing activity and the resultant texts, but also the ideologies and patterns of behaviour surrounding the process, the attitudes and values that inform it, and the aspects of the broader social and historical context which has framed and shaped it.
>
> Tusting *et al*, 2019:12

The changing place and role of writing in contemporary, late-modern society (Giddens, 1991), particularly in online contexts (Domingo *et al*, 2015), has transformed understandings of writing. However, perspectives of writing practices as multimodal and multi-dimensional have not been reflected in educational policy and assessment in further and higher educational contexts, or in national and international discourses around literacy (Hamilton, 2019). Approaches to post-16 educational policy in England have assumed that learning is a simple input-output model where qualifications have been perceived as a proxy for skills (Keep, 2011). The most recent Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (2019) also continues to reflect a reductionist and individualistic approach to learning across all educational phases in England. In addition, Functional English assessments reflect a model of the work environment which is monolingual and highly formalised. As writing educators, we need empirically and theoretically grounded understandings of the multiplicities and changing complexities of adults' writing practices in the dynamic and overlapping domains of their lives, including for example, home, study, work, including their use of social media.

Within the field of Literacy Studies, there are tensions between the formalised, dominant writing practices grounded in institutions such as education, and the vernacular, embodied and networked forms of writing that are part of adults' and young people's everyday practices. Findings from the first study highlighted how most literacy learners positioned themselves as writers engaged in diverse multilingual online and print writing practices in pursuit of their individual life projects in contrast to the limited formal writing genres presented within the Functional English classroom. A repertoire approach responds to this tension by recognising and valuing individuals' writing practices in different contexts instead of employing a narrow focus on standardisation and 'correctness'.

In the HE research, writing, including the use of different languages and technologies, was explored as an element of adults' 'communicative repertoires' which Betsy Rymes defines as:

> the collection of ways individuals shape language and literacy and other means of communication (gesture, dress, posture, or accessories) to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate.

2014:117

Rymes argues that our communicative repertoires are resources that we use to express who we are when we are in dialogue with others in order to make 'common ground' with them. She makes the point that we communicate both with and beyond language and that our communicative repertoires are always instantiated in specific practices and often in multiple languages. Amirah, a research participant, used writing as one element of her communicative repertoire when creating heart-shaped uplifting messages for her son who was being bullied in school. She also shared her undergraduate essays with her mother and peers, wrote posts on Facebook, and helped her grandmother with functional tasks using 'Binglish', a mix of English and Bengali. Our communicative repertoires reflect our identities in our different life domains and they grow out of the accumulation of our experiences and interactions. Language is just a subset of our communicative repertoires. However, taking a repertoire approach to language and literacies means questioning ideologies about language and taking account of the multiplicity of linguistic resources, including language varieties, used by individuals as they engage with others.

Rymes argues that there is an increasing diversity of repertoires in the world as individuals find different ways to communicate by choosing elements of their repertoires and recontextualising them in order to engage with others. Adam, another research participant, wrote about a U-tube video and then posted the writing on his Instagram page. His Instagram followers discussed his ideas (on LGBTQI+ rights), which Adam then recontextualised in his academic writing. Communicating with others requires constant flexibility and, in this process, individuals are also developing and extending their own communicative repertoires.

Individuals communicate - and learn - by expanding their repertoires so that they overlap with others. They also signal what they, or others, are doing with language, or other elements of their communicative repertoire, by engaging in what Rymes describes as 'everyday metacommentary'. An example is Joanne, an undergraduate participant of Chinese heritage, who used ironic metacommentary to explain how she had tried – and failed - to use English and Mandarin together on her travel blog in order to portray herself as 'international'!

A repertoire approach in the adult literacy classroom recognises all the multimodal resources that learners bring to the classroom. Rymes argues that a repertoire perspective allows us to rethink classrooms as 'affinity spaces' and spaces of participatory culture, rather than top-down authoritarian regimes of standardized language. The notion of 'communicative repertoire' can offer a theoretical perspective which supports a learner-centred curriculum, recognising learners' 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez *et al*, 2005) and

the myriad ways in which we all communicate with language and other semiotic resources. The notion of communicative repertoire offers a non-judgemental space, where individuals' communicative resources are valued. In my view, conceptualising writing as one element in communicative repertoires encourages individuals to engage in writing, alongside other modes, without the fear of making mistakes. Creating a safe space for writing in and out of adult literacy and ESOL classrooms is surely a pre-requisite to learning for both students and teachers.

References

Domingo, M., Jewitt, C. and Kress, G. (2015) 'Multimodal social semiotics: writing in online contexts', in **Rowsell, J. & Pahl, K.** (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies* London: Routledge.

Giddens, A (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. & Amanti, C. (eds.) (2005) *Funds of knowledge: Theorising Knowledge in Households, Communities and Classrooms.* Mahwah, NJL Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hamilton, M. (2019) The Discourses of PIACC: Re-Imagining Literacy through Numbers, in Power and Possibility. Adult education in a Diverse and Complex World. Research on the Education and Learning of adults, Volume 7. Brill/Sense. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004413320_006

Keep, E. (2011) 'The English skills policy narrative', in **Hodgson, A, Spours, K. & Waring, M.** *Post-Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning across the United Kingdom*. London: Institute of Education.

Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation (2012) *Criteria for Functional Skills Qualifications,* Ofqual

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (2019) *Further education and skills inspection handbook,* Ofsted.

Rowsell, J. & Pahl, K. (eds.) (2015) Introduction, *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies* London: Routledge.

Rymes, B. (2014) *Communicating Beyond Language. Everyday Encounters with Diversity,* London: Routledge.

Tusting, K., McCulloch, S., Bhatt, I., Hamilton, M. and Barton, D. (2019) *Academic Writing. The dynamics of knowledge Creation*. London: Routledge.

•

The conference presentation is available to download here.

I know why the caged bird sings
Alec Taylor

Adult learner

The poem below was written by myself as part of a project I undertook whilst participating in Amanda's arts course in Chester. Firstly, I include the introductory notes to the project which also included artwork and excerpts from various poems and songs related to the theme, why does the caged bird sing?

My poem is inspired by Maya Angelou's book as well as a story about Beethoven knowing he is going deaf who asked the question, 'Why does the caged bird sing so sweetly?' Beethoven was told the birds were blinded in the belief it made them sing more sweetly; Thomas Hardy's Blinded Bird is a poem which protests against such cruelties. For Beethoven it was an important lesson; that he could create beauty despite adversity.

We may all have some experience of feeling we are trapped in a cage: either through health problems, physical conditions like deafness, blindness or something which affects our ability to move; or because of things imposed on us by others or literally by being locked up. The sense of being in a cage can be self-imposed, through external pressures or by health conditions. The caged bird either adapts to imprisonment and creates, makes a limited existence worthwhile or escapes by flying free and sings of its joy. But the memory of the cage never leaves us; it makes us what we are and what we become. Out of personal cages solutions are sought and often found.

In history, people have sought to escape 'cages' towards promised lands: Moses and the children of Israel and the Civil Rights movement in America. Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872-1906) the first African American poet to be published nationally in America, writes in his poem 'Sympathy': 'I know what the caged bird feels...' 'why it beats its wings' and 'why it sings' - an inspiration to Maya Angelou. Alvin Ailey (dance choreographer) was also inspired by Angelou and captivated the dance world during the 1960's with his performance 'Revelations'.

The poem presented here is mine, inspired by all mentioned above - on the Shoulders of Giants.

Caged bird without or within

Why does the caged bird sing?
Be it trapped from without or within
Oh such pain, the searing sting
Or the darkened world all silenced within

And when the caged bird does sing
Looking out seeing within
Does it dream of escape on mended wing?
Is freedom the shout of the heaven within?

And do you hear the caged bird sing?
Do you feel it without or within?
Does its music soar on heightened wing?
Ready to shout deep feelings from within!

<div align="right">Alec Taylor, 2019</div>

Amanda Derry

Amanda is a tutor with the Workers' Educational Association. She teaches embedded functional English in her courses, including digital skills. She met Alec when he was a student of hers in a therapeutic arts class.

Alec has written the above to express ideas he formulated during the Therapeutic Arts class I ran through the Worker's Educational Association, partnering with a well-being organisation called 3rd Space. The 3rd Space is traditionally a place people go to, after their home and work, to see familiar people in a safe setting and 'where everybody knows your name'. Many of his 'revelations' contributed to the class as it became led by the students in many ways, and themes evolved from week to week. The class involved arts history discussion and practical artwork, linked together. Fairly recently Alec told me that before he attended the class, he had periods of social isolation and depression. His hearing impairment contributed to his isolation, even within social groups. He told me that being part of the class provided him with a platform where he had space to talk and other members of the group listened to him, without having to combat usual cross-talk and interruptions in social situations. Some learners in the class had learning disabilities and Alec found a purpose in helping them with form-filling and writing, as well being introduced to their creative outlooks.

Alec had difficulties with his hearing from an early age. At school he sat at the back of classes. He devised ways to conceal his impairment, but at a later stage in his schooling teachers realised his intelligence. His teacher faced the classroom and told them because they had not gained a place in grammar school, they should not think of themselves as 'factory fodder'. This resonated with Alec and although he left school early at fifteen, he found a series of vocations and read voraciously. When Alec joined the arts class, he channelled his extensive knowledge of art, writing and history into group discussion, writings and exhibition work.

After the Therapeutic Arts class finished in 2017, it was apparent the group had bonded and the opportunity to get together to look at subjects of common interest had well-being and friendship effects. We decided to keep the group going through meeting once a week in various cafe venues and called ourselves 4th Space. Alec is a strong force in keeping the

group going and bringing in cultural 'show and tells'. We can read out poetry or articles of interest. As some members of the group can struggle with reading, Alec brings in art articles which are very picture-based, and we have discussions around them. We have learned throug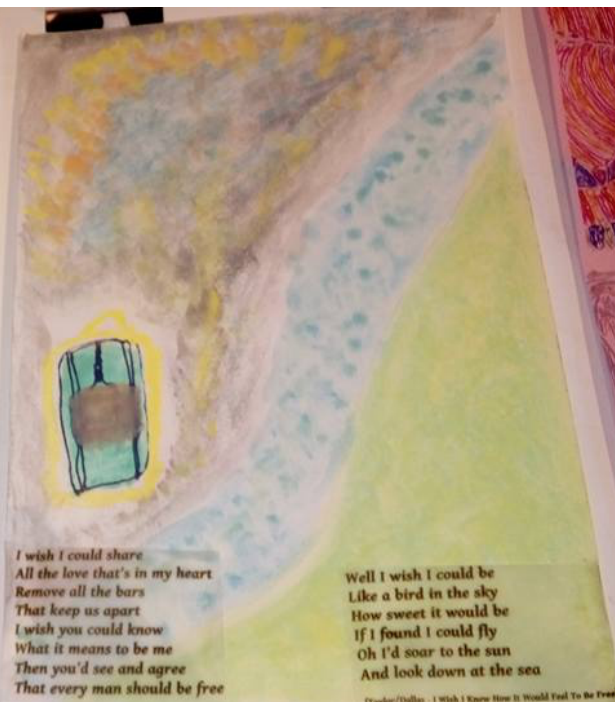h Alec to become more inclusive and accommodating of each other. We organise days out and view films, exhibitions or theatre productions (some of the 4th Space group are involved in amateur theatre – screenplay writing, reading poetry, performing music and acting). Other members have hearing impairments and physical or emotional issues. I believe 4th Space creates a strong foundation of support and the feeling of not being alone, as well as a lot of creative inspiration.

Alec told me a story - particularly related to literacies of reading, writing and communication - regarding a friend he knew when socialising in a pub after work. His friend made a lot of educational references to philosophy in his conversation. Alec went round to his house and saw him reading a book with a five-year-old boy. Alec presumed his friend was helping the boy to read but later found out the boy was helping his friend to learn to read.

We all have knowledge within us which is important to share, that may not necessarily derive from formal education. To me, Alec reveals the importance of expressing our knowledge and enabling that information to be shared and extended and to evolve, for our social and personal development.

To see the world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in your hand
And eternity in an hour.

Heard that he travelled through here
See!
On the mountains
Where the clouds and thunder meet

Sit on its peak
Watch a valley move
All the stone and dirt tracks
Still streams and water falls
Those twist and turns
Snaking through
Grey rock and green fields

So I'll go down to some lonely waters,
Go down where no one they shall me find
Where pretty little small birds do change their voices
And every moment blow blustering wind

English Folk song - Banks of Sweet Primroses

I wish I could share
All the love that's in my heart
Remove all the bars
That keep us apart
I wish you could know
What it means to be me
Then you'd see and agree
That every man should be free

Well I wish I could be
Like a bird in the sky
How sweet it would be
If I found I could fly
Oh I'd soar to the sun
And look down at the sea

[Taylor/Dallas - I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free]

The dancer of *Cry* begins by unwinding her headband and using it as a rag with which to scrub floors; she contracts in pain, she flutters her hands like **captive birds**; **she sinks to the earth** and then **she rises**, and with short, strong steps and ecstatically raised arms, **dances freely off the stage, toward freedom.**

Review of Alvin Alley's dance Cry (Map).

THE BIRD HAS FLOWN

People get ready
For the train to Jordan
Picking up passengers
From coast to coast
Faith is the key

Open the doors and board them
There's room for all
Among the loved and lost

Oh the aquaduct
Ore cast to fire
Smoke a pipe
Cherry tobacco
In the finest briar

Did love really leave?
Question all I believe

Arise
Time to wake
Universe
Cannot hide.

Imagine
Those tramping legions
Calling on gods
Who listened?

Oh strange defeats
And bitter victories
The red mountain
Faner Goch
Hills rolling away into the sunset

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon Englands mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land.

Oh Blake
What was said?
What was mean't?
Oh trees untouched

Gnarled and bent
Was time past here?
The time he spent
In ancient times
Building
Yet another Jerusalem?

Literacy and homelessness: tackling the provision deficit

Julia Olisa MA, BEd (Hons), DipSpLD
Kat Goodacre MA, AMBDA, PGCE, BA (Hons)

Julia has been a dyslexia specialist in primary, secondary and higher education. At London University's Institute of Education, Julia worked in the Literacy Assessment Centre, trained teachers, and was a member of teams researching early literacy development. She has been a volunteer literacy tutor at the homelessness charity Thames Reach since 2006. In 2010 she was commissioned by Thames Reach to write a research report into low literacy and homelessness: 'Turning the Key'.

Kat Goodacre is a literacy and dyslexia specialist teacher and assessor for both children and adults. She spent 5 years providing learning support within a post-16 college in South-East London, and is currently the Literacy Tutor and Dyslexia Specialist at Crisis UK (Skylight London). For her MA in SpLD (Dyslexia) at UCL Institute of Education, Kat explored the motivations and support strategies deemed most successful by adult literacy learners in the homelessness sector.

The aim of this paper is to outline the work of the charity Literacy100, its context and mission.

Background

Earlier this year, a number of literacy specialists working in UK-based homelessness organisations and universities came together to form a professional association: Literacy100. Members of the group shared the perception that basic skills provision neither meets existing demand, nor is universally tailored to the specific needs characteristic of service users within the sector. People who have experienced homelessness commonly face a complexity of issues, amongst which poor literacy is estimated to be present in just over 50% (Dumoulin & Jones, 2014). It creates a significant barrier to their escape from social exclusion, employment and independent living. Olisa, Patterson & Wright (2010), describe a well-established relationship between social exclusion and inadequate literacy. The '1970 British Cohort Study', which tracked the life experiences of over 9,000 34-year-olds, documented the outcomes for those with weak basic skills. These individuals appear to have been impoverished in their employment opportunities, social and political participation, mental health, and personal relationships (Bynner and Parsons, 2006; Dugdale & Clark, 2008).

In an attempt to halt this cycle of inequality and in response to the Moser Report (1999), the government-funded Skills for Life programme was established in the UK. Olisa et al. (2010) interviewed 101 service users of the homelessness charity Thames Reach. They observed that, despite 60% of respondents wishing to improve their literacy, only 13% had attempted this and subsequently gained an adult literacy qualification. The London Skills Commission (London Development Agency, 2006) identified homeless people, particularly those with additional learning needs, to be amongst those least well served by the Skills for Life provision. Why might this be?

Olisa et al. (2010) document the case of a severely dyslexic man, RD, who had suffered multiple adversities throughout childhood and his adult life, which culminated in a lengthy period of homelessness. Supported by Thames Reach, RD attempted to improve his literacy at college, but he dropped out before significant progress could be achieved. A number of key issues are highlighted by this case.

1. Resilience

Within the homelessness sector, low levels of personal resilience and self-esteem are common. Early learning experiences play a fundamental role in homeless literacy learners' perceptions of themselves (Crowther et al, 2010; Goodacre, 2019). These can be overwhelmingly negative, many individuals reporting bullying, inadequate teaching support and poor understanding of their difficulties at school and home. As children, they may have been subjected to frustration, anger and sometimes violence from parents, carers and teachers, resulting in trauma. They enter the adult learning environment with complex needs not only around homelessness, but also in relation to mental health and sometimes unaddressed specific literacy difficulties (Maguire, Johnson, Vostanis & Keats; 2010). Education in adulthood remains a daunting prospect, and even small classes can be overwhelming (Goodacre, 2019).

2. Life skills

Adults with experience of homelessness who do enrol with educational services are often unreliable attenders. Mental and physical health issues may be significant factors, in addition to which some individuals continue to lead chaotic lifestyles. Even the better organised are obliged to prioritise Job Centre or medical appointments above other commitments, particularly when they are not equipped to negotiate these arrangements.

3. Specific learning difficulties (SpLDs)

Of the many causes of low literacy, dyslexia is perhaps the greatest challenge (Olisa et al., 2010). There seems to be an over-representation in the homelessness sector (Macdonald & Deacon, 2015). Formal education providers are obliged to address the SpLDs of their learners. Sometimes, however, the nature of difficulties in students without formal diagnostic reports is misunderstood, or there is not the capacity for targeted, individual support. The most effective teaching programmes for people with dyslexia, for example, are finely structured and explicit, taking account of difficulties with working memory and speed of processing. Unfortunately, learners with these challenges can find classes incoherent and too fast-paced.

The Promotion of Learning

Psychologically Informed Environments

Within homeless services across the UK, an individual's psychological and emotional wellbeing are at the forefront of all support (Maguire et al.; 2010). Such Psychologically Informed Environments (PIEs), along with positive attachments to teachers, can be critical to engagement and learning, particularly when learners have a history of negative relationships and inadequate care experiences (Cassidy & Shaver, 2002; Goodacre, 2019; MacDonald & Deacon, 2015). Migden (1990) documented the case of a 33-year-old dyslexic man, Mr S, whose loss of self-belief had impeded his progress towards improving his

literacy. When his emotional needs were recognised, he at last began to make headway. The outcomes for Mr S were positive and long-lasting. A psychologically-informed approach was similarly fundamental in assisting Goodacre's learners towards realising their full potential. Compassionate teachers with a clear understanding of their learning needs and life challenges helped to counteract their previous negative experiences.

For individuals with SpLDs, access to specialist tutors can be crucial to their success in acquiring literacy. A diagnosis of the condition and positive, informed support both underpin the development of a more self-assured outlook. Their dyslexia becomes less a 'disability' and more a 'difference' (Griffin & Pollak, 2009). Increased resilience and resourcefulness equip individuals to pursue the goal of overcoming their literacy difficulties. As in the case of RD (Olisa et al., 2010), growing self-confidence, gratitude for support, and a sense of well-being can frequently inspire altruism in learners, who help others facing struggles similar to their own (Goodacre, 2019).

Learning programmes

Research into early literacy development informs specific approaches to the teaching of children. The most widely recognised is the phonology-based system of phonics. Less is known about the effectiveness of this method for adults. Nonetheless, there is evidence that men and women with good literacy continue to use their knowledge of letter-sound relationships for reading and spelling; poor readers do not (Torgeson et al., 2002; McBride-Chang, 2004). Errors made by both dyslexic and non-dyslexic low literacy adults indicate that they neither know how to analyse words using phonics - the code of English spelling - nor understand structures such as root words, and morphemes (Worthy & Viise, 1996). In their comprehensive review of development dyslexia in adults, Rice and Brooks (2004:12) encourage the use of phonics: 'Adult literacy learners need to be taught how their writing system works.' They go on to recommend that many adults are helped if the curriculum is, 'structured and explicit.'

Learners in Goodacre's (2019) study identified multi-sensory strategies as effective in helping them learn, including the use of physical letter shapes to practise reading, and using 'funny voices' to help remember pronunciations. Again, there are limited studies around multi-sensory teaching support for adult learners, but this approach has been widely recognised as good practice to maximise the learning potential of all students in schools, and in further and higher education (Phillips & Kelly, 2016).

The view that methods used with children remain appropriate for older literacy learners is endorsed by publishers who currently produce materials promoting a phonological, multi-sensory approach. One service user at Thames Reach responded to his first successes in writing simple three letter words independently by exclaiming:

> I never picked it up so quick before!

Despite these conclusions about good practice, we must acknowledge the differences between adult learners and children. We know that children have greater plasticity in their learning. Adults come to lessons with entrenched habits and compensatory strategies that can be hard to shift. These can be a barrier to the adoption of new skills, as can, crucially, insufficient opportunities for practice (Sheehan-Holt and Smith 2000).

Conclusion

We have described some of the issues facing homeless adults with low levels of reading and writing ability. Regretfully, the services they are offered do not always address their personal vulnerabilities and specific needs. While we recognise the successful work carried out in colleges, Jones (2018) has pointed out that government-funded providers are obliged to use a rigid, standardised curriculum, and to produce measurable outcomes through testing. Neither is suited to the population we have focused on here. Moreover, Jones observed that, without adequate funding, the literacy support provided by smaller homelessness organisations is either non-existent or relies on untrained volunteers. Typically, this consists of little more than compensatory help to complete forms or read documents. Learning opportunities tend to be short-term and ad hoc.

Literacy100 argues that a different approach to literacy provision should be available. The charities Crisis and Thames Reach are examples of third sector organisations that offer more flexible, individual or small-group literacy services. Crisis employs specialist tutors at their Skylight centres, while at Thames Reach lessons are provided by qualified and experienced, teacher-volunteers. Such in-house, person-centred provision might be described as a luxury, but we know that the benefits can be life-changing.

We believe that other organisations, with the support of benefactors, could offer similar high-quality services to their clients. However, in order for learners to experience a consistent level of inclusiveness across the sector, specialists and service providers must work more closely together to develop deeper awareness of their clients' needs. Specialist teachers within the sector need to collaborate to support smaller organisations to develop good practice; hence the development of Literacy100.

Although in its infancy, Literacy100 has a clear mission: to promote high-quality, informed and fully supportive literacy services for recently homeless people. Our aim is that 100% in this position should be able to address their needs.

References

Bynner, J. and Parsons, S., (2006). New light on literacy and numeracy. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Cassidy, J. and Shaver, P.R. eds., (2002). *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Crowther, J., Maclachlan, K. and Tett, L., (2010). 'Adult literacy, learning identities and pedagogic practice.' *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, Vol 29(6), pp.651-664

Moser, S.C., (1999). Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start. London: DfEE Publications

Dugdale, G. and Clark, C., (2008). Literacy changes lives: An advocacy resource (pp. 1-56). London: National Literacy Trust.

Dumoulin, D. and Jones, K., (2014). Reading Counts: Why English and maths skills matter in tackling homelessness. London: St Mungo's Broadway/The Work Foundation

Goodacre, K., (2019). Overcoming the hurdles: Understanding motivations and supporting adult literacy learners with poor literacy and dyslexia in the homelessness sector. London: Unpublished UCL Institute of Education Masters thesis.

Griffin, E., & Pollak, D. (2009). Student experiences of neurodiversity in higher education: insights from the BRAINHE project. Dyslexia, Vol 15(1), 23-41. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Jones, K., (2018). Literacy and numeracy support for homeless adults: an exploration of third sector employment and skills provision (Doctoral dissertation, Lancaster University).

London Development Agency (2006). *The London Skills for Life Strategy.* Available from:

www.lda.gov.uk/upload/rtf/The_London_Skills_for_Life_Strategy_November_2006.rtf –

Macdonald, S.J. and Deacon, L., (2015). 'No sanctuary': Missed opportunities in health and social services for homeless people with dyslexia? England. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, Vol 17(3), pp.78-93.

McBride-Chang, C., (2004). *Children's Literacy Development*. London: Arnold.

Maguire, N., Johnson, R., Vostanis, P., & Keats, H., (2010). Meeting the psychological and emotional needs of homeless people. London. Communities and Local Government.

Migden, S.D., (1990). Dyslexia and psychodynamics: A case study of a dyslexic adult. *Annals of dyslexia,* Vol 40(1), pp.107-116. New York: The Orton Dyslexia Society.

Olisa, J, Patterson, J & Wright, F., (2010) Turning the Key: Portraits of low literacy amongst people with experience of homelessness. London. Thames Reach. Available from:

https://thamesreach.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Turning-the-Key-Literacy-Report.pdf

Rice, R. & Brooks, G., (2004). Developmental dyslexia in adults: a research review. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Sheehan-Holt, J.K., & Smith, M.C., (2000). Does basic skills education affect adults' literacy proficiencies and reading practices? *Reading Research Quarterly*, Vol 35 (2), 226-243.

Torgerson, C., Brooks, G., Porthouse, J., Burton, M., Robinson, A., Watt, I. & Wright, K., (2002). A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomised Control Trials Evaluating Interventions in Adult Literacy and Numeracy. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Worthy, J. & Viise, N.M., (1996). Morphological, phonological and orthographic differences between the spelling of normally achieving children and basic literacy adults. *Reading and Writing,* 8, 139-159. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Moser – 20 years on

Sam Duncan

Sam Duncan works at the UCL Institute of Education in adult literacy studies. She has a background in literature, film and adult literacy teaching and now teaches on research methods courses, alongside MA, BA and teacher education modules on literacy and lifelong learning. She is the author of Reading Circles, Novels and Adult Reading Development (Bloomsbury, 2012) and Reading for Pleasure and Reading Circles for Adult Emergent Readers (NIACE, 2014). Sam has just completed an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Fellowship researching contemporary adult reading aloud practices across Britain.

I was very grateful for the chance to be part of the panel thinking about these twenty years since the Moser Report. This is a time period, in England in particular, which has seen important progress in our understandings and organisation of adult literacy teaching, and it is also a time period in which, arguably, just as significant losses have been made. We have, for example, seen developments in adult literacy teacher education, including the generation of new research reports (for example, the work of the NRDC: the National Research Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy) and teacher education text books (for example the Open University 'Teaching Adult Literacy/Numeracy/ESOL' books). This means we have a solid body of research to refer to, and, in terms of pedagogies, expertise that was perhaps only within the heads of a few experienced practitioners is now written down for others to read. This in itself is a wonderful thing. And yet, more recently we have also seen subject specialist post-compulsory teacher education deregulated, fees increased, and bursaries and support reduced if not completely eradicated. Anecdotally, we have seen an increase in the idea that 'anyone' can teach adult literacy or Functional Skills English.

This is a good time to reflect on what we should prioritize moving forward. On the panel, I suggested three areas, thinking primarily of adult literacy provision.

Firstly, **varied opportunities** for **subject specialist (adult literacy-focussed) teacher education, both initial and continuing.** This should be both well-funded and valued by providers. This is the single most important factor in producing provision that engages learners and allows learners to make the progress they want to make. There has recently, for example, been a lot of discussion about initial and diagnostic assessment. We will never produce a perfect digital (or paper) tool, rather we need expert teachers to undertake initial and diagnostic assessment (as well as ongoing, formative assessment). Expert teachers can do wonderful things with 'ok' tools and resources, but even the best tools or resources are potentially disastrous in the hands of those that (through no fault of their own) have not been supported in the development of specialist expertise. This is a key ingredient in supporting and valuing adult literacy teacher **professionalism**: seeing adult literacy as a specialist area of expertise that requires specialist, trained teachers who develop and share their expertise across **long careers.** We need adult literacy teaching roles with decent conditions and salaries so that good people don't leave the profession (resulting in expertise being lost and newer people having to figure things out all over again). Adult literacy teachers with a strong sense of their own expertise and specialist area will be better able to manage (and influence) external requirements such as those related to accreditation and

funding, better able to support and engage diverse learners and groups, and more likely to contribute to **collegiate networks** of other expert teachers, supporting this expertise and professionalism in others. Learner participation has been damaged by deregulation of teacher education and worsening conditions for teachers, and if policy makers are serious about addressing what seems to lower participation, this is where they should start.

Secondly, we also need a **renewed focus on entry level adult literacy provision**, particularly E1 and E2. This is about supporting adults who may feel that they cannot read or write at all, or very little (despite being confident, competent speakers and listeners). It may be that we need fewer classes at these levels than at E3 and above, but we do need some dedicated provision at these levels and to meet the needs of potential learners we need **good outreach work**.

Related to the above two points, my third idea for moving forward, is that we need to develop and maintain **adult literacy studies** as a recognised **university-based academic subject**, that feeds both into **teacher education** and into **more research in this area**. Protecting and developing adult literacy studies as an area of academic specialisation will **support teachers** in their recognised subject specialist professionalism and **protect** these areas of teaching from the whims of funding and government ministers who are not experts in adult literacy. It will allow us to build on existing expertise and prevent cycles of 'reinventing the wheel' every few decades.

These are the three things that I would like to see careful attention devoted to through a meeting of top-down government-led attention with 'bottom-up' networks of teachers, managers, teacher educators and learners 'on the ground.' This is could be about the use of existing networks and the development of new.

One final other point: I think we need to **find better ways for us all to talk about adult literacy practices, needs and teaching**, to allow us to hear better when others are talking about this area and encourage more conversations and attention. This will require more transparent language and forms of articulation and labelling to make the most of what we do and the conversations we have. Using the label 'English' for adult literacy provision is not helpful as it could suggest either the teaching of language or a school-subject, and certainly excludes thinking about literacy development in other community languages. Whatever courses or qualifications are called, we, as the adult literacy experts, should make sure we are using more helpful terms. We also need to be clear and careful with our language so that we can tease out key debates or distinctions, for example ESOL provision vs adult literacy provision or adult courses vs courses for teenagers who are retaking courses that they may have failed at school. This is not to say that these areas do not share a great deal of fertile ground, but we cannot understand their relationships if we do not acknowledge potential distinctions. Finally, we need leadership – to form, maintain and challenge networks. RaPAL could play a role here, so could others. Hopefully some of those reading this short piece could take this on. Are we ready?

Coaching for sustainable learning

Elizabeth Newton

Liz has taught language in various educational settings. She taught English as a Foreign Language in France and worked as a school manager and teacher trainer in Japan. She undertook doctoral research whilst teaching French at the Universities of Leeds and Sheffield. Liz then taught ESOL and EAP in the FE and HE sectors, working as a lecturer, course leader, mentor and learning leader. At present, she is deputy head of teacher education at the University Centre Leeds, where she teaches on the PGCE English and Masters in Education programmes.

Naeema Hann

Naeema began her career as an ESOL teacher in Leeds. She then taught and co-ordinated ESOL and Bi-lingual courses, including the award-winning Basic Education for Community Languages at Bradford College. Naeema currently teaches on the MA/Delta at Leeds Beckett University and researches second and first language learning, especially in low-literate contexts.

Introduction to sustainable learning

ESOL learners with low levels of literacy often lack the skills and confidence needed to learn autonomously and sustainably (Schellekens, 2007; Condelli et al, 2008). Supporting such learners to develop these skills has a number of benefits, including increased social, educational and cultural capital, as well as enhanced employment opportunities (OECD 2013). This discussion outlines a project undertaken with the aim of exploring whether a non-directive coaching model could lead to greater learner autonomy amongst low-level ESOL learners. The project, Autonomous Literacy Learning Sustainable Results (ALL-SR) was funded by Erasmus+ and carried out in Leeds and Cambridge in the UK, as well as in The Netherlands and Germany. The focus here is on the research that took place in Leeds. Each country's research explored coaching in different educational settings, but all had the same overall aim: to foster independence in literacy and language learning.

Selection of participants

Participants for the Leeds-based project were recruited from the ESOL department of an FE college. The purpose of coaching was explained to participants, who gave their consent to participate and were assigned to a coach. The project ran for approximately twelve sessions of thirty minutes each, scheduled after their ESOL classes for convenience.

GROW model of coaching

The GROW model is an approach to coaching that aims to unlock learners' potential to maximise their own performance. The acronym stands for Goal, Reality, Obstacles (and, in some models, Options), Way forward (Whitmore, 1992). These form stages that inform each coaching session. The coachee, guided by the coach, first identifies their goal, or what they want to have achieved by the end of the coaching. Reality consists of determining where the

coachee is at present, and how far they are from reaching their goal. There needs also to be an exploration of obstacles, i.e. of what is preventing the coachee from achieving their goal, and of options for dealing with the obstacles. The way forward is the process of converting options into an action plan to allow for progress. This framework formed the basis of the coaching sessions; the content grew organically from the discussion between coaches and coachees, similar to the concepts of reflective dialogue and learning suggested by Brockbank and McGill (2006).

Coaching sessions

During the initial session, coaches spent time establishing the coachees' usual literacy practices and exploring whether there were any barriers to their participation in literacy-based activities. Coaches explored with coachees potential opportunities for greater involvement in literacy activities, examining with participants ways in which they might be able to use English, and how they would find time to do so (LSIS, 2009). During each coaching session, participants agreed with their coaches some targets to be achieved by the next session. These were negotiated carefully so as to ensure that participants stood a realistic chance of being able to meet the targets set.

Student outcomes

There was a range of outcomes in terms of the ability of the participants to develop agency and to operate as independent literacy learners. For one participant, there was a very positive outcome. This participant had worked as a teacher in her home country and harboured ambitions to return to the profession. Coaching resulted in the participant volunteering to teach, using English as the medium of instruction, in a community setting. In their final meeting, the coach tried to ascertain the reasons why the participant had decided to go ahead with this. The participant responded: "The project pushed me to do it." She expressed great personal satisfaction at having finally taken this step, which cemented her connection with other speakers of English from her own community, furthered her career ambitions, and allowed her the opportunity to use English actively in professional activities relating to her career goals. Another participant engaged with reading more widely, having never previously visited a library to borrow a book, demonstrating increased confidence in selecting literacy activities to carry out independently. One of the coachees had a love of cookery and began to publish recipes in English on her Facebook page as a result of coaching. For one of the participants, however, the level of autonomy achieved was less clear at the end of the project.

Conclusion

In summary, the project produced a range of outcomes, mostly very positive. The results suggest that such a process could prove similarly worthwhile and rewarding to other ESOL or literacy practitioners and their learners. It must be recognised that the coaching process requires a certain level of commitment in respect of time and effort on the part of both the coaches and the coachees, and that varying levels of learning autonomy may be achieved. However, the impact on some of the participants was significant in terms of increased levels of confidence and autonomy. The project supported not only their ability and levels of

motivation in respect of participation in literacy practices, but also encouraged them in their life and career goals. In most cases, they had started on a path of sustainable engagement in literacy-related activities, and were motivated to continue.

Thus, there are positive dimensions to a process of coaching such as this, e.g. raised levels of literacy and opportunities to address issues of social justice. Given the fact that ESOL and literacy classes are predominantly populated by learners whose opportunities in life are limited by their level of literacy, any attempt to develop engagement with literacy is surely a worthy intervention. On the evidence of this project, the enhancement of learners' cultural, educational and linguistic capital via coaching proved to be a worthwhile undertaking.

References

Brockbank, A. & McGill, I. (2006) *Facilitating Reflective Learning through Mentoring and Coaching.* London: Kogan Page.

Condelli, L., Wrigley, H.S. & Yoon, K.S. (2008) *What Works for Adult Literacy Students of English as a Second Language*. **In Reder, S. & Bynner**, J. (eds) *Tracking Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills: Findings from Longitudinal Research*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group,

LSIS (2009) *An Introduction to Coaching.* Available from: qcf_an_intro_to_coaching.pdf (Accessed 03 December 19).

OECD (2013) *Skilled for life? Key Findings from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD.

Schellekens, P. (2007) *The Oxford ESOL Handbook:* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Whitmore, J. (2002) *Coaching for Performance* (3rd ed.) London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Autonomous Literacy Learning – Sustainable Results (ALL-SR) project links:

https://www.itta.uva.nl/learnerautonomy/learner-autonomy-48 (Accessed 03 December 19)

https://www.itta.uva.nl/projecten/autonomous-literacy-learners-sustainable-results-49 (Accessed 03 December 19)

•

The conference presentation is available to download here.

New resources and guidance for ESOL practitioners

Alex Stevenson and Karen Dudley

Alex Stevenson is Head of English, Maths and ESOL at Learning and Work Institute, an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and social inclusion.

Karen Dudley is a director at Learning Unlimited, a not-for-profit social enterprise that specialises in adult and family learning, ESOL and integration, literacy, numeracy and teacher education.

Effective approaches to meeting the needs of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners at the earliest stages of language and literacy learning – often referred to as 'pre-Entry' ESOL – has long been a hot topic for discussion amongst ESOL practitioners. For learners, the experience of developing language and literacy skills as adults can be a profound and significant life experience. Without access to suitable provision and the input and support of skilled and trained practitioners, it can also be a deeply frustrating and demoralising experience. Practitioners can also find this level challenging - for example, to find or access training and support on working with adults who are new to ESOL and literacy. 'New to ESOL' aims to support practitioners who just 'don't know where to start' with basic literacy for adult ESOL learners, or who may want to build on and develop the skills and experience they have developed. Starting with the background and rationale to the project, this article describes key features and provides a summary of the New to ESOL resources and plans for future developments.

Migrant adult learners who are new to ESOL and literacy have commonly faced educational inequality throughout their lives. They may have only attended a few years of primary school or, particularly for women, they may have had no opportunity to attend school at all. As migrants settling in the UK, they can face a range of additional barriers and challenges linked to their language and literacy skills as well as their status as migrants in a polarised nation struggling with misinformation and the surge of increased racism and racist attacks relating to Brexit.

Recently, the ESOL needs of refugees on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme have highlighted a requirement to support the professional learning and development of practitioners working with learners at 'pre-Entry' level. Home Office data suggest that around 60% of ESOL needs amongst this cohort is at 'pre-Entry' or Entry Level 1 (Home Office, 2017). And as most ESOL provision in general is delivered at Entry Level, effective teaching and learning at these levels is crucial in supporting learners to achieve a solid foundation of language and literacy skills.

The Government's *Integrated Communities Action Plan* (MHCLG, 2019) has recognised this, with the Department for Education and the Home Office commissioning new resources. Funded by the Education and Training Foundation, and delivered by Learning and Work Institute and Learning Unlimited, the New to ESOL project has created a suite of teaching and learning materials and practitioner guidance. The resources support teachers working in colleges, adult community education and civil society organisations supporting refugee resettlement.

ESOL practitioners have been involved in the development process throughout. Over 300 ESOL teachers responded to our survey to tell us about 'pre-Entry' ESOL, with over 50 teachers attending focus groups to explore issues in depth. Practitioners highlighted a lack of formal training in teaching basic literacy to adult ESOL learners, and a shortage of professional development opportunities to address this. They reported highly diverse learning needs which can be present within a single class of 'pre-Entry' students, explaining that the greater need to differentiate increased preparation time and created challenges in classroom management compared with teaching other ESOL levels. Practitioners also questioned the term 'pre-Entry' ESOL, not least because of its relative lexical complexity for learners at this level. So, we refer to learners who are 'new to ESOL and literacy learning'.

The New to ESOL resources set out to respond to these findings, and include features that practitioners identified as particularly helpful. The resources have been carefully designed to recognise that many practitioners may also face the additional challenge of trying to support effectively those adults who are new to ESOL and literacy and learning in mixed level groups with literate learners. They encourage and promote strengths-based and participatory approaches, localisation and the personalisation of learning. The resources aim to:

- offer flexibility, and support differentiation

- provide adult-orientated content, adaptable to local settings and drawing upon learners' lives, skills and experiences

- develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, with a focus on supporting basic literacy throughout

- help to reduce lesson preparation with time-saving ideas, adaptable activities and templates

- provide short, accessible summaries of the essential elements of relevant literacy approaches, in a series of key tips and knowledge.

These resources, suitable for use in graded and mixed level classes, comprise:

- Teaching materials:

- 20 topic-based units divided into five main themes each with supporting teacher notes, learner activities, reading texts and images

- reading texts

- picture pack

- Effective practice guidance documents and top tips

- Screening guidance, exemplars and record.

Recognising that practitioners may want to access and use the resources in different ways, the texts and images which are embedded across the twenty units are also available as separate downloadable packs. The resources can be accessed at: https://esol.excellencegateway.org.uk/learners-new-esol

Learning and Work Institute and Learning Unlimited are now working on additional New to ESOL resources. This will include audio materials linked to the topics in the existing materials, and an ESOL phonics pack. These resources will be available on the Excellence Gateway from spring 2020.

References:

Home Office (2017) 'Resettlement Programme Evaluation', Second Round. London: Home Office.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) *Integrated Communities Action Plan* Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-communities-action-plan (accessed 2 December 2019)

-

The conference presentation is available to download here.

It's time for a renewed focus on adult basic skills of ESOL, English and maths

Nafisah Graham-Brown

Nafisah is the Co-Chair of NATECLA (National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults). She is also Head of Life Skills and Community and a member of the senior leadership team at ELATT, a Grade 1 education charity in London. As an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher and curriculum manager, she has been involved in issues surrounding the delivery of ESOL in FE, ACL and third sector in London for the past nine years. She recently completed doctoral study at UCL Institute of Education, researching the role of English language learning in helping migrants integrate into UK society. Her research focuses on the relationship between social interactions in English and perceptions of belonging.

The 2019 Learning and Work Institute English, Maths and ESOL Conference took place on the 4th December 2019 with the theme 'No one left behind'. I was invited to take part in a panel to look at the progress that has been made since the Moser Report 1999. Statistics presented in the keynote and opening address were depressing: a decline of 40% in participation in adult literacy and numeracy since 2011/12 (Evans, 2019). In ESOL, we know that there has been a reduction of ESOL funding by 60% when comparing figures in 2009 with those in 2016, and participation fell from 180,000 in 2009/10 to 100,000 in 2015/16 (Foster & Bolton, 2017: 7). Furthermore, evidence shows that those lacking in basic skills are also likely to have low basic digital skills (French et al., 2018) It was easy for me to deduce that there had been a downward trend and to be concerned about the future of adult skills.

However, my panel members reminded me that we *had* made progress. Where I saw a declining bar chart, the reality was it was probably more like a bell-curve. Looking at the recommendations from the Moser report, the Skills for Life strategy was probably the recommendation that had the most impact, with the legacy of adult literacy and ESOL core curriculum standards still being used to assess standards to be met for assessment and examination. Panel members also talked about the increase of status of literacy research, the fact that there had been an overall increase in adult literacy rates to Level 2, and the introduction of the entitlement to learn (legal entitlement for basic skills).

Unfortunately, since 2011, we have experienced a decline in the focus for basic skills. In ESOL over the past eight years, we have seen the impact of deregulation of the ESOL and English teaching profession; a reduction in the diversity of programmes on offer as a result of smaller number of providers; issues caused by lack of parity between funding for English and ESOL leading to some ESOL students being on the wrong courses; and a lack of good information, advice and guidance staff in the wider adult learning sector to support potential students to access the right courses for them. I feel concerned the current trend will bring us back to a position where 1 in 5 adults do not have literacy skills as found by the Moser report in 1999. The 2013 PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) by the OECD found that 1 in 6 adults did not have literacy skills at Level 1 (OECD, 2013).

So, what could we do to turn this around? L&WI's research into 'What works in adult basic skills' identifies some things that work, and recommendations for the future.
To add to that, and with a focus on ESOL, here are some ideas and also issues that NATECLA has been raising as part of our work to meet the need for ESOL in an effective way.

We need a strategy for adult basic skills. A few years ago, NATECLA convened a stakeholder group to call for a national strategy for ESOL. As we await the publication of the strategy as part of the government's social integration strategy, it feels like we need renewed national focus on all adult basic skills. Although basic skills are mentioned within Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) skills strategies, I would argue that there needs to be a separate and national focus for adult basic skills.

The strategy should include:

- **Outreach.** A campaign to raise awareness for adult basic skills on national media. Delegates from last year's conference might remember Maryam, a learner who shared with us her journey, tell us that she felt adverts on television and radio would have the best reach. This would be in addition to online and print media.

- **Funding.** A review of funding rates for basic skills qualifications entitlement. Learning and Work Institute have for many years considered ESOL and ICT part of adult basic skills, and this is commendable. It is good to see that from next year we will have a national entitlement to basic digital skills. Unfortunately, although ESOL is often called a 'basic skill' it is yet to be considered part of the legal entitlement to basic skills. NATECLA has been calling for parity between funding for English and ESOL and we feel that this is crucial to supporting ESOL learners to develop their English language skills.

- **Time.** Many learners taking Functional Skills at Entry Level have literacy needs that cannot be supported in the 45 (now 55) guided learning hours (GLH) recommended by the funding rate and the awarding bodies. Learning basic skills takes time. We would like to see flexibility to add time for those learners who are improving their literacy skills. As many further education (FE) GCSE teachers have pointed out, learning English in a school takes place over a period of years but in FE we are expected to do this in 55 hours. We need to ensure that those who have not attained Level 1 or 2 because they need to develop their literacy skills, have the time they need to learn and achieve.

- **Skilled Teaching.** Basic skills practitioners recognise that skilled teachers make the most difference to a learner's ability to learn, and it is good to see that Ofsted now also recognise the importance of teacher specialism in the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF). However, the removal of bursaries for those taking the PGCE to teach English, ESOL and maths this year creates a risk that we will not have qualified teachers entering the profession. We at NATECLA feel it is crucial that there are

routes into qualifying to teach basic skills alongside government initiatives to attract vocational and technical talent into teaching e.g. Taking Teaching Further programme. Additionally, bursaries to learn to teach secondary level English and maths are still offered. Considering many FE English and maths teachers are supporting those who have left school without Level 1 and 2 qualifications in English and maths, we feel that there should be support for trainee English and maths teachers entering the FE sector as well as those entering the secondary sector.

- **Diversity of provision.** Community-based and non-formal approaches to teaching and learning basic skills have experienced large reductions over the past 8 years. The reduction, and in some cases removal, of Community Learning funding has meant that there are limited opportunities for people who face barriers to attending formal classroom learning. We recommend a community-based funding model for provision in the community and workplaces, that is sufficiently funded to meet needs, less qualification-driven, built around learners' context, and flexible to meet the needs of students.

We are hopeful about the future for adult basic skills, but it will require a high-profile campaign to raise awareness of the importance of investment in adult basic skills. Learning and Work Institute have started this and have provided us with a lot of research evidence to take forward. It's up to us working in the sector to come together and push for renewed focus in this area. NATECLA can recommend taking an approach similar to the national group that consulted on and published recommendations for a national ESOL strategy in 2017.

References

Evans, S. (2019) 'Moser, 20 Years On', in Conference Keynote: *No One Left Behind: The Future for Adult Basic Skills*. Learning and Work Institute, 4th December 2019

Foster, D. & Bolton, P. (2017) *Adult ESOL in England*, House of Commons Library, Available from: https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7905 (accessed 11 November 2017)

French, T., Quinn, L. & Yates, S. (2018) *Digital Motivation : Exploring the reasons people are offline*, The Good Things Foundation. Available from: https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/sites/default/files/digital_motivations_final_0.pdf (accessed 9 December 2019)

OECD, (2013) *OECD Country Note: England & Northern Ireland (UK)*. Available from: https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/The_Survey _of_Adult_Skills_Reader's_companion_Second_Edition.pdf (accessed 9 December 2019).

From policy to practice: reflections on the interplay between policy-making and practice in post-16 education

Catherine Paulson-Ellis

Catherine currently teaches maths at The Sheffield College and is also Director of Sheaf Valley Education through which she provides strategic advice, research and analysis on basic skills and vocational education policy. For fifteen years she worked for the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on post-16 education and skills policy. Her last position was as the Head of English and Maths overseeing maths, English and ESOL policy for apprenticeships, traineeships and adults. This article is based on a talk given to the annual English, Maths and ESOL conference in December 2019. The views expressed are her own.

It is not uncommon for people to bring their experience of teaching and education management into working as policymakers for government or other organisations. Their realism and pragmatism can be very helpful in dealing with policy issues as these rarely have simple solutions. It is much more unusual for people to make this journey in reverse. This article offers some reflections on the relationship between the two realms as a result of my making this transition. I am not offering any special expertise or insights, particularly in relation to teaching – there are many much more expert than I. Moreover, inevitably, given that when we reflect we tend to look back, any lessons might be more pertinent for policymakers, or for myself as the policymaker I once was. However, I hope that I can shed some light on why policymakers and practitioners seem to land in different places, even when they are talking about the same problems.

I am in the unusual situation of actually having to deliver some of those policies that I worked on in government, particularly the reform of Functional Skills qualifications which I kicked off and which I am now nurturing my students towards. Qualifications reform takes a long time, so it is hard at this stage to draw definitive conclusions. I've got more students doing Entry levels this year, but on the other hand, the greater challenge at Entry 3 definitely fills what was a yawning gap. My students who did the legacy Entry 3 qualifications last year have a small mountain to climb to achieve Level 1 this year. I also think that having to work without a calculator is no bad thing; it means students are more engaged with the relationships between the numbers – the mathematics of the scenarios they encounter – which should strengthen their skills and understanding. As to the additional content, many of my students want to have another go at GCSE, so revisiting some of that material should help them. Fundamentally though, nothing about the new qualifications has changed my core belief that the primary purpose of Functional Skills qualifications is to help students make their basic maths work for them for their futures, rather than learning lots of mathsy stuff.

Functional Skills reform was a big programme, but in policy terms it is just one small part of a jigsaw puzzle and, in itself, unlikely to substantially change the post-16 landscape. Its existence is a recognition that there is a place and a practical need for education that

enables people to do things. However, any greater impact depends on what else the changes facilitate and particularly in relation to the post-16 condition of funding and the English and maths resit policy (ESFA, 2019a). If the Functional Skills reforms are an incremental policy change, the condition of funding is an example of policy-makers trying to reset the landscape. A lot of what government does is tweaks to the system, fixing the bit that is most obviously not working very well, or just those bits that are easy to deal with or are of interest to particular groups who have managed to catch ministers' attention. What excites policymakers are those areas where they think they are leading rather than following the change. The post-16 condition of funding was exactly that. After performing poorly on international comparisons, government felt able not only to lay down a challenge to the sector to raise the extent and level of maths and English but also to define how that was to be done.

Here we have a great example of the triumph of aspiration over realism in policy making – an approach that basically believes it can will things into being, an approach that does not concern itself with the many and varied reasons why students end up with the GCSE results they do. Such situations often arise when policymakers have become more focussed on that part of the world which they think they can control rather than the complexity of the world as it is. Thus, failures at GCSE are associated with failures by schools and teachers and therefore fixable in a similar institutional environment, rather than a consequence of much wider interplay of individual, social and economic factors.

This policy is a great case study because it throws up a number of discontinuities between policy and practice. For starters, there is, of course, the way that individual policies land in an institutional environment. The switch to the per head funding mechanism in 16-18 was meant to provide more flexibility, potentially allowing GCSE resit students to take two years rather than one. I don't know of many institutions which have managed to do this at any scale. The drive for achievements is so deeply ingrained in the FE system and management culture that all the focus is on what students will get within the academic year in which they are on roll. Many 16-year-old retake students are on one-year courses in FE, even if, in practice, they will continue in some form of education and training for a further year or more. There have been few serious attempts to develop two-year vocational programmes below Level 3 within which a two-year resit could comfortably sit.

Another example is the policy of fully funding maths and English courses for adults up to a certain level (ESFA, 2019b). From a policy perspective, if provision is free then any barriers to offering it must be instigated locally rather than as a result of the policy. This ignores the sheer lack of capacity available for adult provision; it pays less than 16-18, achievements are essential for full funding, and the weight of the condition of funding pushes institutions to make that a priority. We would all like to think that we would not refuse an adult a place on a course, especially if they might be a risk of failing to complete or achieve, but I'm sure we all know of instances where exactly that has happened.

These situations arise because of the way in which policy-making structures in government are largely vertical. This, combined with the sheer pace, means that cross-policy impact analysis is rarely, in my experience, very thoroughly done, and especially when aspects of policy cross departmental boundaries. So, you get policies from different sources overlaid

over established institutional environments and a kind of survival-of-the-fittest tussle for which survive and which quickly peter out.

Another area which feels very different in a practice environment is the use of evidence, and here I am not thinking about pressure on CPD time leaving few opportunities to review the latest research and change one's approach. This is about forms of knowledge. For teachers, the students have to come first, not least because of their sheer immanence. This means dealing with many, many particularities – individuals' knowledge, characteristics and circumstances. Policy-makers do not experience this and have to deal in generalities – that's why they like data so much. Good quality research has some very interesting things to say about which practices can impact across a population, but these findings can be very hard to adapt to the peculiarities of individual students, especially in post-16 English and maths, where the job is so much based on making good what is already there across a very diverse mix of capabilities and motivations.

An example of this tension is the debate about what constitutes the minimum acceptable standard for English and maths. When government looks at international survey results and research about what qualifications are recognised by employers (ETF, 2015), it concludes that the ideal to be achieved is for everyone to get their GCSEs and that level 2 is essential for a productive 21st century economy. But this ignores the lived reality for many people, which is that you can often find a job without your GCSEs and also that a large proportion of the working population have a level of maths significantly below this. As a country we may be less productive than we might, but equally, the economy has not fallen through the floor.

I always encourage people who want to try to achieve their GCSEs to go for it – there is no doubt that these can open doors, particularly to university. But the situation raises very interesting questions about the nature of functionality and the extent to which formal education on its own can ever be enough to enable someone to be fully literate and numerate. (BIS, 2014). Research picked-off in a simplistic way can support simple policy solutions and simplicity can be helpful when trying to explain a policy change. However, in a field as complex as education, there are rarely just a few simple answers if the needs of all students are to be supported. Rather, there are lots of different things that have to keep being done, consistently, over time. It is not clear whether the tight focus on defined outputs has resulted in people being any better educated than a system underpinned by professional values and standards.

Everyone in post-16 education believes, quite genuinely that they are on the side of the student. Government will argue that it seeks to raise ambitions, obtain value for the taxpayer, support wider economic interests, and stop the system being hi-jacked by 'producer-interests'. Practitioners respond that the plethora of performance targets and funding rules that result mean they can't always act in a student's best interest because individuals don't always easily fit into systems. The intentions of both are valid in their own domains and must try to co-exist in creative tension. There are many things people can do to better understand the environment in which they work. Policy-makers can take advantage of sector immersion programmes and secondments and educate themselves in the same way as teachers do about the nature of and conditions for learning, rather than treating this as a black box full of teachers and students. Practitioners can take full

advantage of the many flexibilities that there are, even in the current system, and reflect on how they, as taxpayers, would want to hold public-funded professionals to account. At the end of the day, though, the interplay of policy and practice is not a problem to be solved but a situation to be understood. Education is too important to people for the politics to be removed and where there is politics, there are policy-makers with their eclectic mix of experience and beliefs.

References

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). 2014. *Young Adults' Skills Gain in the International Survey of Adult Skills 2012.* Research Paper 182. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623449/bis-14-1034-young-adults-skills-gain-in-international-survey-of-adult-skills-2012.pdf

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). (2019a). *Funding Guidance for Young People 2019 to 2020: Funding Regulations*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). (2019b). *Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding rules 2019 to 2020*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-rules-2019-to-2020

Education and Training Foundation (ETF) 2015. *Making maths and English work for all*. Retrieved from: https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Making-maths-and-English-work-for-all-25_03_2015001.pdf

Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2016). *Building Skills for All: A review of England (OECD Skills Studies).* Retrieved from: http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/building-skills-for-all-review-of-england.pdf

The New Apprenticeships

Andrew Armitage and Alison Cogger

2019, Critical Publishing

Cost   £19.99

163 pages

ISBN: 978-1-912508-28-0 (pbk)

MOBI ISBN: 978-1-912508-29-7

EPUB ISBN: 978-1-912508-30-3

ISBN: 978-1-912508-31-0 Adobe e-book

Reviewed by Yvonne Spare

Yvonne has taught adult literacy across a wide range of settings for many years, including teacher training and workplace learning, before moving on to work as a researcher and consultant for various educational organisations. She is currently RaPAL Journal Coordinator.

The authors both have considerable experience in post-compulsory education and the development and delivery of apprenticeships. The aim of this book is to facilitate learning, mentoring, coaching and assessing, recognising that there has been limited training and support for the mentoring role.

There are five chapters, divided into sections, each beginning with a theoretical underpinning and followed by a range of activities such as case studies or 'scenarios', self-assessment opportunities by both mentor and apprentice, work-based and learning-based problem-solving and space for discussion and reflection. At the end of each chapter the reader is invited to complete an action plan based on key points in that chapter.

Chapter 1 'The New Apprenticeships' gives a comprehensive overview of vocational training going right back to the establishment of the apprenticeship in 1562, following its progression through the Technical Education Council (TEC), the Business Education Council (BEC), the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), through the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), the New Training Initiative and Youth Training Scheme (YTS) to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), National Occupational Standards (NOS) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) and ultimately the New

Apprenticeships up to 18+ Higher and Degree level, and the planned introduction of T(Technical)-levels as an alternative to A-levels. Each development of this history is set in its social and political context and provides a clear insight into how this complex system has come about.

Chapter 2 'Learning and Development' features subjects that all qualified teachers will be familiar with, including learning theories and learning styles, but which may not be so familiar to mentors working in industry and commerce. This chapter gives us an academic analysis of teaching and learning, but is grounded in relevant practical examples with additional sections on vocational learners and learning, factors affecting them and potential barriers, learning in organisations and current and emerging technologies (a comprehensive and accessible overview of a rapidly developing field).

Chapter 3 'Mentoring processes' looks at the history of mentoring, setting out the process of mentoring as a cycle, involving setting targets, recording progress and managing the learner. There is a section on health and safety in the workplace, where much of the learning takes place, and finally focussing on the mentor's own professional development.

Chapter 4 'Mentoring and coaching skills' follows on the description of the process with a guide to identifying and improving mentoring and coaching skills. There is a useful section on the art of questioning: framing and generating questions for different purposes, and, closely linked, active listening, non-verbal communication and observation skills.

Chapter 5 'Assessment of achievement' rounds off the book with a description of all current methods of assessment, from observation to examination, using written and verbal assessments, discussion, portfolio-keeping, projects and presentations among others.

Throughout, the authors do not shy away from academic terminology – there are mentions of transactional analysis, cognitive/constructivist approaches, behaviourism, Gestalt theory, Piaget's theory of learning development, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in Chapter 2 – power culture, role culture, task and person cultures in Chapter 3 – and Bloom's Taxonomy, proxemics and haptics in Chapter 4, among many others, but everything is clearly explained and illustrated by the many scenarios and activities.

This is an essential handbook and good practice guide for anyone involved in New Apprenticeships. It provides us with a sound academic background tempered by the range of realistic and varied case studies, examples and activities which help to make this a very readable and accessible publication.
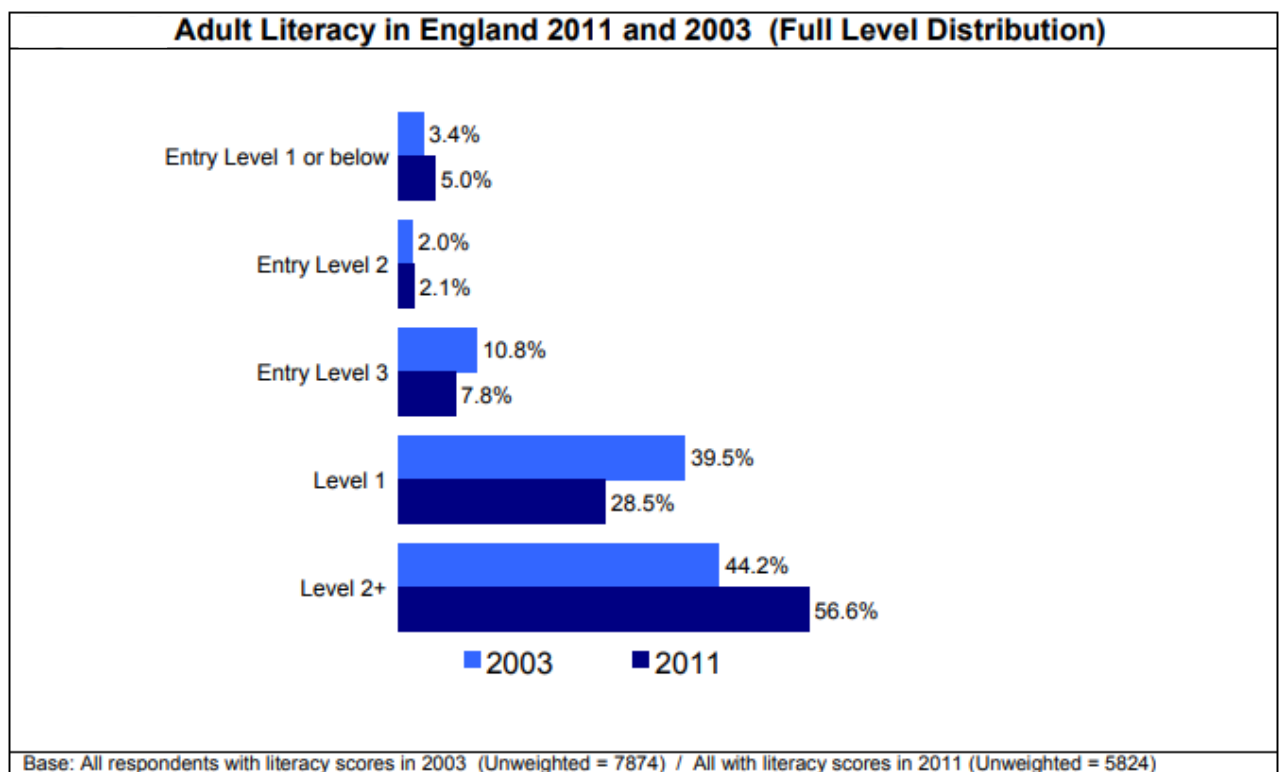
News from the sector
Tara Furlong
Tara is the Chair of RaPAL and can be contacted on webweaver@rapal.org.uk

No-one Left Behind: the future for adult basic skills

This autumn's joint conference panel discussion was a wonderful if brief reflection on the last twenty years of adult literacies provision across the UK. The heyday of investment from the turn of the millennium was clear in Professor Emeritus Greg Brooks' summary of the now-closed NRDC (National Research and Development Centre). Greg's presentation is available to download here. There was much chatter a decade or so ago of this major investment only catching the 'low-hanging fruit'. Against this, it is worth drawing attention to the significant change in the distribution profile of literacy skills in the UK adult population between 2003 and 2011 (see Figure 1 below).

Adult Literacy in England 2011 and 2003 (Full Level Distribution)

	2003	2011
Entry Level 1 or below	3.4%	5.0%
Entry Level 2	2.0%	2.1%
Entry Level 3	10.8%	7.8%
Level 1	39.5%	28.5%
Level 2+	44.2%	56.6%

Base: All respondents with literacy scores in 2003 (Unweighted = 7874) / All with literacy scores in 2011 (Unweighted = 5824)

Figure 6 - BIS, 2011:5

The sudden bulge at 'Entry Level 1 or below' may be explained by the influx of adult learners with little to no literacy in their home communities or languages, many of whom the sector developed awareness of through participation in Entry Level 1 classes. Entry level adult learners have recently benefited from additional resources supporting phonics for adults (ETF, 2019a; ETF 2019b).

The overall trend from 2003 to 2011 clearly shows national adult literacy levels pushing upwards, and may be taken as a tremendous national achievement in the first decade of the new millennium. I haven't seen clear comparison of, for example, level 2+ achievements

from the various domains over the last couple of decades, such as school outputs versus adult, further and community achievements, or higher skills levels attributable to highly qualified immigration levels. This might be helpful to see what is making what degree of difference. On the other hand, longitudinal research demonstrates that participation in classes does not necessarily have a direct impact on increasing literacy levels, and that 'self-study' is another significant factor. Rather, participation in literacy classes can increase adults' capacity and everyday use of literacy practices across their lives over time, and this increase in usage mutually reinforces with literacy proficiency (Reder, 2009; 2014). The research also demonstrates individual long-term increases in real income levels as a direct consequence of improving basic skills levels through participation in adult basic skills programmes, with 100 hours a threshold level.

> In the decades before the financial crisis, improvements in learning and skills contributed one fifth of economic growth. Learning and skills have a direct and indirect impact on economic growth… However… improvements in the UK's skills base have stalled and are set to slow further over the next decade…
>
> Learning and Work Institute (2019:7)

According to the papers referenced here, there is still a clear and significant percentage of the UK population who struggle with entry level basic skills, which impacts negatively on their social and economic participation and their capacity for independence. They merit investment. Equally, level 3 learning and skills is increasingly targeted for attention (*ibid*). Given the strong performance developing in Level 2+ adult literacies, an increasingly complex world awash with 'knowledge economies' and 'fake news' may justify increasing the trickledown effect of a larger proportion of the population with level 3 'basic skills' underpinning their analytic capacity socially, economically and democratically.

During our panel discussion, a social practices approach to adult literacies – working with what people use literacies for in their everyday lives – was argued to maximise the benefits of investment in teacher professionalism, flexible qualifications, and devolved budgets. A social practices approach supports investing in course design which is grounded in local learning profiles – it would be great to see this driven up through Level 3.

Happy New Year, everyone.

References

BIS (2011) 2011 'Skills for Life Survey: Headline findings' *BIS Research Paper Number 57* London: BIS Available online https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623399/11-1367-2011-skills-for-life-survey-findings.pdf Last accessed 18/11/19

ETF (2019a) *Post-16 Phonics Approaches: A Toolkit* London: ETF Available online https://api.excellencegateway.org.uk/resource/etf:3030 Last accessed 18/11/19

ETF (2019b) *New to ESOL Guidance: Teaching & Learning Materials for Learners New to ESOL and Literacy* London: ETF Available online: https://api.excellencegateway.org.uk/resource/etf:3083 Last accessed 18/11/19

L&W (2019) *Time for Action: Skills for economic growth and social justice* Leicester: L&W Available online: https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/LW_timeforaction_skills-for-economic-growth-social-justice_WEB.pdf Last accessed 18/11/19

Reder, S. (2014), *The impact of ABS program participation on long-term economic outcomes*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. Available online: https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/ABS_EconomicOutcomes.pdf Last accessed 06/12/19

Reder, S. (2009), 'The development of literacy and numeracy in adult life'. In **Reder, S. & Bynner, J.,** (Eds.), *Tracking adult literacy and numeracy: Findings from longitudinal research* pp. 59-84 New York and London: Routledge.

RaPAL 100 Project

Have a look at our anniversary survey of the patchwork of adult literacies provision across the UK here https://rapal.org.uk/events/rapal-100-project/. With any centres able to participate, we're keen to carry out an hour's interview either in person or on the phone over the next few weeks. The aim is a 100th edition of RaPAL's digital journal full of adult literacies provision from across the nations.

We intend to draw the attention of local funders, academics and education decision and policy makers to detailed accounts of current needs within adult literacy education. Don't put off 'till tomorrow what you can do today!

Celebrate the 100th edition of the RaPAL journal, 35 years of RaPAL, and our close on the 100th anniversary of the 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction's Final Report on Adult Education, which 'set the groundwork for British adult education during the 20th century' by 'arguing that a population educated throughout life was vital for the future of the country' (WEA, 2019).

Any queries, please don't hesitate to contact Sarah Freeman on 100@rapal.org.uk

www.bit.ly/RaPAL100Proj

•

The RaPAL 100 conference presentation is available to download here.

WRITING GUIDELINES

Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

We invite contributions from anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share ideas, practice and research with RaPAL readers. This can be writing from learners, ideas linking research and practice, comments about teaching, training or observations about policy. 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