

The Teaching and Learning Research Programme

The Literacies for Learning in Further Education project is part of the major national Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP). The overall aim of the TLRP is to support research which will lead to improvements in outcomes for

learners of all stages, in all sectors of education, training and lifelong learning throughout the UK. Funding for the Programme has been provided by the Economic and Social Research Council. Further information: www.tlrp.org.uk

Project Advisory Group

The Advisory Group has an important role in the project. It consists of people in key positions in policy-making, practice and research in Further Education and literacy. They are particularly crucial for ensuring that the work of the project is relevant to practice, and in helping to ensure communication between the project team and those who have an interest in the findings of the research.

The Project is privileged to have the following people on its Advisory Group:

Sue Baldwin, Director, Skills Development, Scottish Enterprise

Mike Breen, Professor of Education /Independent Educational Consultant

Julia Clarke, Faculty of Education & Language, Open University

Alison Cox, The BRITE Initiative, Edinburgh

Carolyn Davidson, Business Manager, SQA

Jay Derrick, Educational Consultant, BlueSky Learning

Kathryn Ecclestone, Senior lecturer, Post-Compulsory Education, University of Exeter/Associate Director TLRP

Ellayne Fowler, Chairperson, RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy)

Sue Grief, Development Advisor, LSDA

Paul Hambley, Approvals Manager, FENTO (Further Education National Training Organisation)

Catherine Hamilton, Adult Literacies Manager, Communities Scotland

Ursula Howard, Director, NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy)

Tom Jupp, Former Principal, City & Islington College/Senior Advisor NRDC

Theresa Lillis, Centre for Language and Communications, Open University

Julie McManus, Basic Skills Development Officer for the North West, NIACE

Joan Machell, Research Fellow, CSET (Centre for the Study of Education & Training) Lancaster University

Andrew Morris, Programme Director, NERF (National Educational Research Forum)

Jane Polglase, Policy Manager, AoSC (Association of Scottish Colleges)

Alison Reid, Chief Executive, Scottish Education Unit

Chris Rooke, OFSTED Inspector/Dean of Essential Skills, Preston College

Lyn Tett, Professor of Community Education and Lifelong Learning, Edinburgh University

Christine Tyler, Principal, Eccles College

Jane Ward, North West Regional Development Officer, NIACE

What are your views about the role of literacies for learning in FE?

Let us know your interests, concerns and questions:

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Literacies for Learning in Further Education

A Further and Higher Education research project

Texts, emails
and computer
games could
help
students
unlock their
learning
potential.

Media-
conscious
college
students may
have little
difficulty
reading sports
reports, firing
off text
messages and
surfing the
web, but
some struggle
to make the
grade in class.



'Students who appear to have low levels of literacy in educational settings are highly literate in other domains of life ...'

The project focuses on the literacy demands of studying in Further Education, and the literacy practices students can draw upon to meet those demands.

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Issue 1, Summer 2004

Lancaster Project Team



Roz Ivanić
Overall Director
of the Project



David Barton
Project
Co-Director



Zoe Fowler
Researcher



A student's story

At school, J. lost substantial amounts of time through fighting with her peers and she obtained very few GCSEs, all at poor grades. But in her spare time, J. developed a very keen interest in motorbikes.

J. initially joined a vocational access course in motor vehicle maintenance, but she dropped out in the first few weeks of the course. She was advised by the careers officer to join an administration course with a view to working in an office in a vehicles environment.

J. sees herself as a 'slow reader'. Her handwriting is slow and her concentration is limited: in a 90 minute class J. will typically complete only a short paragraph of work. Learning Support specialists have advised that she can only cope with very short texts which are printed in a large font. However, when following her own interests, J. is able to do much more than she does for her class work.

At the end of some English classes, the students play a game where they select a category such as food, drink, sports, etc. In the game, the students have to name something beginning with a given letter within their chosen category. J. always selects the category of motorbikes. She not only names the make of a bike, but also the model and engine size. She is always able to name a website which could prove the information she had provided. When J. was asked where she had found out all the information, she explained that she reads magazines and bike reference books.

Although J. struggles to use the internet for class activities, she has been observed expertly logging on and accessing music websites and downloading music from the web. And during another lesson, J. composed an email negotiating a complex business venture with a local company. This email was composed within class time, but was not linked to the class activity. The vocabulary used by J. was very business orientated and far in advance of the work she had produced in class previously.

About the project

The Literacies for Learning in Further Education (LlFE) project is a collaboration between two universities - Stirling and Lancaster - and four colleges, Anniesland, Lancaster and Morecambe, Preston and Perth.

The Project has been funded for three years by the Economic and Social Research Council from January 2004, as part of Phase III of its £28 million Teaching and Learning Research Programme.

The LlFE project is one of only 12 projects to be funded from over 250 original submissions. The LlFE project does not focus on basic skills but rather on literacy practices which enable students to succeed in learning across the curriculum. A major objective will be to uncover actual and potential overlaps and connections between literacy practices in students' everyday lives, the literacy demands of their courses and the uses of literacy in the workplaces in which they are hoping to gain employment. It is intended that the Project should contribute to staff development work and to local and regional conferences as it progresses, so that it becomes useful from as early as possible in its development.



One method of data collection being tried out with students at Perth College, Scotland

The research programme

The research is divided into four phases.

Phase One (January to August 2004) is being spent working with the colleges to document literacy demands, and to decide on priority curriculum areas.

Phase Two (September 2004 to August 2005) will involve detailed research in 16 subject areas (four in each college) on the literacy demands of courses at two different levels in each area, and on the everyday literacy practices of four students on each of those courses. The aim of this phase will be to identify ways in which the everyday literacy practices

can be recognised and drawn upon to help students succeed on the courses.

In **Phase Three** (September 2005 to August 2006) the college based and university based researchers will collaborate to design curriculum developments in the selected areas, based on the findings from Phase Two. The impact of these innovations will be assessed and compared to earlier student outcomes.

In **Phase Four** there will be college, regional and national workshops to examine the relevance of the project findings to other FE contexts and curriculum areas.



Stirling Project Team



Richard Edwards
Director of the Project in Scotland



Greg Mannion
Project Co-Director



June Smith
Researcher

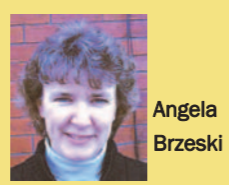
Getting students involved

More than a hundred students at four different colleges will take part in the research. They will document the kinds of literacy activities they are involved in outside of lessons, from reading timetables and chatting on line to taking notice of written language in their environment.

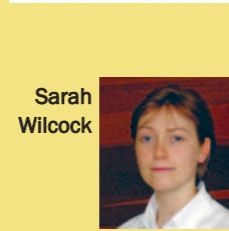
Right: An example of the kind of literacy demand made on students on their courses.



The partner colleges



Angela Brzeski



Sarah Wilcock



One member of staff in each college is seconded to the project for two days a week to act as College-Based Research Coordinator (CBRC). This researcher works closely with the University-based researchers to facilitate contacts and communication and to undertake data collection and analysis.

In September there will be three more members of college staff in each college seconded to the project for three hours a week each.

The research will be a two-way process and it is extremely important to the project that it makes a contribution to the colleges as well as helping to frame long term contributions to policy and practice. It is hoped the project will address concerns in FE over participation, retention and achievement.



Danny McDougall



Roy Anderson

