



Early 2005

Lancaster *Literacies*

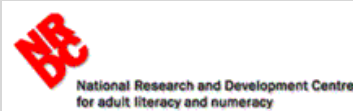
Working with learners in the community

In this second year of research the Adult Learners' Lives project has moved out of college learning environments into community settings, focusing on the perspectives of learners who are often called 'hard to reach' (though we have found this to be a simplistic and often inaccurate label).

We have worked across a range of research settings. In Blackburn, we have worked with a centre for young homeless and an Entry to Employment (e2e) programme; in Lancaster, at a drug and alcohol support centre; in Liverpool, with a tenants' association, Big Issue sellers and a domestic violence self-help group. Our collaborative, flexible, multi-method research approach enables us to be sensitive to different agendas and preferences in each context. We have found there are multiple reasons for people to be

involved in provision, from survival to transformation. For everyone, though, the search for wellbeing is crucial. Feelings and emotions shape experiences of learning; these in turn are shaped by material realities such as pregnancy or homelessness. There are multiple constraints on engaging with learning, such as transport costs. People know the trigger and the 'right time' to engage in change and moving on and this needs to be supported by providers. The majority of people bring negative experiences of school education and of authority; histories of pain, violence and trauma are often

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ALL working with learners in the community

Anorexia

A perfect combination, of relationships long lusted
 A statement made to hurt you, by the friend that
 you once trusted
 She could have stood beside you, but instead she
 let you down.
 Bright shades of Black and Purple, now fade to
 Pink and Brown.
 Anorexia never lets you go, and rarely lets you
 stay
 Bullemia seems a good option, society's made it
 this way
 People say that you're not fat, but you can see it
 in their eyes
 They didn't want to hurt you, so instead they told
 you lies.

Above:
 a poem
 written by
 one of the
 young
 people at
 Nightsafe,
 a shelter
 for the
 young
 homeless



Right:
 students
 on the
 Training
 2000
 e2e
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from previous page

invisible. They have a concept of 'normality', for example, when referring to college students who are supported by home and family, which can exclude them. They have highly developed skills and competencies such as creative writing which may not be reflected in official qualifications. People have 'ordinary' goals and aspirations: to be safe and healthy, with a settled family life, good relationships and enjoyable work. The priority of *Skills for Life* learning within these goals varied enormously, safety and general well being or work often being more immediately important.

Our research suggests the following implications for those working with these groups:

Providers need to take *time* to get to know individuals and understand their reasons for being there;

The relative priority of different goals for people, and the place of *Skills for Life* learning within these, needs to be considered;

High-priority and immediate goals should be distinguished from longer term ones; 'Progress' should be documented in terms of 'distance travelled', and related to people's own goals. This might or might not involve qualifications;

People often 'dip in and out' of provision. This is not necessarily failure, it can be an important and brave step;

Training needs to develop ways of working with learners as whole people. This can be as important as subject knowledge;

People's responses can change radically from one day to the next, in response to other things going on in their lives;

It is crucial that provision does not recall previous negative experiences of education and authority. Ownership and shared accountability are important;

Practical financial support (eg transport costs) may be necessary;

Learning needs to be light, fun and interesting, and incorporate constant encouragement;

It is important that a focus on education does not come at the cost of other important purposes of the provision.

Research

Rachel Hodge

by:

Roz Ivanič

Yvon Appleby

David Barton

Karin Tusting

ALL activities 2004 - 2005

Conferences: We have shared our findings at *Skills for Life* conferences in London, York and Birmingham as well as NW practitioner research forums.

Collaboration: We continue to work with colleagues and organisations in the research sites incorporating their responses into our developing work.

Writing: We are producing reports on engaging with 'hard-to-reach' learners, adult learners' experiences of work, practitioner involvement, mapping provision and research methods.

We are organising, with practitioner researchers, the Adult Learners' Lives National conference in the Friends' Meeting House, Manchester, on 11 February 2005

INTERESTING and controversial issues are already being raised by the Literacies for Learning in Further Education (LlLFE) project – and it is not yet a year old.

The Project, funded by the ESRC as part of Phase 3 of its £28 million Teaching and Learning Research Programme, has achieved a great deal since its inception in January 2004.

All the project staff are now in post including one full-time and one part-time researcher at Lancaster University Literacy Research Centre, one full-time and one part-time researcher at Stirling University and four college-based researchers (CBRs) at each of four FE College, two in England and two in Scotland.

Each CBR is researching two of the units they teach at different levels, making 32 units in all across eleven curriculum areas.

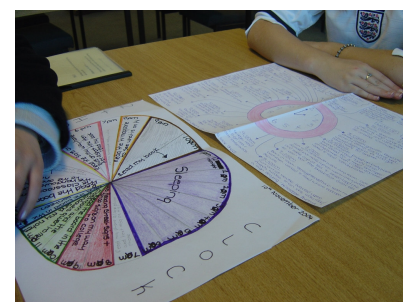
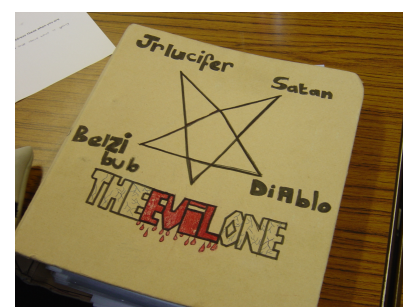
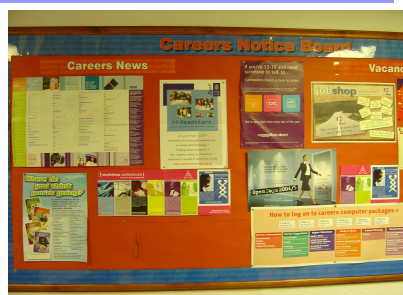
We are expecting the range of curriculum areas to provide many fascinating comparisons and contrasts. For example, Hospitality and Catering is being studied both at Lancaster and Morecambe College and at Perth College, with very different curricula.

Childcare is being studied in all four colleges: this curriculum area has been chosen because the course and the vocational area for which the students are preparing involve engagement in a wide range of literacy practices. Biology has been chosen at Preston College and Social Sciences at Anniesland College in order to include academic subjects alongside vocational ones.

The focus of the research is the interface between the literacy demands and practices of these units of study, and the literacy practices of a selection of students in other aspects of their

Literacy practices for further study

Literacies for Learning in Further Education



Above (top) Literacy practices inside college. Middle: An example of one student's literacy practices and Bottom: an example of a research method being used to discover where the two overlap.

lives. At the present time, CBRs are busy recruiting 128 students across four sites, who will be directly connected with the project.

There is an interesting mix of students so far, mature students, school leavers and students on the Government's New Deal scheme. Where possible they have been selected with a wide range of abilities, from those with support needs to students with degrees retraining for trowel occupations.

Phase One of the project has identified several interesting case studies and examples of good practice at the colleges. We have data to show, even at this early stage, that students are far more inventive and resourceful in their response to the demands of studying at college than is generally recognised.

Early findings have inevitably raised issues that need further exploration, including the usefulness of writing in learning, the reasons why students don't always read all the texts presented to them, and the effects of funding on the media for communication available in different curriculum areas. There has been a suggestion that students are not always using their full

continued overleaf

Researchers

Lancaster:

Roz Ivanič

David Barton

Zoe Fowler

Candice Satchwell

College-based researchers:

Angela Brzeski

Sarah Wilcock

Jim Carmichael

Roy Anderson

Stirling:

Richard Edwards

Greg Mannion

June Smith

Kate Miller

Literacies for Learning in Further Education

from previous page
potential to develop their own academic literacies, because their tutors do most of the work for them – so that the increasing demands of awarding bodies are met. Other issues that researchers will be following up as the project progresses relate to optimal approaches to liaison between subject area staff and those responsible for support, careers, administration and Key Skills.

An important aspect of the project is the research partnership between the two universities and the four FE colleges. The joint venture involves meetings and events in which team members share expertise and plan collaboratively. A project residential in Carlisle was held in January to develop team approaches

to data collection and analysis.

This project is collaborative not just in terms of sharing research with the partner colleges, but also in its engagement from as early as possible with a wide range of FE professionals and other potential users of the research findings.

The project already has a string of publications to its name and information is disseminated through a regular project newsletter. Researchers' engagement with users through regional and national conferences and seminars is serving to develop awareness of project findings among a wider audience. The research team expects that its findings will be relevant to policy-makers and contribute to the enhancement of learning in FE in the future.

For further details, see the LfLFE project Newsletter, available from Marie Ashman in the LfLFE Project Office, or by request from her at m.ashman@lancs.ac.uk, and the project website. www.lilfe@lancs.ac.uk which is also accessible via a link on the LLRC website.



Project director Roz Ivanič and TLRP director Andrew Pollard discuss the Literacies for Learning in FE project at a recent TLRP conference in Cardiff

Researchers

Mark Sebba and Susan Dray

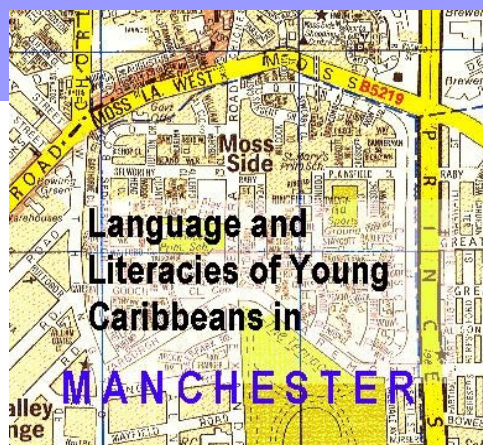
Language of a different culture

THIS new research project is investigating the language and literacies of young African-Caribbeans in Manchester.

African-Caribbeans in Britain are usually first-language speakers of local varieties of English spoken where they live, but they may also actively use a heritage language, which is likely to be a Creole or mixed language of the Caribbean. This project is studying the use of spoken languages by African-Caribbeans in Manchester in two age groups (approximately age 8 and age 14), with the aid of locally-based co-workers who are already established as youth workers and learning mentors.

These co-researchers have been recruited and it is envisaged that fieldwork will be fully underway by the end of 2004. Methods will include tape recordings, interviews and photography.

Although the Creole languages in question are not standardised they are sometimes used in writing, so the project aims to find out about the use of English, Creole and other written languages by this group in school settings but also, very importantly, outside of school.



Since underachievement in this group is an educational issue the researchers hope that a practical outcome of the project will be an improved understanding of their written and spoken language activities which will help to achieve improved educational outcomes.

Mark Sebba has carried out research in London on the language of British-born Caribbean adolescents, which he has published as a book *London Jamaican* (1993). He has also undertaken research into the uses of Creole (Patois) and Standard English in written language.

Susan Dray is responsible for coordinating the project. She has lived and worked in Jamaica where she undertook doctoral research looking at the uses of Creole in written language.



The project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

What's the big advantage of studying for a Distance Learning Postgraduate Degree at Lancaster University's Literacy Research Centre? As one of our current students, Marion Casey can testify...



Literacy and health

Researchers Uta Papen and Sue Walters

THE NRDC-funded Literacy and Health project has just entered its second year.

This project seeks to identify and describe the health-related literacy and numeracy practices of patients and to examine the role of health as a topic for language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) classes.

In its first year, in addition to a literature review, a survey of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL teachers working in institutions across the North West was carried out. The results of the survey are now being written up and a report will be published in 2005. Some of the findings were shared and discussed with practitioners at the NW Skills for Life Research Forum's meeting in Bolton in November.

The survey sought to explore the role of health as a topic in LLN classes through asking questions about teachers' perceptions of their students' health, about their experiences of using health as a topic in their classrooms, about the materials that they used when health was included as a topic and about the impact of the *Skills for Life* strategy on their teaching of health topics.

Some of the more interesting results from the survey showed that teachers did perceive their students as commonly experiencing health problems and that these problems often affected the attendance and concentration of their students in class.

Student drop-out from classes was very often linked to health (65.9% of the time). Results also indicated that many teachers did use health as a topic in their classrooms (75.5%) and thought that it was an appropriate topic for LLN, although they were aware that there were some difficulties with using health as a topic concerning sensitive issues and privacy.

Results also showed that real-life health texts, such as patient information leaflets and medicine labels and inserts, were often used for teaching purposes. The introduction of the *Skills for Life* curriculum did not appear to greatly affect the use of health as a topic in the classroom, and some teachers (13.6%) reported that they were using health as a topic more since the introduction of the new curricula.

Uta Papen, the project director and Sue Walters, who has just joined the project as a Research Associate, have recently gained access as participant observers to four literacy and ESOL classes in Preston, Bamber Bridge, Lancaster and Halifax. Access is being sought to two further classes. Both researchers are getting to know the students in the classes and finding out about their various experiences of literacy and numeracy in health-care settings, as well as finding out more about the role of health as a topic in the classroom.

In the next phase of the research individual interviews will be conducted with the students and with the teachers of these classes.

...they become bigger fish in smaller pools!

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National Research and Development Centre
for adult literacy and numeracy

Practitioner-led research initiative

A team at Lancaster is coordinating the Practitioner-led Research Initiative, three rounds of funding for six small-scale projects of up to £10,000 each.

Each round has an overarching theme for projects to form a research question from.

Round one

In February 2004 the first six small group projects were announced. The projects addressed social exclusion and how we can stimulate demand for learning under the heading of: "New ways of engaging new learners". The theme was interpreted widely and we received applications from across various Skills for Life partnerships including both public and private organizations.

Four of the projects addressed various

aspects of workplace literacy. One project looked at progression within community-based programmes, and another was evaluating innovative ways of work with music and ICT with young black adults. The six projects ended with a successful dissemination event in December and a full report will be available shortly from the NRDC.

Round two

A second round of funding was announced in May 2004 and again six successful projects were chosen, this time under the common theme "Understanding Purpose and Perseverance - Learners' Aspirations and Commitment to Learning".

Details can be found on the NRDC website.

The third round theme will be announced in May 2005, and the

deadline for the applications October 2005.

These initiatives are an important addition to the NRDCs programme of activities. They are designed to offer opportunities for practitioners to step back and reflect on practice, to put research ideas into practice and to systematically explore day-to-day issues arising from the *Skills for Life* policy. The idea is to spread a research culture within the field, contribute to continuing professional development and to draw in a constituency of new practitioner-researchers who will go on to influence their colleagues.

If you would like more information about the Practitioner-led Research Initiative please look on the NRDC website, or contact Kathryn James at Kathryn.james@lancaster.ac.uk

Out at the Margins

Anita Wilson provides information on her NRDC work and also on non-NRDC research.

She has been the academic consultant on the NRDC project 'Success factors in informal learning', a Young Adult Learning Partnership project investigating the implications of a *Skills for Life* agenda in relation to youth work and teaching in informal settings. More information can be gleaned from the project website www.niace.org.uk/projects/successfactors. She is also a member of the core team on another NRDC project entitled 'Improving the literacy and numeracy of young people in

custody and in the community', which looks at the experiences of literacy and numeracy before, during and after their involvement with the criminal justice system.

'...It's a little known fact that Lancaster Literacy Research Centre also heads up the Scientific Commission for Literacy on behalf of AILA.'

The progress report for this project should be available shortly. It's a little known fact that Lancaster Literacy Research Centre also heads up the Scientific Commission for Literacy on behalf of AILA (The International Association of Applied Linguistics). The next conference is in July 2005 in Madison, Wisconsin.

David Barton and Anita Wilson, with a panel drawn from Lancaster, USA, Belgium, Australia and South Africa – undertook the selection process for literacy-related work-

Matters: Assertions of Space in Literacy Practice and Research, eds. Leander K. & Sheehy M., (Peter Lang, 2004)

'I go to get away from the cockroaches': Educentricity and the politics of Education in Prisons in **Identity, Agency and Social Institutions in Educational Ethnography** eds. Troman G, Jeffrey B, Walford G. (Jai Press, Oxford, 2004)

'Last week I wrote a letter for an illiterate guy to his Mum ... he wanted to pay me some roll-up tobacco or chocolate but I told him to get me an envelope and a carrier bag to put my sewing in': **The normalisation of reciprocity in the prison setting**, in **Scottish Youth Issues Journal**, Vol. 8, Summer 2004.



Lancaster Literacy Research Centre News

Welcome to new Research Associates in the Literacy Research Centre team: Susan Dray, Candice Satchwell and Sue Walters



Susan Dray



Candice Satchwell



Sue Walters

Some recent publications

Yvon Appleby *Researching Adult Learners' Lives* Literacy Today, No. 38, March 2004

Barton, D., Ivanič, R., Appleby, Y., Hodge, R. and Tusting, K. 2004 *Adult Learners' Lives Project: Setting the Scene*, London, NRDC

Tusting, K. and Barton, D. 2003 *Models of Adult Learning: a literature review*, London: NRDC

Lancaster Working Papers:

No.1 Rachel Hodge, *A Review of Recent Ethnographies of Literacy*, March 2003

No.2 Karin Tusting, *A review of theories of informal learning*, June 2003

No.3 Yvon Appleby, *Retention and Achievement: a focused review*, September 2003

No.4 Rachel Hodge and Kathy Pitt with David Barton, *"This is not enough for one's life": Perceptions of living and learning English in Blackburn by students seeking asylum and refugee status*, May 2004

No.5 Gill Burgess, *'Is that not literacy, helping parents to help children?'* *Mapping Basic Skills provision in the Lancaster area*, June 2004

No. 6 Karen Kennedy and Nicky Crosby, *Mapping Skills for Life in Liverpool*, October 2004

Forthcoming:

Barton, D. and Tusting, K., (eds), *Beyond Communities of Practice: Language, Power and Social Context*, Cambridge University Press (includes chapters by Barton D., and Hamilton, M., "Literacy, reification and the dynamics of social interaction", and Tusting, K. "Language and power in communities of practice").

Hamilton, M. (in press, 2005) "Understanding the everyday: adult lives, literacies and informal learning". In McKeough et al, *Understanding Literacy Development: A Global View*. Erlbaum.

Papen, U., "Literacy and development: what works for whom?" *International Journal of Educational Development* 25, 5-17, 2005.

Tusting, K. and Barton, D. (in press) "Community-based local literacies research", in Beach, R., Green, J., Kamil, M. and Shanahan, T., *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Literacy Research*, 2nd edition, New Jersey: Hampton Press.

Yvon Appleby and Mary Hamilton, "Literacy as social practice: Travelling between the everyday and other forms of learning", (forthcoming 2005) in Peter Sutherland and Jim Crowther (eds), *Lifelong Learning: Contexts and Concepts*, Routledge Falmer.

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Questions, further information and application forms:

Kathryn James, Department of Educational Research, County South, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YD

Tel: (01524) 593665 E-Mail: edres-ma@lancaster.ac.uk

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