

Late 2007

LANCASTER
UNIVERSITY



A traditional counting system used by shepherds in Cumbria, now becomes a house name.



An irregular newsletter of the Literacy Research Centre



Lancaster *Literacies*

STOP PRESS:

What have those literacy research people been up to?



Prison education - Policy, Practice and Process

A Transatlantic comparison

National Academy of
Education/Spencer
Postdoctoral Fellowship

Anita Wilson

This project took a Transatlantic perspective on prison education and prison literacy.

It identified similarities and differences in prison education policy between Europe and North America and the ways young prisoners took aspects of education into their everyday prison lives. The research was conducted at comparative sites and drew on the life experiences of both young men and young women. It employed qualitative methods, maintaining a strong ethical stance and an awareness of the issues surrounding research at sensitive sites.

Prison education, however, is a broad concept and the project centred its interest specifically on aspects of literacy. Prisoners' perceived lack of literacy ability is already the focus of international concern within conventional parameters of educational research. But although much emphasis has been



placed on the assessment and evaluation of prisoners' basic skills, little attention has been paid to the ways that prisoners take hold of education or to the impact of such activities on young offenders' personal and social identity. This study prioritised the 'doing' of education beyond the prison schoolroom, bringing a social view of literacy to current debate on prison education. In doing so, it sheds new light on the ability of young people to take an active part in managing their terms of imprisonment.

The aim is to add to contemporary debate on the realities of imprisonment and enrich our understanding of the practical and personal benefits of education to marginalised groups of young people.



Literacy practices in action ... members of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre practising what they preach... more pictures on page 5.

Literacies for Learning in Further Education

The research phase of this project ended in June 2007.

Since then, members of the project team have been communicating with practitioners and policy-makers about the implications of the project, as well as publishing aspects of its findings.

About the project:

The LfLFE project aimed to identify literacy practices which enable students to succeed in learning across the curriculum. The project was a collaboration between The University of Stirling, Lancaster University and four Further Education colleges from January 2004 to June 2007. Six university-based researchers worked with 16 college lecturers to research their own courses and students. More than a hundred students took part in researching 32 units of study across eleven curriculum areas. Childcare was studied in common across all four colleges and the other areas ranged from A Level Social Sciences to Painting and Decorating.

Insights from the project

About literacy practices in students' everyday lives:

Staff and students themselves tended to talk about literacy in terms of what students CAN'T do, rather than in terms of what they CAN do. Yet the project found that students engage in a multiplicity and abundance of literacy practices in their everyday lives, compared with the very specific sets of practices that are valued within the context of FE. They engage not only in vernacular literacy practices – that is those which arise from their own interests and concerns - but also in a wide

range of bureaucratic, more formal literacy practices which are demanded by the practicalities of their lives.

About literacy practices in colleges:

The project identified four types of literacies in colleges: (1) literacies for being a student e.g. registration, use of learning resource area; (2) literacies for course-related learning, e.g. content focused learning; (3) literacies for assessment and (4) literacies related to an imagined future e.g. placements, work simulations.

We found that the reading and writing students do on their college courses tend to focus on assessment. The demands on lower level courses are in many respects greater than those at higher levels and there is often a tension between vocational and academic goals.

About harnessing everyday literacy practices to enhance learning:

The final year of the research was devoted to developing, implementing and evaluating small changes in practice based on the understandings reached about vernacular and pedagogic literacies.

Pictured right are examples of clock diagrams completed by student researchers during the data collection phase of the project



The project found that aspects of the literacy practices from students' everyday lives, for example, their collaborative nature, could be harnessed as resources for learning. It identified a list of 'aspects' of literacy practices which can be fine-tuned to make reading and writing on courses resonate more with students' vernacular literacy practices.

semiotic (meaning making) aspects of learning are integral to the cognitive and the practical.

Getting research into practice

Project team members have met with representatives of awarding bodies, providers of teacher education, college principals, and staff of a range of organisations concerned with quality improvement in post-compulsory education to discuss the implications of the research for policy and practice. The project has produced a DVD costing £12.50 about the research for use on professional development course (details of how to order it are on the project website). The newly updated website provides an overview of the project, including details of project publications and downloadable workshop materials to be used in conjunction with the DVD on teacher education and CPD courses.

For further information, see the project website:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/lflfe/>

Roz Ivanič
and
Candice Satchwell

In order to investigate differences between

Scotland and England the project focused on Childcare courses in all four colleges. While the policy contexts and working conditions differed substantially from one country to the other, pedagogic practice was very similar in both countries, in all four colleges, and across the eight Childcare units. Literacies for learning differed more by level than by country or by college.

The research has helped to refine the concept of literacy practices, to reconceptualise 'transfer' and 'border crossing', and to demonstrate how the

The tutors made changes in practice which aimed to:

- make the students more aware of the reading and writing in their everyday lives which could act as resources for their learning;
- make reading and writing on courses more resonant with students' vernacular literacy practices;
- make the communicative aspects of learning more explicit and visible; and/or
- make the reading and writing on courses more relevant to learning.





Refugee Action and English Language Support



We were approached by Refugee Action Gateway Protection Programme in Manchester for support in running their new Gateway English Language programmes funded by the Home Office for groups of refugees who have come direct from living long term in refugee camps.

The programme started in 2004 and the first groups were from Liberia, The Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia and Mauritania. The most recent group who arrived in December are from Burma. The recent funding for ESOL work enables Refugee Action to run a programme in partnership with Bolton Community College. Our links and experience in Literacy and Development work

as well as in ESOL work and research, particularly in relation to refugees and asylum seekers, equips us well to offer support to this project. It is an exciting new venture for us bringing together literacy, language and development work in Britain.

We meet regularly with members of Refugee Action to discuss issues such as programme design, participatory methodologies and strategies for reflecting on the work as it develops. The programme aims to build on mainstream ESOL provision by integrating this with life issues such as citizenship and opportunities to use English in everyday life through social activities, volunteering and intensive job preparation workshops.

Rachel Hodge

Persistence, Progression and Achievement project

In a national NRDC project looking at how people participate in language, literacy and numeracy learning, we have been working at Lancaster with people who are seen to be 'at risk' in various ways.

These have included: geographically isolated families, young people leaving care and living independently for the first time, or who are homeless or living in supported accommodation, people who have marked learning difficulties/ disabilities.

We found the term "at risk" to be problematic in that it only describes the individual as a learner in relation to provision and 'at risk' of non-completion of courses and not as a person within the wider context of their lives. It does not account for the difficulties that some people face fitting in with what they often experienced as inflexible mainstream adult learning.

Taking a social practice approach enables some of the links between

people, their lives and learning to be made. This allows us to define people not by the barriers they face but by who they are as a whole person and to engage with what each young person brings into the learning environment: what their current circumstances are, their learning and life histories, unique personalities, learning styles, their abilities, goals and aspirations.

In this project we devised ways of exploring these issues by 'mapping' and discussing with people their life and learning journeys. We talked with them about various life factors, their experiences of learning, the different kinds of support they have had or not had in life and learning, about issues around choice and about their imagined futures.

Interviews with staff and managers explored factors related to organisation, delivery and learning inside and outside the classroom which support or constrain progress and

achievement as well as their different understandings of persistence, progression and achievement. In this way we have been able to see how all these factors taken together have impacted on how young people have been moving on in life and learning and how provision has responded to their needs, aspirations and challenges.

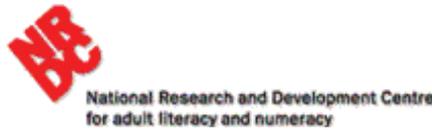
From our research we developed a set of guidelines for receiving vulnerable young people in mainstream learning environments. In order to do this we drew on all the interview data and held a providers' forum for support organisations and educational providers involved in the research to discuss the issues and write these guidelines. This also enabled these providers in one locality to discuss ways of strengthening their inter-agency work in order to further develop their support of young people's learning.

Homeless people and educational provision

One of our main NRDC projects this year is a study of homeless people and their routes into education.

Homeless people are one of the government's priority groups in the Skills for Life strategy but the area has received little attention. In the project, directed by David Barton, we began by investigating the many definitions of homelessness and carried out an overview of national provision for homeless people.

We have carried out a detailed case study of Blackpool. This is revealing the shifting groups of people who are homeless, including ex-servicemen, seasonal workers, ex-



prisoners and new migrants, all of whom have different educational needs.

The research is revealing a wide range of provision for homeless people, both statutory and voluntary, with varying priorities. One thing that is agreed is that homelessness is just one of a multitude of issues for those concerned. As Susan Walsh from Blackpool Council said: "people aren't just homeless, they have a whole raft of issues that they're trying to struggle with, which in most cases has been one of

David Barton and Candice Satchwell

the reasons why they are homeless and unless you try and sort out the other issues that people are trying to address, you'll never sort out somebody's homelessness issues".

Candice Satchwell, the Research Associate on the project, writes "While many people who find themselves homeless have completed their schooling and gained qualifications, homeless people have often had a negative relationship with education in the past.



One man at the Salvation Army Bridge Project was a fully qualified chef, with his chef whites packed away ready to re-enter employment when his housing situation was resolved. Another man, John, however, had been unable to read the letter telling him that he was about to be evicted, and was removed from the Job Centre for being 'difficult' when he was unable to fill in the forms he was presented with.

With the help of a range of workers, John is now attending weekly adult literacy lessons at the local library and is working towards gaining his Health & Safety Certificate which will enable him to work on building sites. His main aim in life is to work outdoors again, having worked continuously for 23 years, but the new legislation requiring him to have the certificate became a barrier to him. He is progressing well with his literacy, and is soon to take the test."



What better way to spend a beautiful autumnal Saturday than swinging through trees in Grizedale Forest...?

The day the LLRC 'went ape' !

Paperwork and pressure

Karin Tusting is currently running a project entitled 'Paperwork and pressure in educational workplaces: the textual mediation of target culture'.

Karin Tusting

Funded by the ESRC, this 2 year project uses qualitative methods to look at centralised paperwork demands on people's working lives in two contrasting educational settings: an early years site and an adult education college.



The aim is to explore the impact of textualisation in the workplace, looking particularly at how an increasingly target-driven audit culture is mediated by different textual forms and practices, how this is lived, resisted or handled by people in the workplace, and the effects that living with such paperwork demands have on workers' experiences, within a literacy studies framework.

The notion of 'paperwork' is taken in a broad sense, to include all work practices where staff are expected to engage in literacy events as part of their job, whether these are paper-based or using information and communication technologies of various kinds.

The project is currently in its first data collection phase. Karin is exploring with research participants the paperwork they deal with as part of their everyday working lives through observation and interviews. This will be followed in the spring by a phase in which participants will log the paperwork they encounter over a period of time, and interviews will be carried out on the basis of these logs.

Data will be analysed against a series of research questions, looking at:

- How understandings and experiences of centralised auditing and monitoring demands are constructed in local

setting The impact of the time taken in fulfilling external paperwork demands on the time available for other working practices in education, such as reflection on and development of teaching, individual feedback or extra-curricular activities

- How local relationships, for instance relationships with managers, inflect the impacts of centralised curriculum and monitoring requirements

- Whether teachers' relationships with students and colleagues change when they are under increasing pressure to produce abstractions of the complexities of these lived relationships for monitoring purposes

- How teachers' notions of professionalism and doing a good job change when the monitoring processes they are expected to engage in are changed

- Whether local resources exist for resisting negative aspects of the increase in paperwork, and how these are drawn on in practice

- What insights this study can offer at the management and policy level to minimise negative impacts of paperwork in workplaces, while still gathering the information necessary for monitoring and development

- What alternative accountability systems could be developed by drawing on situated understandings of workplace social practices.

Migrant care workers in Cumbria

Sondra Cuban

and networks within the care industry, and in a new area of settlement -- Cumbria.

The title Home/work refers to: 1) the intersection of professional migrant women's home and community lives with their work lives; 2) the post-welfare society and its dependency on gendered, migrant care; 3) the educational capital women bring and develop, as they migrate; 4) the hidden curriculum of workplace literacies and learning; and the 5) the reflexive account of a migrant woman researcher positioned in the knowledge-based economy studying migrant women in the secondary service sector.

Sondra Cuban is beginning an ESRC project on the significance of Education, Literacy and Learning in the lives of carers.

The project focuses on professional migrant women and their mobility patterns

New Publications for 2007

We are pleased to announce the publication of the following books this year:

Literacy, Lives and Learning by David Barton, Roz Ivanič, Yvon Appleby, Rachel Hodge and Karin Tusting published by Routledge, *Partners in Literacy: Schools and libraries building communities through technology* by Sondra Cuban and Larry Cuban published by Teachers College Press, *Serving new Immigrant communities in the Library* by Sondra Cuban, published by Libraries Unlimited, the second edition of *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language* by David Barton published by Blackwell and *Literacy and Globalisation* by Uta Papen published by Routledge.



The Schome Park project



Julia Gillen is part of a project involving teenagers on a protected island in the 3D online virtual world: Second Life.

The project, directed by Peter Twining at the Open University, involves children joining together by means of avatars on the island. The environment used, Second Life, has received a great deal of attention both positive and negative in the media but was selected for the project owing to its great versatility and the capability of restricting the island to children and adults involved with the project who are all subject to Criminal Records Bureau enhanced disclosure checks. Other involved universities, besides the OU and Lancaster, have included Warwick and Liverpool running strands of curriculum activities such as archaeology and philosophy.

The project has benefited from sponsors including Becta and the Innovations Unit; many of the young students are members of the GOAL cohort (from socially disadvantaged sectors) of the National Academy of Gifted and Talented Youth.

It is an extremely stimulating environment for a literacy researcher. Everybody communicates in a range of written modes and the most exciting finding has been the collaborations that the young people themselves have initiated. These have included the extremely complicated scripting and 'building' operations needed to create and then play with a fully functional chess set, writing workshops, one-off events including a wedding and many more. There is always something new going on.

Julia gave a presentation to the Literacy Research Discussion Group which you can access on our website. You can also see the project itself and even join our forum: take a look at

<http://schome.open.ac.uk/wikiworks/index.php/>



Together with C.A.Cameron of the University of British Columbia, Julia Gillen directs the 'Day in the Life' project.

A 'Day in the Life' is an ecological investigation of aspects of culture in the interactional construction of childhood in diverse global communities.

Girls aged two and a half years, together with the caregivers they interact with and the values expressed by those caregivers are the foci of attention.

The approach taken is to film a 'day in the life' of each child and supplement these data with interviews in which core values in the child's family existence are explored. A crucial element of the project is the full participation by local investigators.

Several months after the filming there is an iterative stage of data collection, including a videoed discussion with the family of a 'compilation' tape from the day.

The interplay between members of the research team and participants, the collaborations between the local researchers and other members of the international research team, are all critical

components of this effort to develop new cultural understandings of these toddlers in context. Foci of analysis at present include:

- familial support for the development of strong children;
- eating events;
- early literacy activities and their environmental/social supports;
- musicality, conceived of as ways of engaging with and accommodating to the world.

*Images are taken from a paper in **Current Musicology**. They have been altered where necessary to protect the identities of the children.*

Julia Gillen



(Canada)
Selecting from 'all the music that belongs to you'



(Italy)
Actions to the music



(Peru)
Dancing on the bed to an audience of cousin and father (and the researcher)



(Thailand)
On the verandah: birdsong one side; TV the other



(Turkey)
Playing a favourite musical toy



(UK) Watching a Thomas the Tank engine video



(USA)
Whirling to the sound of a Eurovision Song Contest audio cassette

A Day in the Life ...

The 2007 LLRC Summer School

for literacy professionals and researchers



Pictured above are participants taking time out during the 2007 LLRC Summer School

Linking Learning to Literacies: A Social Practice View

Last July the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre hosted a successful summer school where participants could look in detail and link different learning theories to literacy, ESOL, and numeracy practice, policy, and research.

The summer school was aimed at experienced practitioners and managers in the field and participants drew on their professional and academic experiences, examined and built theories and enhanced their knowledge bases towards their continued professional development.

The course used a range of teaching and learning approaches, particularly enquiry-based and action-oriented. Throughout the week participants identified, examined, analysed, and evaluated the usefulness of learning and literacy theories.

The course introduced adult learning theories, then participants worked together to develop a more complex, contextualized view of adult literacy learning and adult learners and related these to literacy theories in various contexts.

Who Participated?

Participants came from a variety of backgrounds and countries and included practitioners interested in deepening

their knowledge of adult learning theory, and advanced continuing professional development, in addition to post-graduate students on professionally relevant Masters and Doctoral courses. Participants chose whether to use the course for credit towards their Lancaster postgraduate studies or other courses.

What participants told us about the 2007 Summer School

"I didn't know anything about learning theories before I came... but I do now! It seemed impossible in the beginning but it all came together. I have gained a great sense of achievement whilst having a lot of fun during the week".

"Learning is really messy, but this is good as it leads to great exchanges with everyone contributing something to the pot playing a different role so there is little duplication. Then of course, the talking helps the thinking..."

"It has been an exercise in reflection for us all..."

Will there be a 2008 summer school and how do I find information about this?

Yes, we hope to run a summer school in 2008 and have set the dates for 14th to the 18th July 2008. Please contact Kathryn James (see address below).



Blended Learning Postgraduate Studies in Adult Literacy, Numeracy & ESOL

www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk

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Modules starting in 2008

- Family & Community Literacies
- Language & Linguistics for Teachers

Debates in ESOL Teaching & Research

- Approaches to Adult Literacy, Numeracy & ESOL
- Understanding Change Management in Education
- Reflective Research & Evaluation for Professional Practice
- Workplace Basic Skills
- On-line Learning
- Academic Writing

Your questions are welcome to: Kathryn James, Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University
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