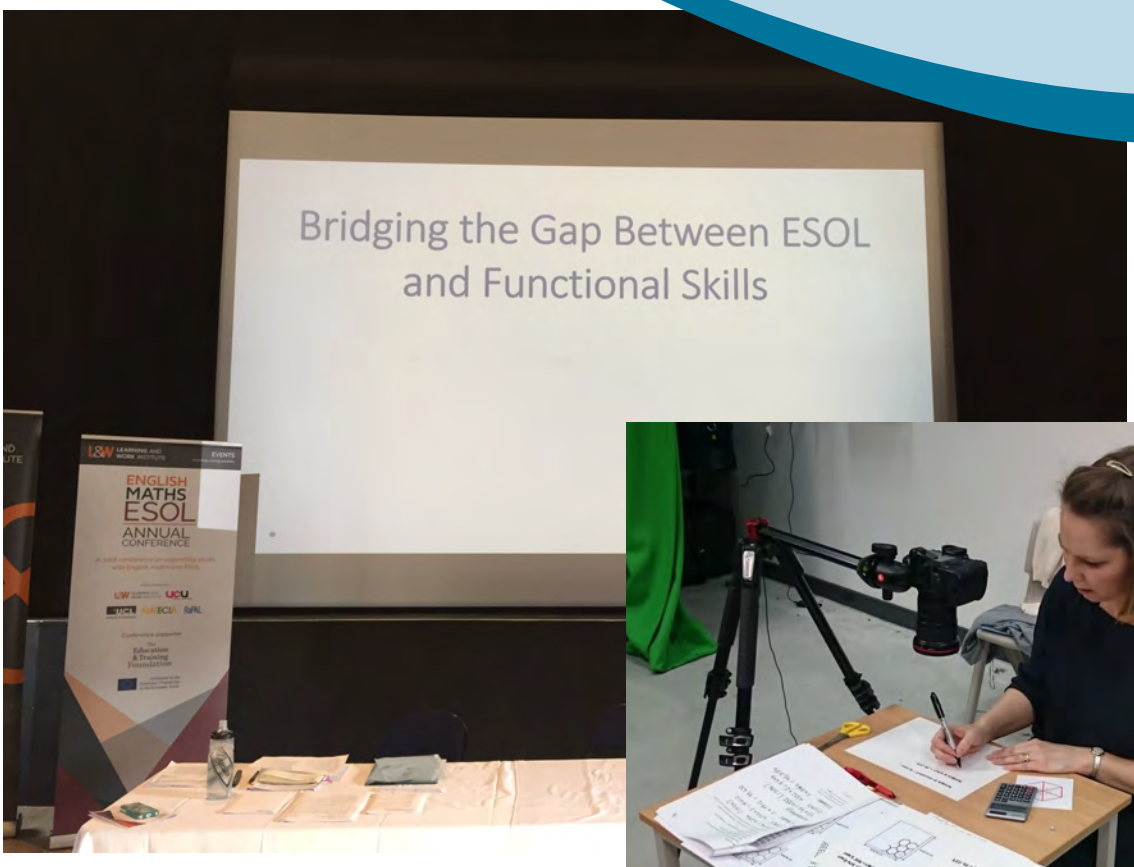
ISSN 2054-5355

Volume No. 91 Spring 2017

RaPAL

2016 Conference Edition



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 2016 /2017

Chair	Tara Furlong
Secretary	Claire Collins
Treasurer	Sarah Freeman
Journal Co-ordinator	Yvonne Spare
Production Editor	Claire Collins
Reviews Editor	Sarah Freeman
Membership Secretary	Jo Byrne
Website Manager	Tara Furlong
Regional Advocate Coordinator	Sam Duncan

Editorial Information

The editorial group for 2016-2017 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers: Gwyneth Allatt, Claire Collins, Samantha Duncan, Sarah Freeman, Tara Furlong, Julie Furnivall, Sue Lownsbrough, Anne Reardon-James, Irene Schwab, Yvonne Spare, Brian Street 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?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk
The RaPAL Journal is also available from various subscription services: EBSCO, LMInfo and Prenax.
The RaPAL journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group. The RaPAL journal was designed by Image Printing Company, Lumsdale, Matlock, Derbyshire

RaPAL Membership form

Help us to double RaPAL's membership in 2016/2017!

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 2016/2017

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

RaPAL

Contents

RaPAL

Editorial

Gwyneth Allatt, Anne Reardon-James and Yvonne Spare

Welcome to Journal 91, which focuses on the joint RaPAL, Learning and Work Institute, UCU, UCL and NATECLA conference held on November 3rd 2016 at Imperial College Union, London. The annual conference on English, maths and ESOL was entitled *Resilience and Responsiveness*; attributes that were reflected in the varied presentations and workshops which considered the challenges and opportunities for adult learning posed by the current policy context and shared some of the ways in which practitioners, providers and learners are responding.

This edition includes contributions from the practitioners and researchers who gave presentations and led workshops on the day, and we begin with Pip Kings' thoughts on the conference in which she explains the significance of the theme of 'Resilience and Responsiveness' and provides an overview of the sessions. This is followed by Steven Evans, who reflects on the changing political situation of English, maths and ESOL, from a skills deficit point of view. Arguing the case for a doubling of investment levels, a need to develop new ways of engaging people and delivering learning (such as through the Citizens' Curriculum), the current chief executive for Learning and Work Institute, sees these as essential to preparing adults for life and work in the 21st century.

Sue Southwood provides an overview of the key findings from the Functional Skills Reform Programme, which gleaned the views of more than 1000 employer and provider representatives. She explains that results have been reported to government and curriculum content is likely to be revised in response to this, with resources developed for teachers to support assessment of and for learning. On a different note, the ESOL Curriculum lead for City Gateway Women's Programmes, Tammela Platt, provides three 'tried and tested' teaching strategies for assisting ESOL learners, who frequently find themselves on English functional skills courses, for a variety of reasons.

Next Seb Schmoller and Graham Griffiths discuss the development and implementation of *Citizen Maths*, a free online course which follows the MOOC model (massive, open, online course). Their article outlines the structure of the course and identifies its intended learners, while also considering the positives and potential pitfalls of online learning on such a large scale.

Meanwhile, Janine Eldred considers the England Impact Forum's response to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) report, *Building Skills for All: A Review of Policy insights from the survey of adult skills,* which analysed data from the *OECD's Survey of Adult Skills*. In addition to outlining the response to the report's findings and recommendations, she also identifies the forum's own priorities and possible directions for the development of literacy and numeracy in England.

Focussing on the Midlands, but with implications for the rest of the sector, Joanne Keatley and Wendy Meredith look at Birmingham City Council's preparation for next year's devolution of the Adult Education Budget. While acknowledging the challenges that devolution may present, they identify a broad range of opportunities resulting from greater flexibility to provide non-accredited literacy and ESOL courses. More personalised approaches, greater use of authentic activities and increased ability to respond to the needs of the local labour market are amongst the varied opportunities they consider.

In our peer-reviewed article Alex Braddell and Bob Read explore the topic of self-directed learning. They outline the work of the Erasmus+ project *Autonomous Literacy Learners – Sustainable results*' in several European countries and consider the potential of non-directive coaching to support adult learners in English, maths and ESOL, raising some interesting questions about the nature of adult learning in the process.

This edition also considers two recent additions to the literature in our field. Sarah Freeman reviews *Exploring Adult Literacy and Numeracy practices: ethnographic case studies from Uganda*, in which the editors (George Openjuru, Dave Baker, Alan Rogers and Brian Street) bring together a series of case studies to provide valuable insights into people's everyday literacy and numeracy and identify their implications for teaching. On a different theme, Tara Furlong reviews *Multimodality, Learning and Communication: a social semiotic frame* by Jeff Bezemer and Gunter Kress which provides a means of re-examining our communication and learning practices in today's social and technological context.

Finally, this edition ends with Tara Furlong's round up of news from the sector, including initial feedback from our recent members' survey.

Note from the Journal Coordinator

Hello fellow RaPAL members

We hope you enjoy this conference edition of the Journal. We have tried to include a representative selection of articles from speakers and workshop leaders on the day.

We have also been busy putting together another long-awaited edition of the Taster Journal, which we hope to have ready in print for our upcoming RaPAL Conference in Liverpool in June. We have chosen a selection of articles from the past three years' Journals. After that, we have plans for a 'Numeracies as a social practice' issue due for publication in the summer. Our editing team have put out a call for papers and we would love to hear from anyone with experience or interest in that field – have you found this to be an accessible route into numeracy? Do you have any learners' stories that we could include?

Many thanks to those members who have joined our editorial group this year, and more recently, those who answered our call for additional peer-reviewers. It is important for us to continue to include a selection of academic articles about research, practice or policy and for this we need to retain a team of peer-reviewers with appropriate experience.

A variety of opportunities and different approaches are discussed in this edition. If you were not able to have your say on the day of the conference, why not take the opportunity to do so now and add your comment to our comments space at the bottom of the page, which needs the password that has been circulated with this edition.

Any thoughts 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 to be able to see your writing published.

We hope you enjoy this conference edition of the RaPAL Journal.

Best wishes

Yvonne

Resilience and Responsiveness: English Maths ESOL Annual Conference 2016

Pip Kings, conference chair

Pip was the Development Director at the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy, language and numeracy (NRDC) at the Institute of Education. In this capacity Pip has led on recent research and development projects for LSIS, BIS, IfL. She managed the teacher education strand of the National Skills for Life Support Programme.

Prior to joining NRDC Pip worked at the Learning and Skills Council as London Regional Skills for Life lead where she collaborated on the development of a London Skills for Life strategy.

'If so much money went into the Skills for Life strategy – what is there to show for it?'

To meet Star Painter at the end of the conference day was a significant moment for me: she provided the very real learner voice from the RaPAL stories of resilience and adult learning that acted as a counterpoint to the whole event. She was the embodiment of the vibrancy and vitality that rang out from her story in the book and provided the meaning behind everyone's attendance at this event. She (and the RaPAL 'Resilience' publication) provided the answer to the above question posed during the panel session.

Why Resilience and Responsiveness?

The conference topic arose from joint committee discussions between RaPAL, Learning and Work Institute (L&W), UCU, NATECLA and Institute of Education (formerly NRDC). In the ever-changing policy world of adult and further education, resilience and responsiveness are qualities that provide a bedrock for the success of adult learning. Both learners and teachers need to be resilient in the face of vacillating priorities regarding education and skills training and funding allocations, and to be creative in their responses to these. Of no less significance is the resilience and responsiveness we need in our personal lives in order to support each other and adhere to our principles.

The aim of the conference was not to make assumptions about resilience and responsiveness but to explore the ideas, and consider how obstacles to learning develop and can be overcome and to respect the lengths to which people will, or have to, go to access education. This would include an examination of current policy focused on English and mathematics skills at level 2 and above whereas there remains a huge need for teaching these subjects at all entry levels and level 1. Policy terminology no longer refers to basic skills, skills for life and literacy, ESOL and numeracy and perhaps the time is ripe for a re-examination of these needs.

Conference speakers

Reflecting on the content of the day I am amazed at how much was covered, the breadth of content, plus a range of authoritative presenters.

Stephen Evans, the new L&W Chief Executive took us through current government policy on English, maths and ESOL drawing attention to the higher levels and revised funding for adult education; L&W will continue to lobby government for widening participation in basic skills.

Jan Eldred, L&W Senior Research Fellow, examined England's performance in English and mathematics from the OECD survey on adult skills (PIAAC). L&W has a key role as National Coordinator on the European Agenda for Adult Learning. She took us through the data that shows comparatively low levels of basic skills in England compared to other countries and sought delegate participation in prioritisation of strategies to change this; we became a live 'people's chart' enabling her to gauge support for different options.

Sue Southwood, ETF Programme Manager, followed Jan with an update on the Functional Skills Reform Programme. Sue is responsible for English, maths and SEN and has successfully raised the profile of these learning areas, securing funding to continue research and staff development programmes. As a result of this work literacy, ESOL and numeracy standards and curricula are being retained and updated.

In the afternoon, we were lucky to hear from Birmingham Adult Education Service: Joanne Keatley, Principal, and Wendy Meredith, Curriculum Lead English and ESOL, about their experience of the devolved Adult Education Budget. Amidst concerns that this will mean a further dilution of adult education, Birmingham AES has seized this as an opportunity to reshape the adult budget locally with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and to align their programme with local skills and productivity plans. They see the potential for greater flexibility for teachers in the use of non-accredited learning and RARPA.

Finally, delegates had an opportunity to question an expert panel that drew from the day's speakers plus representatives from: Department for Education, Kate Cropper; NATECLA, James Cupper; L&W, Alex Stevenson.

Workshops

The workshops form the backbone of this conference which has been held annually for many years now to link research and practice in basic skills. This year we had a greater number than ever encompassing all the basic skills:

- Bridging the gap between ESOL and functional skills
- Citizen maths supporting the level 2 maths challenge
- The workplace and basic skills: opportunities for adult literacy
- Coaching to support self-directed English and maths learning
- Client Care and Self-Advocacy (and implications for literacies education)

- Re-imagining assessment and tracking for maths and English
- Talk English project: Demonstrating the impact of community English language learning.

The titles themselves evidence the depth of learning and research that provided the knowledge base for each workshop. The commitment of all presenters ensured a programme both relevant and critical in the current adult education landscape.

Conference organisation and venue

The conference organisers discovered a new venue this year thanks to Imperial College Union who hosted us in their own premises. A new venture for them, they will have been grateful for the feedback from all delegates. The eminent location behind the Royal Albert Hall was welcome and mention must be made of Mintra Sadler (L&W) who worked tirelessly with the premises manager to ensure that everything ran smoothly.

Tara Furlong, her team and the book

Learners' stories are aways the most powerful advocate for adult learning and it was inspiring to see this collection in RAPAL's 'Resilience: stories of Adult Learning'. At the end of the day Tara launched the publication, together with some of its contributors. Not an additional event to the day, but very much integral to the thinking and sharing throughout the day and a welcome celebration of all learners.

And finally…

The space, the input, and resulting professional practice exchanges were invaluable to us all. The importance of conferences like this really cannot be overvalued.

English, maths and ESOL: the current state of play

Stephen Evans

Stephen Evans became Chief Executive in 2016 after two years as Deputy Chief Executive, where he was responsible for Learning and Work Institute's research and development work. He joined from Working Links, a leading provider for employment and skills services, where he led on policy, strategy and business development. Prior to this, he worked for the London Development Agency as Director of Employment and Skills, commissioning programmes and leading the work of the London Skills and Employment Board; was Chief Economist at the Social Market Foundation; and spent six years as Senior Policy Advisor in HM Treasury, leading on policy to cut child poverty, increase employment and boost productivity.

Setting our sights high

It has been a topsy-turvy year of almost unprecedented political change. But the challenge of supporting all adults to gain the basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills needed for life and work in the 21st century remains central to our future prosperity and fairness. There is much good work going on, but we need extra action and investment to match the scale of the challenge. Just over a year ago, everything seemed relatively settled. After an unexpected majority victory in the 2015 general election, the new Conservative government had set out its key policy and investment priorities in an *Emergency Budget and Spending Review*. The challenge for those of us in the learning and skills sector was to implement the policies these showed.

A year later, and so much has changed. Following the UK's vote to leave the European Union (EU), a new Prime Minister and government are in place. Confirmation and further details of both devolution of the *Adult Education Budget* (AEB) in England and the UK-wide *Apprenticeship Levy* have followed. The *Autumn Statement* has set out the economic and policy challenges ahead. The aftermath of the EU referendum vote has included a debate about how to spread opportunity more widely across the UK and the future of social investment, once we leave the EU.

Our stark challenge

But in many ways nothing has changed. In particular, there are still 9 million adults with low literacy or numeracy skills and around 11 million with low digital skills. This is a staggering number and has a massive impact on people's life chances, social inclusion and economic prosperity. People with low literacy, numeracy or digital skills are far less likely to be in work. This employment penalty is only likely to increase as global economic changes continue to reduce the number of jobs that do not need these skills.

Our national prosperity, particularly in a *post-Brexit* world, depends on people having the skills needed for the jobs of the future. This drives not just individual opportunity but business success too; for our businesses to make the most of future opportunities they need a well-skilled, adaptable workforce. The importance of literacy, numeracy and digital skills to employers can be seen in part by the higher wages they pay people with them. For example, those with Level 1 numeracy skills earn 6-7% more than those without.

But it is also bigger than that. Literacy, numeracy and other basic skills are associated with increased likelihood of voting, active citizenship and social inclusion. This is in addition to being associated with improved health and financial capability. In other words, this is not just about driving economic growth and individual opportunity. It is also about the sort of society we want to be and ensuring everyone can play a full part in it.

Making a change

What then to do?

The first thing is to argue for *more investment*. Current rates of progress are simply too slow. We need more adults to have the opportunity for learning. *Learning and Work Institute* have argued, along with *Joseph Rowntree Foundation* in their *Solve UK Poverty* strategy, that we should set a national goal that all adults have the opportunity to gain these basic skills by 2030. This would require an additional £200 million per year, doubling current levels of investment. But it would pay back many times over, given the clear job, earnings and social benefits detailed above.

The second thing is to develop *new ways of engaging people and new ways of delivering learning.* People need to want to learn and learn in ways that are tailored to their own circumstances and motivations. People learn for many different reasons, whether to find work, build a career, support their children with homework, to make friends, for pleasure and many other reasons. People also learn in different ways and in different modes, whether in groups, digitally, or fitting around work and personal life.

At Learning and Work Institute, we have been working with a number of partners to develop the *Citizens' Curriculum*. This takes the core skills of literacy, numeracy, digital, financial capability, health literacy and citizenship. It brings them together into a programme of study-type approach with the content co-designed by learners. In one pilot with Rochdale Council, every £1 spent saved £3.68 to local public services.

We think the Citizens' Curriculum is part of the answer. We would like to see local commissioners and learning organisations develop their own similar approaches and also for this approach to learning to be built in to other public services, such as health, regeneration, employment and social care. Ongoing work to review and revise Functional Skills curricula is also an important part of the answer; GCSEs are not the answer for everyone and functional skills have the potential to be a solution.

The scale of the challenge is stark. The case for action is clear. The challenge is for us collectively to build a national mission to ensure everyone has the core capabilities and skills needed for life and work in 21st century Britain.

Functional Skills Reform Programme update

Sue Southwood

Sue Southwood is programme manager for Professional Standards and Workforce Development at the Education and Training Foundation. Sue has lead responsibility for the Foundation's work on maths, English and learners with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Before joining the Foundation in September 2014, Sue was Head of Basic Skills at the former National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), where she worked for 9 years. Sue began her career as a literacy and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) English teacher for Norfolk County Council. An experienced manager with over 25 years' experience in the sector, Sue has led a variety of national programmes to develop and improve practice and has written several publications. Prior to joining NIACE, Sue held a number of posts including curriculum manager for City and Islington College and spent a year in Spain as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher. Sue set up and managed workplace basic skills at work programmes for Northern Foods, Ford Motor Company and Transport for London.

The Functional Skills Reform Programme has consulted with employers, teachers, trainers and learners from across the education and skills sectors and reported to Government. We have heard from more than 1,000 representatives of employers and providers about what they think must be done to improve the qualifications, which, despite being relatively new, have already had a positive impact on many people's lives.

The top three skills employers asked for in English are to speak confidently and clearly; understand questions and give a relevant, logical and coherent answer in language that is appropriate; and to follow complex oral instructions. The top three maths skills required by employers are to solve problems that involve number or measurement in a job-specific context; to break a problem down into smaller parts and then work through systematically to get a sensible answer in a job-specific context; and finally to persevere and try different approaches if you do not find the answer straight away. We are confident that revised Functional Skills, especially at Levels 1 and 2, will give employers what they are looking for. Our revised national standards for adult literacy and numeracy, Functional Skills subject content and report are currently with ministers for approval.

The consultation included discussions on the balance between developing confidence in skills and applying them. For example, are Functional Skills about using simple skills in complex environments or does the challenge of re-creating a realistic scenario act as too much of a barrier for some learners? Will increasing content enhance the value and credibility of Functional Skills qualifications or will this just make them too much like GCSEs? These are vital questions and the devil will be in the detail. Once we receive ministerial go-ahead, the next step is to consult on how we assess the revised content in order to ensure these qualifications have credibility with learners and employers. There will be further consultations led by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) to iron out these details. When the qualifications are ready, we will be working hard to promote Levels 1 and 2 as qualifications that prepare young people and adults for the workplace.

Functional Skills should develop confidence in the basics of maths and English through understanding their relevance and application. We are developing a dynamic and inclusive exemplar curriculum for teachers, particularly to support those who are new to teaching Functional Skills. We have developed a range of resources to support assessment of and for learning and will continue to support teachers and trainers with a comprehensive Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plan. The Education and Training's *Maths and English Pipeline* offers a range of training and resources to develop teaching approaches in order to improve learner outcomes in these subjects and Foundation Online Learning has support for all teachers to improve their maths and English to Level 2.

For more information, go to http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/

Bridging the gap between ESOL and Functional Skills

Tammela Platt

Tammela Platt is a Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA)-qualified ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Curriculum Lead at City Gateway Women's Programmes, where the majority of learners are adult migrant women. She leads a small team of ESOL and Functional Skills tutors and teaches accredited ESOL and Functional Skills courses, as well as non-accredited pre-entry English courses. Tammela has been teaching English in various guises since 2010 - from secondary school pupils in the Ukraine to international students at University College London (UCL). Her academic interests include theories of second language acquisition, teaching academic writing and literacy for ESOL learners.

Introduction

In November 2016, I delivered a workshop at 'Resilience and responsiveness', the annual joint conference on English, maths and ESOL. My workshop highlighted the challenges of moving ESOL learners to Functional Skills (FS) English courses and introduced three practical classroom activities used to support and prepare ESOL learners for the FS English Level 1 exams. This article explains the workshop's origins and then outlines each of the classroom activities. It is hoped that they will be useful for any practitioners teaching ESOL learners on FS English courses.

Background: linking ESOL and FS English

Recently, the ESOL and FS tutor team at City Gateway Women's Programmes has noticed that many ESOL learners can achieve the FS English Entry 3 qualification, but the jump from Entry 3 to Level 1 – and on courses meant for native English speakers – proves difficult for these learners.

Why do we move ESOL learners onto FS English courses? We have identified the following reasons why our organisation progresses ESOL learners onto FS English courses:

- Some claim that FS qualifications are more widely recognised than ESOL qualifications by vocational training providers as well as employers *(we wonder if this is, indeed, the case and would welcome more insight about it from practitioners and employers)*
- FS qualifications are required for people completing apprenticeships
- Most employers still prefer applicants with GCSEs and FS qualifications put learners on the path to GCSEs
- There is more government funding available for FS, as ESOL funding continues to be cut across the country.

Due to the issues listed above, we developed a non-accredited '*bridging*' course to try to prepare ESOL learners for the FS Level 1 English course. This course ran for two terms following one term of FS English Entry 3 and proved to be about 50% successful, with half of the students being assessed as 'Level 1 -ready' before the autumn term.

Challenges for ESOL learners on FS English courses

We have identified three main categories of challenge for ESOL learners on FS English courses:

- **The exam mark schemes are designed for native speakers (NS)**
    - The standards assume that learners can already use English accurately and so do not award marks for elements like vocabulary range or pronunciation
    - Grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes are counted on the writing exam. This automatically disadvantages non-native speakers (NNS), as they are increasingly likely to make more mistakes than native speakers (NSs); for example, using incorrect prepositions or articles.
- **English is not the first language of ESOL learners**
    - NNSs need to master subjects such as grammar, syntax and lexical chunks, which NSs can apply automatically. This again disadvantages NNSs in the writing exam
    - If there are many unfamiliar words in a text, NNSs might become too preoccupied with decoding at word and sentence level to focus on meaning.
- **Other challenges**
    - Language learners naturally plateau around B1-B2 level (ESOL Entry Level 3 to Level 1)
    - Many of the FS English exam tasks are culturally specific and assume the learners possess certain knowledge; this is evident in the use of classically English names such as ‘Jane’ and lesser-known place names like ‘Glastonbury’
    - NNSs have much more to learn than NSs; the recommended 45 Guided Learning Hours (GLH) are often not enough to enable NNSs to achieve the Level 1 qualification.

Classroom activities to support NNSs in FS English Level 1

Our ESOL and FS tutor team has developed three practical classroom activities that we find useful in addressing some of the challenges that ESOL learners face in FS English Level 1. (At the conference, the workshop participants acted as learners in order to try out and give feedback on each activity.)

Nightmare topics

This activity addresses difficult, often culturally-specific writing exam tasks. It can be staged as follows:

- Each learner writes down a topic they do not know much about or would hate to write an exam on. For example*, 'My nightmare topic is writing an article about British films'*; a NNS would find this difficult if they do not watch British films
- Small groups pool their topics and pick one at random to discuss these questions:
    - What do you know about the topic?
    - What can you guess or make up about it?
    - What opinions do you have about the topic?
    - How can you contrast it with your home country or experience?

One workshop participant pointed out that this activity helped her realise that she knew more about the topic than she thought; sharing ideas with a group can do this. 'Nightmare topics' also help learners to develop confidence in their ability to make things up on the spot rather than always sticking to the literal truth.

Unfamiliar lexis

This activity helps learners with difficult vocabulary, particularly on the reading exam:

- Present a few challenging words that the learners are unlikely to know
- Ask the learners to look at the words and see if they can identify any prefixes, suffixes or root words within the new words
- Show the words in sentences and encourage the learners to use context to guess the meanings, both of the word and of the sentence as a whole. They could also try to identify the word's part of speech.

The point of this activity is not to teach new words, but rather to show the learners that they do not need to understand every word in order to infer the general idea of a sentence or text. In the workshop, I used German words for the 'unfamiliar lexis' that the participants had to decode.

Top 10 mistakes

This activity came from a former co-worker of my colleague:

- Hand back learners' marked work with the types of mistakes identified in the teacher's preferred marking code (e.g. 'sp' for spelling, 'gr' for grammar, etc.)
- Each learner must come up with a list of 10 common errors that they make in their writing.

  The errors cannot be as general as 'grammar' or 'capital letters'; encourage learners to look closely and identify specific errors that they regularly make, such as 'the letter 'p' is always capitalised' or 'spelling "because" incorrectly'.

This activity helps learners focus on weaker areas of their writing and is less overwhelming than trying to improve all areas at once. Learners should revise their lists regularly so that they have a working document to refer to when checking their homework and preparing for exams.

Conclusion

Teaching FS English to ESOL learners is not ideal, but in today's funding environment and employment market it is sometimes the easiest way to help learners progress into further training and work. The ESOL and FS English team at City Gateway Women's Programmes uses the above three activities, among others, to support our ESOL learners in the FS English Level 1 classroom.

What challenges do you have in working with ESOL learners on FS courses and how do you support them? How does your organisation progress ESOL learners into further training and work?

Can an open online course like Citizen Maths help tackle the (Level 2) maths challenge?

Seb Schmoller and Graham Griffiths

Graham Griffiths taught mathematics in FE for many years. He now works as a Lecturer in Education at UCL-IOE where he leads the Post Compulsory PGCE Mathematics with numeracy course. His main focus in the Citizen Maths team is on evaluation. Email: g.griffiths@ucl.ac.uk.

Seb Schmoller worked in trade union education in FE until 1996, and then held learning technology roles in FE till 2002. Until 2012 he was CEO of the Association for Learning Technology. He now does independent work on online learning, including directing Citizen Maths. He is a Governor of Northern College and of The Sheffield College. Email: seb@schmoller.net.

To stay in touch with Citizen Maths, go to https://www.citizenmaths.com/keep-in-touch/.

Background

What is Citizen Maths?

Citizen Maths is a free and open online maths course for self-motivated adults, at Level 2, covering five 'powerful ideas' in mathematics, and involving between 25 and 50 hours of study. It does not lead to a formal qualification. We have structured Citizen Maths according to the OECD's PISA Assessment and Analytical Framework for Mathematics, Reading, Science, Problem Solving and Financial Literacy, which provides an internationally recognised framework for mathematical content. Citizen Maths has been developed incrementally since 2013 and was launched in its final form on 31 January 2017. All of the course content is licensed under the most liberal Creative Commons licence, so is freely available for reuse.

Who is behind Citizen Maths?

The development of Citizen Maths was funded by the Ufi Charitable Trust. The work was done by Calderdale College, with the UCL Institute of Education and OCR, with advice from the Google Course Builder team. Citizen Maths is continuing, in its current steady-state mode, with support from Calderdale College.

Ufi Charitable Trust

The Ufi Charitable Trust became a grant-giving body following the sale in 2010 of Learndirect (the learning arm of the University for Industry, which the government set up in 1998). With an initial fund of £50m, the Trust focuses on scaling up the use of digital technology to support adult vocational skills. Citizen Maths was one of the first three projects chosen to be funded by the Trust.

Headline data

At the time of writing over 9,000 people had signed up for Citizen Maths, at a current rate of nearly 200 per week, with over 18,000 people having completed the nine-point pre-course self-assessment that (optionally) precedes registration, and which ensures at least to some extent that learners know what they are letting themselves in for.

Learners are roughly normally distributed around the 30-39-year-old range. About 60% of those signing up are women.

Nuts and bolts of Citizen Maths

The thinking behind it

Typically, our learners will have been through the conventional education system and they will have been failed by that system, coming out of it with qualifications that they now feel do not reflect what they might have achieved, given different opportunities, and what they now need, either for personal satisfaction or for more utilitarian purposes. Like many others, they probably do not see the point of maths, finding it hard to engage with the subject. They may simply 'glaze-over' when presented with numbers. As a result, perhaps they feel a sense of disempowerment, captured memorably by the astronomer, Carl Sagan (1996) in his final interview, who argued that, without scientific understanding, 'We don't run the government, the government runs us.' (Bailsie, 2012). This view could equally be applied to mathematical understanding.

It is a key starting point for the design of Citizen Maths that these individuals will benefit from engaging with a different approach to the teaching and learning of mathematics from the conventional pedagogy that did not work for them in the past. Our design sets out to avoid portraying maths as something abstract. Instead it puts maths in the context of many adults' everyday lives.

> Learning results from what the student does and thinks and only from what the student does and thinks. The teacher can advance learning only by influencing what the student does to learn. (Simon, n.d. in Eberly Centre for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, 2015).

We have tried to apply the above 'axiom' about learning, which is attributed to Nobel Prize winner Herbert Simon. We've designed the course so that learners engage in contextualised problems in such a way that the *power* of mathematics is revealed. We've modelled Citizen Maths in part on the 2011 artificial intelligence (AI) MOOC designed and run by Google's Director of Research Peter Norvig and by Sebastian Thrun, at that time a computer science professor at Stanford University, who then went on to found the online course provide Udacity Inc. Our *aim* is to give learners the feeling – at least for some of the time – that they are in a one-to-one tutorial with an experienced and effective maths tutor.

Intended learners

Citizen Maths is for self-motivated learners who want to improve their grasp of mathematics amongst the 10 million or so adults in England whom surveys shows are at or above Level 1, but not yet at Level 3.

Citizen Maths may also be of use to employers who want to provide staff (or trade unions, their members) with a practical and flexible learning and development opportunity in maths; also to colleges and other learning providers who want to give enrolled learners an additional or alternative route to improving their maths.

The 'pool' is so big – in absolute terms, and in relation to the amount of public funding available – that we think it is important to try to meet some of the need using a non-standard approach.

Structure of Citizen Maths

We've organised the course under five powerful ideas – proportion, uncertainty, representation, pattern, and measurement, each split into between three and five units of about five lessons. We use a range of content types including:

- short (typically 3m) videos of 'tutor to camera' or 'tutor's hand to camera'
- quizzes and other challenge activities
- spreadsheets and purpose-designed apps which learners can use to 'experiment with the maths'
- some programming in the educational programming language Scratch.

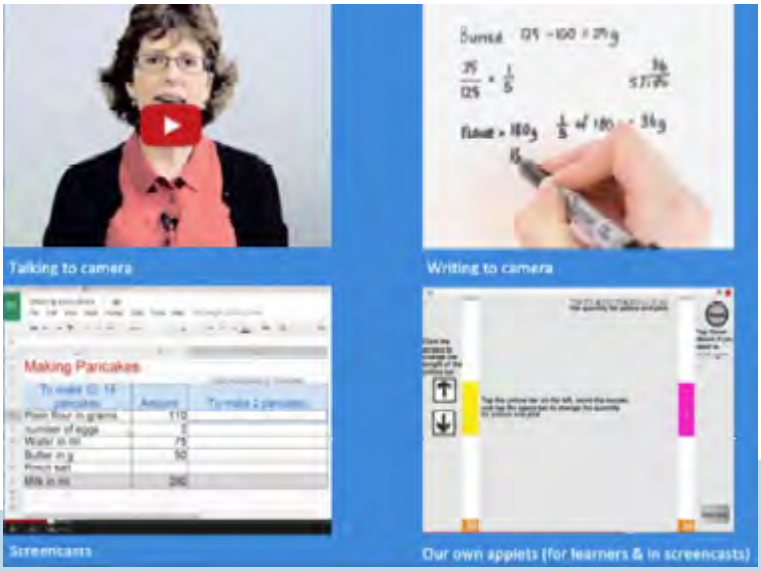


Figure 1 - examples of content types used by Citizen Maths

We've designed Citizen Maths to be exceptionally cheap to run at very large scale. This has meant making many design compromises.

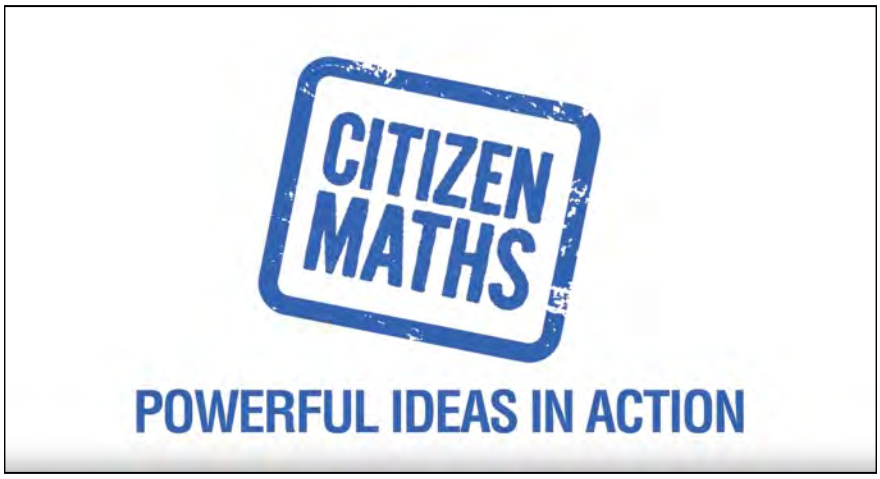


Figure 2 - 3-minute screencast showing what Citizen Maths is like from a learner's point of view

Possibilities and problems

Possibilities

Demand. Uptake is growing steadily, without substantial marketing spending, such that we are reasonably confident that 'left to its own devices' Citizen Maths will have at least 15,000 registrations by the end of 2017, and perhaps 30,000 by the end of 2018.

Learner enthusiasm. Learners' ratings of many different aspects of the course range, in general, from positive to very positive (averaging 3.5 to over 4 on a five-point Likert scale).

Figure 3 - Lesson ratings, aggregated by Unit (5=100% Extremely Useful; 1 = 100% Not at all Useful)

We know from learners' narrative feedback that some feel that they gained from doing Citizen Maths. Here are some illustrative snippets:

> *I really enjoyed this section, I was able to do the calculations quickly & easily. I have even been able to grasp rounding and will be using this method to help me in future tasks.*
>
> *I feel I have learnt how to read and interpret data on both on a spreadsheet and even without the aid of a spreadsheet. This lesson has been the most enjoyable, clear and easiest to understand.*
>
> *This is a good app to use to interpret household data. I enjoyed working through the lessons*.
>
> *Definitely got me thinking as I have played the Pass the Pigs so this helped me to construct mental images to accompany the statements about the probability.*
>
> *This course has allowed me to consider how I react and respond to maths. It has given me the confidence to tackle questioning that I ordinarily would not be exposed to in my current work role (learning support assistant). … Particularly useful is the feeling of having my own personal tutor alongside me all the way. Being able to pause videos whilst I process what is being taught has empowered me too.*

Figure 4 - short video with learners (mainly from Barking and Dagenham College and from Morley College) talking about their experiences of Citizen Maths

Figure 5 – short video with teachers from Barking and Dagenham College and from Morley College giving their perspectives on Citizen Maths

Problems

Attrition. In common with other open online courses, the road to learning is 'paved with good intentions'. That is to say, many people register and do no more than that. Some then take a look and go no further. (That may have been all they were intending to do; or they may not have liked what they found.) A small proportion, once they've got started, then stick at it.

Support. If Citizen Maths is being actively deployed by a learning provider (and it has not been designed with this in mind), then learners may have access to local support: otherwise, unless they actively seek help, if stuck they will remain so. To counter this, we have provided on the Citizen Maths web site a wide range of support materials, FAQs, video 'how-tos' and the like. Citizen Maths also has an opt-in system that we have developed which tracks individual learners' progress and which emails them friendly, context-sensitive 'chivvies'.

Learning gains. We don't know other than anecdotally whether people who use Citizen Maths gain in their grasp of mathematics.

'Techno-discrimination'. It is well known that there are adverse age- and income-gradients in access to the Internet and to computers. Therefore online learning is inherently discriminatory against those who do not have personal access to technology. On the other hand, Citizen Maths is free to learners, and can be tackled without learners needing to go anywhere near a course provider.

Practicalities

Platform requirements

To run a service like Citizen Maths – cheaply – you need access to a 'cloud-based' system which can cheaply handle potentially very large numbers of users without stress. It is for this reason that we have developed Citizen Maths using an Open Source system called Google Course Builder, which runs on an economical commercial service provided by Google called the Google Cloud Platform. Our hosting costs vary almost linearly with the amount of use, and are very low indeed per learner.

Learning design

Face-to-face v. online. In contrast to a face-to-face course, an online course like Citizen Maths needs to be meticulously designed and implemented and tested – with nigh on every 'i' dotted and 't' crossed, before it is used by real learners. This is a commonly underestimated challenge. We have had the benefit of being funded to develop Citizen Maths over 2+ years, iteratively, which has helped us iron out many problems. Readers who would like access to our design spreadsheet (which may serve as a template) are welcome to contact Seb Schmoller).

Skills. To develop Citizen Maths we have needed:

- maths learning expertise
- evaluation knowhow
- outstanding to-camera tutors
- online learning design knowhow
- content development expertise
- web-systems engineering and software development skills
- project management experience
- privacy policy and IPR knowledge
- web-usability knowhow.

It is arguable that this mix of skills tends not to reside in single institutions.

Summative assessment. Because of changes in the regulatory environment, we decided early in the project to drop earlier plans to develop a Level 2 qualification to 'go with' Citizen Maths. We know from learner feedback that explicit linkage between Citizen Maths to a Level 2 qualification – indeed 'click-through' access to summative assessments – would be highly valued by a proportion of our learners. Once the revised Functional Skills Mathematics specifications have been finalised there would probably much to gain from the creation of a 'Citizen Maths-like' course explicitly linked to Functional Skills Mathematics.

Conclusion

We began this article asking if an open online course like Citizen Maths can help tackle the (Level 2) maths challenge. From our experience with developing and running Citizen Maths we think that the straight answer to the question is 'at least to some extent'.

Very few if any single institutions in the further and adult education have access to the wide mixture of skills referred to in the 'practicalities' section, so the challenges for a single institution to develop comparable courses to Citizen Maths would be great in any event.

But, alongside this, most successful developments of large scale open online learning have been:

- 'start-ups', such as Udacity (mix of free and subscribed to courses, with a lot of strong industry links, multi-million dollar investment from venture capital firms), or Alison (very early into the field, funded by advertising, partially philanthropic), or
- dependent on some kind of aggregation of demand and sharing of effort between institutions, such as the Open University's FutureLearn (single platform shared by partners who are willing to share previous registrants with each other via FutureLearn, thereby ensuring that each new course is advertised to several million people).

For these reasons, we believe that to make a long-term success of provision like Citizen Maths, across the spectrum of adult learning needs at around Level 2, there needs to be the Further and Adult Education equivalent of FutureLearn. This would enable development and deployment to take place at a large enough scale for it to be done cost-effectively and efficiently, and with sufficient outward reach to ensure that individual courses were used by thousands of learners.

Whether there is sufficient motivation and resources within a fragmented Further and Adult Education system for such an endeavour to be viable is an open question.

References

Bailesie (2012) *Carl Sagan's last interview with Charlie Rose.* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8HEwO-2L4w&feature=youtu.be&t=4m44s (Accessed 17 February 2017)

Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation (2015) *Principles of Teaching and Learning. Available at:* http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/principles/index.html. (Accessed 17 February 2017)

Further reading/viewing

Reports

- PISA 2012 Assessment and Analytical Framework: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/PISA%202012%20framework%20e-book_final.pdf
- BIS Research Paper Number 130 – The Maturing of the MOOC: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240193/13-1173-maturing-of-the-mooc.pdf
- Scaling up: Achieving a breakthrough in adult learning with technology: http://www.ufi.co.uk/sites/default/files/Scaling%20up_21_5_V3.pdf

Websites

- Citizen Maths: https://citizenmaths.com/
- The STEM Teaching Futurelearn Programme: https://www.futurelearn.com/programs/stem-teaching
- Udacity: https://udacity.com/
- Khan Academy “Math”: https://www.khanacademy.org/math

Articles

- Citizen Maths: Improving maths in the workplace. Article about Citizen Maths in 'Mathematics Today”, December 2015: https://www.citizenmaths.com/improving-maths-in-the-workplace-mathematics-today/
- Q&A about Citizen Maths: https://www.citizenmaths.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PartnerInformationPackAppendix2.pdf
- TES article about Citizen Maths by John Rees and Seb Schmoller, June 2016: https://www.tes.com/news/further-education/breaking-views/why-moocs-could-have-answer-uks-maths-challenge

Links

- How Video Production Affects Student Engagement - An Empirical Study of MOOC videos: http://www.webcitation.org/6O3Gq6pJN

- Post-16 Maths Review - September/October 2016 round table meeting to discuss the potential for digital learning to help improve maths participation and attainment post-16: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B5Ps5nzrL5ENRkNhTmRUMmw5Zmc
- 'The MOOC revolution that wasn't' – Audrey Watters, 23/8/2015: http://kernelmag.dailydot.com/issue-sections/headline-story/14046/mooc-revolution-uber-for-education/
- Peter Norvig's TED Talk about the MOOC on artificial intelligence: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYclUdcsdeo
- Designing University Education for 2025 (relevant to FE…). A talk by Jeff Haywood: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bi94Jz6oY2k
- Seb Schmoller's blog posts about:
  - Peter Norvig and Sebastian Thrun's MOOC on artificial intelligence: http://fm.schmoller.net/ai-course/
  - Keith Devlin's 'Introduction to Mathematical Thinking' MOOC: http://education.lms.ac.uk/2013/05/seb-schmoller-a-report-from-keith-devlins-and-courseras-introduction-to-mathematical-thinking-mooc/ and http://education.lms.ac.uk/2013/06/seb-schmoller-second-report-from-keith-devlins-and-courseras-introduction-to-mathematical-thinking-mooc/
  - Links for two talks about MOOCs at the International Centre for Theoretical Physics and one for the European Trade Union Institute: http://fm.schmoller.net/2013/09/links-for-a-talk-at-ictp-about-moocs.html

European agenda for adult learning: UK National Coordinator Work Programme 2015/17

England Impact Forum responses to the OECD report, *Building Skills for All: A Review of England. Policy insights from the survey of adult skills*

Janine Eldred

Janine is a Senior Research Fellow at the Learning and Work Institute. Previously Jan worked at NIACE in the areas of widening participation; literacy, language and numeracy; health and disability equalities and young adults as well as international aspects of adult learning. She was an Assistant Director for NIACE until 2010 when she became a Senior Research Fellow in a freelance capacity. She has worked as a teacher and tutor organiser in Adult Basic Skills, a community outreach worker, a Local Government Officer and a Head of Faculty in a College of Further Education. Jan has a Master's degree and a Doctorate in Adult Literacy and was advisor to Lord Boswell of Aynho, the Chair of the Commissioners of the NIACE Inquiry into Adult Literacy in England. Her current work includes working with colleagues on the European Agenda for Adult Learning in the UK (L+WI is the National Co-ordinator) on insights into the impact of adult learning on work, health and communities. She supports her local authority Adult and Community Learning Service and is chair of her local Citizens' Advice Bureau.

1. Background

In January 2016, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published its report, *Building Skills for All: A review of England Policy insights from the survey of adult skills*.[1] This report had been trailed by OECD, at the summative conference of the UK's contribution to the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) in September 2015.

Skills planning and funding in the UK is devolved to the four administrations: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. However, it is also worth noting that there are moves to devolve further within England, linking skills planning, commissioning and delivery to local economic development and well-being.

The focus of the OECD report was on an analysis of data relating to England only, with source data being drawn from OECD's *Survey of Adult Skills,* which was published in 2013[2]. This document provided comparative analysis of data drawn from across 23 participating countries.

---

[1] https://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/building-skills-for-all-review-of-england.pdf

[2] https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/

Of the UK administrations, only England and Northern Ireland invested in the survey. When the 2013 report was published, it showed that England faced some challenges, some of which were shared by other developed countries, and others which were unique or atypical.

The purpose of the 2016 report is to present the England-specific data in a single report, assess the implications of the identified challenges and recommend prioritised actions that are required to address these.

2. The England Impact Forum

The forum was established in 2014 as part of the UK work programme for the EAAL. There are impact forums in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The purpose of the England forum is to discuss research and development activities related to the UK's programme of work and contextualise them for England. During the current UK work programme, the forum will feed into the development of a 'State of the Nations' report on the impact of adult learning to be published in September 2017.

Membership of the forum includes:

- Representatives of local and national policy makers in England
- Representatives from adult learning providers including colleges, local authorities, as well as private and third sector bodies
- Representatives of infrastructure bodies, or agencies in health or regeneration bodies with an interest in adult learning
- Employers and trades unions with an interest in the EAAL and adult learning policy
- Support agencies and curriculum specialist agencies in adult learning
- Universities and think-tanks researching in the field of adult learning
- EAAL project leads will be invited to attend and present their findings
- Representative of Learning & Work Institute or the programme's Research Group.

The forum had previously discussed the full *Survey of Adult Skills (2013)* so decided that the OECD report (2016) should be discussed as highly relevant to its terms of reference. Basic or essential skills, particularly contextualised approaches such as those promoted and piloted by the Citizens' Curriculum, are a key aspect of the UK EAAL National Coordinator programme.

OECD authors of the report were invited to attend the Forum but were unable to do so. A summary presentation (based on OECD material) was circulated prior to the meeting of the Impact Forum in February 2016. Dr. Janine Eldred, Senior Research Fellow at Learning and Work Institute, summarised some of the key elements and recommendations of the report. This set the scene for Impact Forum members to discuss their responses to the report in small groups and prepare flipcharts with their feedback. The small groups were asked to discuss the key questions:

- What are our responses to the headline findings?
- What are our responses to the recommendations?
- What would our priorities be for the development of literacy and numeracy (English and maths) in England?
- What evidence can we draw upon to support our priorities?

3. Feedback from the England Impact Forum discussion

3.1. What are our responses to the headline findings?

3.1.1 Is there anything new here?

Impact Forum members felt that there was a lot of information in the report which was familiar; this included such aspects as the impact of parental involvement on children's and young people's achievements; the diversity of adults who need support and the challenges of how to adopt the most effective teaching and learning approaches. The comparative statistics were probably some of the most interesting insights. There was felt to be, already, a great deal of collective insight and knowledge, amongst both research communities and practitioners, about levels of need and what works to help adults to develop the English and Maths which seem most relevant to their lives.

3.1.2 Is there a strong enough focus on valuing, training and developing the English and Maths teaching and learning workforce?

There were concerns that reductions in the amount and availability of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers and assistants in the English and maths sectors were not emphasised. Additionally, the depression of teachers' pay and conditions, when compared with highly successful countries, was possibly a contributing factor, when trying to attract the most able and competent teachers. Forum members would have welcomed an analysis of how successful countries manage the Initial Teacher Training, CPD and pay-conditions systems of their workforce in this curriculum area.

3.1.3 Should there be even greater emphasis on intergenerational approaches?

The Forum welcomed the endorsement of evidence around the intergenerational impact of poor literacy and numeracy skills, recognising that parents with under-developed skills cannot support their children. This has been identified over many years of research. There was support for the recommendation of involving parents much more in early years' education, which should be implemented through more family learning programmes. This approach has long been evidenced and advocated to help support children's learning as well as develop adults' skills and therefore impact upon the intergenerational difficulties. In spite of the compelling data from the NIACE Inquiry into Family Learning, this approach has not been given a high policy priority in recent years in the UK. However, the forum felt that, given its importance and proven impact, the recommendation could have been given greater prominence.

3.1.4 Was the diversity of contextualised approaches to basic skills given enough emphasis?

Members of the Forum felt that the presentation of contextualised basic skills as a subset of another recommendation was to underestimate its importance. Competence in basic skills is about being able to relate those skills to the diverse capabilities required to get on at work, at home and in the community. The Forum supported the necessity to include literacy and numeracy in apprenticeship and traineeship programmes but was concerned about a lack of skills amongst the English and maths teaching workforce and variable quality of teaching and learning. Literacy and numeracy are used in life-wide and lifelong situations and so opportunities for development and learning should reflect that diversity of contexts and settings. The work of the Citizens' Curriculum [3], is evidencing how literacy and numeracy can be developed using holistic, contextualised approaches in a wide number of settings including, for example, housing, homelessness, health, financial management, drug and alcohol recovery and community development. Many of these contexts are where we find many people, who, for diverse reasons, benefited least from initial education. They often face challenges and difficulties in adult life which, research tells us, are closely linked with difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Evidence from work in these contexts, including the Citizens' Curriculum, highlights the importance of also developing high quality, so-called 'soft' skills, demanded not only for employment, but for navigating and negotiating throughout life.

---

[3] Bynner, J and Parsons, S, 2014: The Impact of Adult Literacy and Numeracy, research based on the 1970 British Cohort Study, London, Centre for Longitudinal Studies

[4] NIACE, 2013: *The Inquiry into Family Learning in England and Wales*, Leicester, NIACE

[5] http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-work/life-and-society/citizens-curriculum/

3.1.5 Is it possible to reform skills provision without reforming the ways people access learning (through information, advice, guidance, support, sign-posting and brokering)?

Forum members acknowledged that more could and should be done to offer information, assessment and guidance at the point of transitions from school to Further Education, Apprenticeships and Higher Education. This should be supported with the appropriate, relevant literacy and numeracy so that individuals can benefit most effectively from their progression. Similarly, adults returning to learning following job-loss or periods of long-term unemployment, require qualified support with relevant information, advice and guidance. This seemed a significant gap in the report.

3.1.6 Is it possible to stop using qualifications as a proxy for skills?

In the general discussion generated by the Forum, great concerns were expressed about the instrumental approaches to the development of literacy and numeracy amongst the adult population, which sees these skills linked only to employment, work and economic impact. Qualifications are often used as a proxy for identifying the skills that have developed but the forum believed that the gap between levels of competence and the qualifications gained, should have been more highly emphasised. There was a strong feeling that this method of accountability is flawed and there is plenty of practitioner (and employer) anecdotal evidence to support this. Further systematic research into successful alternatives to qualifications, as proxies for skills and knowledge, should be explored, including, for example, entrepreneurship, employability, civic responsibilities and citizenship.

3.2 What are our responses to the recommendations?

3.2.1 Do the recommendations match the findings?

The Forum felt that the recommendations were not those that they would have proposed, given the evidence presented, alongside their practitioner and research experience. There was a strong feeling that initial education alone cannot address the challenges identified by the report. It was believed to be naïve to think that only initial education can meet the ever-changing demands of living and longer years of working, in times of rapid technological, economic and social development. This was felt to be particularly important in the context of increased geographical mobility and the demands of responding to enforced migration and the needs of diverse migrant and refugee communities. Put simply, schools cannot have all the answers. There must be a more holistic approach involving all players in a policy of Lifelong Learning.

Members wondered how the recommendation of the "the priority of priorities" on initial education had been reached. Previous evidence in *Learning Through Life*[6] and other publications has indicated that a policy response based on addressing the 'flow' (or new entrants to the labour market) over the 'stock' of those already in it, is an inefficient use of resources. Some concerns were expressed that literacy, numeracy and technical skills are embedded in schools' systems but generally lose priority in FE, HE or employment. Teaching and learning approaches in sectors other than schools should be examined and key success factors identified so that transitions from school to work or to further formal learning, unemployment to employment or changes in employment are supported. Each of these transition points demands an appropriate structure and staff with the necessary professional competences and qualifications.

3.2.2 Are the recommendations sensitive enough to the devolution agenda?

Whilst recognising the timescale within which the OECD report was compiled, Forum members were keen to stress that although hitherto the funding system for adult basic skills in England has not supported the most effective ways of teaching and learning, policies were changing. With moves to devolve decision-making in England, members felt that there could be a greater focus on the evidence of 'what works', as opposed to simply continuing to support and fund qualifications.

As suggested above, England has, for many years, used qualifications as a proxy for skill levels, as a way to link funding of provision in adult basic skills and assess outcomes. However, the development and piloting of such initiatives as the Citizens' Curriculum and What Employers Want[7], in developing employability skills amongst young people, indicate how relevance, links to 'softer skills' and application to context are highly valued and cannot always be evidenced through qualifications.

With greater devolution, centralised approaches to investment in skills for life and work will be more heavily scrutinised and future emphasis could be on impact rather than certification.

3.3 Priority recommendations and actions from the England Impact Forum

3.3.1 Learn from what works elsewhere

We should use research to identify what other countries do that helps their schools and adults to achieve more successfully. The evidence should be used to inform the development of teachers, providers, curricula and accreditation.

---

[6] www.learningandwork.org.uk/our.../what-employers-want-young-peopl...

[7] www.learningandwork.org.uk/our.../what-employers-want-young-peopl...

Action:

OECD data and other international comparative studies (see for example, the work of the British Association of International and Comparative Education www.baice.ac.uk) should be examined and summarised by Learning and Work Institute to identify the key success factors which help to inform systems and approaches in both compulsory and post-compulsory learning in other countries. Learning and Work Institute should share the insights widely amongst policy makers, providers and practitioners in the UK and across Europe.

3.3.2 Engage education leaders in the debate

Education leaders in both the schools and post-compulsory sectors should be made aware of the evidence of need and what works.

Actions:

- Advocacy organisations such as Learning and Work Institute, the Reading Agency and the Literacy Trust should raise awareness amongst the public, practitioners and providers, of the challenges identified by the OECD report.
- Advocacy and research organisations should work with the Department for Education and The Education and Training Foundation, to acknowledge the OECD data and analysis for England, to publicly recognise the challenges and help to inform and shape future priorities in all education sectors.

3.3.3 Integrate the learning process with other forms of support

Guidance opportunities should be offered at transition stages from school to FE, apprenticeships and HE, which take into account literacy and numeracy achievements and developmental needs. Literacy and numeracy support should be integrated in all post-compulsory programmes, including HE, where individuals may present strong skills in other areas but less so in literacy and numeracy.

Actions:

- Forums such as the Association of Colleges, the Local Government Association (LGA) and forum for local providers (such as LEAFEA and HOLEX) should bring together careers guidance organisations, local authorities, Academy Trusts, schools, Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges representatives to explore, identify and implement assessment, information, guidance and support processes to ensure continuity at transition stages with a focus on English and maths competence and achievement.
- HE and FE forums should collaborate more in identifying the best match for skills and aspirations, including offering additional learning alongside vocational and academic programmes. There is evidence that this kind of support can be highly effective for international students who can out-perform their peers. It should be available for all students.

- Learning and Work Institute and its partner organisations, should explore and re-present the evidence of the effectiveness of embedded and integrated approaches to teaching and learning English and maths, such as the Citizens' Curriculum. This should inform work-force development programmes for both Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development.

3.3.4 Look at family learning in the light of the report

Family learning should be a higher policy priority and the promotion of years of experience, knowledge and understanding shared widely and used to support training of both school and adult educators.

Actions:

- Learning and Work Institute and its partners should make strong representation to the Department for Education, using summaries of the impact of family learning, alongside the evidence of longitudinal studies and the OECD reports, to create a family learning 'deal' with nurseries and infant schools.
- Drawing on the evidence, a programme of CPD should be organised by DfE to equip staff in both compulsory and post-compulsory settings to successfully offer family learning programmes.

3.3.5 Don't forget devolution!

Regional and local networks, including the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), should be made aware of the need to develop literacy and numeracy as well as what works in teaching and learning. Integrating the development of these skills with work-place learning, apprenticeships, community development, health, housing and employment policies and practices will provide the diversity of platforms required to meet diversity of need.

Actions:

- Strong advocacy and representation should be made by LGA with local authorities and educational representatives on LEPs and City Region Boards to inform them of the challenges presented by the OECD report as well as some of the solutions identified.
- LEPs and City Region Boards should advocate the vital importance of English and maths, their priorities for review and development and offer their support through forums or conferences.
- LEPS and City Region boards should prioritise CPD, for all teachers of English and maths, of integrated and embedded approaches to teaching and learning. This should be co-funded with UK government departments (such as DfE and DWP.)

3.3.6 Don't forget the workplace!

Integration of literacy and numeracy in apprenticeships and traineeships should be reviewed in order to identify the most effective ways of supporting both young people and adults in their training.

Actions:

- Linked with the devolution agenda, trades unions, employers' forums and City Region Boards should work co-operatively to communicate the benefits to employees as well as business and commerce, of investment in work-related English and maths (as part of the STEM agenda).
- Such networks and consortia should work with research and development organisations to inform and provide continuing learning opportunities for apprentices, trainees and employees.
- Work-place trainers and HR staff should be supported with CPD in effective practices and approaches to integrated work-place English and maths.

Feedback

The England Impact Forum seeks feedback on this paper and the matters we raise. Please contact the independent chair, Mark Ravenhall via markravenhall@sky.com

Implications of the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) for local adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision

Joanne Keatley & Wendy Meredith

Joanne Keatley is Principal at Birmingham Adult Education Service. Prior to this, Joanne was Vice Principal at Walsall Adult and Community College with responsibility for Curriculum. Joanne began her management career in education back in the heady days of the Gremlins as Skills for Life Manager for a Community College in the Midlands. Joanne qualified as a teacher in 1991 and has taught ESOL, EFL and literacy at FE colleges and private and public sector organisations. She is passionate about adult learning as a tool for social and economic empowerment.

Wendy Meredith is Curriculum Leader for English& ESOL at Birmingham Adult Education Service. Before joining BAES, Wendy has worked as lead trainer for a social enterprise, training young adults to work as PAs/carers for disabled children, and spent 8 years in the role of Operations Director for an IT recruitment agency. Wendy began her teaching career as a family literacy and English tutor working in deprived communities across Birmingham; and inclusion is very much part of her identity as a teacher and curriculum manager.

Birmingham City Council's adult education service (BAES) is preparing for the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB). This budget is currently managed for central Government by the Department for Education's Skills Funding Agency. From August 2018, this responsibility will be passed to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) or Combined Authorities who have secured a devolution deal and have met the readiness conditions.

The aim of devolution is to increase local powers and enable localities to make decisions that impact positively on their locality. This combined with the aim of the AEB to improve productivity and create opportunities for the most disadvantaged in our communities should bring positive results for local people.

However, there are challenges to getting devolution right. There are many unknowns and new territories to navigate. BAES has been preparing for devolution strategically and operationally with particular attention to English and ESOL as two core and key competencies for its Birmingham residents.

Strategically BAES recognised the importance of getting a place at the table where local decisions to shape a devolved AEB were taking place. Of course, this was true for all providers and the key has been an alliance of the Adult Education providers within the footprint of our devolution deal. The West Midlands Adult and Community Learning Alliance (ACLA) was formed and has provided the strategic voice to support shaping the devolved budget.

Operationally for BAES, changes to Adult Skills Budget funding requirements over the past four years have resulted in an increased, almost total, focus on delivery of accredited courses in English, maths and ESOL programmes: GCSE, Functional Skills, QCF Awards in English and Maths Skills and ESOL Skills for Life QCF qualifications. Moving forward, the introduction of AEB and planned devolution of funding to the Combined Authority affords us an opportunity to be more flexible in programme planning to design a better 'fit' for our learners.

In 2013-14, QCF Awards in English and Maths Skills were introduced as stepping stones to Functional Skills and GCSE qualifications. Awarding bodies responded quickly to this funding change and the market was saturated with a vast array of individual and combined awards. At BAES, we welcomed the introduction of bite-size awards as they offered increased funding to aid progression for weaker learners; for example, additional guided learning hours to focus on improving the technical skills of writing. However, the context and content of QCF awards assessment papers often did not meet our learners' needs; the language used in tests did not reflect how students needed to use English and maths in their everyday life and at work and, with limited guided learning hours, tutors felt they had little flexibility to meet individual students' needs and were mostly 'teaching to the test'.

In 2016 – 17, with the introduction of AEB, we now have greater flexibility to run non-accredited basic skills courses. For example, to prepare learners for Level 2 English, we have embarked on use of non-regulated funding to design courses to better meet our learners' needs. There is a continued focus on development of spelling, punctuation and grammar: 82% of students are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, many of whom speak two or three languages, and a focus on grammar is essential. By removing qualifications from this course, we offer a more personalised learning journey and, with less time spent on controlled assessment in class, learners now develop literacy skills in a range of authentic activities with employability themes, rather than just working towards a set of exam criteria. Students now have time to engage in community fundraising events (to plan/organise and raise money for a charity nominated by the whole class) or to create displays and write articles to raise awareness of subjects they feel passionate about: local environmental issues, healthy lifestyles and the work of local charities to support disadvantaged groups. Feedback from learners so far evidences increased confidence and enjoyment of learning. To ensure consistency in delivery, all our non-regulated courses are aligned with requirements for RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) and individual learning plans evidence learner progress in literacy skills from start to end of course.

Another new flexibility that comes with local commissioning is the need for English, maths and ESOL provision to meet local priorities. Students without GCSEs are already entitled to study English and maths for free. With new funding powers, some combined authorities may decide to offer ESOL for free to support local economies. One example of how BAES are considering bespoke free ESOL courses is in response to Birmingham's commitment to resettlement of refugees. Birmingham is officially recognised as a City of Sanctuary for refugees fleeing war and persecution in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Eritrea. We have taken a citizens' curriculum approach to design a bespoke ESOL course for newly arrived refugees. There are two underpinning principles: learning is co-created with learners and development of English language skills is interlinked with digital and civic capabilities. As well as improving spoken English, priorities are developing a sense of belonging to the area and access to local services, prioritised by learners. By the end of the course, students produce an information pack about the local area in digital format to be shared with other recently arrived refugees. Birmingham is a young and diverse city and community cohesion is key. ESOL is likely to be high on the local agenda.

Another demand of devolved AEB will be to work with our partners to create pathways to ensure learners at all levels benefit from economic growth in the region. Birmingham is currently experiencing considerable economic growth. A key priority is to promote inclusive growth and to ensure every citizen is part of that growth and benefits from it. Adult learners who present with language, literacy and numeracy skills below Level 2 must be offered pathways to skilled jobs in our local economy.

In September 2017, a National College for High Speed Rail will be opening in Birmingham. It will offer specialist training at Level 4+ and one of our challenges at BAES is to work with our partners to create pathways for adult learners in STEM subjects. In our ESOL and English programmes we have skilled migrants, qualified engineers from Syria, who are under-employed because of poor English language skills. We are looking at ways to identify these individuals and fast-track to enable access to work opportunities reflecting the high level of vocational skills they already hold. With a devolved AEB, the expectation is that adult education providers will continue to work with unemployed adults and those furthest from the labour market. Adult literacy and numeracy will remain a priority for funding before any local allocations can be made. These new flexibilities will enable authorities to also make ESOL a key priority.

We see the impact of devolution as potentially very positive for both teaching staff and learners. Instead of routinely offering mostly accredited courses based on what is fundable from one year to the next, with a localised agenda we should be able to plan more strategically to offer bespoke courses to our target groups, leading to jobs that exist in the local economy.

Who's the boss?

Coaching to support self-directed English and maths learning

Alexander Braddell and Bob Read

Alexander Braddell is Director at the Oxfordshire Skills Escalator Centre CIC Ltd.

Bob Read is Training and Development Advisor at the Association of Colleges, Eastern Region

[Corresponding author: Alexander Braddell abraddell@gmail.com]

Workshop summary for conference

Classroom teaching helps many adults to improve their English and maths skills, but to sustain and develop those skills adults need to go on learning outside of and beyond the classroom. Many learners, however, lack both the strategies and the confidence to engage in this sort of self-directed learning.

Non-directive coaching is an approach specifically designed to help people become more effective self-directed learners. It has proved powerfully effective in a range of contexts, but we know relatively little about its potential in the field of adult English, maths and ESOL learning.

For the past two years, however, the Erasmus+ project, *Autonomous Literacy Learners – Sustainable Results* (ALL-SR), has been exploring that potential through pilots across a range of contexts (including at work) in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany. Results suggest that coaching has rich potential to reinforce and extend English, maths and ESOL learning.

1. Autonomous Literacy Learners – Sustainable Results

Between October 2014 and September 2016, the Erasmus+ project *Autonomous Literacy Learners – Sustainable Results* (ALL-SR)[1] investigated the use of non-directive coaching to help adult literacy and language learners develop the skills, strategies and confidence they need to become more effective self-directed learners, better able to take advantage of the many literacy and language learning opportunities that arise naturally in daily life, including work (ITTA, 2016).

The Dutch-led project's team included six practitioner-researchers, two each from the Netherlands, Germany and the UK (including the lead author of this paper). The team was supported by a small reference group of academics and practitioners (including the secondary author of this paper). All had extensive experience of adult literacy, language and numeracy.

The project was structured into three phases:

---

[1] https://www.itta.uva.nl/learnerautonomy/learner-autonomy-48

The project was structured into three phases:

- Development of an underpinning conceptual framework
- Formulation of a practical approach, with guidance and other resources
- Piloting to test the approach, including training for practitioners.

Piloting took place at eight locations in the context of low-level second language learning (i.e. ESOL and its equivalents in the Netherlands and Germany) in further education, adult and community learning and workplace learning. The project recruited both professional and volunteer second language teachers to coach learners, typically over a period of several months. Some of the pilots took place within formal provision, some alongside it. The workplace pilot (which took place in the UK) occurred in a non-formal context. Pilots included both one-to-one and group coaching, together with one exploration of peer coaching.

Research data was gathered through

- Interviews with learners and coaches at various stages of the process
- Session records and reflective logs compiled by coaches
- Session recordings (audio and/or video), with transcripts
- Session observation

Full details, including results and products developed during the project, are available from the project website.

2. Context: Why support self-directed English and maths learning?

> Any model of adult learning that claims to be complete has to take into account the self-directedness of much learning, and the fact that the majority of learning in people's lives takes place outside formal learning provision. (Tusting and Barton, 2003:6)

Here as elsewhere in Europe, efforts to improve adult basic skills have tended to treat literacy and numeracy as technical skills learned through formal instruction, starting at primary school. Our basic skills 'problem' – referenced again in the government's recent green paper on industrial strategy (BEIS, 2017) – is presented as essentially a failure of schooling.

This outlook on basic skills dates back to the mid-1990s, when the International Adult Literacy Surveys (IALS) linked literacy to national economic performance (OECD, 2000). In the UK, IALS underpinned Skills for Life (DfEE, 2001) and a decade of investment in high quality, formal literacy, numeracy and ESOL instruction – at the end of which, despite substantially increased enrolment, completion and achievement, with some 'worthwhile gains' for learners, there was little evidence of impact on employment, productivity, civic participation or learning progression

(Vorhaus et al, 2011). Worse still, the number of adults with low basic skills[2] in England has risen from the seven million identified in 2001 (DfEE, ibid), to nine million, among them a 'surprising' number of young adults, at every qualification level (Kuczera, Field and Windisch, 2016).

Consistent with the understanding of literacy and numeracy as technical skills learned at school, Kuczera and her fellow Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) analysts prioritise what they describe as 'early intervention': improving school standards, together with a focus on basic skills in further, higher and vocational education. By contrast, the returns from adult learning are 'very uncertain': those in need are vulnerable, hard to reach and often reluctant (ibid).

Meanwhile, there is a broad recognition that the skills themselves are evolving. 'The way we live and work has changed profoundly – and so has the set of skills we need to participate fully in and benefit from our hyper-connected societies and increasingly knowledge-based economies' (OECD, 2013:3).

Skills needs related to literacy, language and numeracy also change over time at a personal level. As individuals move through the lifespan and also as their specific circumstances change, they face different, in many cases unpredictable, demands on their literacy, language and numeracy skills associated with e.g. family responsibilities, work, personal finance, etc.

These demands both challenge and enable adults to maintain and develop their skills and, in this sense, the vast majority of adult literacy, language and numeracy learning is self-directed, informal and occurs outside of formal provision.

Self-directed adult learning has been an area of research interest for well over 50 years and the five-step process outlined by the American researcher Malcolm Knowles (Knowles, 1975) is well-known. Perhaps less well-known is the work of the Canadian researcher, Alan Tough, on what he described as self-directed learning projects (Tough, 1971). Tough found that adults of all types undertake significant self-directed 'learning projects' on a regular basis, throughout their lives, prompted by their own interests and aspirations. Key to these projects was the learner's ability to source learning resources, including people willing to share expertise.

To learn autonomously, individuals need not only motivation and resources, but also confidence, perceived self-efficacy and learning/problem-solving strategies (Amalathas, 2010). Where adults lack these qualities, their capacity to learn and problem-solve autonomously is greatly reduced – a characteristic of many adults with limited literacy, language and numeracy. At the same time, it is important to recognise that learning 'is a characteristic of all real-life activities' (Tusting and Barton, ibid:5) and that most adults who struggle with learning and problem-solving in relation to literacy, language and/or numeracy are still 'able to manage their lives effectively' (Parsons and Bynner, 2007:10). That is, in other areas of their lives, these adults are effective learners.

---

[1] Defined as people who 'struggle with basic quantitative reasoning or have difficulty with simple written information' (Kuczera, Field and Windisch, 2016:9).

This last is an important point and perhaps somewhat obscured by the heavy focus on instruction that sits at the heart of our model of formal literacy, language and/or numeracy provision, a focus encapsulated by that recurrent line in the Skills for Life core curricula, 'Adults should be taught to…' (DfES, 2001: *passim*).

Instruction has its place, of course, but the ultimate object of formal literacy, language and numeracy provision must surely be to enable learners to move beyond it – to equip them with the confidence and strategies to problem-solve and learn from the literacy, language and numeracy demands that they encounter in their daily lives, so that they are able to sustain and develop their skills autonomously.

Typically, formal provision aims to do this by teaching learners technical literacy, language and numeracy skills, as prescribed in national standards – in other words, transmitting the body of knowledge that currently constitutes 'English and maths' for adults. However useful and helpful, this is not quite the same as helping adults to become autonomous literacy, language and numeracy learners, capable of coping with real life demands, in the face of difficulty. Yet isn't this what both learners and policy-makers are really trying to achieve?

Given the stubborn persistence of large scale basic skills deficits over decades, it seems increasingly clear that complementary strategies might be helpful – strategies that are consistent with the overall scale of need, its persistence over decades, the actual capacity of our adult education systems, the new opportunities that digital technologies offer, the dynamic, evolving nature of the skills themselves and what research tells us about how adults really learn, including their recognised drive towards autonomy and preference for meaningful learning (Tusting and Barton, ibid).

3. Coaching as a strategy

What is coaching and how is it different from teaching?

Originally slang for a private cramming tutor, the term 'coach' has also been applied to personal and team trainers in sports and now has wide currency in business, where 'coaching' is often paired with 'mentoring'. More recently, the terms 'coach' and 'coaching' have appeared in areas such as health, employment and lifestyle. Common to all these applications of the term is an understanding that the purpose of coaching is to help the individual or group improve their performance in a given context.

Generally speaking, how a coach achieves improved performance is up to the coach. Moreover, performance objectives and measures of improvement are typically negotiated directly with the coachee. A teacher, by contrast, tends to work within an externally prescribed framework where objectives, measures and often methods are set by a third party (e.g. an awarding body) and are non-negotiable.

There is a further crucial distinction to be made. Teacher-led learning is for the most part based on the transmission model of learning, i.e. instructional. Consequently teachers are expected to

have field (i.e. subject matter) expertise: a teacher of French is expected to speak French proficiently, a teacher of physics to understand physics, a vocational tutor to be competent in their vocational field. Quality assurance schemes generally require teachers to have field expertise one or more levels above the level of study. This field expertise underpins much of a teacher's classroom authority. It may also be central to the teacher's sense of professional identity.

This is not the case in coaching – or at least, not in coaching proper (as opposed to activities more accurately described as tutoring, guidance or mentoring). The coach's focus is on 'unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. [Coaching] is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.' (Whitmore, 2002:8)

This is perhaps most clearly visible in the well-developed area of executive coaching. In this context, the coach helps executives to solve problems about which the coach knows little or nothing. The coach's authority and identity rest solely on their expertise in coaching.

Coaching is underpinned by a reflective, problem-solving model of learning. Acting as a non-judgemental, but highly attentive, 'critical friend', the coach aims to help their client gain clarity about their objectives and how best to achieve them, given the realities of the client's situation. By taking a close, supportive interest in the client's progress, the coach builds the client's confidence as well as their awareness (of themselves and their circumstances) and helps the client to persist in the face of difficulty. The coach's aim is first and foremost to enable the client to take full personal responsibility for their own progress. The coach does this by treating the client at all times as a resourceful person, fully capable of developing their own solutions – even when the client doubts their own ability. By refraining from giving advice or instruction to the client, the coach gives the client space to devise, test and develop their own strategies. (Whitmore, ibid; ICF, no date; Van Nieuwerburgh, 2014)

This sort of non-directive coaching has proved powerfully effective in other contexts. Might it help adults develop the skills, strategies and confidence they need to take charge of their own literacy, language and numeracy learning? What would that look like in practice?

4. Coaching approaches developed by the ALL-SR project

Two coaching approaches emerged from the ALL-SR project, both based on the widely-used GROW (Grow, Reality, Options, Will) model (Whitmore, ibid; Van Nieuwerburgh, ibid), together with a competency framework for autonomous learning developed by the project team (ITTA, ibid) that essentially paralleled Knowles' delineation of self-directed learning: needs identification, goal setting, resource identification, application of appropriate learning strategies and evaluation of outcomes (Knowles, ibid).

The GROW model offers an iterative method of goal setting and problem-solving, based on reflective questioning (e.g. coaching questions such as, 'What are you are trying to achieve in your life now?', 'What problems might occur?', 'Who could you ask for help?); constructive challenge ('What else?', 'Is that realistic?', 'What's the real issue here?'); and confidence-building reassurance, affirmation: ('I am sure you can do it!').

The principal approach was structured around a time-limited, self-directed learning project. In this approach, the coach supports the learner to frame a learning project of their own choice, which they undertake outside of the coaching sessions over a specified time period, e.g. 12 weeks (i.e. long enough to allow for meaningful learning, but short enough to offer a clear beginning, middle and end). The coaching sessions are used to support the learner to action-plan the learning project, to identify resources, to trouble shoot and to monitor and evaluate progress.

In addition to this learning project approach, a second peer coaching approach was developed by a Dutch associate of the project, Annemarie Nuwenhoud, for classroom use within formal provision. This approach structured around a weekly group discussion in class time. Called 'My Plan', this discussion was framed around a set of easy-to-understand questions. Initial discussions focused on long-term goal-setting: 'Why do you want to learn Dutch?' 'What is your plan?' 'How long will it take to reach your goal?' 'How much time do you want to invest?' 'When do you want to make time to study?' Subsequent sessions paired learners together to monitor progress and action-plan. Questions included, 'What are you going to do this week?' 'Where, when are you going to study?' 'Who can you ask for help?' 'Can I ask you next week how your plan went?'

Both these approaches frame learning in terms of an action plan developed by the learner to achieve larger life goals. Both combine problem-solving with reflective learning. Both direct the learner to the many affordances for learning offered by their environment. Both position instruction (and the teacher) as a resource for learning, rather the source of learning. Most importantly, though, both from the outset, entrust the learner with full responsibility for their own learning.

The use of peer coaching in the My Plan approach introduces a range of dynamics absent from the learning project approach and gives the teacher (absent in the other approach) a facilitative role.

A further point to note is that in neither approach does the coach/facilitator require teaching expertise or specialist knowledge of literacy, language and/or numeracy. To be of use to the learner, the coach/facilitator needs only to help the learner problem-solve for themselves.

5. Pilot outcomes

The ALL-SR pilots were designed to explore the practicalities of using a non-directive coaching approach to help low-level adult learners develop the competences that underpin autonomous learning.

Training, guidance and resources for those who acted as coaches in the pilots were necessarily limited, not least because the approach itself was an emerging one. Those acting as coaches performed in different ways at different points during the pilot. Expectations, demands and behaviours of learners varied. Despite these significant limitations, however, pilot results (available in detail on the project's website) make it quite clear that this is an approach with real potential.

For many participants – both teacher-coaches and learners – the experience of simply asking the learner to set the agenda was transformative, as illustrated in the sections immediately below.

Learners reported gains in confidence, engagement and motivation. They developed new strategies and reported progress towards goals in relation to work and family life.

Teacher-coaches reported significant gains in understanding about their learners and about the learning process more generally, particularly regarding the distinctions between teaching and learning and between teaching strategies and learning strategies. At times, this could be challenging to their sense of purpose and professional identity, but was ultimately viewed as a positive development.

6. Pilot voices: Learning project approach

The following extracts from interviews with coaches and learners participating in the workplace pilot show how these individuals experienced the learning project approach. Co-ordinated by the lead author of this paper, the pilot took place at a large UK social care provider, many of whose staff were migrants with limited English. To support these staff, the employer ran a scheme where volunteers, often retired ESOL teachers, offered staff one-to-one tutoring at work. For the duration of the pilot, six of these volunteers agreed with their learners to test the coaching approach.

Learner voices

> *I was the person that was mostly in control. It wasn't like sit in a classroom.*
>
> *You feel more relaxed. It's not really, 'oh she's my teacher.' I feel like more like two people. I can tell what I needed, you teach me in a way what I needed. That is fantastic, it become less boring. Don't become like what's happen in the school most of the time.*
>
> *When she teached me she choose all the subjects and everything what I have to do. For the coaching I have to choose what I want to learn and, if I've got some questions, I can ask and she's going to explain to me what it is. But always was my choice what I have to learn.*
>
> *Maybe when you go teacher, teacher taking more responsibility to teach you. When you are learner in the coaching project, maybe I'm taking more responsibility to learn and not let down teacher.*
>
> *Last year [I did] manual handling and fire training, but that time I was like a statue, I just listen them and 'okay, yeah, yeah, yeah.' Sometimes I want to ask questions but because of my English I could not ask properly, so I just stay quiet. So this [year] I ask lots of questions to them. Because of [coach] I am able to get confidence and then able to say my own thing. If I cannot exactly word I will say a different word to make them understand, so I am glad.*
>
> *Before I know, but I couldn't tell to my nurse and manager what is main thing. I do know, but I couldn't explain so I just keep quiet. So nothing that was helpful, but I just keep as regular carer, personal carer, that's all. Nowadays I'm able to know their pain, their feeling, my residents. So that is good thing for me and residents as well, they are happy with me. While I'm attending them I start to chat with them, before I don't. They also feel happy 'oh you are here today, oh I am glad' they start to say.*

Coach voices

[The training] really was interesting and totally alien. For quite a while I thought it really couldn't work, having been trained as a teacher. I thought there was no input. But gradually I began to realise that there was quite a good thing about it and there was some very positive aspects of it.

I started to think, 'I'm only going to be seeing her every fortnight. She's got two weeks in between when she's at home, when she's with clients, when she's working with people.' That's when it started to make sense… it's giving them tools.

I've learned more about [my learner] as a person in two coaching sessions than I did in six months of teaching her – and I have so much respect for her as a person!

We both [i.e. coach and learner] are aware at every session that we're learning [how to make the coaching work]. But this is a way, I can see that. It's good that responsibility comes from the learner.

There are two main points that stick with me. First, since the coaching model seems to work for most, it is a way forward for the workplace which has other learning and development constraints. Second – the model empowers, engages, involves and respects the learner.

7. Pilot voices: My Plan approach

To document the My Plan approach, Nuwenhoud produced a short film showing a group of learners using the approach. The following exchanges between learners (translated from the original Dutch) give a flavour of learners' coaching interactions:

Conversation 1

Learner 1:	*What is your plan?*
Learner 2:	*Yes, my plan... I'll work... I'll... it's difficult…*
Teacher:	*Don't you have a plan yet?*
Learner 2:	*No, I don't have a plan.*
Learner 1:	*No! Everyone has a plan. Nobody says: "I have no plan." Someone who says he has no plan is dead. (Laughs)*
Learner 2:	*No, I am not dead, look… I find it "strict". I am busy. I am very busy with my children. That is the problem.*
Learner 1:	*Look, the question for you is why, why do you have to learn Dutch, right?*
Learner 2:	*To speak with colleagues. Colleagues and customers.*
Learner 1:	*That is also a plan.*

Conversation 2

Learner 1: *What is your plan?*

Learner 2: *Um... This is my plan... Saturday I go to work. I finish at one o'clock, I go home. I go to the market. I buy chicken. I am done. I come home. I cook soup. Then... Soup and...*

Learner 1 *And when you're finished eating?*

Learner 2: *When the chicken soup is finished, I'm going out. I go to the house of my friend. Then I'll talk a bit. Then I go back home and look at the Dutch lessons.*

Learner 1 *At what time are you going to read? And at what time are you going to ask someone if your reading and if your talking is good? When can you ask someone for help?*

Learner 2: *It's difficult with my friends. Nobody speaks Dutch well.*

Learner 1 *Look, I am telling you this now, look, you're taking Dutch classes now, right? As for me, I used to hang out only with Africans and I only spoke my own language. That was not good for me. Now I look for people I can practise my Dutch with. You should do the same. Look for a man, a woman, it doesn't matter who it is. Not only, "Ghana, Ghana, Ghana!" That's not good.*

Learner 2: *Talk to all the people!*

8. Conclusions

In their review for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) of the outcomes of Skills for Life, Vorhaus and colleagues suggest:

> The key to learner persistence is that breaks in engagement in formal learning are supported by other learning opportunities and supports for learning, and that overall learning provision is flexible and responds to individual learners' needs. (Vorhaus et al, 2011:115).

The OECD's analysts note adult learners' recognised drive towards autonomy and preference for meaningful learning and stress the importance of personalised goal-setting and progress tracking (Kuczera, Field and Windisch, 2016).

The approaches described in this paper have practical relevance to all those agendas, but they also touch directly on a tension that lies deep at the heart of our adult basic skills 'problem'. What exactly is the problem? Is it that adults need to be taught the formal literacy and numeracy skills they failed to acquire at school? Or is it that adults need more confidence and better strategies to pursue learning goals of their own? How adequate is our closely prescribed, instructional model of adult literacy, language and numeracy learning? Who is best-placed to define what and how low-skilled adults should learn? Here the issues of trust and responsibility

are pivotal. Everything we know about adult learning emphasises the importance of the learner taking full responsibility for their own learning (Tustin and Barton, ibid; Amalathas, ibid). Do we trust low-skilled adults enough to allow them to take that responsibility?

The ALL-SR coaching pilots offer some indications that between teacher and learner (and by extension, government and citizen), responsibility is a zero sum game: the more one takes, the less remains to the other. Ultimately, how we think responsibility is best shared will likely reflect our understanding of why as well as how to help adults improve their English and maths.

References

Amalathas, E. (2010), *Learning to Learn in Further Education, A literature review of effective practice in England and abroad.* Reading: CfBT Education Trust.

BEIS (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) (2017), *Building our industrial Strategy. Green paper.* London: HM Government/DBEIS.

DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (2001), *Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills*. London: TSO, DfEE.

DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2001), *Adult Literacy core curriculum*. London: DfES/ Basic Skills Agency.

ICF (International Coach Federation) (no date), *Core Competences*. http://www.coachfederation.org/credential/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=2206&navItemNumber=576 [Retrieved: 2 February 2017]

ITTA (Kennisinstituut voor Taalontwikkeling) (2016) *Learner autonomy.* Autonomous Literacy Learners – Sustainable Results. Amsterdam: ITTA. [Available at https://www.itta.uva.nl/learnerautonomy/learner-autonomy-48]

Knowles, M. (1975), *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. New York: Cambridge Books.

Kuczera, M., Field, S. and Windisch, H.C. (2016), *Building Skills for All: A Review of England. Policy Insights From the Survey Of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD.

OECD and Statistics Canada (2000), *Literacy in the information age: Final report of the International Adult Literacy Survey.* Paris: OECD.

OECD (2013), *OECD Skills Outlook 2013, First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD.

Parsons, S. and Bynner, J. (2007), *Illuminating disadvantage: Profiling the experiences of adults with Entry level literacy or numeracy over the lifecourse.* London: NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy).

Tough, A. (1971), *The Adult's Learning Projects: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Practice in Adult Learning*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Tusting, K., Barton, D. (2003), *Models of adult learning: a literature review.* London: NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy).

Van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2014), *An introduction to coaching skills. A practical guide*. London: Sage Publications.

Vorhaus, J., Litster, J., Frearson, M. and Johnson, S. (2011), *Review of Research and Evaluation on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills. BIS Research Paper Number 61*. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Whitmore, J. (2002), *Coaching for performance (Third edition).* London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Exploring adult literacy and numeracy practices: ethnographic case studies from Uganda

Eds: George Openjuru, Dave Baker, Alan Rogers and Brian Street

Cost: n/a
Publisher: Uppingham Press, 2016
Also available as a pdf
Pages: 125
ISBN 978-09542114-1-7
Reviewed by Sarah Freeman

Sarah Freeman has worked in adult literacy and ESOL since the 1970s and seen many changes in provision in community and adult learning venues, further education colleges, voluntary provision, schools and prisons. Over the last ten years she has also undertaken various action research projects and a doctorate study among literacy learners and teachers, ESOL learners, and teachers involved in Additional Learning Support.

This book will be close to the hearts of many RaPAL followers as it recounts fascinating studies made into everyday literacy and numeracy practices of tradespeople, marketers,

and parents in Uganda. Being the third book in a series under the umbrella 'Learning empowerment through training in ethnographic research' (LETTER), it aims first to raise awareness in newly trained teachers in developing countries 'designed to help them make their teaching more effective' (5).

For me as a UK adult literacy teacher it encompassed four main enquiries I have been conducting in my own research:

- What are the many social practices acquired through informal learning by tradespeople and parents that enable them to get by successfully in small businesses despite little formal literacy/numeracy training?
- How similar are the experiences of learners in developing countries to those in the UK?
- What are the attitudes of the Ugandans interviewed, to formal adult education programmes?
- How do the authors suggest the findings from the eight ethnographic studies can be applied more widely?

The case studies are very well reported, each giving detailed comprehensive account(s) of people trading, bringing up children and having roles within the local community. The greatest literacy and numeracy obstacles to their prosperity are, as in the case of Peter the carpenter, not being able to submit documents in English that would enable him to tender for larger-scale furniture-building contracts (36). I was at once reminded of a number of builders, parts engineers and tradesmen in the UK who came to classes over the years with varying levels of literacy but many relying on a family member, usually a partner, to produce the estimates and invoices for official purposes. The picture on the front of the book illustrates another case study of Mama-Saa (69). Mama-Saa, 75 years old, is seated on the ground at her homestead looking at some passages from a bible. She supports an extended family and has been treasurer to the local church for many

decades. She runs a smallholding and rears some domestic animals for the market. Her ability to manage the church funds and her own small market trading affairs is gone into in great detail. After many years of studying how people (students whom I have taught) get by in their jobs in the UK I would describe some similarities between the resourcefulness of the Ugandan men and women and the UK born/ UK migrant people. In the UK, for example, students become increasingly creative and adept at using mobile phones and other assistive technology to help them with their everyday lives, and alongside learning from raw experience, they are, like the Ugandans, always aware of new literacy and communication methods at hand to help them get by at work and in running the home. There seemed to be a bit of ambivalence about some of the adult education classes that the various Ugandans were doing (Peter 36); others were quite enthusiastic. 'Alice' in her early twenties was attending a Functional Adult Literacy class and had been given 15,000 Ugandan shillings to buy a piglet (86) – from which in due course she had produced a further 28 piglets. Her exercise books were used for class but also for noting the telephone numbers of clients who want to buy the piglets. In this way, she was also able to produce more vegetables for sale.

Part III, the section commenting on the findings and discussing their implications, has a big disappointment which is that the page references, of which there are many, must be to an earlier version of the case studies document because the page numbers are all incorrect. This is frustrating if you are interested and want to trace all the ideas that the authors are describing. The other thing is that the authors rarely use the respondents' names here, so you don't have that to nudge your memory of a particular case study either. However, the organisation of the discussion of findings under themes is a thorough and very interesting follow up to the case study descriptions. As I found in my own studies, the authors remark that 'there was a desire to learn' and in some cases this was linked to work (107).

I think more could be read into the implications of the studies which are discussed in the last part of the book. There is emphasis on the importance of learners' informal learning. With one student, Ann, her child's health was what drew her to learning at the clinic. She studies all the paperwork connected with health routines. Nakiru Rose is also bringing up a family of five and she has a little education but not enough to understand the appointment cards which are issued by the clinic for her child's immunisations. The authors call for more health literacy provision – literacy dedicated to promoting a particular area of social practices.

Finally, the teachers are urged not to ignore informal practices but to build on them. My only regret was that while this is mentioned several times, there are not any suggestions embedded in this conclusion of strategies that the teachers could use with adults to tailor the formal literacy and numeracy taught to everyday needs.

This is an excellent book, beautifully illustrated with photographs throughout the case studies, that tells the stories as well as brings alive the social literacy and numeracy practices of eight individuals. Their stories are very specific but also add funds of knowledge to our understanding of the universal literacy/numeracy student.

Multimodality, learning and communication A social semiotic frame By Jeff Bezemer and Gunther Kress

Cost: £29.99
Publisher: Routledge
Pages: 157
ISBN 978-0415709620
Reviewed by Tara Furlong

Tara has twenty years' experience in adult education and training in the private and public sectors in the UK and abroad, specialising in integrated English language, literacies and digital learning. She has an ongoing interest in the relationship between multi-modal and contextualised, versus abstracted learning; and its mirror in social and literate practices and language across life spheres. She can be contacted on tara.furlong@designingfutures.uk

Additional readings of this seminal, simply structured and accessible illustrated text open new avenues of understanding. It bridges interdisciplinary study and is fundamental to elucidating communication and learning practices in a multi-cultural modern world. In seven compact chapters, we move from reconceptualising communication and learning in 2 and 3 (Signmaking and Transformative engagement) to how to form those sites and potentials and read interaction in 4 and 5 (Shaping engagement, Assessment and judgment). We review changes in the social and technological conditions in 6 (Gains and losses) and apply to standing challenges.

There isn't sufficient room in this review to detail the theoretical framework and derived terminology for analysis, nor the examples and visuals. Aside from providing underpinning theoretical tools for practical design of more effective learning materials, environments and interactions, we have conceptual redesign of the multimodal social semiotic entire. Bezemer and Kress carefully and implicitly hand us back the keys to re-establishing dynamics of functionality and power in communication practices and thereby in learning. In cumulative stages, we look in detail at the interaction between teacher, learning environment and learner, developing understanding of 'expert teachers' and 'expert learners'.

The authors reject transmission models and argue for iterative interaction in learning paths. Sign-making as interpretation splits power between the rhetor's motivation and design capacity across perceived potentials and constraints of the material modes in any given environment, and the capacity of the audience to respond to these prompts. These subjective sign ensembles foreground meaning potentials as communities of practice are negotiated and "show persistent questions, practices and problems in a new light" (138) of multicultural dialogue. The authors identify a historical shift from explicit to implicit. They invite us to re-examine the pre-eminence and utility of the universal if differing recourses of sound (languages) and mark-making (scripts) in the context of all meaning-making modes. We review established induction practices which graduate step-by-step skills development, minimising harm and maximising values in any given setting. These introduce fundamental questions. What are the affordances of amplified resources for semiotic production, distribution and dissemination? Which conceptual (non-material) means and principles aid guarantees of communication? That is given that representation, not replication, is the product of sign-making simulation and abstraction. What implications do these have for teaching and learning?

Meaning-makers frame, select, arrange and foreground resources in the environment. Material modes are manipulated to carry conceptual meanings in given contexts, and where genres develop, keyed in to communities of practice. Establishment of these historical traces of interaction may mature into epistemological commitments. We might ask, why this mode ensemble, when it might not immediately appear best suited? Why these metrics and shaping agencies in social groupings? What role does negotiating mimesis have and what design features best draw learners' attention? Learners' signs of engagement may translate across modes and may "have been shaped by the modes (made) available to them" (54). For example, in the use of video or range of available platforms, which in turn start to create new specialisms. Changes in coherence devices, in layout as much as in clausal connectors, move explicit agency and outcomes from author to audience. The authors argue that meaning translation across modes (transduction) as opposed to within modes (transformation) is "productive of new meanings and so constitute new domains of learning" (54). In this, the authors compare models of learner agency with deficit models of performance to canon in any given community.

One of the risks of multi-modal curricular and pedagogical redesign is "making materials look more attractive... but ultimately not carrying the actual curricular load, and therefore merely creating 'noise' that would distract learners from learning the 'core'" (102). This is equally true in attempts to assess multi-modal signs of learning. Bezemer and Kress leave us with a framework and tools to re-imagine the multimodal communication and learning practices which immerse us, and some ideas for how to best go about understanding and assessing their effectiveness.

News from the sector

Tara Furlong

Tara is the Chair of RaPAL and can be contacted on webweaver@rapal.org.uk

RaPAL Conference 2017 'Global Literacies: UK Literacies in a Global Context'

Sat 24th June 2017, Liverpool

Call for Workshops

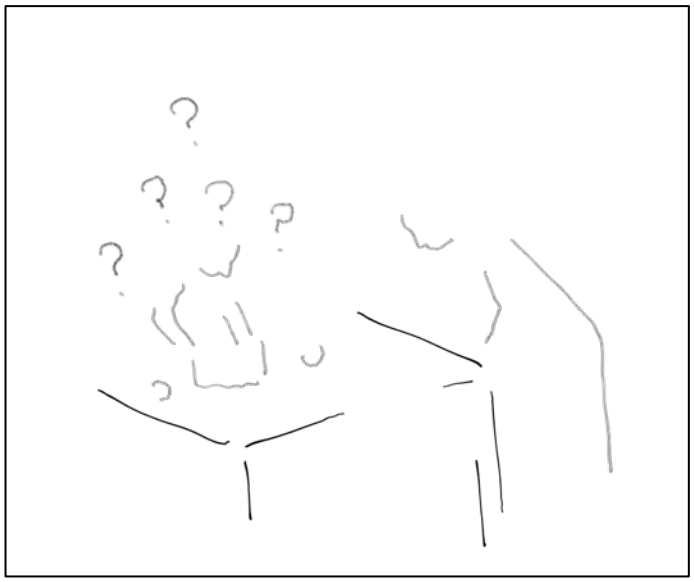
The theme for this year's RaPAL conference is superdiversity in adult literacies and English. We are putting out a call for conference contributions which address the spectrum of resources and challenges presented by superdiversity in global literacies and in a UK context. Liverpool is a rich source of superdiversity and has indeed been a cosmopolitan city for hundreds of years.

'Superdiversity' acknowledges the acceleration and intensification of processes of cross-cultural social integration as well as fragmentation nationally and internationally. These have occurred because of dramatic changes in migration flows, and the advent and spread of the Internet and mobile technologies. The resulting extreme diversity in language and literacy resources has opened exciting and innovative research paths as well as potential directions for literacy in practice.

We are looking for short and sharp 'market stall' presentations on innovative work you are interested in sharing with colleagues, and for more substantive workshops. If you are interested in contributing, please complete the call for workshops here and email to conference2017@rapal.org.uk by 18th April 2017.

Booking open at £45 early bird; accommodation at £45pppn; and bursaries available. More information on https://rapal.org.uk/conference-2017/

RaPAL Survey Results



In December 2016, RaPAL launched a Members' Survey to help us work ahead. Thank you to everyone who responded: you provided us with a working average of over 300 years' experience in education! This comprised almost 300 in English literacies, 140 in numeracy and maths; and a bit less in teacher training. We also had a good showing of experience in management (100), research (90) and ESOL (60). The sector training, development and policy responsiveness needs are striking. We won't go into them here: the raw data is online for members to access if interested. In the meantime, we're working on it.

You are a fabulous bunch who overwhelmingly contribute to training in the sector, and take on voluntary roles. However, you don't tend to publish. Why not: you're a member of RaPAL! Academic literacies and research are not a priority, and neither are apprenticeships (currently). Adult literacies as social practices takes first place spot, with a lot of focus on integrating in to other content, and digital learning. You told us that termly publication of the journal remains our number one priority, but you'd like more involvement in consultations. Our literacies events are important to you.

Thank you again for responding. We will have more to say at the conference in June. We can only say - please get more involved in RaPAL - we need you and we can't do it without you.

Commentary 'Wots the problem exactly?'

For a little while now, RaPAL have been trying to work out what the national strategy for adult literacies in lifelong learning is. It appears to be organic.

There are no explicit policies on adult literacies in lifelong learning currently listed under the Department for Education though there is a UK Digital Strategy Policy Paper. The Department's five-year plan (DfE, 2015) last updated in September with no apparent amendments in the light of the entire post-compulsory education sector moving back into its remit: it talks about children and young people to age 19. It may be assumed that, because we're all grown-ups, the sector needs neither the vision nor the plan: it's just getting on with it. This glaring gap has been noticed by Stephan Evans, Chief Executive at Learning and Work Institute, in recent news posts on the March budget; while Alex Stevenson, Head of ESOL, is carrying out a study on ESOL in London. ESOL was highlighted in HOLEX's (2017) press for 'a people budget' where basic skills makes the top three in its list of budget recommendations.

This of course doesn't mean that adult literacies in lifelong learning has disappeared from government entirely: it is in a March '16 sector update to governors and leaders, emphasising their importance and commenting on Functional Skills and GCSEs; English and maths are explicitly reported on in the Further Education and Skills statistical releases; literacies (e.g. English, ESOL) achievement and provision needs' analysis may be mentioned in the Area Reviews. English and maths is embedded in to Apprenticeships and vocational provision. The Education and Training Foundation continues as the sector professional body; it puts English and maths top of the list of priorities in their recently released self-review; and has activity targeting quality improvement in Functional Skills and GCSEs.

On the public policy face it appears adult literacies are to do themselves, integrated into other stuff, because after the last few years, everyone knows it’s important. Or maybe we're taking a (short) breath after the frenzied activity around the millennium and during this period of huge sector upheaval are hoping no-one will notice. Why do we need an adult literacies in lifelong learning strategy anyway?

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES, 2016:23) commented that in the next few years, 54% of the workforce will be working at level four or above, 30% at Masters degree or above. How will we achieve this accelerated capacity building, and what will everyone else be doing? Might literacies have a critical role to play in achieving or not this accelerated development? Research evidence in the sector suggests it's all about leadership (after teachers of course!). And driving a culture of evidence-based best teaching and learning practices: it can only be assumed curricula are implicit. We've heard that there isn't a tremendous amount of robust evidence in adult literacies (Maughan, Smith, Mitchell and Horrocks, 2016; ETF, 2014), beyond advocating embedded, or integrated, literacies provision (NRDC, 2011).

FE Week report on £6million pounds worth over three years split between the equally prestigious Behavioural Research Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge and the Centre for Vocational Education Research here: see what you think of it. BRCASK managed to increase attendance (no comment on attainment) with four strategies; CVER has crunched massive data sets and analysed fine-drilled detail on general knowledge. So, that is a start.

So: back to leadership. Over the next few years, what's the cross-sectoral vision from the centre?

What's the plan?

DfE (2016) *Single Departmental Plan 2015 to 2020* London: DfE

ETF (2014) *Effective Practices in Post-16 Vocational Maths Final Report* London: ETF

HOLEX (2017) *Spring Budget 2017 Representation 'A People Budget'* Childswickham: HOLEX

Maughan, S., Smith, J., Mitchell, T. and Horrocks, N. (2016) *Improving Level 2 English and maths outcomes for 16 to 18 year olds Literature Review* London: Education Endowment Foundation and Alpha Plus

NRDC (2011) *A Literature Review of International Adult Literacies Policies* London: UCL IoE NRDC

UKCES (2016) *Working Futures: 2014 – 2024* London: UKCES

LSRN Beds, Bucks and Herts 'Researchmeet'

Bedford College on 26th June: Research, experience, practice: have you got a great idea? Aiming to give a platform to ideas from those working in FE and Work Based Learning (WBL) who may struggle to get their ideas heard elsewhere. This event will be a unique event that addresses the priorities and innovations of practitioners, rather than leaders and policy makers. If you're interested in presenting or attending, please email Sam Jones (sjones@bedford.ac.uk) by 1st May 2017. ATL are sponsoring and cover some travel costs.

TELL

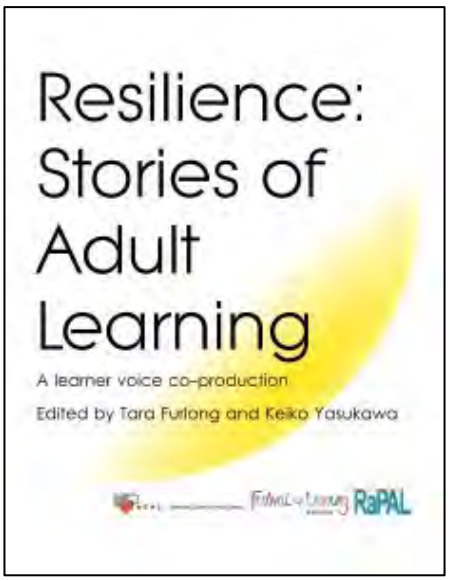
The TELL (Teacher Education in Lifelong Learning) network have two more day conferences scheduled this academic year: Tuesday 9 May 2017 at Northumbria University, and Tuesday 15 June 2017 at University of Westminster. These are free to attend and all are welcome: email Jim Crawley at j.crawley@bathspa.ac.uk if you wish to join TELL. For more information and to book, please see their website here.

BALID (British Association for Literacy in Development)

BALID have the following Informal Literacy Discussions scheduled: 'Literacy teaching in Northern Nigeria' with Dr Mary Anderson in London Thursday, 20th April 2017 at 5pm in London; and with Marta Paluch in Brighton on Monday, 12th June at 17:30. To book or for more information, please see the website here.

Resilience: Stories of Adult Learning

"Supporting learners and potential learners into and through adult, further and community education"



This free learner voice multi-media publication is available to access and download in multi-platform e-book, pdf and web versions from https://rapal.org.uk/resilience/. There is video and audio on the website, often with accompanying transcript and a number of stories are available in a range of European languages. The book is widely available on standard e-book platforms to support using reading apps on devices, and in paperback for cost of printing (£5), p&p to support outreach and inclusion – or just because you prefer paperback!

The resources can be used by friends, family, tutors, libraries, enrolment, and of course learners themselves. Whether it is getting back in to education in the first place or looking at how you might progress in what you are doing, there is a story. Perhaps the course is getting a bit rocky, a health or family issue comes up, and it is difficult to keep going, there is a story. A number of tutor pieces contribute to understanding the journeys and the successes along the way. This is the culmination of a two-year international project between RaPAL and ACAL (the Australian Council for Adult Literacy).

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:

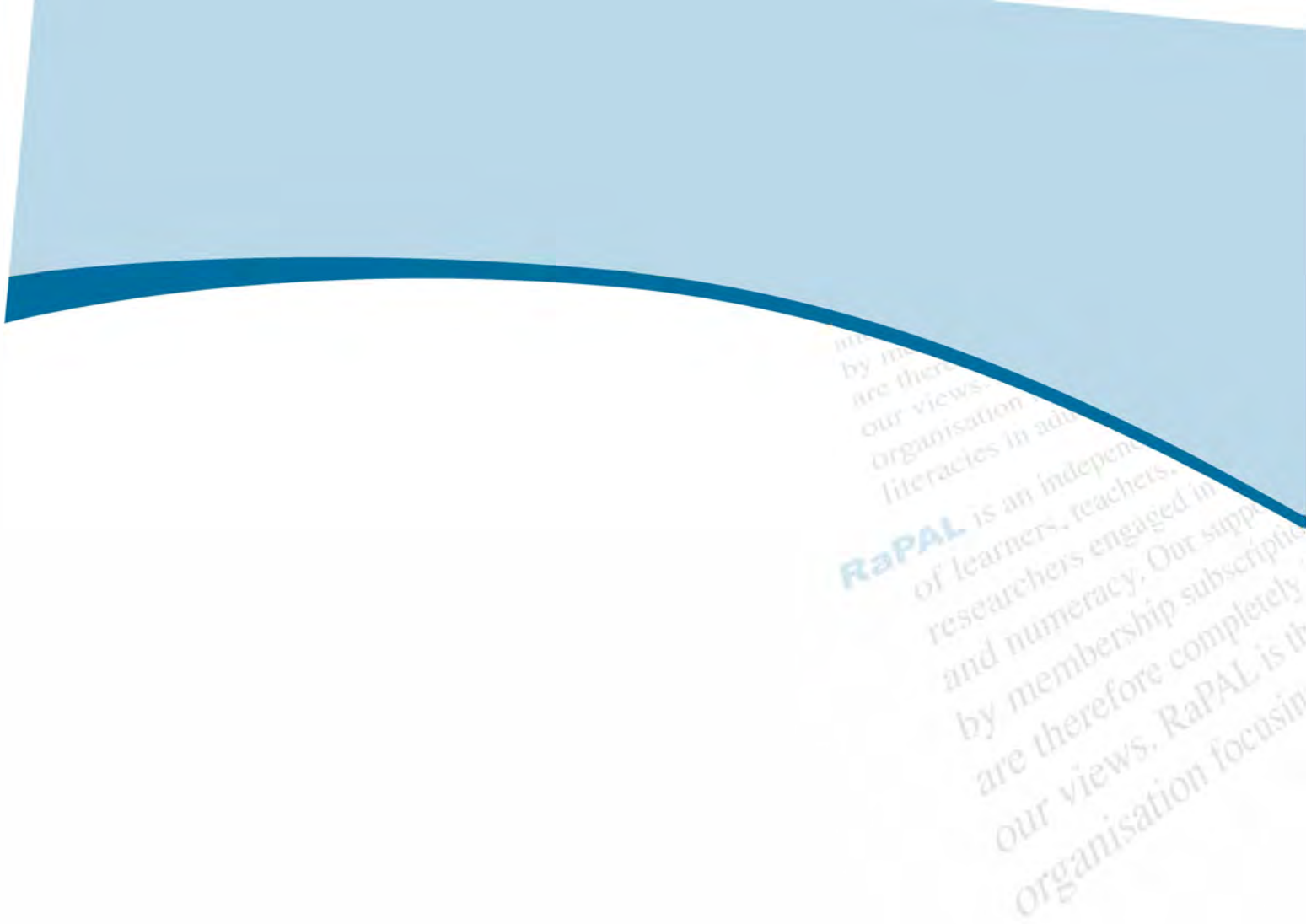
- Relate to the practices of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL
- Link to research by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies
- Provide critical informed analysis of the topic including reference to theoretical 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


RaPAL