



Lancaster Literacy Research Centre

Summer 2004

# Lancaster Literacies

## Update

### ALL will be revealed ...

In the first phase of the **Adult Learners' Lives project** we concentrated our ethnographic work in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL learning environments in our key sites of Lancaster, Liverpool, Blackburn and Accrington.

We worked in classrooms with six teacher researchers developing their own practice through individual projects linked to the Adult Learners' Lives project as a whole.

We have produced several working papers and reports from our work so far, which include:

• Three LLRC working papers - 1. 'A Review of Recent Ethnographies of Literacy' by Rachel Hodge', 2. 'A Review of Theories of Informal Learning' by Karin Tusting and 3. 'Retention and Achievement: a Focussed Review' by Yvon Appleby.

• ESOL case study LLRC working paper: 'This is not enough for one's life': Perceptions of living and learning English in Blackburn by students seeking asylum and refugee status' by Rachel Hodge and Kathy Pitt with David Barton. **continued over**

**We are now offering a full MASTERS COURSE in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL. This is a flexible modularised programme with three start dates each year.**

**The course is aimed at experienced ALNE practitioners and managers who are considering professional development or looking for ways to build on their Level 4 qualifications. Each module is delivered through tutor supported online distance learning and includes:**

**1st and 2nd October 2004:**

*Approaches to Adult Literacy*

*Language and Linguistics for Teachers*

*Family and Community Literacies*

**7th and 8th January 2005:**

*Reflective Research and Evaluation for Professional Practice*

*Perspectives on Prison Literacies - past, present and future*

**22nd and 23rd April 2005:**

*Debates in ESOL Teaching and Research*

*Workplace Basic Skills Policy and Practice*

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College-based researchers Sarah Wilcock and Angela Brzeski at work on the Literacies for Learning in FE project.

### Literacies for Learning in Further Education project

The Literacies for Learning in Further Education project, funded by the ESRC as part of its Teaching and Learning Research Programme, is now six months into its three-year lifespan.

Two full-time researchers are now employed on the project, Zoe Fowler at Lancaster Literacy Research Centre, and June Smith at the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Stirling.

Interviews will be held soon for a second, part-time researcher at each university. College-Based Research Coordinators have been

appointed in each of four colleges, Angela Brzeski at Preston College and Sarah Wilcock at Lancaster and Morecambe College.

There have been research meetings at both universities to integrate the college-based staff into the research teams, to introduce them to project aims, concepts and methodologies and to engage in the joint planning of the project. Contacts have been made with staff at several levels in all four colleges to facilitate access, to consult about uses of the research to their specialisms and to identify key issues for the project to address. **continued over**



National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy



# Literacies for Learning in FE

(continued from P1)

The project's Advisory Group met in March and established many worthwhile links with policymakers, practitioners and researchers in education and literacy. Communication between the project team and those who have an interest in the findings of the research is particularly crucial, and the high-profile membership of the Advisory Group is helping to ensure that the work of the project is relevant to practice. The first issue of the project's newsletter has been published and distributed.

Phase One of the project is concentrating on mapping the literacy demands of studying at the colleges, from the perspectives of subject staff, support staff and students. Documents which students have to read and respond to, and those which set out the literacy requirements made on them, have been collected ready for analysis. Students have been taking photographs of the explicit literacy demands of their college environments and discussions about them have been recorded as project data. A questionnaire has been designed and will be distributed in June for analysis in July.

The project team is in the process of drafting papers on issues such as a comparison between policy contexts for literacy in Further Education in England and Scotland, 'mapping' as a conceptual and methodological approach, the relationships between 'literacies' and learning, the uses and misuses of the notions of borders and boundaries in research. They have had three proposals accepted for conference presentations in July and September.

## Looking forward to Phase Two

An exploratory study has been undertaken to experiment with innovative data collection procedures for identifying students' literacy practices across different domains in Phase Two, which begins in September. The curriculum areas which will be the focal point of this phase have now been decided; Childcare has been identified as the curriculum area which will be common to all four colleges. Three additional members of staff in each of the partner colleges are currently being recruited to work with the project in the selected curriculum areas as from September.



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## ALL will be revealed ...

(continued from P1)

- NRDC review: 'Adult ESOL pedagogy: a review of research, an annotated bibliography and recommendations for future research' by David Barton and Kathy Pitt.
- A forthcoming NRDC review entitled: 'Understanding the relationship between learning and teaching: 'A review of the contribution of Applied Linguistics' by Roz Ivanič and Ming-I Lydia Tseng.
- A forthcoming NRDC report provisionally entitled: 'Linking Learning and Everyday Life: A social perspective on Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy classes' by Roz Ivanič, Yvon Appleby, Rachel Hodge, Karin Tusting and David Barton.
- An NRDC teacher researcher report: 'Listening to Learners: Practitioner Research on the Adult Learners' Lives Project' by Dianne Beck, Gill Burgess, Kath Gilbert, Russ Hodson, Andrew Hudson and Carol Woods.

**All these will be available on our website, and the NRDC reports are available from the NRDC Website.**

Currently we are working in the three sites with learners, in what is referred to as 'hard to reach' provision. This includes a drug support and aftercare centre, a young homeless project, a domestic violence project and with Big Issue. We are also maintaining contact with over 30 learners from the classroom research who represent the longitudinal cohort of the study. We are working with practitioners in each of the sites, exploring collaborative research and methods of researching learners who frequently have issues in their lives that impact upon learning. We are also working with practitioner researchers mapping basic skills provision within each of the three sites, showing a range of provision from the very visible to that which remains hidden.

By using a social practice perspective we are making links between learning and other aspects of learners' lives, which include work, family and community. A report looking at the links between learning and work will be available shortly. This will be followed by reports covering the longitudinal learners, learners and social exclusion and lastly what mapping can tell us.

## Getting Involved in Research: The NRDC's Practitioner-led Research Initiative

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

In February this year the first round of six projects were

funded. The projects address the broad theme "*New ways of engaging new learners*". Four of the projects address various aspects of workplace literacy. One project looks at progression within community-based programmes, and another is evaluating innovative ways of work with music and ICT with young black adults.

The six projects are now fully underway and details of them can be found on the NRDC website. A second round of funding has just been announced. Six projects will be chosen under a new common theme of

*"Understanding Purpose and Perseverance - Learners' Aspirations and Commitment to Learning"*. The projects will be funded in 2004/2005 and up to £10,000 will be available for each. The programme aims to produce findings which will give new insights into adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL; to build research capacity; and to strengthen networks linking practice research and policy. Groups are expected to:

- \*decide a research question
- \*design a research project to investigate the question
- \*decide appropriate methodology
- \*carry out the research
- \*write up the findings
- \*network with other groups funded by the scheme and share expertise
- \*participate in dissemination events to share work with other researchers

Further information and guidelines for applications are available on the NRDC website. Closing date for applications is 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, and feedback on outline proposals will be given until the end of August.

## Changing Faces of Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL 1970-2000

This ESRC-funded project is coming to the end this summer. Emerging findings will be presented at the RaPAL conference in July and a final report will be available at the beginning of October. We have recently updated our website (follow the links from [www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk](http://www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk)) and the archive materials we have collected will soon be accessible online, together with the catalogue of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre.

For further information, please contact Kathryn James

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