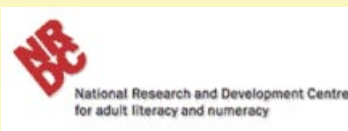




Late 2005



EUROPEAN UNION
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Lancaster

Literacies



LRC moves into new home

At the end of September most members of the Literacy Research Centre moved in to the new Institute for Advanced Studies building.

As well as existing projects we have been joined by geographers in a two year Arts and Humanities Research Council project, *Visual Imprints on the Prison Landscape*. This develops on from work on the role of literacy in the lives of people in custodial settings by exploring the visual semiotics and survival strategies of people in prison. In January 2006, a three and a half year project also funded by the AHRC unites colleagues in English and Creative Writing and the Department of European Languages and Cultures. *Mediating Marginalities* will examine how immigrant communities in Manchester use the written word to define and affirm their identities. All these projects combine to produce an exciting atmosphere in floor C of the new Institute for Advanced Studies Building. Do visit us or check out our website :

www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk.

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There have been a number of developments to report on around literacies and criminal justice.

Within the NRDC, my colleagues Jane Hurry, Laura Brazier, Mary Parker and I were commissioned by the DfES to undertake a strategic review on interventions relating to offenders and employment which should feed in to an up-coming government Green Paper.

This was an enjoyable if 'rapid' exercise and we are all now available for independent consultancy work on searching large databases! We are also completing the final report for our study 'Improving the literacy and numeracy of disaffected young people in custody and in the community' and look forward to being able to circulate it to the many people who gave of their time, energy and expertise as we undertook the interviews across prison and community sites in England and Wales.

I'm also currently writing the final report for Doncaster community arts entitled 'Engaging People in Change' funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

Over the last 12 months I have been their resident ethnographer – a post I have enjoyed immensely and which has given me the opportunity to enlighten policy makers, government offices and indeed community artists as to the efficacy of using ethnographic methods with groups of what are considered to be 'hard to reach' or marginalised such as substance misusers, offenders, excluded pupils and refugees.

It has also had an added attraction for me of being able to work alongside



Cell literacies in the 'austere' unit

Shirley Brice-Heath and together we have been championing the efficacy of the creative arts.

On a more practical note, my module 'Literacy and Learning in Criminal Justice Settings', part of the Masters in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and

ESOL run through the Department of Educational Research here at Lancaster commences again in January 2006.

It will be hard to improve on the level of commitment shown by my students who took the module this year and I'm looking forward to meeting them in the New Year.

Finally, I have recently begun work on a two year AHRC funded project, run in collaboration with colleagues in the Geography department entitled 'Visual Imprints on the Prison Landscape'.

We will be testing our concepts of 'literacies' to the limits incorporating all aspects of visual and visible marks and texts as a way of trying to understand how they impact on the survival and resilience of those who live and work in prison.

The impact of the *Skills for Life* learning infrastructure on learners

We are working in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Education and Training to run the qualitative strand of the National Research and Development Centre evaluation into the *Skills for Life* infrastructure, linked to quantitative work carried out at Sheffield University.

The three-year study aims to examine the impact of the infrastructure on the experience and achievement of learners. The research is being carried out in six sites across England, working closely with stakeholders.

From initial stakeholder interviews, several common issues were identified. Whilst the Standards and Core Curriculum were viewed as helpful there were also concerns that they shouldn't be applied in a rigid and restrictive way, particularly to achieve funding targets. It was felt that the infrastructure had helped professionalize provision, encourage networks and provide quality. There were issues with matching supply and demand where the recruitment of qualified tutors was seen as a major difficulty. In spite of some difficulties and local variations there was a positive response to the impact that the strategy was

having. It was felt that learners were able to access more and better quality provision as a result of the *Skills for Life* strategy.

Learners were then interviewed across a wide range of provision. Many are positive about the learning opportunities they are experiencing. The fact that much provision is local, flexible and friendly is described as important. Many learners stressed the importance of the social aspects of learning as well as acquiring new skills for themselves and their families.

In the current phase we are re-interviewing a selected sample of stakeholders and learners to see what has changed. We are also interviewing tutors to understand how they mediate between the needs of the students and the requirements of the strategy.

Yvon Appleby

www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk

From research to practice

The transition from Phase Two to Phase Three of the Literacies for Learning in Further Education project

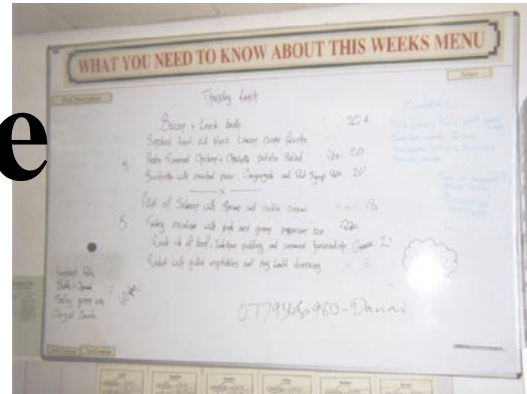
The Literacies for Learning in FE (LlLFE) project is researching the interface between Further Education students' literacy practices in their everyday lives and the demands of their college courses.

The aim is to find out about the reading and writing that FE students do successfully in other domains of their lives, in order to identify ways in which these have the potential to be mobilised, or 'folded in' to enhance their chances of success in their courses.

The LlLFE project is a collaboration between Lancaster Literacy Research Centre and the Centre for the Study of Lifelong Learning at The University of Stirling. The project is working in four colleges, two in Scotland and two in England, with sixteen college-based researchers across eleven curriculum areas.

In Phase Two of the project, the college year 2004 – 2005, the team interviewed approximately 100 students on 32 courses about the literacy practices in their lives. We have written case studies of each student, showing the richness and diversity of their reading and writing in the six categories of everyday use identified by Barton and Hamilton (1998: 247 - 250):

- Organising life
- Personal communication
- Private leisure
- Documenting life
- Sense making
- Social participation



A whiteboard in the catering department of Lancaster & Morecambe College

In addition, we researched the courses on which they were studying, showing how literacy practices are embedded in the teaching, learning and assessment practices of the courses and, on vocational courses, in the jobs for which the students are preparing. For example, on a course in Catering and Hospitality, we saw how a whiteboard would be used in a professional kitchen to plan the food preparation for the day.

In the college training restaurant it is used in this way too, but also co-opted for pedagogic purposes: teaching the trainee waiters and waitresses about the food they will be serving, and organising which member of the class will be responsible for what.

In June and September 2005 the college-based researchers came together to compare their findings across colleges and across curriculum areas, and to discuss the implications of their research for improvements to their courses next year. These discussions are continuing as the course team analyse the Phase Two data, and reach greater understanding of the nature of students' everyday literacy practices and of the role of literacies in learning on the range of courses we are studying. In Phase Three, the college year 2005 – 2006, the team are piloting innovations in the college courses based on these findings.

Barton D. and Hamilton M. (1998) *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community*, London: Routledge.

For more information, see
www.lancs.ac.uk/lflfe





Rachel Hodge is currently working on the NRDC Embedded Learning project and on the Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy project.

The primary aim of the Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) project is to identify and support effective and inclusive family literacy, language and numeracy practices. This will be done through both research and development activities, taking account of the changing nature of family structures and contemporary ways of living.

The first phase of the project, a largely quantitative review of the impact of FLLN programmes, both in the UK and in a selected number of other countries, has been completed.

We are now in the second phase carrying out a number of context specific detailed case studies to explore the nature and potential of FLLN work which is effective and inclusive in developing the literacy, language and numeracy of adults as well as children. The case studies are being carried out by researchers in Croydon, Derbyshire and Rochdale. In addition to these case studies, practitioner researchers from a selected number of other



National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy

Rachel Hodge

providers will be self-reporting on FLLN provision in which they are involved. Rachel has recently begun her work on the Rochdale case study where she will be focusing on how the FLLN work responds to the needs and aspirations of bilingual learners in particular. This will include exploring the potential of linking creative arts and Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy working with families involved in programmes based at a Community Arts Learning Centre.

The centre was set up by women of South Asian heritage who had been involved in a programme which linked ESOL learning and creative arts. Recognising that grandparents or elders are often main carers of children in contemporary life, the provider is involved in a new initiative for them. Rachel will be doing a detailed study of two joint projects with children, grandparents or elders linked to schools in two diverse communities with the provider and the Community Arts Learning Centre.

The families will be creating their own art work inspired by a local theatre company production. The art work they produce will also be a catalyst for developing reading, writing and oral language.

‘Mediating Marginalities’:

Written Narrative and Immigrant Identity in Greater Manchester since 1960

In January 2006 we are joined by a major new project directed by Lynne Pearce and Graham Mort (Department of English and Creative Writing) and Robert Crawshaw (Department of European Languages and Cultures).

The ‘Mediating Marginalities’ project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It will explore the processes whereby specific immigrant communities in the Greater Manchester area have employed – and continue to employ – written narrative (e.g., fiction, poetry, autobiography, drama, screen-play, multi-media installations) to define and affirm their identities.

In close collaboration with The Arts Council, local publishers and writers’ groups, museums and holders of archives, the project will survey and catalogue the output, since 1960, of individuals and groups associated with Greater Manchester.

The project will also support the commissioning and presentation of new writing that employs narrative to ‘mediate’ immigrant identity within the region. During the life of the three and a half year project Lancaster University, together with the various publishers and agencies associated with the scheme, will host a series of workshops, seminars and conferences in which academics, writers, publishers, arts workers and members of the public will be invited to participate.

At the end of the second year of this three year project we have analysed and reported on the findings from a survey of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL teachers in FE colleges in England.

We are now beginning to analyse the data from forty-two interviews with Literacy and ESOL learners from classes across the north west.

Some interim findings are:

Learners' Health

Many of the learners in the seven classes we have observed and interviewed in have health problems. This finding also emerged from the survey of teachers that we carried out in 2004.

Literacy, Language and Numeracy Demands of Health Care Settings and Difficulties Experienced

The demands and difficulties experienced by learners in health care settings were related to both the oral and written language demands of encounters with health care professionals. In relation to written demands, learners revealed that they needed to deal with leaflets and brochures, letters (specifically appointment letters), package inserts containing information about the medication, prescriptions, forms (both registration/consent forms and forms for claiming benefits due to ill-health) and the signage/maps provided for finding their way around health care settings.

Strategies Used by People to Deal with the Literacy, Language and Numeracy Demands of Health Care Settings

The strategies that learners used fall into two key areas:

Reading strategies –

The use of dictionaries and/or phrase books to read and understand leaflets or letters. Reading health leaflets in the light of oral information provided by the health worker during the consultation. Calling on past experience and knowledge in order to make sense of leaflets, package inserts and the information on packages of medicine.

Mediators –

Learners revealed how they drew on a family member, a friend or a professional/key worker in order to deal with the literacy, language and numeracy demands of health care settings. Mediation took the form of having someone to accompany the learner to a consultation, looking up information regarding an illness, reading package inserts in order to check whether the medication could be taken at the same time as other drugs, filling in forms on behalf of the learner or turning written texts or signs into oral information.

Health and Learning

The key theme emerging from the project is that dealing with ill health frequently engages students in informal and self-directed learning. As part of their own attempts to understand the illness they suffer from and the treatments on offer, students engage with a range of literacy and language practices. In so doing, they acquire new literacy and language skills.

In particular, people acquire information seeking skills – for instance they learn how to search on the internet and which sites to choose or to reject, they become knowledgeable about diseases that affect them or their families and know where to find further information and support.



Uta Papen



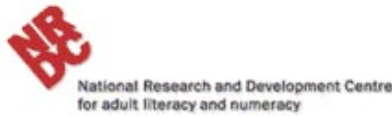
Sue Walters

NRDC Practitioner-led research initiative: Moving into Round 3

The NRDC Practitioner-led Research Initiative (PLRI) is a nationally coordinated series of small-scale practitioner-led research projects that began in February 2004 with the first round of six projects.

October 2004 saw Round Two get underway and now in November 2005 Round Three projects are also just starting. The three rounds of funding have enabled 17 groups of *Skills for Life* practitioners to put their research ideas into practice with the support of a team at Lancaster and various other NRDC networks around England.

Round One projects were



commissioned under the overarching theme of 'New ways of engaging new learners' and their project reports will be launched by the NRDC this autumn. The dissemination event for Round Two will be held at Lancaster on the 8th December 2005. It promises to be an interesting mix of practitioner reflections on research in the field and the initial outcomes from their research under the theme of 'Understanding purpose and perseverance - learners' aspirations and com-

mitment to leaning'. Round Three is the last round of the PLRI funding and falls under the theme of 'Creativity in teaching and learning'. Details of all projects can be found on the NRDC website (nrdc.org.uk).

The PLRI has aimed to build research capacity in the field, allowing practitioners time to reflect on their own practice, and strengthening regional and national research networks that link practitioners, researchers and policy agencies.

If you would like more information about the projects or the Round Two dissemination event at Lancaster on December 8th please contact Kathryn.james@lancaster.ac.uk

New books from the Literacy Research team

We are pleased to announce three books published in the past few months:

David Barton and Karin Tusting (eds.) **Beyond Communities of Practice: Language, Power and Social Context**, Cambridge University Press, 2005

Uta Papen, **Adult Literacy as Social Practice: More than Skills**, Routledge, 2005

Kathy Pitt, **Debates in ESOL Teaching and Learning**, Routledge, 2005

Northern College for Residential Adult Education

Experience of the NRDC Practitioner-led Research Initiative and working with the Lancaster support team

During 2005 the Northern College *Skills for Life* team worked on an NRDC practitioner-led research project.

As Northern College provides residential adult education, the project aimed to explore *Skills for Life* learners' perceptions of the impact on their learning of being residential. From the beginning of the project, the Lancaster/NRDC support team have been extremely supportive.

Since none of us had previously engaged in action research to this extent, it was really important to us that we had clear guidance and support. The support team provided training days at key points during the project, as well as on-going feedback on our progress. Project communication has been excellent. We have felt supported throughout and have never felt that we can't ask for help.

We felt that we could be honest with the project team, which was a real benefit.

The project has been successful in various ways, particularly in that it has developed the research skills of the team and given staff the confidence to try research techniques that were previously intimidating, such as running focus groups. In addition, the team have developed a feeling of empowerment, since we were given a collective responsibility for this research, taking our role as practitioners forward. As a result of this project, the team are now able to integrate research with their teaching and organisational activities and are looking at other areas which they could explore in order to enhance the *Skills for Life* provision.

Bronwen Ray
Basic Skills Programme
Co-ordinator, Northern College

What is embedded learning?***Does it help young people succeed on vocational courses in Further Education?***

The Literacy Research Centre is a partner in a large NRDC research project which is comparing embedded and non-embedded teaching of literacy, language and numeracy for learners on vocational programmes.

In 2004 the NRDC had undertaken seven case studies of embedded provision of Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN), finding that in the successful courses they researched, literacy, numeracy and ESOL were built around the actual language, literacy and numeracy practices of the subject, rather than being treated as a separate curriculum. Key factors in this provision were mutual understanding and joint planning between the literacy and numeracy teachers and the vocational teachers, willingness to learn from each other, and a shared commitment to providing differentiated teaching in order to serve learners' individual needs. On such courses students' attendance, motivation and achievement were high. The current project builds on these findings, attempting to find out what factors in the relationships between the vocational teaching and the Language, Literacy and Numeracy teaching have a positive influence on the learners' attendance, attitudes, persistence and achievement across a large number of courses in a wide range of curriculum areas in different parts of the country.

The table below gives a sense of the scale of

the research, showing that 71 courses in all are being studied.

Seventeen colleges of Further Education are participating in the study, five of them in the North-West: Accrington and Rossendale College, Blackpool and the Fylde College, Preston College, The Vocational College, Merseyside, and Wirral Met. Rachel Hodge is the LLRC researcher working with these colleges, and Roz Ivanič is responsible for the qualitative side of the research design and analysis.

The research design is unique, integrating quantitative with qualitative data collection and analysis. Quantitative data is being collected about the students' success on each course. Members of the course team have been interviewed about the way in which LLN is taught. On the basis of these interviews the qualitative researchers are categorising each course according to 26 factors; for example, the extent of integration of planning, and the extent that materials are differentiated to accommodate learners with different LLN needs. This information is used firstly to identify those courses on which provision is said to be 'embedded', secondly to identify which of the factors appear to be particularly salient in relation to measures of student success, and thirdly in order to relate these quantitative findings to the more nuanced qualitative descriptions of specific pedagogic practices in the different institutional contexts.

The final report is due in March 2006.

CURRICULUM AREAS PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH

Curriculum area	Number of colleges	Number of courses
Business Studies	7	11
Construction	8	14
Engineering	8	14
Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy	7	12
Health and Social Care	11	20

MA students have the last word ...

I can't say I've loved **every** minute of my time studying with Lancaster University – but I have certainly got out of it as much as I have put in. Fitting in time for the readings is always a problem and I seldom have time to read more than the course material itself. I always finish the assignments right on the deadline and get frustrated that the final document is never quite as polished as I know it could be – if only I had another two evenings to work on it..... I have learnt a lot about Skills for Life and adult literacy and numeracy in their broader sense; have made many good friends across the country and have learnt a lot about myself as well as hopefully (in about a year's time) having some more letters to add after my name! Amongst my new friends I would number the staff at Lancaster University who do their utmost to make students feel welcome and settled in the brief time they spend on campus, but are always on hand to help out with any problems once we are back on home ground.

Marion Casey
November 2005

Read more of Marion's MA experience on our website.

'Returning to academic study on a 'distance learning course' has reminded me how much I value being able to 'chew things over' with other people and how vitally important for me anyway it is to have a variety of 'communication channels' open and available in addition to the on-line formal processes. This is why I feel that having a student representative is valid and significant even though I seem to have had little available spare time to be able to develop it in that way. Nevertheless I intend to use the café site to post some items that might be of general interest to students on the M.A. A.L.N.A.E., news comment, articles and other publications that may have an interest or bearing on our field. Meanwhile Kathryn deserves a tremendous 'thank you' for always dealing with any problem that emerges and providing one of those much appreciated 'communication links' enabling the distance experience to be not so distant.'

Mike Brown

www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk

Distance Learning Postgraduate Studies in Adult Literacy, Numeracy & ESOL at Lancaster University

"I have thoroughly enjoyed studying at Lancaster and the variety of topics - some of which were new to me. All the tutors and programme team have been very supportive and their enthusiasm for their specialist subjects has encouraged me in my studies"

"The Programme has significantly helped my career"... "it has provided me with an academic focus and requirements to engage in studies that have expanded both my knowledge and understanding."

We offer 10 week modular courses designed to be taken by experienced practitioners on a stand alone basis or credited towards a Postgraduate Diploma/Masters in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL.

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We deal with many queries about professional development issues. Please contact us if you would like further information about the modules or if you have a question about your CPD route.



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

Lancaster Literacy Research Centre is a core partner in the DfES funded National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL.