

Living Literacy: a whole-organisation approach to integrating literacy in a vocational training setting

Executive Summary

**Report of the
ACE Research
for the
Youth Training and Development Centre,
Newbridge,
Co. Kildare.**

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Section 1: Introduction to the study

This report is a case study of a literacy project which was implemented in Newbridge Youth Training and Development Centre (NYTDC) in Co. Kildare. The centre works with young people who have left school early and who do not yet have all of the skills or qualifications that would help them to get a job or a place on more advanced training. An important part of the work of the centre is developing trainees' literacy skills. The Newbridge centre takes a whole-organisation approach to its work and integrates literacy into all aspects of its vocational training.

In 2007, 'Integrating Literacy into Vocational Training' a research project submitted by NYTDC, took first prize in the Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Awards. The ACE Awards were introduced by the National Adult Literacy Agency in 2005 to celebrate its 25 years in existence. The awards are sponsored by the Educational Building Society (EBS) and were initially designed to exemplify the good work being accomplished by all those involved in adult basic education. In 2007 the aim of the awards was re-focused to identify and support research into innovative and high quality learning opportunities in adult basic education.

The research, which began in March 2008 and ended in January 2009, took place in two stages. Stage one of the research investigated the centre's policies and procedures which support integrating literacy into vocational training, with a special focus on assessment. During stage two of the research tools and materials to support assessment in the context of the centre's work were developed and piloted.

What is Integrating Literacy?

This approach to literacy work focuses on the reading and writing which arises in natural contexts. Learners develop skills and confidence in literacy at the same time as they are working on other skills. Integrating literacy draws on theories of learning that highlight the importance of the setting in which the learning takes place, including the social context. This refers to the different situations where people interact and can include work, training or daily life.

Integrating literacy is underpinned by a social practice view of literacy which places context and values at the centre of how 'literacy' is defined. The integrating literacy approach can help to eliminate unnecessary barriers to learning. It can also use work-related training as an opportunity for trainees to develop the reading or writing demands of a particular situation which is new to them. In NYTDC, the context for integrating literacy is the programme which trainees follow during their time in the centre.

Some education and training centres are using this approach to work on literacy, as the opportunity arises in the vocational area. This way of working on literacy is most effective when part of a whole-organisation or whole-organisation approach to literacy that involves planning, staff training and general organisation. NALA has special Guidelines on Integrating Literacy; and cooperates with National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) in providing the Certificate in Integrating Literacy, a level 7 qualification in Integrating Literacy which trains tutors and managers to work in this way.

The Winning Project: ACE Research, 2007 - 8

Newbridge YTDC adopted this approach to literacy in 1999. The research proposal NYTDC developed for the 2007 ACE Award had three aims:

- to put on record the centre's experience of a whole-organisation approach to integrating literacy in a way which other educators working in other settings could understand.
- to improve the work of the centre by identifying policies and procedures which are working well, and what could be added or changed.
- to explore how well their approach to integrating literacy works.

These questions were addressed during the first stage of the research. NALA supported a second stage of research to allow more time to develop and pilot support tools and materials.

Methodology – how the information was collected

The following methods of gathering data were used:

- Desk research, including analysis of programme documentation, FETAC modules, students' files and portfolios, support materials and research in integrating literacy;
- Individual and group interviews with centre manager and the twelve staff;
- A small quantitative analysis of the range of literacy skills embedded in the FETAC modules offered as part of the NYTDC programme.

Section 2: Policies and procedures which support a whole-organisation approach

The centre, ethos and target group

NYTDC is a community training centre, funded by FÁS, which was set up in 1989 to provide training and development opportunities for young people from 16 to 21 years of age, or in special cases up to 25, who left school without the skills or qualifications to progress to a job or to further training. NYTDC follows the Youthreach programme, which is an early school leavers' programme supported jointly by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Department of Education and Science (DES). Many of the NYTDC trainees left school without the Junior Certificate and none of the current trainees has a Leaving Certificate. Some of the young people also have difficulties in literacy or numeracy.

Staff in NYTDC strive to put the learner at the centre of their work and to help the young people in their personal and social development. They also aim to teach them the skills they will need to get a job or a place on a more advanced training programme when they leave.

The programme

The two-year programme in NYTDC includes work skills, life skills and wider social

activities. 'Work skills' can be accredited by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) modules in specific areas including catering, sewing, pottery, woodwork, upholstery, picture framing, hairdressing, office skills, metalwork and computers. 'Life skills' are programmes and activities which address health, personal care, reading, writing and maths and community service. Many other informal and social activities, including sport, are provided. All trainees work towards national FETAC certification. They also take part in supported work experience for a one or two week period. Towards the end of the two-year programme, they get help with curriculum vitae (CV) preparation, interview practice and other personal and social skills that help in applying for jobs.

The staff

This programme is delivered by twelve centre staff. Eight are tutors, including a literacy/numeracy expert who is funded through the Adult Literacy Service provided by the local Vocational Education Committee. The others are the administrator, the counsellor, the advocate who provides career guidance, and the centre manager. All of the tutors have several areas of expertise and can provide training in a range of different FETAC modules. This makes it possible for NYTDC to implement the centre programme in very flexible ways and to focus mainly on what the learner needs, rather than on the demands of particular subjects.

Policies which support a whole-organisation approach to literacy

The following policies were identified as supporting the integration of literacy into a wide range of programme and activities:

All activities are underpinned by a learner-centred ethos

Centre policy is orientated towards addressing young people's personal and social development, as well as equipping them to progress to a job or to further education or training when they leave. The work of the centre is therefore designed to support the young people in developing their personal and social skills, not only for moving into a job or further training, but in maximising their potential in their daily lives.

All staff engage in further education and training on an on-going basis.

It is centre policy to facilitate training and development in any areas which will assist the young people in meeting their goals, and support the staff in helping them. Staff are also facilitated in sharing their expertise in useful areas with their colleagues by providing regular training in-puts for them. This ensures that staff are equipped to cope with the many technical requirements of their work. It also supports them in meeting the personal demands they face, such as dealing with conflict and setting boundaries in their role.

All members of staff have several different areas of expertise.

This makes it possible for staff to provide a variety of learning experiences for learners as the need arises. Ensuring that each tutor has a multi-dimensional teaching has made it possible for NYTDC to achieve a high degree of flexibility in the implementation of the work programme. This provides an alternative approach to the subject-centred timetable.

The centre manager assumes a key role in supporting the whole-organisation approach to literacy.

The manager ensures that not only the teaching but all centre activities and processes, including strategic planning, monitoring and administration mechanisms, are informed by an awareness of how literacy issues can impact on the totality of learners' experience in the centre. In facilitating the implementation of specific procedures part of the role of the centre manager fulfils the functions of 'literacy facilitator'. This key position is identified in the NALA Integrating Literacy Guidelines ¹ as a necessary support to achieving the integration of literacy into the whole organisation.

Teamwork and joint work practices are actively encouraged and supported in practical ways.

The various support mechanisms already mentioned, such as staff development, training and consultation, facilitate the development of a shared professional experience and a common understanding of events and how to address them. Centre procedures including communication systems of Key Worker and Case Conferencing, are described below. The introduction of a whole-organisation approach to integrating literacy has encouraged team-teaching and collaboration amongst all staff.

The timetable is organised to facilitate a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning.

In this system, each individual is allocated to the *tutor* who is responsible for their preferred subject areas, rather than to a group based around the *subject*. Some of each person's time is spent with their designated tutor; some time is spent with other tutors following different subject areas; and some on individual work. Although every learner has a structured timetable, no two people have the *same* time-table: each person's schedule is individualised around their preferences and needs. This approach to timetabling is possible because of the high degree of planning and support in the form of practical resources which are made available to the staff. Some resources are developed and shared by tutors, others by the centre manager. Another factor which facilitates the individualised time-table is mutual co-operation and trust between the staff.

The physical space where learning takes place is organised to create a pleasant and nurturing environment.

The centre is housed in port-a-cabin classrooms set out around a small, central courtyard. This creates a learner-friendly environment which is relaxed and personalised. The central courtyard is embellished with samples of the learners' work, such as carpentry and metalwork and window-boxes. The manager and the staff have made use of their own expertise to work with the learners in designing their centre in ways that would support the learning.

Procedures which support a whole-organisation approach to literacy

The following procedures were identified as supporting the integration of literacy into a wide range of programme and activities:

¹ Ní Chinneide (2002), op. cit.

The Induction process is used as a vehicle to explore the literacy skills of new entrants.

Induction is the process by which new entrants are given important information about the centre, get to know the staff and each other and provide tutors with an indication of their interests and their needs. Naturally-occurring tasks which trainees experience at this stage provide a lens through which tutors can observe how the young people manage certain reading and writing practices. Updating the Induction materials was identified at an early stage in the research as one area which should be further developed. Staff also noted that many of the reading and writing activities covered as part of Induction, such as form-filling, correspond to certain requirements in some FETAC modules, especially Level 3 Communications. It was agreed with the staff that those connections should be made explicit.

A Key Worker system is in place which allocates every trainee two tutors whom they meet once a month, at a specified time, to discuss progress.

Each tutor is Key Worker to between four and six trainees and each trainee has two Key Workers. Key Workers meet each young person individually once a month on a designated day. With new entrants, the time is used to develop a work-plan with the individual which matches their needs and aspirations. Later meetings address any issue of importance, review the work plan and review progress towards their goals.

A case conferencing system is in place which brings together all staff to discuss the progress of each individual trainee.

Case conferencing brings together all the centre staff on one day each month shortly before the day when Key Workers meet the trainees. All of the trainees in the centre are discussed, their progress is reviewed, any special achievements or challenges are noted and staff discuss how best to advance the goals and needs of each person. Findings of the case conference are then discussed with the young person at their one-to-one Key Worker meeting a few days later.

All tutors carry out a literacy analysis of their work programme.

Tutors examine the programme they are going to deliver in order to identify the literacy skills embedded in the work and also, in the methodology they intend to use. This ensures that staff can anticipate potential difficulties, prepare for them and also, communicate with their colleagues about the kind of help individuals may need. Other areas of the work of the centre, including counselling, advocacy and work experience can make literacy demands on the young people. Systematic analysis of the literacy content of all of these areas should be carried out on a limited scale.

All tutors engage with learners in a process of planning, goal-setting and monitoring the progress of learners which is recorded using forms and templates specially designed for different purposes.

Individual Learner Plan: Two Key Workers meet the learner to draw up a plan of work which is recorded on a document known as the Individual Learner Plan (ILP). This is an individualised approach to programme planning. It is revisited at later Key Worker meetings and up-dated periodically, usually month-by-month, especially following a “mentoring session,” which is the periodic meeting with the Key Workers.

The Web Profile: This individualised recording tool was developed by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) for use with the target group in community workshops and training centres. It creates a comprehensive profile of the individual's perception of their life in each area. The format consists of a wheel which is divided into sixteen segments, including a section on Basic Skills which refers to "the ability to attend; to speak, understand, read, write English; to use maths; to use IT; to problem-solve, etc."

Case conference notes: this is an open, unstructured form which records only the learner's name, the name of the two key workers and provides a blank space to write any special areas of discussion that arose and the date and the Key Worker's signature. Specific information about learners' experiences in the centre, both positive and negative, is recorded here. Notes from the individual case conferencing forms, which refer to an individual's situation at a particular point in time, are periodically transferred to a centre-wide group data-base which summarises the main points of each individual's situation over a period of time.

Developing a method and recording tool to record the fine detail of learners' literacy progress, tailored specifically to the literacy of the programme offered in NYTDC, was identified as key area for further development.

All tutors in NYTDC use a wide range of teaching methods including discovery-based approaches which involve learners in a wide range of activities, including activities which take place outside the centre.

All tutors in NYTDC use a wide range of teaching strategies which are based around practical, activity-based methods. Team-teaching is a significant strategy which reinforces the potential of the craft or vocational area to connect similar literacy demands which arise in different areas. Integration of literacy work into all of these methods is supported by the literacy analysis of programmes and sessions which tutors carry out at an early stage.

All staff in NYTDC produce a wide range of teaching materials which are kept in a central location and available to all as the need arises.

All staff develop resources to support the literacy of their own area and the centre manager also creates materials for FETAC modules and other activities. All of this material is accessible to all staff, who can access whatever is available, as the need arises.

All staff in NYTDC use a wide range of assessment methods for a variety of purposes, including assessment of learners' needs, summative assessment for certification and assessment of learners' progress.

Induction has supported an informal initial assessment of learners' literacy on entry to the centre for some years. In addition, all learners work towards FETAC certification and comply with the FETAC assessment requirements for the module and level. This often involves portfolio work, demonstration of tasks, production of items and of written work.

Further developments in assessment recommended for this study were: update the materials used as a vehicle for the assessment process; incorporate assessment of process dimensions of learning, especially independence and fluency; support assessment by a set of recording tools which include all of these dimensions.

Convergence with the NALA Integrating Literacy Guidelines

Many of these policies and procedures are consistent with the NALA Integrating Literacy² Guidelines. This shows how one centre has taken those general guidelines and put them into action, specifically in relation to: planning (Guideline 1); staff development (Guideline 2); resources (Guideline 3); literacy analysis (Guideline 4); access policy (Guideline 5); communication (Guideline 6); induction (Guideline 7); individualised planning and assessment (Guideline 8); teaching methodology (Guideline 9); progression and work experience (Guideline 10).

Section 3

The impact of a whole-organisation approach to literacy

Stage One of the research identified the centre policies and procedures which contributed to a whole-organisation approach to literacy. It also probed the impact of the approach on the staff, the learners and the organisation.

Effects on centre staff

There is strong evidence that adopting the NYTDC approach to integrating literacy has had a very positive effect on the practical expertise which centre staff bring to their work. For several staff, the NUI Maynooth Certificate in Integrating Literacy was their first experience of third level education. Many of them have since gone on to complete other qualifications at higher levels. In addition, a number of specific effects were observed during this study. Tutors use a wide range of practical techniques for teaching their subject in ways that integrate literacy into many different activities. Integrating literacy has also promoted teamwork amongst the staff. Everyone has a general idea and sometimes, a very specific knowledge, of what their colleagues are working on with different trainees. They regularly use this knowledge to collaborate on monitoring the progress of the young people. Staff members describe their practice with confidence and authority and have a robust theoretical knowledge which underpins their practical expertise.

Effects on learners

All of the staff gave examples of ways in which the individual young people who had started their work with gaps or difficulties in certain literacy practices had improved. This related both to the technical side of literacy, and to their confidence and willingness to use their skills. These and other events provide substantial indications of the positive impact which the NYTDC integrating literacy approach has had on learners' progress. Some of these achievements are kept on record in the ILP or the Case Conferencing notes.

The potential of learners' centre-based work to provide verifiable evidence of progress, expressed in a format which connects to the relevant FETAC modules, was identified as a key topic to explore during the second stage of the research.

² Adapted from NALA (2002) "Integrating Literacy – NALA Guidelines for Further Education and Training Centres," Dublin: NALA.

Effects on organisation

Many of the policies and procedures which the centre has introduced to integrate literacy into vocational training have also supported good practice in general. For example, the whole-organisation guidelines for programme planning, in communications and in staff training have been used as evidence to meet FETAC quality assurance requirements. However, taking an integrating literacy approach has not been the only positive influence on the work of the centre. The centre has benefited from other initiatives, especially work carried out by the National Educational Psychological Service. FÁS provide the core funding for the centre. Recommendations from a review of the centre carried out by NUI Maynooth in 1999 also contributed to the development of the centre's policies and procedures.

Nevertheless, NYTDC began to emerge as a model of good practice after the centre manager and staff adopted an integrating literacy approach. Many of the policies and procedures outlined in the last section are consistent with the NALA Guidelines on Integrating Literacy, including the need for a whole-organisation approach. The experience of NYTDC suggests that a number of these guidelines are also features of good management and good practice. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that although it was not the only contributing factor, a whole-organisation approach to integrating literacy has had a positive influence on the emergence of NYTDC as a model of good practice.

Section 4

Development and implementation of the assessment support tools

This second stage of the research focused on developing and piloting two key instruments. One was a practical method to assess learners' literacy skills. The other was a tracking mechanism to structure and record the findings. These instruments are linked to the first three levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This means that when centre staff assess learners in the context of the work programme, they can discuss and record this in terms which are consistent with NFQ award specifications.

Rationale for developing the tools: pros and cons

One of the main topics identified for further research during Stage 1 of the study, was the potential for assessment carried out at centre level – assessment for learning – to connect with the national structures designed to support certification. This accounts for the use of the FETAC Modules in Reading and Writing at Levels 1 and 2 and in Communications Level 3, as a set of definitions of literacy levels. This was the main reference according to which the literacy content of the NYTDC programme was analysed. However, the primary purpose of FETAC modules and the National Framework of Qualifications is to support the certification of learners' achievements. It therefore cannot be assumed that it could or should be used as for other purposes.

The availability of Levels 1 and 2 on the NFQ brought national certification within the reach of people whose learning had not previously been accredited by the national system of awards. However, this also now facilitates the use of quantitative indicators, such as numbers of learners achieving accreditation, as targets and as benchmarks of

success. Difficulties arise when such indicators are designated the main or even, the only indicator of success. Given the strong impact of an assessment on teaching and learning, there is a danger that using the FETAC structure as a reference tool, linked to formative assessment of progress on the ground, could result in the teaching and learning process being driven by them.

However, the potential benefits may outweigh the pitfalls. The origins of the FETAC reading and writing modules are found in Mapping the Learning Journey (MLJ), a NALA initiative which was designed³ to support teaching and learning in adult literacy. The FETAC structures for levels 1 and 2 are very similar to the MLJ structure for adult literacy assessment. Furthermore, the MLJ levels emerged from a long period of consultation and piloting with adult literacy practitioners and managers which confers the structure with a measure of legitimacy.

Therefore, instead of avoiding using the national structures, it may be better to develop strategies to refine and complement them, in order to expand their uses. One way of doing this is the task recommended for this study: to investigate how to connect the processes which teachers and tutors routinely use to assess the wider dimensions of learning - assessment *for* learning – with the instruments used for summative and certification purposes.

Making those links has the potential to improve the ways in which the process dimensions of learning are assessed. Tutors and programme planners routinely comment on gaps or improvements in the many qualitative aspects of learners' progress mentioned earlier. However, it can be difficult to define and capture these challenges or gains in systematic ways which are easily understood by an external audience. A method which provides a structure by which qualitative indicators of achievement can systematically be described, and progress on these tracked, could raise this information from the level of anecdote to that of qualitative data. By connecting such a structure with national assessment instruments, those process dimensions of learning would be recognised as valuable indicators of progress and outcomes of learning.

Also, for certification purposes, only the knowledge and skill dimensions of reading and writing appear in the FETAC outcomes. These capture some, but not all of the finer gradations or the qualitative aspects of learners' progress. It would be worth exploring how these process dimensions could be incorporated into literacy levels, thus expanding the current definitions of skill.

Developing the tools

The first task was to use the FETAC Reading, Writing and Communications modules at Levels 1, 2 and 3 to create a "Literacy Reference Tool" which sets out side-by-side the three levels of reading and writing contained in the relevant FETAC modules. The second task was to use this reference tool to analyse the reading and writing demands of the NYTDC programme. This was done by checking each FETAC vocational and craft module offered by NYTDC, outcome by outcome, for literacy content, as defined by the FETAC Reading and Writing modules, embedded in the

³ <http://www.nala.ie/index.cfm/section/publications/top/1/ext/publications/cat/0/page/4>

standard, independent of content and methodology. This provided the basis for a small quantitative analysis.

Findings of quantitative analysis

In the great majority of modules, the embedded literacy demands are not very extensive. The most frequent reading requirements are recognition and understanding of vocabulary; and, to a lesser extent, interpreting signs and symbols. The skill of information retrieval does not figure very strongly. Nor is writing very frequently required. However, the skills which are required are of crucial importance. If learners do not understand the key words related to the craft or vocational area, their understanding and progress in the craft area may suffer.

Identifying Literacy Practices

The most common literacy demands emerging from the quantitative analysis were grouped into general categories, six for reading, and six for writing. By far the most frequent are: 'read key words' and 'read signs and symbols'. The four others, which are 'Understand document lay-out', 'use best reading strategies', 'find information' and 'use reading rules,' arise less often. In writing, the most significant literacy demands are: 'write for daily tasks' and 'write to give information'. Less frequent writing demands are: 'write something creative', 'correct writing' and 'write accurately'. Taken together, these comprise one of the main components of the tracking tool which contextualises assessment within the particular demands of the Newbridge programme.

Description of Tracking Mechanism

Next, a tracking mechanism was developed. This is a set of forms specially tailored to the literacy practices in the NYTDC programme, as described above. This tracking mechanism consists of three interlinked forms which all have the same lay-out.

- Literacy Audit Activity Sheet, which is used to examine the demands of a particular activity;
- Tutor's Observation Check-list, which the tutor uses to record the learners' performance on that activity;
- Summary of Learner's Progress, which shows results for several activities, and progress over time.

These forms are designed to help tutors and learners to identify the literacy content of an activity or a programme, and to assess and record learners' progress in relation to that content. Each is structured around the reading and writing practices which were identified as being significant in the NYTDC programme. Forms also include the process dimensions of independence, fluency, range of settings.

Description of assessment tool

The assessment method which the adapted Induction materials support, is the performance task. Learners perform or work through a rich activity or a practical task which gives them the opportunity to demonstrate what they know, can do or have learned. Tutors observe them at work and examine any written material or other items they produce as part of the process. Assessment is therefore very close to the process of teaching and learning. To make this work for the systematic tracking of progress, the task and materials are constructed to include all of the relevant literacy skills, at the relevant levels.

The existing Induction materials were reworked to meet all of these requirements to take the form of an Induction Manual. This 30-page A-4 booklet contains a wide range of activities which present and stimulate practical work on Induction topics. Some involve individual written work and others include discussion and are done in pairs or in groups. An accompanying tutors' version of the Induction Pack cross-references each activity on each page with the items on the Tutors' Observation Check-list.

How the initial assessment was carried out

In late September, 2008, these tools and methods were used with a new group of ten trainees. This took place during three half-day sessions when the centre administrator, the literacy tutor and the researcher recorded their observations of how the young people worked through the Induction manual. A specially prepared observation sheet and notation facilitated recording, using the tracking tool described above. Assessors compared their judgements and examined the work produced by the young people to clarify their literacy needs and levels.

How later assessments were carried out using the same approach

During the two months following the Induction process, eight of the centre staff implemented a process similar to that carried out at the Induction stage, using tasks arising from the regular work of their craft area as a vehicle to assess the reading and writing skills of the young people. The eight tutors all chose tasks of different levels of complexity, depending on the content of the work the learners were engaged in at that particular time. Each of the chosen tasks was a regular activity, from a normal day, but structured using the tracking mechanism described above.

Practicalities of using this process

Tutors' reactions to implementing the process and using the materials were generally positive. All agreed that the process worked best when two people were both teaching and assessing at the same time, rather than one person teaching and one assessing. All agreed that advance preparation in becoming familiar with the materials, including opportunities for practice, is very important for tutors using this method. Some people found the layout and format of the tracking mechanism rather daunting, until they got used to it.

It would be useful to explore alternative formats for the recording mechanism. The impact of forms and record-keeping tools on practice, and how observation and recording tools could enhance teaching and learning in a literacy context, could be the subject of further research.

The actual process of assessing learners' literacy progress in context is not substantially different from what tutors had already been doing. The main difference is in the provision of a structure which they can use to highlight and record their observations, and the systematic approach to monitoring progress.

Improvements to tracking mechanism and assessment strategy

The piloting of the tools and materials provided insights into the general effectiveness of using a performance task, based on a real-life activity, to carry out assessment. Tutors found that it worked well as an assessment strategy and also, that in practical terms, it was possible to manage the logistics of the process using the recommended

method. They also thought that it might be possible to accomplish the same goal using a less extensive assessment process, over a shorter period of time. Improvements in the fine detail were suggested, such as refinements in the allocation of levels to different activities. For the assessment task to be manageable with a group, both assessors should observe all members of the group, rather than each taking responsibility for half of the group.

The experience of assessing and recording progress using these instruments and tools showed that the process and materials did facilitate tutors in identifying particular areas of strength and weakness. It also provides a workable method of recording and tracking progress which accommodates a range of levels. Expansion of the tracking mechanism to include higher levels would make the process relevant to all learners, and also show progression to those higher levels

Impact of this assessment approach on teaching and learning

Over a period of weeks tutors used the insights into trainees' strengths and weaknesses which they had gleaned from the induction process to adjust the pace of the teaching. They also used insights from the interactive nature of the to probe the wider dimensions of learning contained in the ten-level grid describing the National Framework of Qualifications, specifically, 'insight' and 'learning to learn'. This moves the teaching and assessment of literacy beyond its technical aspects to encompass the social and societal dimensions of learning.

Section 5: Final conclusions and recommendations

Literacy demands of FETAC modules

A key finding of this study is that there are few reading and writing demands embedded in FETAC modules, and that those which are there relate mostly to word recognition.

- Developing strategies for teaching the reading and writing of key words, signs and symbols in all learning contexts should form part of the training for educators of all disciplines and crafts, at all levels.

Many of the literacy obstacles which some students encounter when they are working towards FETAC accreditation arise from the reading demands of the teaching methods and resources used.

- Practitioners need to be equipped to use a wide enough range of learning methods and resources to ensure that learners do not have to rely exclusively on the written word and that methods and materials accommodate all range of intelligences and learning styles. They should also be equipped to make extensive and conscious use of opportunities to promote literacy in context.
- Staff training is needed to equip people to carry out these processes.

Using the FETAC modules in Reading, Writing and Communications to analyse the reading and writing demands of other modules depends on a clear differentiation

between similar or related outcomes specified at the different levels. This is not always the case. To make the FETAC structure usable as a literacy framework:

- Differentiate the FETAC outcomes for the different levels more clearly. This could be accomplished either by revising some of the outcomes, or by producing literacy guidelines to accompany the modules with greater detail or illustrations of the range of work appropriate for each level.
- Incorporate the wider processes relevant to literacy including fluency, independence and range, drawing on the full range of categories describing the NFQ 10-level grid.

Although this study found that the literacy demands of most of the FETAC modules analysed were not very extensive, nevertheless, most modules do involve some reading, at least of terminology or signs and symbols. This can be crucial to understanding and if not addressed, can present an unnecessary barrier for some learners.

- Identify the literacy content of all FETAC modules as a major priority, to support the work of literacy practitioners, and also of tutors, trainers and teachers of all crafts and disciplines.
- Carry out this analysis at national level, in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, and publish the results in a format that will be accessible for use by programme developers and tutors to use as a reference tool.
- In the longer term, analyse the literacy demands of all national qualifications and awards in Ireland. Publish and regularly up-date a manual describing these.

This could provide a concrete, practical resource for literacy practitioners. It would also be useful for teachers and tutors of all subjects who are not teachers of literacy, but who come into contact with learners who need literacy support. It could be one of the many resources used in the training of tutors and teachers and would contribute to promoting the integration of literacy into work in education and training in all settings.

List of acronyms

ACE	Adult and Continuing Education Awards
CPI	Crisis Prevention Intervention
DES	Department of Education and Science
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
EBS	Educational Building Society – a national financial institution and funders of the ACE awards.

FETAC	Further Education Training and Awards Council, the national awarding body for qualifications at levels 1 – 6 on the NFQ
FÁS	Foras A the national training agency
ILP	Individual Learner Plan
ITABE	Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education, a programme and assessment method designed to track learners’ progress for accountability purposes.
LES	Local Employment Service
MLJ	Mapping the Learning Journey, a method of assessing adult learners’ progress in literacy and numeracy
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service of the DES.
NUIM	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NYTDC	Newbridge Youth Training and Development Centre, the training centre where this study took place.