

Meeting the challenge: strategies for motivating learners in adult education in Ireland.



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) was established in 1980 and is an independent membership organisation, concerned with developing policy, advocacy, research and advisory services in adult literacy work in Ireland. NALA has campaigned for the recognition of, and response to, the adult literacy issue in Ireland.

The Literacy Development Centre, incorporating the NALA/WIT Accreditation Project, is a national partnership between the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), established in 1997 to design, develop and deliver third level qualifications to practitioners working in the adult literacy sector in Ireland. The Literacy Development Centre is based in the School of Lifelong Learning and Education in WIT.

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Abbreviations

ABE	Adult Basic Education
AES	Active Employability Skills
AGS	Adult Guidance Service
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
ALS	Adult Literacy Service
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CE	Community Employment
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DLEO	District Literacy and Education Officer
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETB	Education and Training Board
	■ KETB: Kerry
	■ LCETB: Limerick and Clare
	■ MSETB: Mayo and Sligo
	■ MSLETB: Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim
FÁS	The Irish National Training and Employment Authority (formerly the National and)
FET	Further Education and Training
IT	Information Technology
ITABE	Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education
KAGS	Kerry Adult Guidance Service
LES	Local Employment Service
LTU	Long-term Unemployed
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway
PME	Professional Masters of Education
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	The Further Education and Training Authority
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology

Introduction

This research was carried out by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and the Literacy Development Centre in Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). It is the latest in a series of research reports, published by NALA, that describe a range of adult literacy and numeracy programmes across Ireland.

This report presents current teaching and learning practice in adult literacy provision in the context of the changing profiles of learners. It provides an in-depth insight into specific teaching strategies that are used to motivate and support adult literacy development. It is intended that by documenting and recording these motivational teaching strategies, this report will be a useful resource to those working in adult literacy in Ireland.

Background

Traditionally, in Ireland, learners engaged in adult literacy and numeracy provision on a voluntary basis. In light of recent labour market policy, a formal referral agreement has been put in place between the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and Education and Training Boards (ETBs), including their adult literacy services. This has resulted in an increasing number of people being referred to adult literacy services from local employment services.

All learners will experience 'highs' and 'lows' in their education journey however, those referred by the DSP to attend education and training courses may be more reluctant to participate fully in the learning process. In such an environment, motivation to learn can be a real challenge for both learners and tutors.

There is extensive research to support the claim that motivation plays a big part in successful learning (Bates, 2016; Merriam & Bierema, 2013; Wlodkowski, 2008^[1]). Two types of motivation are recognised – intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the internal drive to succeed and extrinsic motivation focuses on outside influences which impact on our need to succeed. Some aspects of motivation require an understanding of the learners and what might work for them. Other aspects relate to what the teacher's can do in their classes. Curzon (in Bates 2016 p.144) prescribes a plan that draws on all of the motivation theories that are relevant to methodology.

The adult literacy tutors who took part in this research are actively addressing the challenge involved in motivating learners who do not come to the services with their own learning goal, but attend in order to satisfy the requirements of the referring agency. In these instances, learners have benefited from engaging with experienced teaching personnel who can boost motivation at critical times. This research captures these motivational teaching practices and presents them in a way other tutors may find useful when seeking to build the motivation levels of learners.

[1] Full literature review available on request from Eilish Roche at emroche@wit.ie

The principles for good adult literacy work

The **Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work** (NALA, 2012) sets out and explores the principles, approaches and philosophy that underpin good adult literacy work.

- Adult literacy work is based on a philosophy of adult education that is concerned with personal development and social action.
- Adult literacy learning is an active and expressive process.
- Adult literacy students have the right to:
 - explore their own needs and interests,
 - set their own goals, and
 - decide how, where and when they wish to learn.
- Adult literacy work respects different beliefs, cultures and ways of being.
- An ethical code of trust and confidentiality underpins all aspects of adult literacy work.
- Students' knowledge and skills are vital for the effective organisation of adult literacy work.
- Students should have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of provision.
- Adults learn best when the decision to return to education is their own and the environment is supportive, relaxed and friendly.

The principles reflect the importance of student-centred learning, literacy as a social practice and a humanistic approach to adult learning. The Guidelines also suggest that ideally adult literacy learning should not be linked to welfare benefits or employment.

Changing policy environment

In 2008, a deep economic crisis affected most countries across Europe. The impact of the crisis was severely felt in Ireland. This led to historically high levels of unemployment, and though greatly reduced, it remains a legacy from that time (Duell et al, 2016).

At the height of the crisis the Government, as part of its Programme for Government 2011-2016, introduced **Pathways to Work, Government Policy Statement on Labour Market Activation, 2012**. The document set out how the Government intended to engage with and support unemployed people back into the workforce.

Pathways to Work 2012 had five strands:

- More regular and ongoing engagement with people who are unemployed;
- Greater targeting of activation places and opportunities;
- Incentivising the take up of opportunities;
- Incentivising employers to provide more jobs for people who are unemployed; and
- Reforming institutions to deliver better services to people who are unemployed.

In effect, **Pathways to Work** was an overhaul of the way the State supports jobseekers. It introduced a code of rights and responsibilities where, in return for welfare support, unemployed people must actively seek employment or engage with employment or training services.

A key element of **Pathways to Work** was the transformation of social welfare offices into one-stop-shops where unemployed people could access their entitlements and get help planning their return to work. The DSP administers and manages social welfare payments in Ireland.

Intreo, launched in 2012, is designed to provide a single point of contact and a more streamlined approach for all employment and income supports. One of the key elements of Intreo is a Social Contract. The Social Contract ensures that all parties understand the rights and responsibilities that come with income support and underpins the Intreo approach. The commitment expected of clients under the Social Contract are that they will:

- Co-operate with the Intreo service in developing a Personal Progression Plan;
- Use this plan to strive to secure employment;
- Attend all meetings and provide all information requested by the DSP; and
- Sign and honour a record of mutual commitments.

Failure to honour this commitment can lead to a reduction in and ultimately a cessation of payments (Government of Ireland, 2012).

Further Education and Training

The ETBs, work closely with the Intreo service in placing unemployed and people in education and training courses.

A range of free adult education and training course are available to all adults, including those unemployed, through their local Education and Training Board (ETB).

The SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019, accompanied by implementation plans, aims to develop a high quality integrated system of further education and training in Ireland. The two broad objectives of the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy are that it will:

- meet the needs of citizens; and
- promote economic development (SOLAS, 2014).

Government policy recommends the integration of literacy into all publicly-funded FET provision. The SOLAS report outlines the important role played by FET in promoting social inclusion and lifelong learning.

The FET Strategy also reflects the priorities set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, **Pathways to Work** and wider policy reform in education. A key priority for FET is to:

- Address the unemployment challenge by providing targeted skills programmes that support jobseekers to both reskill and upskill;
- Modernise and expand the apprenticeship system; and
- Implement the new structures for FET to deliver higher quality flexible and responsive programmes (SOLAS, 2014, p.3).

The FET Strategy also includes a literacy and numeracy strategy with 12 elements including:

- Encourage increased participation and completion and attainment of major awards at levels 1, 2 and 3 with regard to priority groups – see page 100 FET Strategy.

The attainment of literacy and numeracy is held to be fundamental to personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability. This is because it enhances participation in personal, social and economic life (SOLAS, 2014, p.99).

Participation in adult education and training

In 2013, data from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) showed that the total number of learners in the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) adult literacy service was nearly 55,000.

Adult literacy and numeracy provision is provided by ETBs through the local Adult Literacy Services (ALS). The ALS provides tuition on a one-to-one or group basis and offers a variety of programmes to adult learners that include:

- Adult Basic Education;
- Numeracy;
- Family Learning;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- Workplace Basic Education; and
- Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE).

Classes are typically for two to four hours per week, during the academic year. The ITABE programme offers the learner the opportunity to access intensive tuition for up to six hours per week over a 14-week period.

A review of the ALS (DES,2013) recommended that ETBs should deliver intensive literacy options to learners of at least six hours a week as part of its core service. All of the services offer learners programmes accredited through Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

Figures from SOLAS (2016) show that in 2015 the number of people taking part in adult literacy and numeracy provision was nearly 62,000. This represents an 11% increase on the 2013 figures. See Table 1 below for a further breakdown. How much of this increase is due to the referrals from the DSP is yet unknown as there are no official figures that support this assumption either way. However, some services have reported an increase in their numbers following the introduction of **Pathways to Work**.

Table 1: The numbers of people taking part in adult literacy and numeracy provision

	Total number	ALS	ESOL	ITABE
2013	54,682	41,600 (76%)	11,055 (20%)	2,027 (2%)
2015	61,702	41,759 (68%)	16,136 (26%)	3,807 (6%)

Research methods

The objectives of the research were to:

- Capture innovative motivating practice in adult literacy centres;
- Describe motivational strategies in different learning contexts; and
- Provide a report on such practice that will be a resource to adult literacy and numeracy practitioners.

Our initial task was to establish contact with all adult literacy schemes within the ETB adult literacy service who might be potentially willing to participate in the study. All of the ETBs we contacted received a detailed description of the study aims as well as a written synopsis of the proposed research strategy.

We received responses from seven Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs) and adult literacy tutors and these were included in this report. The practice showcased in this report was collected at seven ETB Adult Literacy Services (ALS) and further education programmes throughout the country. The locations were:

- Castlebar Basic Education Centre, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB;
- Killarney Adult Basic Education Learning Centre, Kerry ETB;
- Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB;
- Limerick City Adult Education Centre, Limerick and Clare ETB;
- Nagle Centre Waterford, Waterford and Wexford ETB;
- Tralee Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre, Kerry ETB; and
- Waterford and Wexford ETB.

A case study methodology was used in this research. Case studies for educative purposes are regarded as useful to illustrate the complexity of, as well as providing examples or illustrations of, theory or practice. The techniques used in the research were primarily qualitative methods. Qualitative methods were chosen because they are particularly designed towards discovery. They also allow the researcher to explore identified themes and issues in great depth and detail (Strauss and Corbin, 2007). These methods were semi-structured in-depth interviews with tutors.

Data analysis

Verbatim transcripts of all individual in-depth interviews were prepared. Data analysis was guided by grounded theory methodology in which data collection and analysis occur close in time (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The research team discussed the interview process and, at this stage, interview questions, topics and language were modified where appropriate. Preliminary analysis was ongoing throughout the fieldwork phase of the research. For example, after the completion of individual interviews, it was standard practice for researchers to make a written record of notable issues and themes. The initial stage of the formal analytic process involved a thorough reading and rereading of individual interview and focus group data. Open coding was used in the case of all transcripts to group concepts such as teaching and learning styles and reading strategies.

Case Study 1:

**Castlebar Basic Education Centre
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education
and Training Board (MSLETB)**

Case Study 1: Castlebar Basic Education Centre Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB)

The tutor

Sorcha Moran has been working with the Castlebar Basic Education Centre, MSLETB for eight years. She teaches literacy, maths and information technology (IT) across a wide geographical spread of Westport, Castlebar, Achill and Ballycroy.

Sorcha's learners are of mixed age and groups comprise six to seven students. Most of her literacy and maths learners are Irish people, but the IT classes attract a mix of nationalities. She facilitates programmes at QQI levels 2 and 3.

Sorcha's background was in software engineering. She then completed a Certificate in Adult Learning with NUIG. There she learned a lot about the psychology of learning and found that very interesting. Not working in education proved difficult in terms of application of knowledge, but once she got her qualification she found the confidence to work in the area and immediately found relevance for all she had learnt.

Teaching style

Sorcha describes her teaching style as informal and relaxed. In her maths class, she goes back to the basics and uses a lot of hands-on and exploratory work so that her learners can discover and understand basic concepts before moving on.

She explains the basic concepts in a range of different ways so that the learners can get a rounded view of the topic and then they start to make lots of different links. Much of what she does with her learners could be termed 'discovery learning'.

Sorcha keeps up to date by using the internet. Having a curious mind helps, but getting the best from the internet involves a lot of time. She searches a range of sites and applications because maths is so diverse. She also attends conferences such as those organised by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). She has done online courses for her own Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and is currently enrolled on a blended learning course.

There are also some opportunities for peer learning among colleagues in Sorcha's centre. This is because some learners from her groups may also be in literacy or other groups. She finds it can be useful to chat to colleagues about learners' general demeanour and what strategies for learning work for other tutors. But she is the only numeracy tutor and so is not able to avail of peer learning for her subject area.

The learners

Sorcha was aware in advance that the current group were all male and there was a mixture of referral agencies involved. The men came from:

- The Probation Services;
- Community Employment Schemes;
- Men's Sheds; and
- Traveller Support Groups.

Sorcha had no information about individuals in the group. However, she was reassured that there was no threat of violence.

Sorcha thinks the men's motivation changes over time. Even the ones who have to be there change their attitude as they become part of the group. They like the social aspect of attending, learning new social skills, how to behave and what they can say.

Being in the classroom presents a risk for some of the learners in relation to their identity. These learners come from a tight-knit community and initially they were only aware of their own surroundings. There is a constant struggle between what they are familiar with and the prospect of change. They have a fear of being rejected by their own community. Participating in the course and in group discussions in the classroom gives them an awareness of other people's experiences. Sorcha notes that over time their attitude changes and they develop more tolerance for difference and become more broad-minded.

Learner goals

Accreditation is one of the big goals for Sorcha's current group. They look forward to the presentation night and receiving an award. These students never received a certificate before and it is a real motivator to get the 'piece of paper' to show that they learnt something. Some learners are motivated by getting the opportunity to show that they are capable of learning and that is enough. It is about self-belief.

Sorcha, as the tutor, sees the transformation of the person as the big achievement. The learners can sometimes be unaware of all the learning that is happening within themselves that cannot be recorded on worksheets.

Confidence is the biggest thing with Sorcha's learners. At the initial stages they say 'I can't do maths'. Maths is seen as something that you are either good at or not and if you are, you are considered lucky, like being a musician. By showing them that they can, in fact, do maths, Sorcha is helping them to develop their confidence.

Once they believe they can do it then they are not afraid to ask questions and this is the biggest breakthrough. Once the questions start, Sorcha knows they have made the breakthrough. Then they start relating it to things they are doing every day. This takes the learning to a completely different level.

Past education experiences

Sorcha saw that past educational experiences have an effect in the classroom. They compare adult learning with school and saying how it is making sense to them now. Learners often remark: 'If you are told often enough that you're no good at something, or that you're slow, then you begin to believe it and it stays with you all your life'.

Sorcha has heard this so many times that she now introduces this topic on the first day. The learners reflect on past educational experiences and create a space for considering that maybe they were not the problem, but it might have been their situation or circumstances, or that the system did not suit their learning style. That gives them the confidence to try it again in the knowledge that they are not stupid.

Sorcha thinks there should be a before and after snapshot of the learners. When they come into the classroom they have a particular perception of themselves and their ability to learn. This can be read in their body language and how they interact with others. They are not always aware of the change in themselves and forget what they were like before, but the changes are very positive in terms of their self-esteem and their confidence.

Funding in the literacy service can depend on accreditation, or progression, or getting employment. The QQI portfolio records the skills development, but the soft skills and the personal changes are not measured. However, within the scheme there is an equal emphasis on valuing and celebrating the personal achievements and development.

Experience of teaching referred learners.

Eight years ago when Sorcha began tutoring with the service, a lot of the maths students came from other groups within the scheme because they were encouraged to 'give it a go' by the Adult Literacy Organiser (ALO) or resource workers. More learners are now being referred to the classes by Probation Services, Community Employment (CE) Schemes or learners from the Travelling Community.

According to Sorcha, if there are learners in the group who are not motivated this can be quite challenging. The work of motivating the learner is seen as part of her role because learning cannot take place without motivation.

Sorcha suggests that being put into a class that is chosen for learners is not always a bad thing, especially for learners with lower skills because often they do not even know what they need.

Sometimes learners do not anticipate the benefits they would get from a class ahead of joining, and probably do not even notice the learning that is taking place in addition to what goes on the page. After a little while they might remark 'oh, I needed that'.

Sorcha likens it to showing somebody a machine they have never seen before and asking if they have any questions about it. They do not know anything about it and so they do not know what to ask. Taking time to build trust and confidence will always pay dividends. In this respect, she believes that the learner-centred ethos of literacy is important and impactful, despite the learner not being there voluntarily.

Sorcha reports that she feels reasonably confident in dealing with reluctant learners. If they are in the classroom it is good. Where she feels at a loss is when learners do not attend. As they are adults, Sorcha is not in favour of ringing them up to encourage attendance. She has not experienced disruption in the classroom where a learner interferes with the learning experience of others.

The most common initial behaviour is one of opting out or not trying, but the behaviour is not disruptive. Giving the example of her current group, she reflects that she felt a bit nervous beforehand and was apprehensive about the dynamics in the group.

This group were doing Health and Fitness at QQI level 3 and Sorcha's task was to integrate numeracy and maths into the overall programme. The group had a fitness trainer whom they knew and trusted. Initially, he was with them in class so that made it easier for Sorcha to get to know them.

Reflecting on what is happening in the classroom helps Sorcha to know her learners' abilities and capacities for learning. Trust is a big issue in trying something new. She considers her strategy in advance and with the learner in mind. Then if she thinks it would benefit the learner and if the learner is ready she will push them to do better.

Teaching and motivation strategies

Confidence plays a big part in motivation, but Sorcha also feels that it is important the tutor understands the learning process and is patient with learners' progress. Making them comfortable in the group is the first objective. Sorcha encourages any chat that will highlight that everybody has similar fears about the new environment. The informal tone helps them to relax.

Peer learning, Sorcha suggests, is really effective in the maths classroom because there are many ways of teaching something or different ways of explaining. Through discussion on learning styles and previous educational experiences they realise that it was not them that failed, but that it might have been the system or just personal or home circumstances. In this space they get to challenge the perception of themselves as being incapable of learning.

Similarly, there is huge diversity in the application of the principles of maths. That is why conversations are so important. Everyone sees it differently and one learner will come up with an idea and another will have a question. From there they feel it is worthwhile to give it a chance. The increase in motivation is evident when they are more engaged – they sit up straight and ask loads of questions. From there the learning progresses well.

Sorcha knows when motivation is high from their body language and the rate at which questions are being asked. It is more tacit knowledge than any set framework. Overall, motivation increases by Sorcha creating a safe environment. Feeling safe is a big thing. Knowing that they will not be left behind and that there is no exam is a relief.

Making learning relevant

The most important aspect for Sorcha is finding what the learners are interested in and making the learning relevant to their lives or their personal interests. Sorcha lets her learners discover that they are using maths all the time without knowing it. She finds it easy to find everyday, relevant examples. Then it is not just numbers, there is meaning attached to the numbers and that is what makes the difference.

They do a lot of exploratory work and the learners love hands-on work when they are physically doing something. For example, for fractions they use Play-Doh. When they can work with Play-Doh, they see what they have changed and what they have made. If you take the numbers out of it and make a visual representation of the task it makes more sense. These tasks are often done in pairs so that they learn from one another.

Sorcha points out that the way maths was taught in school was all about rules, but it should not be like that. The rules of maths are really shortcuts and they are shortcuts that work. But in school we were taught the shortcut without knowing where the shortcut came from or understanding it.

For example, in algebra you are told to bring the number to the other side and to change the sign and we learn that off, but without knowing why. What you are actually doing is keeping it balanced because the equals means that it is the same value on each side. So if you are taking it off one side you must take it off the other. Sorcha uses a set of scales to demonstrate this rule. The biggest thing is to understand what is happening. Therefore, in class they explore it to understand it and once they understand what they are doing they can begin to work with the numbers.

Learning objectives

Sorcha has to work with learning objectives. The objectives may be listed in a linear manner, but it doesn't mean that the learning has to be organised in the same sequence. Often the learning objectives are not presented in a logical way and, in these instances, Sorcha follows the logical order of learning instead. With maths, especially, you have to understand one thing in order to grasp the next concept. It is all about building on existing knowledge and building up the concepts and understanding.

Online resources

Other motivation techniques that Sorcha uses are setting her learners up with some online work. They can then learn at home themselves as well as just in the classroom. She uses Khan Academy quite a bit because it is a fully supported learning environment. They can get extra practice on what is being covered in class and get hints on how to do it. If they get stuck they watch videos and that helps them to progress. Sorcha has recently completed an online course on blended learning and has introduced quite a lot of ideas from that course with this group.

With this group Sorcha explained how they were able to integrate some of the numeracy module learning outcomes into the work they were doing for their health and fitness programme. For data handling they took their measurements before and after their fitness programme. From this data they were able to produce graphs and analyse them to cover the learning outcomes.

Similarly, they created an online questionnaire to evaluate the health and fitness course, then they completed the questionnaire and analysed the results. In this way they use blended learning opportunities alongside integrating numeracy. They realised then that they were doing maths every day.

Another of the resources from her online course that Sorcha implemented was Padlet for gathering ideas. This is an online tool where learners can post their ideas to a virtual notice board. It is very helpful for learners with literacy difficulties because the contributions can be a video or a photo or a link to a website rather than text. They find it easier than a discussion forum where they have to put in a lot of text.

The completed Padlet (notice board) can be printed off and is great for brainstorming and sharing of ideas. They also use Typeform for creating surveys, this is a bit like Survey Monkey. With the ideas generated on the Padlet they decided what types of questions should go into the survey. So it was all their own ideas that were used as the basis for the questionnaire.

Building relationships

Building trusting relationships with learners gives them confidence in Sorcha as a tutor and she can encourage them to take on new challenges. For example, she suggests they might like to meet 'the girl who does the reading and writing'. Sorcha can then invite the literacy tutor to come in for a chat and they are more likely to attend literacy classes as a result. Signing up on a voluntary basis is a big breakthrough and demonstrates a big growth in confidence and motivation.

Sorcha explains that theoretical frameworks have helped her to understand the importance of linking new learning to what learners already understand and what is familiar to them. She engages them in discussion about their learning styles to demonstrate how different ways of learning can be used to make a concept clearer. However, she would not always identify what theory is being highlighted in their journey. For example, when she notices a transformative moment she would not point out to students what was happening, but it helps her to understand the learning journey.

Sorcha does not think of herself as being different from her learners and places more importance on being accepted by them. This demonstrates respect and by respecting her learners she is modelling an equal relationship between learners and their tutor. Sorcha also values the informal aspect of being in a group. The informality of the class is hugely important and the tea break is one of the most important things as it gives space for developing relationships and finding commonalities, both of which are crucial for a good learning environment.

Patience is very important. Giving learners enough time and space to do tasks and to get full understanding is essential. Sorcha sees encouragement as key to motivating learners. Many of them would never have heard a positive word in an educational setting, this has led to fear of getting it wrong and they need encouragement and support to move past those bad experiences and to take risks. Encouraging learners to try something to see if it works, helps to build their confidence and that is key to motivation. In an environment where there are good, trusting and respectful relationships and where learners' confidence is nurtured, motivation will thrive.

Case Study 2:

**Killarney Adult Basic Education (ABE)
Learning Centre, Kerry Education and
Training Board (KETB)**

Case Study 2: Killarney Adult Basic Education (ABE) Learning Centre, Kerry Education and Training Board (KETB)

The tutor

Elaine Clifford is an adult literacy tutor who works at the Killarney Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre. She has more than 10 years' experience of delivering adult literacy and numeracy tuition to adults. She works with learners in group or one-to-one situations and delivers QQI modules at levels 2 and 3. The modules include:

- Level 2 – reading, writing, quantity and number; and
- Level 3 – computer, internet skills and word processing.

Elaine has completed the WIT Higher Certificate in Literacy Development. She has also taken part in other literacy and numeracy courses. Elaine describes her teaching style as respectful, to both the learner and to their life experience. She strives to ensure that the learner feels that the classroom is a safe place where they can express themselves, where they can learn at their own pace and also follow a dedicated lesson plan. The lesson plan is mostly adhered to, but is also flexible enough to allow for teachable moments.

Elaine describes her style as energetic and she encourages learners to be highly involved in every aspect of the programme. It is her goal to have a motivated and engaged session with her learners. She plans the session so that she does as little talking as possible. She uses a variety of resources including videos, handouts and practical tasks including ice-breakers to keep the learners interested and motivated.

Elaine is actively engaged in her own CPD. Alongside developing her formal professional development, she attends NALA CPD events. Attendance at these events allows her to network with other adult literacy and numeracy tutors and share her own experience and knowledge with others.

Kerry ETB has a strong focus on CPD and provides many opportunities for tutors to attend events and workshops organised by the ETB. All tutors are actively encouraged to attend the events and to keep up to date with development in the adult literacy and wider FET sector.

Elaine says she has gained enormous benefit from taking part in NALA research projects. Being involved in the research has afforded her an opportunity to engage in reflective practice about her own work and to learn from other practitioners involved in the research. It has allowed her to test out and in many ways has validated her work and this itself is very worthwhile.

The learners

For the most part, Elaine is the main tutor delivering the Active Employability Skills (AES) programme¹. These learners have been referred or recommended to the service by the local DSP and LES.

The learners are generally Irish nationals and there is a good gender balance. The age profile of the group is varied with the majority falling into the 30 to 50 years' age group. The group she most recently worked with comprised a number of young males, usually aged 18 to 25 years.

One of the first questions Elaine asks the learners is to identify any recent learning they engaged in and how it worked for them. She does this in an effort to identify the learning style of the adult and to get their views on how they feel about being in the classroom and about learning in general. She has found this process particularly interesting and revealing in that the adults usually associate learning with being back in school, sitting at a desk and being directed by the teacher. In this respect, the collaborative and informal nature of the adult learning environment is something very new to them.

Over the course of time Elaine has observed how social dynamics in the group grow and change and how ultimately the learners benefit socially from attending the programme. She finds it interesting, how initially, some of the group will resist getting involved, but as they become more at ease within the group their outlook and approach to the programme changes. She has noted a distinct improvement in their overall communication skills and social skills.

Learner goals

Elaine identifies the lack of guidance and the identification of a clear learning goal as one of the main barriers to referred learners engaging fully in the education process. The lack of a clear goal is of particular concern to her. Elaine says she strives to make the learners feel as comfortable as possible when they start on the AES programme. Her view is that as learners have not made the decision to return to education, understandably there is a general reluctance and often resistance to engage fully in the programme. This is where her skills and experience as an adult literacy tutor are put to good use.

Elaine feels confident in motivating reluctant learners. Over time her confidence has improved and grown and she attributes some of this to the structure she has put in place in the classroom. For example, she initiates a discussion with the learners around what is termed a 'group agreement'. The group agreement is one of the activities outlined in the AES programme and is part of the introductory session.

¹ See Appendix 1 for an overview of the AES programme

The group agrees a template and once everyone is happy about the content of the agreement, all the learners sign up to it. However, it is Elaine's experience that not everyone will abide by the terms of the agreement and in cases like this she 'whips out' the class agreement. If a particular behaviour continues she will take the learner aside, usually after the class and have a quiet word with them.

Elaine has only had to do this once and was nervous that the learner might not return for the next session. She had discussed the issue with her ALO prior to speaking with the learner. However, this was not the case, the learner returned and there was no repeat of the behaviour.

Experience of teaching referred learners

Considering how the learners on the AES programme differ from other learners, it is Elaine's view that in the past learners who 'come in the doors' did so because they wanted to be there and with a specific learning goal in mind. This is not always the case with the AES learners, some of whom are long-term unemployed.

Before joining the AES more than 70% of the AES programme learners have 'done a lot of courses', mainly in personal development. To Elaine it seems like: '...every hour of every day was being filled with a course of some sort'. In her view the problem with this strategy is that due to a lack of consultation and guidance the adults are, in many cases, no clearer in terms of their education and training goals than they were before they started taking courses.

The end result can be that there is a certain fatigue and resentment among the learners and often they do not want to participate in yet another course. Many of the learners struggle with understanding or knowing why they have been referred to the programme in the first place.

For some it can be difficult to follow a schedule or to arrive to the programme on time. There is often a feeling among the learners that they haven't made the decision to come to the programme and initially they resent being there. Many don't have any clear defined learning goals and are not particularly focused on the learning process. There is a general feeling of 'we'll do this for two hours a day and then they'll leave us alone'.

According to Elaine it's like they feel 'coursed out'.

Teaching and motivation strategies

One of the first things Elaine does with the learner is to identify their learning style to find out if they are visual, auditory, kinaesthetic learners or if they have a combination of learning styles. She discusses with each learner the different ways they can learn and the different ways they might like to learn.

One of the first lessons they do, taken from the AES programme, is to get learners to write the 'Story of my Name'. This exercise is a gentle way to ease the learners into the programme, and to have some fun. Due to the fact that adults are referred to this course there is no formal assessment of the learners. Therefore, using this exercise allows Elaine, in a non-intrusive way, to assess the literacy levels among the group.

The programme also involves a session on career guidance. This session is facilitated by personnel from the local Adult Guidance Service (AGS) and LES. According to Elaine the inclusion of these sessions in the overall programme is absolutely necessary, because so many of the learners do not have a clear learning goal or plan.

The programme also includes IT skills where the learners learn to send formal emails, are given a list of recommended websites to view and gain information from and visit local libraries. The learners are also introduced to www.writeon.ie, the NALA learning website.

Elaine strives to encourage the learners to think about and reflect on the learning from this programme and from other courses they have been involved in. She wants the learners to do more than come and sit passively 'for two hours and do nothing'. If this is what they choose to do, she encourages them to consider that 'what they are learning can help them develop a personal and career plan and think where they would like to be in five years' time'.

Elaine sees her role as sign-posting learners to achieve certain outcomes and explore possibilities rather than spoon-feeding the learners. Part of this is to encourage them to reflect on their learning and develop a short and long-term plan.

Active Employability Skills Programme

The Active Employability Skills Programme (AES) was inspired by the increasing number of learners referred to the centre by the local DSP and LES offices. The increasing number of learners alongside the lack of a clear definition of what a 'referral' was designed to achieve was the catalyst that led to the creation of the AES programme.

The programme was developed by staff at The Killarney Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre with input from the LES. A pilot programme was run in May 2015. Due to the success of this pilot the programme was run again in 2016. It is hoped that this programme will be rolled out around the country in 2017.

The programme aims to provide adult learners with the skills necessary to improve their employment opportunities. The content is relevant and practical and helps learners to improve their reading, writing, numeracy and computer skills, alongside developing listening awareness and speaking confidently.

The tuition is intensive, over 10 sessions, with the opportunity for learners to achieve QQI minor awards. However, the AES is a preparatory course and achieving QQI accreditation is dependent on the learner. Some of the awards available to learners are:

- Career Preparation – level 3 major award; or
- Learning to Learn – level 2 major award.

Recommended key principles of the programme

- An adult literacy tutor should deliver the tuition.
- The programme should be learner-centred and based on learner-need.
- Sessions should go ahead as planned and agreed: this may require contingency planning but is critical to the successful delivery of the programme.
- Literacy tuition must be prioritised so that it does not clash with other tuition or with DSP and LES appointments.
- Progression opportunities should be provided to all through Kerry Adult Guidance Service (KAGS).
- All learners should be assessed prior to inclusion on the course.
- Information that is relevant to learner needs should be distributed through 'Plain English' with the guiding principle that less is more.
- Visits to the library services should be built in the programme – this should be done in a planned and integrated way.
- LES sessions should be delivered by the referring Case Officer to allow follow-up and build relationships between the learner and the Case Officer.

Items to consider

- Every group of learners will have different needs, therefore the tutor must be resourceful and adjust the programme accordingly.
- The programme must always remain learner centred.
- From the beginning, the tutor should encourage learners to become active in their learning and where possible assign homework in between sessions to keep the learner engaged.
- Access to a computer, a shared printer and the internet is essential.
- Other recommended resources include, an overhead projector, flipchart and whiteboard.
- Attendance cards provide learners with evidence of their attendance throughout the programme and may be useful should DSP require details from the learners.

- A course schedule should be given to each learner in Session 1 providing them with dates, times and contact number of the Learning Centre.
- A group agreement is required.
- A Learning Journal for each learner is essential.
- File management – the tutor should consider how each worksheet will be filed.
- Avoid giving out too many handouts.
- Encourage learners to access websites to ensure the most up-to-date information is available.
- Each session should be two hours in duration and where possible there should be two sessions a week.
- There should be flexibility in the sequence to which sessions are delivered.
- Use www.writeon.ie with your group – it is recommended that each tutor has a www.writeon.ie account to ensure they are familiar with the various awards at levels 2 and 3.
- The tutor should record all www.writeon.ie passwords and email them to the Centre Manager.
- Evaluation – it is essential to encourage all learners to participate actively in evaluating their learning programme (AES Programme, p.2).



Case Study 3:

**Mairéad O’Riordan, freelance adult
education tutor, Dublin and
Dun Laoghaire (DDLETB)**

Case Study 3: Mairéad O’Riordan, freelance adult education tutor, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire (DDLETB).

The tutor

Mairéad O’Riordan is a freelance adult education tutor affiliated to DDLETB. She has been working as an adult education tutor for more than a decade, mostly in the Lucan and Clondalkin areas of Dublin. Before moving into adult education she was a registered secondary and further education teacher. The subjects she taught included maths, chemistry and biology. She has also worked with parents of primary school children mostly through liaising with Home School Liaison teachers.

Mairéad teaches maths at Maynooth University with Professional Masters of Education (PME) students. Most adults she works with are participants in adult education programmes provided through the DDLETB. She teaches maths, business calculations and statistics at QQI levels 3 and 4.

Mairéad has not had any Continuing Professional Development through DDLETB. She engages in it ‘off her own bat’ and keeps up to date with new developments in the sector by networking and sharing resources with a group of tutors. They share materials and resources online via the internet. She also gets a lot of her ideas for teaching from her interaction with the PME students and she does research on teaching methods through Maynooth University.

Teaching style

Mairéad describes her general teaching style as engaging active learning strategies. She prefers to work in a learning environment that has a buzz about it and where the learners are actively doing things. Typically she breaks the learners into groups and has one group working on maths at a board and another group working out a problem on the computer.

‘I love when people are doing different things, working away, it’s great to see people working together,’ says Mairéad.

Mairéad promotes peer learning among the group and she believes that this way of working benefits everyone involved. However, it is something she has to keep an eye on so that learners do the actual work and do not copy from each other.

Mairéad believes it is vital to get learners involved in their own learning, to build their confidence and foster a sense of control and empowerment. She encourages them to reflect on the differences between learning as an adult, where they can control and direct their own learning experience and learning when they were at school.

The learners

Mairéad works with groups of learners who have mixed abilities and are at varying QQI levels. Some might have completed the Leaving Certificate, others the Junior Certificate and some might be early school leavers. This situation can be problematic and challenging for her especially when trying to blend a class together.

Many of the learners who attend her classes have been referred by the DSP. Many have made clear that keeping their benefits is the only reason for being there and their main reason for staying there. Mairéad has noticed that some will arrive in the classroom to get a tick on the register and make an excuse to leave early.

Over time many of the learners will eventually see the benefit of attendance and stay on but others will 'flip out' and leave for good. Those learners who stay on usually progress to the next QQI level. For example, if they come in at level 3 they will stay on and complete level 4. According to Mairéad the retention rate is quite high, usually around 90%.

Learner goals

A particular challenge is managing the different needs and expectations among the group. 'One person might want to learn how to multiply, while another will want to do something more complex,' says Mairéad.

One solution is to come up with a list of topics that everyone in the class agrees to. For example, one week she will concentrate on teaching multiplication and another week the focus will be on learning fractions. Mairéad finds this group approach more successful than teaching learners individually or in isolation. She believes that asking people what they want to do is the key to success. She will check in with them about what they want to do, what they liked, what they did not like and what they felt about each of the lessons on the various topics and subjects.

Experience of teaching referred learners

Mairéad has observed a distinct difference in attitude, behaviour and motivation that referred learners present with compared to those who come off their own bat. Mairéad finds that motivating and teaching referred learners can be trickier than teaching learners who are there of their own volition. One way to overcome this challenge is to establish and build up a relationship with the learners involved. This usually happens during the socialising that takes place as part of the class. Most likely during a tea break when everyone is relaxed and sitting around chatting.

It is Mairéad's experience that building relationships between her, the students and amongst each other is crucial to the class dynamic. This personal interaction helps to keep the learners motivated and interested and most importantly to ensure that they return every week. However, this does not always work and from experience she knows 'almost instinctively' who will not respond and leave.

Mairéad encourages all the learners to keep an open mind about what they are learning and how it will benefit them in the long run. According to Mairéad, when it works it works really well. 'It's great to see the most unexpected people work well together, it's really good,' says Mairéad.

Initially, it can be difficult to motivate learners to be self-directed and involved in their learning. This is an understandable and expected reaction from someone who has been out of the education system for a long time.

They will struggle to work through a problem or an idea on their own and can panic without some type of assistance, reassurance and support from the tutor. These learners require a lot of time and effort in order to get them to a stage where they feel comfortable working by themselves. Over time, as their skills continue to grow and develop so does their confidence in their ability to solve a problem by themselves. Eventually, they become confident enough to work on their own. This results in a sense of achievement for both learner and tutor.

Accreditation

A particular challenge is the lack of resources that a tutor has to work with and a growing pressure on the move towards accreditation. Mairéad has noticed that some of the learners are 'freaked out and afraid' of the suggestion of a move towards accreditation.

Those learners that make the decision to achieve an accredited outcome are very aware of the value of doing this. Working towards accreditation requires a huge commitment on their part in terms of time and workload. It has been Mairéad's experience that the learners see the potential rewards attached to accreditation and understand the value of an official Certificate.

Teaching and motivation strategies

When preparing for her first class with a new group of learners, Mairéad encourages the learners to work on a learning plan. She values an ongoing dialogue and discussion between herself and the learners about the content and direction of the course.

From the start Mairéad will identify and agree with them a list of subjects and topics that will be covered in each session. If the course is accredited at QQI levels 3 or 4 then there is a syllabus that needs to be taken into consideration. Once the topics are agreed Mairéad will plan and structure the session accordingly. She puts the completed list on the wall and ticks the topics off as they go along.

Mairéad also finds ice-breaker exercises are good for helping people relax. Rather than use a standard one such as 'introduce yourself to the group', she will set the learners a simple maths problem and ask them to solve it. Initially, some learners are reluctant to get involved, however, with encouragement and support from Mairéad they usually engage. She describes the sense of achievement for herself and more importantly the learners when they realise they have solved a maths problem and start discussing what might be next.

Active learning strategies

Mairéad finds active learning strategies are both useful and effective in the classroom. It is her view that when people are interested and understand why they are learning certain things in a certain way, it increases the motivation of everyone involved. For example, when teaching geometry she observed that terms such as 'perpendicular' and 'parallel' were irrelevant and nonsense words to the learners. However, these are terms that they need to know, learn and understand. So, she gives the learners some catalogues and asked them to start marking off shapes or lines that they recognised and were familiar with.

According to Mairéad active learning gets the learners excited and doing things. Active learning strategies make the work relevant to the learners' lives and helps the learners to understand in a deeper way the relevance of maths to their everyday lives. It is Mairéad's experience that using real-life examples works really well, for example, looking at grocery and household bills. These are things that learners can understand and respond to.

Mairéad finds that using money is a fantastic way to get people thinking about numeracy and maths in a way they can relate to. She also uses real-life resources when teaching a subject like fractions and percentages.

'I get them to bring in food, physical things, by making it real for them they can see how and why they need to learn certain things. It's better than saying 'it's on page 40 of the syllabus' so I try to make it real and interesting for people,' says Mairéad.

Mairéad believes that active learning strategies work unbelievably well. They make the learning more relevant and interesting because people can see and understand why they are learning certain topics and subjects. She also finds that they increase the motivation of all the learners to learn.

Mairéad provides an example of a learner who was disinterested and disengaged from what was going on in the class and from his peers. Having talked to him about his interests outside of the classroom she discovered that he loved scuba diving. With the consent of the other learners in the class she designed a lesson around fractions and scuba diving. The lesson was based on the air tank used in diving and the class were to work out how many minutes' air you have in a full tank, how much time you have left if the tank is half empty or a quarter empty. The lesson went 'fantastically well' and confirmed to her that if you give learners input and control over what they do it pays dividends in the long term.

The use of discussion

Mairéad finds that having ongoing discussions with the learners is a good way to get feedback from lessons. The information she gets from the discussion informs what can be changed and improved upon. It is a good way to avoid making assumptions about what works and what does not work. She has had times where she has designed a lesson plan, implemented it and thought the class went brilliantly. But when she asks the learners for feedback it is often the case that they are not as enthusiastic as her about the lesson and make some suggestions for change. She writes up the feedback at the end of the lesson and incorporates the changes into revised lesson plans.

Mairéad believes that the key to motivating learners, in particular, reluctant learners, is making people feel comfortable, and feel that their opinions are valued and listened to. Some learners may have had a negative experience in the formal school system so it is important that they understand from the outset that this is not school and that they have input into what, when and how they learn.

Mairéad believes that the tutor needs to build a positive relationship with the learners. She also believes it is the role of the tutor to provide a safe and positive learning environment where learners feel valued and their opinions are heard. Mairéad believes that she, as a tutor, is responsible for building positive affirmation into her lessons for everyone, for making sure learners enjoy the experience and that they leave the class with a sense of having achieved something new.

Case Study 4:

**Limerick City Adult Education Centre,
Limerick and Clare Education and
Training Board (LCETB)**

Case Study 4: Limerick City Adult Education Centre, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB)

The tutor

Roseanne Dunne has been working as an English tutor to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) with Limerick City Adult Education Services for four years. Her background is in business and marketing. The groups she tutors are working towards QQI certification in General Learning at levels 1 and 2. She completed the Graduate Diploma in Adult Education through Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

Roseanne's learners are all non-Irish nationals and their primary need is English language acquisition. In these groups, learners' levels are measured in two categories: the level of English and the level of literacy. The English levels vary between non-existent and QQI level 2.

In addition, the educational backgrounds are varied and some have never been to school in their own country. There is also a wide variation in motivation levels with some learners being highly motivated to learn and others being more resistant to learning.

Roseanne uses interactive strategies of teaching and she tries to get people from different countries working together. She introduces topics that are of general interest in the group and works on the vocabulary that emerges from the learners' paired work on these topics. This approach is similar to the Language Experience Approach used in literacy classes and demonstrates how the literacy ethos can support learning in ESOL groups.

Through the Graduate Diploma in Adult Education programme Roseanne became aware of the policies and strategies relating to adult and further education and the particular issue of the policy within the DSP of referring clients to adult education programmes, including ESOL and literacy.

The learners

Participants are new immigrants or asylum seekers who are unemployed. They are interviewed by a company under contract from the DSP to identify what supports they need. Invariably it is language skills they need and they are referred to the ETB for English language classes. Assessments are quite informal and tutors know very little about the learners before the course begins.

The motivation of learners varies within the group. In the past, people came as migrant workers and did not always have an opportunity to integrate beyond their own communities. When they lost their jobs they became marginalised.

They are in classes partly because they know they must do more to help their own language acquisition and partly because the DSP has dictated that they must attend or risk losing their social welfare payments. The learners feel they are not getting enough English language tuition and can be pessimistic about getting work without better English skills. They are competing with Irish people who do not have the language barrier.

Those who came through the asylum process have even more difficulty because they have huge gaps in their CVs. On the one hand they are very glad to have left the adverse situations in their own countries, but learning English and literacy needs are separate issues.

Roseanne gave an example of a group of women from Georgia who invited her to their apartment. She observed how they watched Georgian channels on their televisions and noted that they spoke Georgian among themselves. They make little or no effort outside of class time to improve their English.

Some of the learners think they cannot learn English and that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Others have a more positive approach and are good attenders and believe they can succeed and this helps them to learn.

Roseanne gives an example of a young woman from Sudan who had never been to school but was determined to learn. She was impatient with interruptions in class and was very focused. She now attends VTOS on a part-time basis, as well as the English classes and will attend the full-time VTOS course next year. This student is highly motivated, she wants to learn, she asks questions and is not afraid to say she does not understand. Roseanne reflected that this learner may come from a privileged background and felt entitled to ask questions while others may not have that confidence.

Accreditation

At the start of the year Roseanne explains what QQI level they are working towards and what is involved. However, they do not have an understanding of the levels. Some are interested in whether they will get a certificate while others do not care. She outlines that they will do some grammar, some reading and some writing and asks them what they would like to do. Some do not want to do grammar, but with the reading she can incorporate work on pronunciation. They read the free local paper as homework and discuss it in class.

Teaching strategies

Roseanne uses a combination of reading, writing and comprehension to assess understanding and progress. Repetition and revision are important and the same words are used in a variety of contexts. Form filling is an important activity for most and the same vocabulary will be used for most forms.

All of the learners are working towards QQI Awards at level 1 or at level 2. While the general learning programmes are not strictly focused on language acquisition, the programmes provide opportunities for improving vocabulary and engaging more with their new environments and communities. Getting the certificate is a great motivator, even though they do not know what it means. It is an official document with their name on it and they value that.

Experience of teaching referred learners

Roseanne believes that the system of referring learners from the DSP has resulted in many learners not being there of their own choosing. In general, people go to English classes to improve their employment prospects. But some immigrants are not interested in work and just attend to ensure they continue to get their welfare payments. This changes the dynamic in the classroom. Roseanne tries to motivate these reluctant learners by encouraging them to see how improving their English language skills will help their families as well as their job prospects.

Roseanne hopes her own enthusiasm for learning and teaching is motivational for her learners, but she does not see how she can change people who have decided they do not want to learn. She is quite direct with students and gives an example of a student who was very reticent to participate in class, but responded well to a one-to-one chat about the importance of learning English. Thereafter his attitude changed and he engaged more freely.

Where there are both literacy and language difficulties it is even more challenging. These learners need one-to-one literacy support and the resources are not there for them. Roseanne finds that even when they get that support they may not continue. When they stop coming to class Roseanne tries to contact them, but often communication is difficult because of their poor English.

Roseanne would like to be more confident in her motivation skills and to achieve this level of confidence, she feels she would need to know her learners better. However, with only four hours per week and with 10 learners in each of her groups she finds it difficult to know how best to tackle the issue of low motivation.

Roseanne feels quite confident about trying new things in the classroom. She is more secure in teaching adults because there are no behavioural issues. They have class outings which cost nothing, like going to the Art Gallery or to the Museum. They look at the paintings or engage with some of the background stories in the museum and that gives rise to opportunities for building vocabulary.

Roseanne also encourages them to build their language skills outside of class time because they need more immersion in the language. She gets them to listen to RTÉ Player and suggests programmes like Nationwide to get them involved in different stories in the community. Sometimes they listen to the news in class and discuss the words that keep coming up. They discuss topical issues like the Luas strike or where they go shopping.

Roseanne is acutely aware of the disconnect they have from the communities in which they live. They only interact with Citizens Information and the Social Welfare office. They are unaware of upcoming festivals and the many free activities available in Limerick.

Roseanne thinks enthusiasm is one of the most important characteristics of a tutor who can motivate learners and adds that the tutor must be motivated themselves. The motivated tutor will be passionate about what they do, they will be interested in their subject and in their students. Openness, humility and humour are also important qualities.

Teaching and motivation strategies

Roseanne 'maps' modules onto one another, that is, she integrates learning between modules to achieve a range of learning outcomes. She regularly organises a day trip to a local gallery, museum or to an event and finds she can achieve learning outcomes from this for a range of modules.

The great advantage of working at QQI levels 1 and 2 is that they are so malleable and flexible in terms of what will fulfil the requirements of the learning outcomes. There is no facility for recording soft skills, but Roseanne can identify improvements in attendance and general demeanour in the classroom. She is keenly aware of how learners' confidence levels improve as they succeed with their learning. Roseanne is genuinely interested in all her students and regularly helps them with correspondence around medical appointments or tax issues.

Roseanne encourages learners to come to class, so that they will get the benefit of interacting and engaging with other people. They learn new words and new vocabulary and she coaxes them to learn five new words every week – that will add up to a huge amount in the course of a year. She uses the Dolch list which, she reminds them, represents 60% of the English language. If they can know all the words on that list, they are really improving their vocabularies and opening up opportunities for themselves.

Roseanne finds that her learners like to have a worksheet in front of them in class. They write down everything from the whiteboard, even if they have written it two days earlier. So they work a lot with worksheets, sometimes filling them in themselves or working with colleagues to complete a task like a grammar exercise or untangling a jumbled-up sentence.

Roseanne sometimes uses You Tube clips, but finds it difficult to get ones that are basic enough for her learners to follow. She uses a CD on pronunciation. She gives her learners a few words which, after they have been said, they have to spell and write down. Most of the learning is done through activities like trips out – that would be as frequent as once a week.

One time they had a drama facilitator who came in for four or five sessions. Learners' responses were mixed – some loved it and some hated it. They did role play in groups and acted out scenes where the rest of the class had to explain what was going on. This was valuable for building vocabulary. Some of the learners chose not to engage or participate in this exercise.

Building relationships

Attendance is the first indicator of increased motivation. Then it is evident in engagement and willingness to participate in whatever activity is going on in class. For example, if Ramadan is coming up everybody gets to talk about it in a very respectful way. Roseanne encourages everybody to give their opinion, but those who are not motivated just will not participate.

Some learners need support with their progression. Roseanne refers again to the highly motivated learner who wanted to join the VTOS group. Peer support is difficult, particularly with different nationalities in one classroom.

Roseanne thinks it is very important to be respected by the learners. If they do not have respect they will not be interested in what she is saying and will think they can learn nothing from her. Roseanne treats all her learners as adults and has enormous respect for them because she is learning as much from them as they are from her. She is interested in their backgrounds and in what they want to share about their personal lives, assuring them at all times of the confidentiality in the relationship. The learners see her as an authority figure with influence to decide whether or not they will come back next year.

Roseanne thinks that the nature of the relationship she has with learners is extremely important. She notes that some learners want her to continue to teach them and suggests that this is not necessarily because she is the best English teacher but because they have formed a nice relationship and that gives them a good connection.

Case Study 5:

**Nagle Centre Waterford, Waterford and
Wexford Education and Training
Board (WWETB)**

The tutor

Linda Ryan works in the Nagle Centre Waterford, teaching on a QQI level 5 fulltime, 50-week Office Administration Traineeship. Class runs for 40 weeks, and there are 10 weeks for a work placement. The programme is for up to 20 people attending on a daytime basis, and up to 16 people can do it at night. Linda's employer is a private training company contracted to the WWETB.

There is a penalty deducted from the fees paid to the training company if the noncompletion rate is excessive or if there is a failure for numbers of learners to progress to employment or college. No penalty is deducted if a learner decides within the first four weeks of the course that it is not for them and leaves. This gives Linda a four-week window to work with. Linda has more than 20 years' experience in training and education, including BTEI programmes and working with Traveller Women's Groups. She has been involved in teaching certified programmes for the past nine years.

The emphasis on the employment and progression outcome on this course has inspired her professional development, and Linda is currently engaged in the Teaching Council-recognised level 8 BA Honours in Teaching in Further and Adult Education in WIT.

She is also undertaking a level 7 Supported Employment course that increases her understanding of the mental, physical or other disabilities that affect learners when selecting and participating in work placement. Linda has completed a Career Coaching course, which again is relevant in this Traineeship programme.

Linda believes that this ongoing study gives her empathy with what the learners have to go through and she describes her approach as humanistic, with the relationship with the learner at the centre. 'Learners can see whether you're motivated or whether you're passionate about the topic,' says Linda.

Teaching approach

Linda's humanistic approach and relationship-building pays results. There are many benefits to getting this right, through Linda's use of ground rules and the idea of the Johari window to foster good group dynamics. 'Initially they're strangers coming in to a group, but even today, one girl got up and said she doesn't want to leave the group after being together for so long,' says Linda.

The learners

The learners on this programme are aged between 20 and 50. The majority of the learners are referred by the DSP or have applied for the course through the Intreo website. Two have come from Youthreach, most of the current group have a Leaving Certificate, and one has a degree in Childcare.

Learner goals

Some learners are referred by local employment services, who present the learner with information about a range of courses. Linda's course requires the ability to work with computers, and the learner may have been asked about this prerequisite in the local services and have said 'yes' to it, but their ability might be very limited. So it is common to have a diversity of ability in any one group.

Other learners may have significant family and other commitments affecting their ability to attend a year-long full-time course, so the four-week window is used by Linda as a settling-in period while they establish a new routine 'and manage their time better'. The first module is hard for learners for that reason.

The buddy system can work well for learners to get a new structure going in their lives. It starts a process where learners motivate each other, which of course is very motivating all round: '... we've all motivated each other'.

Past education experience

Past experiences of school can be very discouraging for some learners. Linda tells the story of one sub-group of three young women who had gone through school together, but had not had good experiences of school. This came to light when they had to do a presentation. They had been ridiculed by their schoolteacher when they did a presentation and 'told they would never amount to anything'. Linda reassured the group that the content of their presentation was not being assessed, rather the assessment was about the way they worked together as a group to organise it. They were able to do the task and pass. Making the assessment criteria transparent was essential in this case.

According to Linda, two of the learners who did not complete upper secondary schooling said that: 'If school was this way they would have gone on and stayed and done their Leaving'.

The learner who already has a university degree has identified the difference in the teaching and learning process that is working well for her such as being shown how to use Word software for managing references.

Programme structure

Transparency also happens when Linda displays the programme structure, showing what modules happen and when. This stays on display throughout the course and reduces anxiety for learners, as they know what will happen. It gives them the chance to prepare themselves or identify any particular difficulties that might arise. This transparency follows through in making the learning outcomes of the programme available for every learner. Linda also explains that she is required to cover those outcomes and that she needs to report on their coverage on a daily basis.

A feature of a level 5 course in comparison with levels 3 and 4 courses is the amount of self-directed learning required of each participant. So many things can impede this work and many struggle to make this transition. They need encouragement.

Linda is mindful of her own daughters' preferences for their schoolteachers who 'sit and actually talk to them'. The intensive nature of the programme allows such encouraging relationships to build. We can see that Linda's approach is about getting to know and understand the learner and their context. Many adult learners are the givers of encouragement, but all learners need it. Sometimes the teacher is the only person who will be that encourager. For Linda, it is about working to 'help them in evolving as learners and as people'.

Experience of teaching referred learners

Linda has noticed a change in the type of motivation that some contemporary learners present with. Before the recession, learners were able to keep their benefits and get a training allowance when doing a FÁS course, for example. Many learners said to Linda that this was their reason for attending. That incentive has now gone.

Linda notes that people who used to be self-employed are now using these opportunities to gain new skills or update old ones. While being victims of circumstance, they value the opportunity. Other learners are Long-Term Unemployed (LTU), and they come on the course because they have received a letter threatening loss of benefits. Linda uses this as an opportunity for a discussion about how people feel when they are told what to do, but links this to what could happen at the end of the course for each learner.

Such discussions enable learners self-select who is 'in for the long haul'. Other discussions during this four-week window address often-unasked questions such as 'What's in it for me?', or 'Are they going to like me?'. All of these early discussions are designed to foster an attitude of: 'Listen we're all in this together, let's try and make it as enjoyable as we can'.

Then friendships and good social interaction start to develop, underpinned by a conscious reference by Linda to the fact that she herself is a learner, and she encourages them to keep sight of the possible rewards.

Teaching and motivation strategies

A good relationship with the learners is important, but Linda also values the good relationships learners establish with each other. 'I think it is good to have a better understanding of where they're coming from because if you've got an understanding of them they're more open to listening to where you're coming from and why you're abiding by the rules and regulations here and why you have to do what you have to do. It's so important to have the respect and the trust from day one,' says Linda.

Good relationships are fostered when everyone can understand and accept differences. Linda establishes the idea of different learning styles with each group by using the IKEA discussion: she asks the group what they do next after buying some flat-pack furniture. 'I'd say, you've just purchased something that is in a box and needs to be put together and you've got it under your arm and you're putting it in the car. You take it home. How many of you would rip that box open and just put it together? And I'd say, hold on. And how many of you would take it out, lay the instructions, count everything and lay them all neatly before you'd start putting things together? How many of you would look at the pictures and read half and try and do it yourself? Finally how many of you wouldn't do anything and phone a friend and get them to do it? So there are four different scenarios, and what I'm trying to do is teach them from an early stage that there are so many different learning styles and I have to accommodate them all,' says Linda.

Linda asks the group to understand that her teaching methods in the class have to incorporate all the learners so that is the reason she has PowerPoint presentations, group work, hand-outs and different books.

Linda leaves the group alone for their tea breaks in the four-week window to let them get on with each other. After that time, she will use opportunities such as going for a meal together as an incentive, 'a little motivator', when appropriate, such as at the end of a module. These events mark and celebrate the achievement and progress of learners in the programme. They mark the passage of the academic year for the learner and provide a chance to get a sense of achievement before starting the next module in the course.

Linda has the facility for working with learners and counselling them on a one-to-one basis, as necessary, throughout the programme. Many learners will explain what might be interfering with their commitment or ability to participate in private. This is the opportunity to get the full picture, and for Linda to address what she can. These individual sessions allow Linda to ask if there is something outside of the class she should be aware of that might be stopping the learner's ability to participate.

Questions to the group usually give Linda information about what can be changed within the class. Obviously Linda can attend to an issue within the class, but is very aware that if a barrier is happening outside, 'then it needs to be nipped in the bud straight away'. The first step is to identify it. Individual learners co-operate because 'I say that nobody's a mind reader'. This encourages learners to give Linda the necessary information.

The use of discussion

Individual and group discussions enable Linda to establish the state of learner readiness. This enables her to pitch the discussions and tasks appropriately. Linda is always open to finding ways of making a task more relevant and interesting. The topic of data protection, for example, is one that learners might find dull, but Linda has found that the Think, Pair, Share technique for learners is useful for learners to identify how relevant the issue and information is.

'I put them into pairs, then I'll make the pairs get to another pair, then we'll get a bigger group and then we'll all have a huge conversation about what everybody else found. Then when they hear other people's opinions, not just me, they go, ah I didn't look at it like that, and they see that the informal means of learning can give them more than just the formal learning from me,' says Linda.

Linda normalises the dynamics of group work by referring to the theories of stages of group formation and roles within groups. This enables the learners to accept that there are times of conflict or changed behaviour. Linda also uses it to show the relevance of theory, by enabling learners to see how it happens in practice.

'I like the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model of motivation. I gain their attention first of all, and once I've got that attention I have to make sure that they can see the purpose of what they're doing. Then they're getting a bit confident so they're kind of like, yes I can do it, yeah well I can understand what's in it for me. And then ultimately they will be satisfied at the end of it,' says Linda.

The use of feedback

Prompt and accurate feedback to the learner is important for Linda. She reviews their progress at the end of every week by giving general feedback on how the group as a whole is doing. This feedback can be sent out by email or by text message, which provides an opportunity for a learner to respond to it, or query it, if required.

Linda can assess the level of group motivation improving when 'they are eager for more'. She will respond by providing more challenging tasks. Learners are conscious of their changed approach because Linda makes motivation topics such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs part of the learning.

Building relationships

Sometimes a motivating action can feel like going against an ethos of learner centeredness. Linda was advised by a mentor that it could be appropriate to say to a learner they didn't want to be there: 'Tell them you're not keeping them here, there's the door', and I asked, 'But say they leave?' and he said, 'Try it'. I had one particular learner who was like a child with a parent pushing the boundaries. I said to her, 'You don't want to be here and I certainly don't want to teach somebody who doesn't want to be here, there's the door, I'm not keeping you here, the only thing that's keeping you here is you probably won't get your social welfare for at least nine weeks, but there's the door, there are no locks on the door'. And she said, 'Well that's fine then, I'll stay'. I said, 'but you can only stay if you change the attitude because we can't have attitude in the classroom'. I tried to say it as calmly as possible while thinking, if she goes I've lost one. But it was a complete turnaround,' says Linda.

When a learner hits difficulties and becomes demotivated, Linda will be able to remind the learner of their goals and say to her, for example: 'This is your time, your children are reared, you've joined this course and you told me on the first couple of days that you wanted to do something for yourself and this is your time to do it, you can do it.' Keeping sight of the possible rewards is helped by the following activities.

'What I would do on a regular basis is always have a person that I would contact after a previous course and if they'd been a success story I would say, would you come in for a little while and have a chat with my latest group,' says Linda.

Linda also tells her learners about her own story of becoming a lone parent, doing unskilled work and then getting on a Community Employment Scheme and using the training to get qualifications. The potential of rewards is reinforced. The past pupils tell their story of what it was like for them on the course, the work they put in and what they got out of it, including the fact that Linda had challenged them when they were on the course.



Case Study 6:

**Tralee Adult Literacy and Basic
Education Centre, Kerry Education
and Training Board (KETB)**

Case Study 6: Tralee Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre, Kerry Education and Training Board (KETB)

The tutors

The tutors, Eleanor Neff, Peter Keane and Andrew Duggan work at the Tralee Adult Literacy and Education Centre (part of the KETB). Between them they have more than 26 years' experience as adult literacy tutors.

They work mostly with ESOL learners in Tralee, Listowel, Kenmare and Killarney. They work mostly in group situations although they also do some one-to-one tutoring.

All three tutors engage in CPD. Kerry ETB is hugely supportive of their tutors engaging in CPD, and availing of CPD opportunities.

The tutors regularly attend NALA CPD events and get a lot of new ideas and new approaches to learning from participating in workshops. Attending training events also provides a valued opportunity to network with other tutors working in the ALS.

The tutors also value the importance of peer-to-peer learning, contact with colleagues and the swapping, sharing and bouncing ideas off each other. Issues pertaining to their practice are discussed formally at staff meetings and informally in the staff room. The tutors have also completed modules in adult literacy and numeracy at WIT.

Teaching styles

The tutors describe their teaching style as relaxed, learner-centred and in philosophical terms as 'progressive – radical' where language and power are very much connected. In the adult literacy classroom 'the learner is viewed as the educator and the educator as the learner'.

The tutors strive to ensure that there is a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the classroom and to provide a positive and dynamic learning environment. They emphasise that they are 'tutors' not 'teachers' and that the classroom is not school, but adults working together to achieve their learning goals. They stress from the outset that this is adult education as opposed to formal schooling.

The tutors feel confident in their ability to deal with learners who are reluctantly in the classroom. They will do all that they can to motivate the learners to engage in the learning process. They believe that it is a major part of their role as adult literacy tutors to do so.

The tutors reflect on how their initial and continuing training has equipped them with the skills set on how to motivate learners. They also rely on their years of teaching experience, which has added many extra tools to their skills set. There is also a support structure in place in the Centre. They can share any concerns or issues with the manager and this in turn reduces the burden felt by the individual tutor.

The group view themselves as tutors who are constantly learning, engaging in peer-to-peer learning, and updating and developing their skills. They believe that they are constantly reinventing and relearning what it is to be a tutor, see themselves as learners and tutors, and this experience and knowledge allows them to deal with almost any situation.

The learners

For the most part, these three tutors work with ESOL learners. The learners are from different countries and cultures including Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Most are male and they range in age from early 20s into their 60s.

Over the past two years, the tutors have noticed an increase in the number of 'referred' learners in the service. The majority of learners are there because they have to be and their main motivation for being there is financial. They have also noticed a different attitude to learning amongst these learners. They are usually less motivated than learners who come in voluntarily, they don't always want to be there and there can be a lot of absenteeism.

Attendance is strictly monitored and learners who do not attend for a satisfactory per cent of classes are not invited to return for subsequent terms. This applies to ESOL and literacy groups as well as one-to-one learners.

As part of the initial meeting and assessment with the DLEO, learners are asked to maintain full attendance and they are asked to contact the Centre if they might miss a class or be delayed, in order to fulfil their responsibilities as learners.

The tutors describe the 'referred learner experience' as different to teaching learners who have a willingness and want to be there and to learn. They have found that many referred learners are initially reluctant learners.

Initially, learners will turn up because they have to if they want to keep their benefits. They would come in, get the form signed and be off out the door as soon as possible. The attitude among this group was: 'We don't want to learn, we don't need to learn, we don't want to be here and the only reason we are is because we were sent'. However, the tutors have noticed in many cases change can and does happen and the reluctant learner changes into the self-directed and active learner.

Experience of teaching referred learners

The tutors believe that from the start it is essential to establish trust between themselves and the learners. As in any situation when meeting a new tutor there may be a reluctance among some learners to work with and respond to this new situation. The reluctant learner can be one who has been referred to the service by the DSP, by their employer or by other services including the probation service. The tutors try to be as understanding as possible in the circumstances, but they also have a job to do and a class to teach.

The tutors have noticed that some of the learners, particularly Eastern Europeans, come from a school system that was both strict and authoritarian. As a result, there tends to be a nervousness amongst the group about making mistakes. The tutors take time to reassure them that it is okay to get things wrong and that they can move on and learn from the mistakes they make.

The tutors have found that learners want to learn and to be actively involved in their learning. Where there is a difficulty, it tends to lie in the learner's educational background and what they perceive to be a structure of power in the classroom. However, once they understand that the power is in their own hands, and that they are in control of their learning and their learning plan, their attitude shifts and changes. Over time they start to engage more in what is taking place in the classroom.

They all agree that while most learners are initially referred to the service, most stay on because they want to. They want to go back to education, they want to learn and ultimately most of them want to integrate into wider society.

The tutors believe that the willingness or motivation to learn also depends on the individual student, on their circumstance and often on their ability to learn. For example, some ESOL learners are parents and want to improve their English so that they can engage more with their children's education and match or at least keep up with their children's skills and abilities to speak the English language.

Ultimately, the reasons for the learner being there are financial, however, over time a group dynamic begins to evolve. Learners begin to engage and socialise outside of the classroom, to take the journey to the local shop or gym and engage and learn with and from others.

Teaching and motivation strategies

Making learners comfortable in the classroom is one of the primary objectives of the tutors. They encourage discussion among the group about the direction and focus of each class.

One of the initial tasks is to draw up a group agreement and encourage the learners to take control and responsibility for what happens in the classroom. The agreement provides for the basics such as turning off your mobile phone or keeping it on silent, to have respect for each other and to have patience with each other because some might learn in different ways and at a different pace to others.

Learners are also requested to have respect for, and patience with, the tutor. As a result, if any issues arise in the class with a learner, the group and the tutor can refer to the original class agreement.

Strategies used by Peter

Peter gives an example of how he likes to establish a set of rules agreed to by the group. The first rule is that everyone takes an active part in the classroom, number two is that each learner agrees to attend at least 80% of the sessions and rule number three is that everyone agrees to complete all class work and homework. This approach has been successful for Peter and he has completion rates of more than 90% among his students. 'I just believe that they are adults and should be treated as such...they are not children and I am not here to plámás them and they appreciate this,' says Peter.

Strategies used by Eleanor

Eleanor explains the methods she used when working with a group of men involved in farming. They were doing the QQI level 5 communication module. It was apparent from the start that they did not want to be there. 'So I just decided to name it, I said 'look lads I know you don't want to be here, that it's of no real interest to you, but let's try to get through and you can get your certs at the end of it',' says Eleanor.

The group agreed to this and she endeavoured to make the course as interesting as possible for them. She chose topics that she thought might be of particular relevance to what learners did and the learners worked diligently towards the end-goal of accreditation.

Strategies used by Andrew

Andrew distinguishes the difference between the reluctant learner and the disruptive learner. It is his experience that the reluctance to engage often lies in the learner's educational background. However, it is his view that if the tutor is clear in how they apply their methodologies, then they will be confident in dealing with any situation that arises in the classroom.

Andrew believes that the reluctant learner is not a disruptive or disrespectful learner. It is his experience, and this is agreed by the other two tutors, that initially there are only one or two really difficult learners in each group. However, it is also his experience that inevitably this situation is turned around and the learners slowly begin to see the benefits of engaging in the learning taking place around them.

Self-directed learning

All the tutors agree that people learn best when they are self-directed. From the outset the tutors establish: 'This is your learning experience, you get to decide what you want to do, this is your time so let's make the most of it'.

The tutors try to establish a friendly and safe learning environment. They allow a settling-in period during which they establish a friendly and respectful relationship with the learners. These methods help with motivating the learners not only to learn, but also to return each week.

The tutors actively include the learners in the planning of each session and get their ideas and suggestions on any topics they would like to cover. These can deviate from the curriculum, but incorporating real world relevant topics every now and then helps maintain and foster the interest of the learners and motivates them to learn. This is particularly important when teaching ESOL learners because if motivation is working, fluency develops, if fluency develops, language acquisition happens. therefore, motivation can be seen 'when the learners start using the language they have acquired'.

Case Study 7:

**Case Study 7: Waterford Wexford
Education and Training Board
(WWETB)**

Case Study 7: Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB)

The tutor

Edwina Kelly-Crean works for the Irish Colleges Training Centre (ICTC), a training company contracted by WWETB to deliver a full award in Information Technology at QQI level 5. The course runs for one academic year of 49 weeks, five days a week, and includes soft skills modules. Edwina delivers the full award herself. This gives her the opportunity to work intensively with her group of learners, and the group can vary in size from 11 people to a maximum of 20. The ages of the learners are from 20 to the mid-50s.

Edwina has been training for 36 years, and has 16 years' experience on this type of course delivery. All of the learners on this course are referred by the DSP, and Edwina has no details about the learners until she meets them at the start of the course. However, all learners will have had some experience of QQI courses, usually starting at level 3, and proceeding to level 4. Induction week provides Edwina with the opportunity to assess the learners, their learning styles, and generally get to know them and what they might be interested in.

Keeping up to date with new developments is taken seriously by Edwina. Information technology-related teaching requires constant upskilling. The course also involves teaching 'soft skills' and Edwina addresses this by doing a level 6 Coaching course. Her development of teaching methodology is met by doing the Teaching Council recognised BA (Hons) in Teaching in Further and Adult Education in Waterford Institute of Technology.

The learners

The learners, as stated above, are all referred by the DSP, and have had some prior experience of formal further education, such as QQI or the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). They are expected to progress to employment or a higher education college at the end of the course, but not to progress to a QQI level 6.

Some learners can be reluctant and resentful that they have to attend to keep their benefits. But it is only a rare learner who will fail to engage at all. The vast majority can be motivated by making the course relevant to them. Edwina gives the example of an older learner who, because of his age, had no sense that doing CVs and job application letters would result in him getting employment. Thanks to the knowledge that he had a daughter who was applying for jobs, Edwina encouraged the learner to get relevant skills and use them to support his daughter's job search, which he did with interest and enthusiasm.

The activities and tasks that are part of the course give a learner good feedback about their ability to achieve. 'They can see for themselves that they can do it.' This means there is intrinsic satisfaction in the abilities they are building throughout the course. Edwina encourages the learners to see the transferability of the skills and techniques, and the course provides many such opportunities for the realization. However, past experiences of school can impact on the learners' belief in their learning capability.

'I say to them at the very start of the course, this is not school. It's not like I'm the teacher and you're the student and you're sitting there and I'm going to be telling you exactly what to do and you don't look sideways. This is adult education. A lot of them don't get the difference between being in secondary school and adult education,' says Edwina.

Edwina notes that there is no generational difference where poor experiences in education can be predicted to influence the learner. Learners of any age can present with the effect of poor experiences of school.

Filling out daily reports and submitting monthly reports also give Edwina a chance to identify significant instances of engagement and changes in motivation levels. In addition to mid-course and end-course evaluations, Edwina's employers also call in to the class to do evaluations with them. This could happen three to four times over the course.

Edwina likes to check with the learners at different points of the day. She finds that reviewing the previous day's work first thing in the morning gives learners a good opportunity to identify what they got out of the previous day or what was difficult and needs clarification.

The assessment aspects of the course also provide additional clues about learner progress, but in one case a learner refused to do any of the course assessments. Edwina used the idea of assessment, whereby the learner was able to identify his own progress against his starting point on the course and this motivated him, even if not enough to undergo the standard assessment.

Experience of teaching referred learners

One change that Edwina has noted in the 16 years of teaching, mainly on FÁS courses, has been the appearance of resentment of learners in tandem with an increase of awareness in rights and entitlements. The resentment is apparent when learners are sent to a course they do not want to do. Groups of learners in general have more self-confidence and self-esteem than they used to, but what is the same, however, is the extent to which learners' low levels of self-esteem or self-confidence have an impact on their motivation and ability to learn.

Edwina gives the example of a young woman on a course in Dublin whose family were dubious about her ability to get anything out of doing the course. Edwina worked at building up the young woman's confidence in her abilities so that she succeeded in getting the job she wanted. Edwina sees her job as motivating learners and this can present a challenge to a teacher.

Other challenges are that learners may not see that their literacy levels are not what may be required and need attention. Addressing literacy levels is possible once the relationship with the learner has been established, and the learners trust Edwina when she identifies the issue. Edwina outlines the need for high standards, but conveys the expectation that the learners can reach the standard.

Building relationships

When the teacher gets to know the learner, then each can be challenged to stretch their abilities – not too much, but enough to show the learner that they can achieve the tasks and meet Edwina's expectations.

Such judgement is not taken for granted by Edwina, but experience has built her own sense of confidence that this aspect of work can be done successfully. Edwina sees this aspect as part and parcel of her teaching role and uses the journey home after the day's work as the opportunity to reflect on the engagement of learners. That sense of confidence is applied to trying new activities, which she introduces as new to the learners so that all at that point are learning.

Edwina will use group work and peer learning opportunities to deepen the learning and try independent learning in groups. She can switch to the facilitator role and monitor how the groups are getting on. The room she has with the group facilitates this. The front of the room is in rows with computers, and the back of the room has round tables and room for flipcharts. This allows different activities throughout the day, including the developing of the social aspect of learning.

Teaching and motivation strategies

Emphasising throughout the course that adult education is different from their experiences of school does have results. The learners become more relaxed in the classroom. They will ask questions more freely.

Asking more questions is good in Edwina's eyes: 'They're taking more control of it and they're taking more meaning out of it because they have generated the question so they're interested in the answer and then they take on board a couple of things'. Asking questions is an indication of how interested they are.

The use of questions and discussions

Higher levels of motivation over the duration of the course are visible, according to Edwina: asking more questions, looking more relaxed, smiling more, all go with greater levels of engagement. This is visible in the work that the learner will produce. The cycle becomes positive.

A resistant learner who will not participate will have a negative effect on the group's overall ability to attend and concentrate. Such a learner can be a distraction or a worry for them. The departure of a very resistant learner to another course can relax the group. Level 5 courses reinforce the link between input and outcome. Edwina describes learners as being very aware that when they put in the effort, then they can see progress. This is why they can be distracted by a resistant or nonparticipating learner. Being able to see the link is intrinsically motivating for each learner.

As stated earlier, many of the tutors value making clear to learners the relevance of the course for their lives. They give the group examples of past learners and what they are doing now and what the course did for them in a 'where to from here' approach. They get the class to review the skills of a person with a level 5 award competing for a job against a person with a level 3 award, and how the employer might view each.

A series of questionnaires and discussions enables the interests of the learners to become known. The field of information technology then enables Edwina to identify relevant and interesting tasks that each learner can be interested in. Edwina finds topics that will 'grab their attention'.

The topic of motivation itself is useful. Edwina asks the group to find or generate a motivational statement, and present the statement on a page using graphics and design. A gallery of their attractive A4 page posters displayed around the room is motivating in itself as well as evidence of IT skills. The course is seen by Edwina as an opportunity for creativity to shine: 'They all get to do, pretty much, their thing here'.

Building relationships

Getting to know the learner is key. Understanding what is going on for them in their lives enables Edwina 'to cut them a little bit of slack' as necessary. The relationship is respectful, but Edwina does not allow the learner to become dependent on her. Edwina shows them how to do the task, but then expects the learner to go off and do it themselves. This, in Edwina's opinion, gives the learner the necessary control over their learning that is motivating in itself. The learner achieves the learning, rather than gets the task done by the efforts of others rather than their own. 'If you've handheld them, they won't value it as much,' says Edwina. Feedback for the learner, when done positively, is also motivating.

'If they're doing something wrong I need to be able to show them, well look this isn't quite the way to do it, how about you try this way? We do it in a very positive manner so that they can actually say, ah, okay now I get it, now I can see where I'm going wrong, and they learn from it,' says Edwina.

Discussion of the case studies

The case studies in this report illustrate how the adult literacy service is providing a range of courses to meet the specific needs of the learners attending. The case studies show that there is no one definitive way of ensuring best practice, rather they demonstrate aspects of the principles of good adult literacy work, including transformative learning, student-centred learning and a humanistic approach to adult learning.

A common thread throughout the case studies is how learner-centred the programmes on offer are. They highlight elements of transformative learning for the learners and how the learning process changed their perceptions of themselves as adult learners. The case studies present what can be described as innovative and creative programmes designed to meet the needs of the adult learners.

The tutors and their programmes – an overview

Similar issues about the changing profile of groups is identified by ESOL tutors in Tralee, Eleanor Neff, Peter Keane and Andrew Duggan; and in Limerick, Roseanne Dunne.

Numeracy tutors recognise that there is less stigma associated with being bad at maths, therefore adults attending numeracy classes are not viewed as remarkable. This was identified by numeracy tutors Elaine Clifford, in Killarney; Mairead O’Riordan, in Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB; and Sorcha Moran, in Castlebar ABE.

QQI level 5 tutors, Linda Ryan and Edwina Kelly-Crean, have considerable years of experience of working with referred learners. They see opportunities for transformation for their referred learners, whereby the learners will get something really useful and relevant for themselves through coming to their courses.

All the tutors convey a strong belief in the potential of their learners and this is expressed in the classroom as high, but achievable expectations of their learners. The extrinsic motivator of having to come to class is used by the tutors to generate intrinsic motivation.

The case studies are an example of social practice where the needs, concerns and experiences of the learners are the focus of the learning.

The learners

Many learners come to adult literacy tuition to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. With ESOL this includes the desire to improve their English-language skills for employment purposes. The case studies showed how those who were not in a position to seek or take up employment, such as when on full-time family care duties, could be encouraged to see how increasing their understanding and fluency would enable them to help their children and families generally.

All of the respondents who work in ESOL settings acknowledge that limited interaction with English speakers will limit fluency or language acquisition. The classroom is the key opportunity for interaction. The tutors actively encourage that social aspect of learning.

The social aspect of the class

The tutors have a deep understanding of the importance of establishing a good relationship and environment at the outset. They facilitate the group's identification of ground rules, and sometimes provide their own set of 'rules'. They do not make the mistake of thinking that once the ground rules have been agreed by the group, they will be kept, or that the group will enforce them. They are prepared to 'whip them out', as necessary, or even speak privately and confidentially to an individual, if required.

The tutors made an interesting point about the risk to learners' identities. Being mindful and respectful of each learner's individual journey contributes to the safe environment where learners can make their own choices and be comfortable with the changes in their lives. Good adult literacy practice puts in place learning that is relevant to people at the right pace and in a collaborative and participative manner.

Building relationships

Relationships are not just about the relationship between the tutor and learner, but the relationships between the learners is also seen as important. We saw how the tutors actively encourage peer relationships. This involves all the learners in understanding the process of learning and how differences are normal.

The tutors describe how they encourage their learners to challenge their existing attitudes to education and then to trust the new way and to engage with it. Many of the tutors commented on how they encouraged learners to communicate, to listen, to speak and to work with their peers. This made class and break time much more enjoyable and led to increased learner motivation and engagement. The tutors facilitate the learning the adults wish to pursue. This approach promotes collaborative facilitation between tutor and learner (NALA, 2012).

What engenders confidence in tutors to motivate learners?

The greater the years of experience of the tutor, the more confident they feel in taking risks to motivate their learners. These tutors avail of opportunities for networking and peer discussions within their own schemes and when they attend NALA workshops. Their CPD also affords them opportunities for peer support as the WIT programmes actively encourage the creation and development of communities of practice for students on their courses.

The tutors all see themselves as learners, actively engaged in formal and informal learning, especially learning from their own learners. They model being a learner, and empathise with the struggles their learners have in coming back to education.

The tutors and learners are embarking on a journey of transformation, as described by Mezirow (1990). A key element in this process is critical reflection. The transformative learning makes it possible to develop new perspectives, challenge assumptions and take action based on this new view of themselves.

Overcoming adverse initial experiences of education

Overcoming failures of the past was seen as essential in influencing motivation amongst learners and these tutors were acutely aware how prior school experiences could be blocks to learning for their learners. Eastern Europeans, for example, are accustomed to formal education being strict and authoritarian and they expect the same approach in the learning environment here.

The gap between mainstream school and adult education is emphasised by all. Many of the tutors encourage learners to reflect on prior experiences of education and to contrast the difference between initial education and adult education.

The tutors often used discussion time to discover more about their students – their past learning experiences, their learning styles and how they felt about being in the classroom. In many instances they describe how they work to dissipate the lethargy, disinterest and sense of hopelessness, which are detrimental to learning. They also describe how the old attitudes to education need to be broken down in order for the new order to be trusted and to be engaging. In this way they actively work to generate an atmosphere of equality and respect in the class. If learners respect their tutor, that can be the catalyst for making an effort and taking risks.

NALA's Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work place great value on the importance of building relationships of respect, trust and learner-centred practices in the adult classroom. Similarly, the tutors in this research focused on getting to know their learners. All the case studies highlighted the ways the tutors engaged with their learners to build those strong relationships that will foster motivation.

Another aspect at the early stage, is that learners initially may not know what they want, what they need or what they are capable of. Linda Ryan's 'four-week window' prioritises this phase where getting to know the learners is the most important goal. In this time, the tutor can seize every opportunity to reassure and to encourage learners, amassing information that will enable her to assist learners in setting goals and working towards their achievement.

Teaching methods

All tutors talk about how making the learning relevant and meaningful to individual students' needs and interests is central to motivation. They model flexibility for their learner as they regularly change their plans in order to respond to learners' needs.

QQI levels 1 to 3 can be very flexible, and programmes such as the AES course in Killarney have been adapted to accommodate the gaps identified by other groups of learners. Roseanne Dunne shares her methods of organising an enjoyable activity for the group that covers a range of learning outcomes in her ESOL module, but also in other modules of a programme.

What is relevant to one person may not be interesting to another, and getting to know the common interests means getting to know the learners. The tutors prioritise this stage of development in their groups, and devise discussions and activities that provide this information. The tutors encourage group discussion on how life circumstances impact on their ability to learn or commit to learning. Even the experience of being instructed to go on a course is an opportunity for discussion. Feelings and experiences are normalised; group members learn that there are many other perspectives than their own, which can be a new experience for traditional groups such as farmers or Travellers.

Many of the tutors rely on listening to and observing both verbal and body language of their learners. Through reflection they adapt and amend their topics and materials as a better match for where the learners are at a particular time on the programme.

Tutors are very aware that different learning styles exist, and are prepared to generate materials and activities that work to different strengths. Explaining the reason for an activity or discussion helps the learner be patient with their peers who may not learn as they do, or whose level of ability in a particular skill area may be different. Paired learning is popular for that reason.

Some of the tutors describe how they find opportunities to get learners to spend more time outside of the classroom on their topics, thus extending the learning time and achieving more.

Materials

In the case studies we see a wide range of authentic materials being used to encourage engagement and motivation. The numeracy tutors used everyday materials, like kitchen scales and pizzas to make their lessons more accessible. ESOL tutors used local newspapers and current affairs programmes to encourage their learners to integrate more fully.

Sometimes child-friendly playthings can be used appropriately by adults when the reason is explained. For example, Play-Doh is useful for representing numbers. The same tutors also use more sophisticated technology such as Padlet and Typeform. A good selection of materials enables the learner to link what is already understood to new learning. The case studies present examples of how materials can be put in context to the real lives of the learners, for example, a better understanding of how to interpret household bills.

Assessment

The tutors are very aware of the need to measure achievements, as recognising this by the learner is intrinsically motivating. Formal assessment can do this, but there are other means that can be used.

Some of the tutors display the modules and the tasks to be covered over the year's programme, so that it is very clear to each learner where they are, what is coming next, but also what they have already achieved. Openness is central to the tutor's way of motivating learners to see the positives of assessment and she puts the outcomes on the wall for everybody to become familiar with them.

Submitting assignments for a qualification may not be the primary objective of a learner. However, many see the value of a certificate. For immigrants, it may be their first Irish official certificate. It shows that they are capable of learning. Doubts about the value of such effort can be set aside by either telling the stories about what past pupils are doing now, or inviting a past pupil in to tell their own story.

Focus on goals

Trying out different ways of motivating the learners, indeed, carrying the awareness of the topic of motivation, will mean that the tutor can incorporate it into the planning phase, use new knowledge about the learner to relate topics to the learner's interests, and model 'having a go' for the learner.

For different reasons, learners may start out by being nervous about making mistakes. All of the efforts of the tutors go to enabling them 'have a go', and try something out, all the time keeping an open mind. Sometimes learners get tired and discouraged. When tutors hold the learner's goals in mind, encouragement can be given that the learner can achieve, and remind the learner of the achievements so far.

Indications of increased motivation

Tutors are delighted to observe any evidence that their learners are becoming more motivated. Tutors note how learners' body language changes with their increased confidence. They talk about body language, smiling and being more relaxed being synonymous with the improvement in motivation. An enthusiastic learner may become impatient with class interruptions. As the capacity to learn increases, learners become more independent of the tutor. An interested learner often asks more questions than before and Edwina Kelly-Crean sees these as indicators of a move towards self-directed learning.

The joy of seeing learners lose their fear of asking questions or being seen as inferior is the reward for the tutors. Motivating the learner becomes a motivator for these tutors. They see the result of their efforts and can maintain their own level of energy and enthusiasm for the teaching. In this way motivation is self-perpetuating.

Trust is central to the tutor-learner relationship and tuition is learner-centred in all respects. Most importantly, according to the Guidelines:

Adults learn best when the decision to return to learning is their own and the environment is supportive, relaxed and friendly (NALA, 2012, p.24).

The Guidelines also propose that tutors should get adequate training to support their learners and to create an environment conducive to learning through the use of appropriate resources and methodologies.

Adult literacy and numeracy tutors are often challenged to provide all learners with optimum learning opportunities. The tutors reported that learners who are referred to a service can often be reluctant to participate in a particular programme, may lack motivation to learn, or indeed be resistant to learning. In environments such as this, motivation to learn can be a real challenge and it impacts on both learners and tutors.

Many learners reported that they did not want to attend classes and the main reason for attending was financial – non-attendance meant withdrawal or reduction of social welfare payment. However, over time the tutors began to notice a change in attitude among some of the learners who began to self-motivate and began to actively engage in the learning process.

Reflective practice

Wlodkowski (2008) advised that all teachers needed to challenge their own assumptions about education and what goes on in the classroom. He also recommended that tutors engaged in on-going reflection of their practice. The topic of reflective practice is particularly relevant to discussions on motivating reluctant learners. It is a topic that is evident in all of the case studies where tutors can objectively assess the learning situation in a spirit of trust and honesty. Reflection on experience helps tutors to fit their teaching to learners' specific needs. We saw how reflection on practice enabled Sorcha Moran to transform the syllabus content into a logical order because the linear sequence did not scaffold the learning.

Continuing Profession Development (CPD)

The requirement for CPD for practitioners is clearly identified in the Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS 2014). Action 2.2.2 provides further detail on how this will be achieved.

Support FET staff through continuing professional development to attain the necessary knowledge, skills and competence to respond effectively to the literacy and numeracy needs of learners and provide intensive literacy provision.

There is little or no evidence of the tutors having received any specific CPD in how to deal with 'referred' learners, or indeed if there is a need or requirement for same. The tutors reported that they were confident in teaching and motivating referred learners to the service. In the main they tend to rely on their professional training and work experience in this regard. They have applied the principle of good adult literacy work to their practice and several of the tutors have availed of the informal CPD offered by NALA through its events (see appendix 3) and undertaken qualifications offered by the NALA/WIT programme.

In 2015, NALA organised and hosted an International Literacy Day conference entitled **Learning can change lives**. Over seventy people, including practitioners and policy makers were in attendance. The main focus of the event was a celebration of how motivational and transformative learning can change lives.

Speakers at the event explored the social and emotional elements of adult literacy tuition, how transformational learning can work and explored examples of good practice in motivating referred learners. The event offered practical and innovative ideas for working with learners and highlighted the importance of boundaries in the context of adult learning.

NALA and WIT collaborated to design, develop and deliver third-level programmes specifically to be of relevance for adult literacy practitioners and the Literacy Development Centre was set up for this purpose. The programmes are typically modular in structure, often delivered on an outreach basis and incorporate elements of blended learning. These aspects facilitate easier access to CPD for adult literacy practitioners in the field.²

² For more information on the NALA/WIT modules see Appendix 2.

Conclusion

In summary, all tutors in this research project provide a welcoming environment and optimum conditions for learning. It is difficult to capture the less tangible transformations that happen when learners are engaged and motivated. It is hoped that these case studies will help tutors recognise their own good practices. Perhaps some new ideas have been provided.

The case studies demonstrate how challenging it can be to facilitate such transformations. To be authentic and model transformation for their learners, tutors themselves have to be prepared to 'have a go', and critically reflect on trial and error.

They not only tell the learners about the skills for transformative learning, but model how to be a self-directed learner. They demonstrate good literacy practice through ensuring a learner-centred approach and ensuring that learning is an active and expressive process.

The practice presented in this report can be described as both innovative and creative and specifically designed to meet the needs of the 'referred' adult learner. There is no doubt that this work is repeated in other adult literacy services around the country. It is hoped that this report when read in conjunction with the **Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work** will be a useful resource to all those working in the area of adult literacy and numeracy provision.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of the Killarney AES Programme

The table below presents an overview of the AES programme and some recommended activities and comments and resources.³

Overview of the AES Programme		
Scheme of work Session number and content	Activity	Comment and resources
S1 Introductory session: Learning styles	Complete registration form. The story of my name – a gentle icebreaker to allow the group to get to know each other.	Registration form The story of my name – a gentle icebreaker to allow the group to get to know each other. Learners share the story and origins of their names. Learners write their names in BLOCK CAPITALS and their signature.
S2 Introduction to ICT Introduction to word processing and Microsoft Word	Word processing. Set up email account.	It is essential to use a variety of worksheets to ensure all learners enhance their IT skills. Tutor will assist learners to set up a Gmail account. Learners will record their email address and password.
S3 www.writeon.ie Level 2 awards Microsoft Word formatting features	Set up each learner on www.writeon.ie. Start at level 2. Using Microsoft Word.	Tutor will set up each learner with a www.writeon.ie account. Each learner completes a Skills Checker questionnaire within the website. Setting Learning Goals (L2 minor award) is an excellent starting point with any group. Tutor will explore the various formatting features in Word with the learners.

³ This overview, list of activities and list of comments and resources is just a 'taster'. You can download the complete programme free from the Killarney Adult Basic Learning Centre, website.

Overview of the AES Programme

Scheme of work Session number and content	Activity	Comment and resources
S4 LES section 'Job Seeking Skills', delivered by LES coordinator	This session is an excellent introduction into all aspects of the LES service. In addition, there is a summary of the skills and information learners require to get work or training.	This information is provided by the Killarney LES coordinator.
S5 Email Accessing websites Using IPAD and mobile phone	Using internet and email. Accessing relevant websites: tutors should contact LES office for list of websites and use Jobseeker websites recommended by them. Using iPads and mobile phones.	Internet – learners use the internet to find specified pieces of information about the day they were born. Email – learners will send emails requesting information and attaching a document. Divide learners into pairs and ask them to access listed websites. Ask them to rate the websites in terms of relevance and ease of use. Group discussion on ways we access information.
S6 Explore and review www.writeon.ie QQI awards	Exploring my CV. Employment skills compared to employability skills. Adult guidance session.	TEach learner should bring a copy of their CV. Discuss the different formats and layouts. Highlight what needs to be in a CV. Group work – what is the difference between these skills? Encourage learners to agree list of possible questions for guidance session. Tutor should email this list to Guidance service prior to the session.

Overview of the AES Programme

Scheme of work Session number and content	Activity	Comment and resources
S7 KAGS session – practical interview advice	The session takes about an hour, including time for questions and general discussion.	
S8 Apply for job, type cover letter, send CV and letter by email.	Apply for 'actual job' using INTREO website.	Learners will review and select jobs to apply for on the INTREO website. Learners will make a list of what is required to complete the application process.
S9 Programme evaluation Visit library	Programme evaluation. Visit local library.	Review learning goals, course expectations and concerns. Ensure that all learners have information for joining the library and using ICT facilities.
S10 Final programme evaluation and discussing future learning opportunities	Programme evaluation. Listening skills. Future learning opportunities.	It is essential to encourage learners to participate in evaluating their learning programme. Discuss active listening skills and reasons 'Why we do not listen'. ALO/DLEO to speak with group. Agree this beforehand with the learners.

Appendix 2: Continuing Professional Development Opportunities for adult literacy tutors

The requirement for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for practitioners was clearly identified in a range of government policy documents following the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey for Ireland (OECD 1997). The most recent of these is the Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS 2014).

NALA and WIT collaborated to design, develop and deliver third-level programmes specifically to be relevant to adult literacy practitioners. The Literacy Development Centre was set up for this purpose. The programmes are typically modular in structure, often delivered on an outreach basis and incorporate elements of blended learning. These aspects facilitate easier access to CPD for adult literacy practitioners in the field.

Literacy tutors can start at level 6, and select modules like Group Dynamics, Curriculum Development, and Psychology of Adult Education. These lead to a full Higher Certificate award. Graduates of the Higher Certificate can proceed to obtain a level 7 BA (Ordinary) in Adult Education, and then onto a level 8 BA (Hons) in Teaching in Further and Adult Education.

The BA (Hons) in Teaching in Further and Adult Education is designed to provide participants with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies required to teach in a variety of settings within the adult and further education sector. It is recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland as a teacher education programme for further education (see www.teachingcouncil.ie).

In these case studies, respondents engaged in formal and informal opportunities for Continuing Professional Development as follows.

Accredited CPD

- BA Honours in Teaching in Further and Adult Education in WIT.
- Career Coaching.
- Certificate in Adult Learning NUI Galway.
- Graduate Diploma in Mary Immaculate College Limerick.
- Higher Certificate in Arts in Literacy Development in WIT.
- Supported Employment (level 7).

Non-accredited CPD

- Individual ETB training events and workshops.
- Internet searches.
- Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs).
- NALA training days and workshops (see appendix 3).
- Networking and sharing resources with other tutors.
- Participating in research projects (NALA and Maynooth).

Appendix 3: NALA and CPD

Since the 1980s NALA has organised annual informal professional development events for literacy and numeracy adult literacy tutors, volunteers and organisers. The overall aim of each event is to provide practitioners with information, resources and ideas on the most effective ways to enhance their practice. Practitioners who attend these events are from a range of organisations and services that deliver adult literacy and numeracy provision including: adult literacy service, National Learning Network, Community Training Centres, Youthreach programmes and community education and training centres. These education and training opportunities have gone some way to provide much needed informal professional development to adult literacy and numeracy providers.

NALA CPD events.

These daylong events provide practitioners with valuable information through keynote speakers who share research findings and practice tips and in practical workshops on teaching tips and ideas.

- **Annual tutors forum**
- **Numeracy conference**
- **Numeracy workshops – run during Maths Week in October**
- **Family Literacy conference**
- **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) conference**
- **International Literacy Day conference**

Impact of NALA conferences 2013 to 2015

	2013	2013	2014	2014	2015	2015
	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work	Learned something new	Inspired changes to work
National Tutors' Forum	96%	87%	92%	78%	100%	94%
Numeracy conference	94%	93%	100%	82%	100%	100%
International Literacy Day conference	Information not available	Information not available	95%	92%	100%	*96%
ESOL conference	92%	85%	100%	100%	98%	73%
Family learning conference	91%	64%	100%	100%	100%	*100%

www.writeon.ie

NALA's distance learning website www.writeon.ie offers learning and accreditation options at levels 1 and 2 on the National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland. As a result of demand from practitioners NALA organises training sessions around the country. These 3 hour training sessions are free and are designed to introduce tutors, organisers and other practitioners to the content and structure of the site. During 2012 180 different learning centres had used www.writeon.ie for accreditation.⁴

In response to demand from practitioners, we also completed and made available level one learning content on our e-learning website writeon.ie. Subject to the conclusion of the QQI review of levels one to three, which NALA is also contributing to, we will explore offering accreditation at level one. In the meantime, writeon.ie continues to support many learners develop their skills and get accreditation.

⁴ In 2012 numeracy awards at level 2 and level 3 accounted for approximately 34% and 15% respectively of the overall total of awards to [writeon](http://writeon.ie) learners.

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