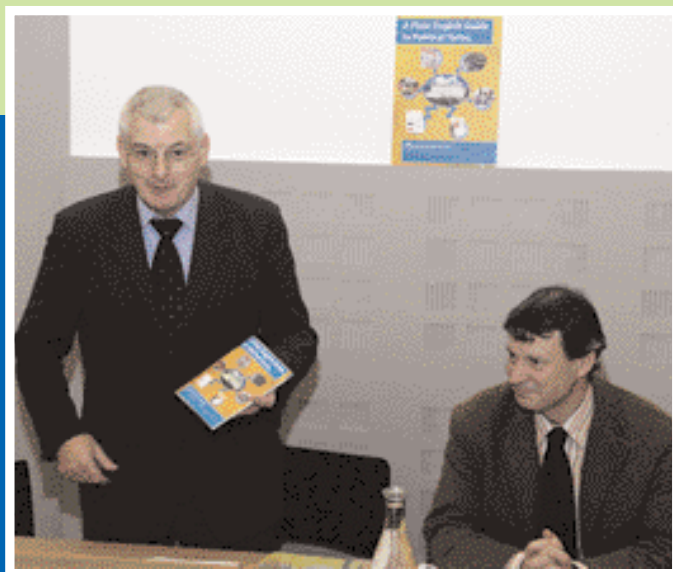




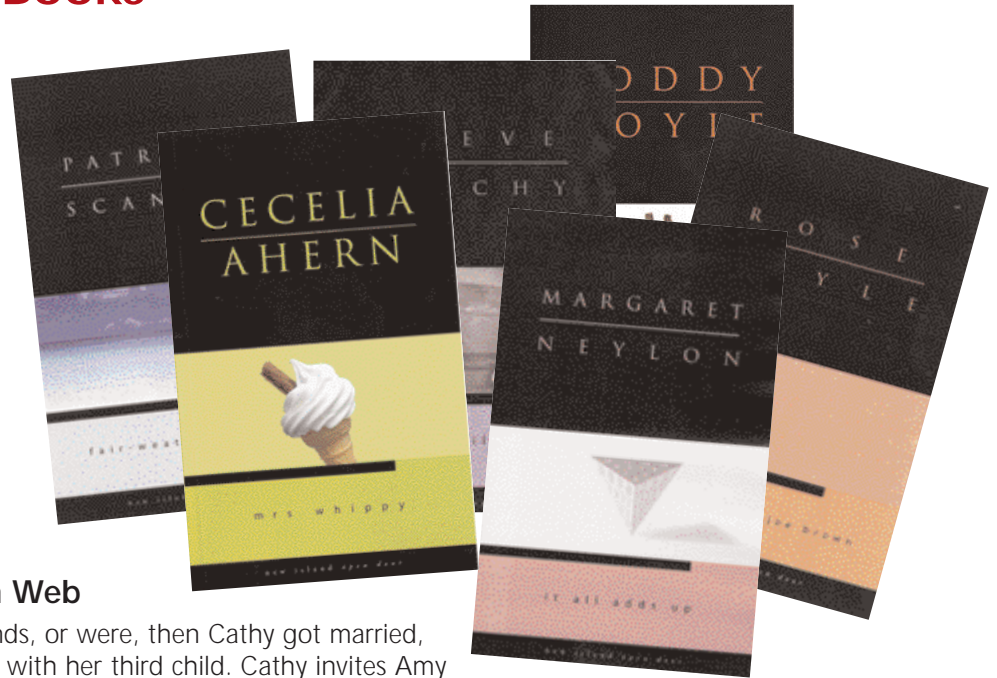
NALA Journal

Spring 2007

National Adult Literacy Agency
An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



New Open Door Books



Behind Closed – Sarah Web

Amy and Cathy are best friends, or were, then Cathy got married, moved away and is pregnant with her third child. Cathy invites Amy to a baby shower party but things do not go quite to plan.

€6.50

Mrs Whippy – Cecelia Ahearne

Emelda is 46 years old and separated from her husband who left her for a 23 year old. For comfort she turns to ice cream but lately there's a handsome man driving the ice cream van.

€6.50

Mad Weekend – Roddy Doyle

Dave, Pat and Ben have been best friends for years. On the way to support a Liverpool game, they visit the pub, have a few too many drinks and then discover that Ben has disappeared.

€6.50

Secrets – Patricia Scanlon

Kate is upset and depressed as her husband has become unemployed and she doesn't know how she's going to afford Christmas this year. Things look bleak but a visit by an old friend gives them hope for the future.

€6.50

The Underbury Witches – John Connolly

The year is 1915 and a man lies dead in the small village of Underbury. This is no ordinary killing - the witches of Underbury have surfaced again.

€6.50

Second Chance Book and Student Workbook

Tony and Jean have had a row. Tony's unemployed and broke, with a wife and child to support. However a string of events helps them both to make a new start. Part of the Open Door readers for adults. This student's workbook has been designed to compliment the reading book.

Book: €6.50, Workbook: €5.00

Order resources from
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76 Lower Gardiner Street
Dublin 1
Tel: (01) 855 4332
Fax: (01) 855 5475
Email: literacy@nala.ie



National Adult Literacy Agency
An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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The views expressed in this NALA Journal are not necessarily the views of the National Adult Literacy Agency.

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Resources available from NALA



Special ESOL offer!

Paving the Way, The Big Picture and The Big Picture 2 all for €20

The materials range in level from beginner ESOL students, through to exercises for higher-level students so that tutors may teach the same theme in a mixed-level class. Student and tutor-generated materials are included and may give those using the packs ideas on how to use their most valuable resource, the students. The packs may also assist in showing how tutors can create their own material, tailored to students' needs. The packs represent the words, stories and pictures of ESOL students living in Ireland.

All three for €20 plus postage and packing



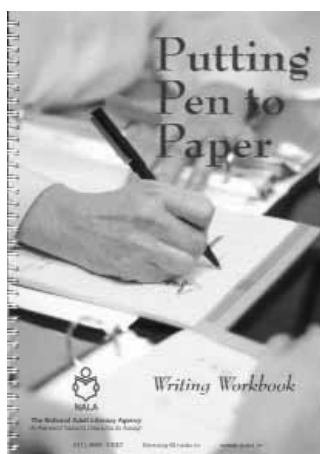
'Missing the Tóbar'

This is a literacy resource pack, containing four short reading books, written by members of the Travelling community:

- The Milkman
- Baking the Bread
- My Sweet Face
- A Cycle into the Past

Accompanying these is a set of teaching and learning activities.

€25



Putting Pen to Paper: Writing Workbook

This is a clear, relevant and practical resource with tips and ideas for basic writing skills.

It can also be used by tutors with one-to-one or group students. The various exercises become more difficult as you progress.

€15

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Accredited family learning modules

By Mary Flanagan, Co-ordinator, Clare Family Learning Project



The Clare Family Learning Project has successfully gained accreditation for two locally developed FETAC Level 3 modules in Family Learning, Learning Skills LF2492 and Home Study Skills LF 2493, to support parents of primary school children. The modules were developed in response to requests from parents for help in supporting the learning needs of children in primary school.

The emphasis of these modules is on parents as partners in learning. They do not presume detail of individual teaching methods or content of curriculum but focus on activities in the home and community that enhance the learning for both adult and child.

The emphasis of these modules is on parents as partners in learning

The modules can be used as stand alone units or as part of other family learning programmes or childcare courses, possibly leading to full certificates at Level 3.

Learning Skills LF2492 concentrates on the awareness of the overall needs of the growing child and consists of three units:

The Growing Child

- The main cognitive, physical and emotional developmental changes in children between junior infants and sixth class.
- What social skills children need in their community and how these are acquired.
- How to support creativity in children and encourage them to reflect on their lives.

Home and School Learning

- The important role parents/carers have as partners in their child's learning.
- Look at the differences between home and school learning. Identify different learning styles.
- Discuss communication between home and school.

Supporting Homework

- Discuss parents/carers view of what is expected from children at school.
- Why do homework? Key ways parents/carers can assist their children with homework. Ways of checking homework.

Home Study Skills LF2493 looks at learning skills and consists of the following three units:

Learning is Fun

- Skills learned through play and how these link to subjects taught in school.
- What are value for money resources for play for the older child and the use of television, computer and video games in relation to learning.

Literacy Development

- The importance of expanding a child's speaking and listening skills.
- How parents/carers can use print in the home, school and community to extend literacy skills.
- How to use different approaches to support a child's reading.
- Why children should write for a purpose.
- Look at methods to support learning to spell.

Exploring Numbers

- How maths in everyday situations can be used to extend school maths.
- The importance of a parents role in supporting their children's maths.
- Look at ways of helping a child in a particular area of maths.

Learning Skills LF2492 and Home Study Skills LF2493 were designed as follow ups to broaden Clare Family Learning Project's initial work in family learning. They have evolved through the piloting and evaluation of a number of courses, with different groups, throughout Clare. The core sessions are those in which the parents were most interested and found content that was useful and relevant to their needs.

The FETAC modules can provide a first introduction to family learning. Indeed, in many cases, attending family learning courses is a parent's first step back into formal education since leaving school. Most family learning programmes are targeted at parents who have not completed upper second level at school and are not confident in their own literacy and numeracy skills. At the same time, the modules can offer progression opportunities for parents who have previously attended courses that focus on the emergent literacy skills of the pre-school child, such as those developed using the Clare Family Learning Pack.

The focus of each module is distinct from, yet compatible with, the Caring for Children and Child Development and Play modules at the same level. Parents/carers gain an understanding of how children learn, of the content and expectations of the primary curriculum, of the significance of the home environment as a learning place, and especially of the value of parent child interaction to foster learning. Furthermore, the modules encourage an increased awareness of the learning process. The OECD 'Students for Life and Knowledge' Report (PISA 2000) indicates that the attention in family

Most family learning programmes are targeted at parents who have not completed upper second level at school and are not confident in their own literacy and numeracy skills

literacy work to ways of learning and learning to learn is particularly important. For both parents/carers and children, increased 'cognitive awareness' raises the learning capacity and encourages student autonomy. As a result, student confidence soars.

The Clare Family Learning Project has been delivering these modules since September in six locations around the county.

Permission to use these locally developed modules must be obtained from The Clare Family Learning Project, prior to registering Candidate Entry Forms with FETAC. A letter of consent will be sent to those wishing to deliver one or both modules.

For copies of the modules, letter of permission or more information please contact Mary Flanagan at famlearn@eircom.net or telephone The Clare Family Learning Project at (065) 682 4819.

Family literacy resource pack

By Tommy Byrne, Public Relations Officer, NALA



The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) believes that family literacy is an effective intervention to build literacy and numeracy of parents and children. Family literacy work is still a relatively new area of educational development in Ireland and there are very few Irish resources. This means that many tutors have to seek resources from the UK or the USA. In addition there is very little support for families wishing to address these issues themselves, independently in their own homes. With this in mind NALA has developed a resource for use by tutors to enable adults and children to build up their literacy skills by engaging in everyday fun activities.

NALA policy and guidelines Working Together: Approaches to Family Literacy (2004) notes how family programmes can bring adults back to learning. Family literacy programmes aim to provide support for family members who want to develop their own literacy and numeracy skills, while helping their children's education.

'Supporting family literacy: ideas and tips for tutors' resource

Titled 'Supporting family literacy: ideas and tips for tutors' this resource is designed as a support for those involved in delivering family learning programmes. It offers a menu of activities to family literacy tutors and tutor trainers, which can be used to build tailored programmes. To insure it is user-friendly it is graphic led containing a series of practical activities that people across the age ranges can engage in to help build their literacy and numeracy skills. The resource follows the format of 'how to' make reading and maths fun, by including games and puzzles that have a wide appeal.

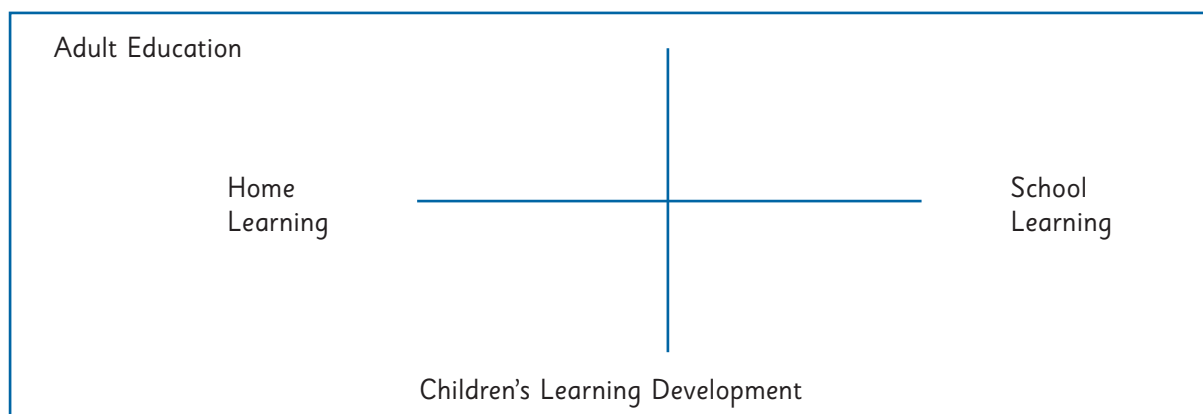


Figure 1. Matrix of family literacy

Approach to family literacy taken by the guide

The approach to family literacy on which this guide is based, promotes the idea of the 'wealth model' and considers the positive things that children learn at home from their families. As it encourages family involvement in children's education, programmes can include parents, older siblings, grandparents, carers or other significant adults. Family learning provides a link between home and school learning and between adult education and children's learning development (Figure 1).

a menu of activities to family literacy tutors and tutor trainers, which can be used to build tailored programmes

Family literacy can be linked to formal or informal educational provisions. Collaborative approaches to family literacy allows for the involvement of other groups, who have a shared interest in the education of adults and children. This can include families where English is their second language. Participants are encouraged to reflect on how they learn and how they can support their children's learning. Most family literacy programmes are group based so participants benefit from peer mentoring and shared experiences.

What does the new family literacy resource contain?

The guide comprises 150 pages ring bound for easy use such as photocopying. This guide is arranged in themed chapters which have a theoretical framework and cover ten topics from 'Learning through play' to 'Tell me a story'. It also contains four supporting appendices which are:

- Lesson plan structure;
- Family feedback form;
- Links to accreditation; and
- Communications module.

There are a variety of supports for tutors in how they can use the resource to optimum effect. This includes guidelines providing suggestions of approaches they can take to individual topics and ideas about best to plan their family literacy activities.

The tutor support material also contains:

- Keywords relevant to each chapter;
- Suggested course outlines;
- Home play activities which tutors could suggest parents; and
- Sources and resources in relation to family literacy.

To visually guide users around the resource a variety of symbols are used. Each section uses these to indicate the kind of activity suggested for example, reading, writing or listening. Each section also has tips which highlight learning points for students and could be used for posters.

Who is it for?

The pack would be relevant for use in a range of settings such as adult literacy services running family literacy programmes, family resource centres, community development projects, Community Training Centres, Travellers' Centres and school-based programmes involving parents.

Promotion and distribution

The booklet will be launched at a family literacy conference early in 2007. It will be distributed to all centres delivering adult literacy tuition, as well as centres working with families. It will also be downloadable from the NALA website.

For more information contact NALA at literacy@nala.ie or on (01) 855 4332



Clonmel Traveller men – an update!

By Mary Roche, Adult Literacy Organiser, South Tipperary VEC

In the Spring 2006 Journal, I told you about the themed literacy and numeracy Barrel Top Wagon Project and the story up to December 2005. Since then, the wagon has been completed, launched in Hotel Minella and became a feature in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Clonmel.



The project participants were: Michael Stokes; Patrick O'Reilly; Michael O'Reilly – Old Bridge; James O'Reilly; Michael O'Reilly – Cahir Road Roundabout; Jonnie O'Reilly; Michael O'Reilly – Condon's Cross; Willie O'Reilly; and John Stokes.

The participation from the group went far beyond the tuition hours allocated for the project; Michael Stokes loaned a finished wagon to the project for measurements and design purposes. Traditional hard-to-find parts were located by the men in their spare time and they contributed their knowledge and experience to prepare the funding proposal, used to secure sponsorship from our partners in the project. They also encouraged the female members of their families to participate in a soft furnishings group to make the curtains, top cotton and mattress. Their dedication has exceeded expectations, at the latter end of the project the men were attending the Scheme nine hours per week.

The tutors' commitment to the project has also been exceptional. Jim Haide joined the project early last year to facilitate a woodwork class to build a model wagon. Subsequently it was his expertise and guidance that was key to the completion of the wagon, his

Their dedication has exceeded expectations, at the latter end of the project the men were attending the Scheme nine hours per week.



The finished wagon

skills as a woodwork and adult literacy tutor motivated the men to enhance their skills and develop new ones.

Peter Cleary and Gerry Carey are both adult literacy tutors for the South Tipperary VEC Adult Learning Scheme, with various groups and also in 1:1 tuition. Peter and Gerry were involved with the project from the start and both were on the project steering committee. Their friendly, professional approach to the classes ensured the success of this project.

It was necessary that the training methods, used to work with the group students, sought to diminish any sense of stigma and improve self esteem, as well as improve technical reading and writing skills. It was important to work on the technical and non-technical aspects together. They were intertwined so that confidence, independence and self-image were given room to develop. By involving the men in directing their own learning, Peter and Gerry achieved this. For the

duration of the project these 2 tutors worked above and beyond their remit and both could be found preparing for classes and in the workshop, any hour of the day or night and at weekends.

It was necessary that the training methods.... sought to diminish any sense of stigma and improve self esteem, as well as improve technical reading and writing skills

We could not have even begun without funding and for that we thank the sponsors: South Tipperary VEC was the lead agency for the project with funding provided by the Adult Learning Scheme and Community Education. Further support was received from FÁS; Department of Social & Family Affairs; Merck, Sharpe & Dohme; Conor Fleming Opticians; South Tipperary Co. Council; Clonmel Traveller Action Group; Larry O'Keefe Furniture; Muiris Walsh; and the Community Foundation for Ireland.

Barrel Top launch

The wagon launch, held in Hotel Minella, on a snowy March 16th was a huge success, with a presentation by Michael Stokes and Michael (BA) O'Reilly detailing the stages of the classes and construction of the wagon. The other speakers at the launch were Cllr. Sean Nyhan, Chairperson of the VEC, Cllr. Mattie McGrath, Chairperson of the VEC Adult Education Ad-hoc Committee; and Eileen Condon AEO. After the speeches, the 80 or so guests braved the cold outdoors to witness Cllr. Nyhan cutting the ribbon and to take photographs.



Cllr. Nyhan cutting the ribbon at the launch

St Patrick's Day Parade, Clonmel

The St Patrick's Day Parade, held in Clonmel on Sunday March 19th was a wonderful experience. The men donned their Sunday clothes and the women and children dressed in traditional shawls and carried baskets of beautiful paper flowers. It was a glorious sunny day and the float was greeted with applause from spectators on every street. It was indeed a proud day for our group and their families.

So what's next?

Tuition will begin again with a focus on producing a DVD and writing a book, based on the development and experiences of the men involved in the project. As for the wagon....we have a few offers for temporary housing, but we are seeking a permanent home where it can be safely displayed and preserved.

Further details are available from Mary Roche at mroche@tippsouthvec.ie or by telephone (052) 27543. For more information about the project, you can visit the website www.tippsouthvec.ie.

Thinking big, starting small, acting fast or battling document by document?



Two distinct international approaches to plain language

By Clodagh McCarthy, Plain English Co-ordinator

Plain language is a style of giving information that enables someone to get the facts they need, understand them easily and act on them if they need to. The term usually applies to written information, but plain language in speech is just as important, particularly when there are more constraints on checking understanding.

The latest information on plain language movements internationally suggests two contrasting approaches. On one side are countries where central governments have led the way and on the other are countries, including Ireland, where plain language initiatives have been piecemeal and halting. This article traces these two patterns.

Governments taking the lead for citizens' rights

Sweden has been at the forefront of adopting plain language since 1976, when its government first appointed an expert to begin modernising the language in its laws (see winter 2004 edition of the NALA journal for more details). In the past 30 years, the government there has been inspired by the need to make the Swedish language accessible for citizens. According to Anne Marie Hasselrot, from Sweden's Ministry of Justice, "A public administration that wishes to gain and keep the trust of citizens must communicate in language that is easy to understand."

In keeping with this, the government proposed four new objectives for national language policy in its autumn 2005 parliamentary bill 'Best language – a concerted language policy for Sweden'. One of the bill's goals is that the Swedish authorities use simple and understandable language.

The bill also sets up a state body for language planning, which will incorporate the Plain Swedish Group, set up by government in 1993. The new body's work will include promoting the use of new Swedish terms, providing information on plain language and helping people find advice and language recommendations. All of this aims to encourage the spread of plain language throughout official documents.

Similar government-led initiatives have taken place in **Mexico**, where the government has included plain language in its plans to change how it operates so it puts citizens first and is more efficient and effective. The strategic plan guiding this change – the Good Government Agenda – was launched in 2002 and includes a strategy to reform government regulations to make them more understandable to citizens. This includes cutting down and standardising regulations and other official documents, rewriting them in plain language and making them available on a single website.

As with Sweden, the impetus for this development comes from the desire to promote openness and democracy.

Part of the programme of change involves putting 'citizens' charters' on a single website. These are clear, simple documents informing citizens how to receive a particular government service or payment. The government intends that these will curb corruption, which regularly occurred when citizens were unable to understand how to get a service or payment, when public servants gave conflicting information or when a process was so complicated that citizens preferred to bribe officials to get it done.

Plain language... is a style of giving information that enables someone to get the facts they need, understand them easily and act on them if they need to

All of this work takes place as part of the Citizens' Language Project, set up by the government. Following the motto 'think big, start small, act fast', the project awards clear writing, offers a one-year academic programme especially for civil service staff and has so far trained over 5,000 other staff through short plain language workshops.

The Citizens' Language Network, an independent group of journalists, lawyers and writers, was set up soon after the project started with the aim of pushing the government to keep going and build on its efforts to better serve citizens.

A similar trend is evident in **Chile's** plain language efforts. The Senate of Chile has been the main actor in this initiative, having hosted a conference in August 2005 titled 'Transparency, Right and Language'. The conference started a debate on the relationship between language and rights and on how language can aid the spread of democracy if it is understandable to the average citizen. Those attending the conference included government officials, university lecturers, public service workers, librarians, lawyers and writers.

Like Mexico, Chile's plain language efforts are fairly recent. One of the main achievements so far is the publication of a style manual, which will guide how the Senate writes documents and help authors simplify the parts that make documents difficult to understand. However, the use of plain language will need continued interest and support by the Senate to properly get off the ground throughout the country.

Chile's efforts have been guided by the experiences in Sweden and Mexico, but its main task for the future is to spread the plain language message to legal drafters and judges so they think of their audience when they work within the law.

The **United States'** history of plain language work dates from the 1970s (see winter 2004 NALA journal for details). The current, Republican, administration does not have a plain language policy, but individual government bodies have developed their own plain language approaches to their public information.

One such body is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which adopted plain language for its regulations and guidance material in response to criticisms about their clarity from commercial pilots.

The FAA has also trained about 2,000 staff in plain language since 1999 and hosts www.plainlanguage.gov, the plain language website for government employees.

Other plain language initiatives include those from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), among others. The FDA, which regulates food and drug labelling and testing, has for many years been committed to making its information clear to the public. Many of the offices under its remit now seek comments from the public through meetings and usability testing about what communication works and what doesn't, especially when communicating health risks.

While the initiatives in Chile, Mexico, Sweden and the United States represent a strong government commitment to plain language, the efforts in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom reveal the other side of the plain language movement.

The piecemeal approach

The work of the National Literacy Secretariat in **Canada** in the 1990s (see winter 2004 edition of the NALA journal) has not led to a dedicated, national approach to plain language. Instead individual agencies, such as the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), work to redesign their forms, letters and guidebooks and provinces such as British Columbia and Nova Scotia set down their own requirements for plain language in regulations and official documents.

Other organisations left to pick up the plain language torch include sectoral associations such as the Canadian Public Health Association and the Canadian Bankers Association. The former works with a number of pharmaceutical companies, hospitals and health organisations to revise their documents and test them with intended readers. The latter is committed to providing customers with banking information they can easily understand and use. This commitment has led its members to work together on applying plain language writing principles to mortgage documents, among others.

The biggest obstacles to the spread of plain language in Canada are the failure of national campaigns in the past to filter down and maintain interest past 2000 and the possibly connected lack of understanding of what plain language actually is. Some organisations, including regional government agencies, document the need for plain language in communications, but it's unclear to what extent they have followed up on this.

South Africa has also had a mixed relationship with plain language. On the plus side, it is the first country to put its constitution into plain English and has also revised its laws regulating employment, trade, alcohol, gambling and clothing. One of its greatest achievements is its Consumer Credit Act, which requires that all documents given to borrowers for any loan must be in plain language, whether they are contracts, cautions or warnings.

Despite these positive developments, plain language in South Africa is generally a low priority. Among the obstacles the government faces are the number of languages spoken there (30 in total) and the fact that many of these languages have developed a formal style, even in spoken form. Broader socio-economic difficulties also, naturally, are receiving greater attention: racial tensions, very low literacy levels and an adult HIV infection rate of 40% mean that spreading plain language is far from urgent.

Australia has also had mixed fortunes with plain language. In 1990, the United Nations' International Literacy Year sparked interest in the quality of public writing. The publicly funded Reader Friendly Campaign produced a guide to clear documents and a kit to aid writers and

organised two ceremonies of the Reader Friendly Awards. Since then, corporate regulators, medium to large law firms and public sector finance agencies have been most likely to adopt plain language.

Some laws, for example on income tax and road safety, have been put into plain language, but they are isolated occurrences. While some government departments and private sector organisations have plain language policies, the lack of formal programmes to back them up mean they are often ignored. There is no central government memorandum officially sanctioning plain language at any level of government or industry and universities and courts are among the slowest to take plain language on board.

As Neil James, co-founder of the independent group Plain English Foundation says, “Without institutional backing, the battle for plain language has been fought workshop by workshop, document by document, organisation by organisation.”

The main obstacles in Australia, as elsewhere, are the lack of a national body devoted to plain language and the absence of nationally agreed standards or public programmes to reach the broader community. Independent groups, such as the Plain English Foundation, intend to carry out further research such as gathering indicators to measure quality in professional writing from a plain language perspective.

Like Australia, the history of the plain language movement in the **UK** is characterised by sporadic work by the government to improve legislation and by campaigning and professional plain language work by independent groups such as the Plain English Campaign. The other main actors in plain English include local authorities and health services and large financial corporations.

Some government offices, such as the Office of Fair Trading, have encouraged the spread of plain language by requiring it in certain consumer documents. In addition, the Tax Law Rewrite Project has tried since 1995 to simplify thousands of pages of tax law. But this has proved costly: already, £19.9 million has been spent rewriting 760 pages of law, and there are nearly 2,000 pages left to rewrite!

The experience in the UK and Australia shows significant similarities with **Ireland**. We in NALA have worked with a number of HSE offices, various local authorities and state bodies, corporate regulators and some Government departments, notably the Department of Social and Family Affairs, to make their public information easier to understand.

Banks and building societies have also taken the initiative to make their documents clear, but the reluctance to change exact wording required by regulators means that some terms and conditions might still be too complex for the average reader.

NALA's efforts to spread plain language are gradual, often one document at a time, reflecting the

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situation in Australia. What organisations need to realise is that plain language is not a 'one size fits all' solution to complex information, which oversimplifies concepts to the point of inaccuracy. Neither is it about producing information in 'alternative formats' just for certain members of the public: it might ultimately become essential to earning customers' and citizens' trust and loyalty.

For more information on plain English, please contact Clodagh McCarthy at cmcarthy@nala.ie or on 01 809 9194.

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Launch of new international e-literacy project

Details based on information issued by UNESCO and Google.

Emma Ramsey, NALA

Each year at the beginning of October, thousands of publishers, authors, and book lovers gather in Frankfurt, Germany for the world's largest book fair. What better place, then, to launch "The Literacy Project" – a resource for teachers, literacy organisations and anyone interested in reading promotion and education, created in collaboration with the Frankfurt Book Fair literacy campaign (LitCam), and UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning.

"Litcam is excited to have partnered with Google on this site. A global problem deserves a global solution, and we believe that cooperation and the sharing of best practices is key in the fight against illiteracy," said Karin Plötz, Director of Education for the Future, Litcam.

The Literacy Project enables users to access and share literacy resources from around the world - from e-learning videos and books about literacy, to scholarly articles, reading groups, and literacy-related blogs. Visitors can also use the Google Maps function to search for literacy organisations around the globe. The site is available in both English and German.

"Education for All is UNESCO's first priority. Literacy is at the heart of Education for All and is an issue of vital importance for individuals, families, communities and societies. Literacy and basic education give individuals a chance to succeed, open a world of opportunities, contribute to equality, improve health and economic self-sufficiency. The aim of this site reflects one of the key missions of UNESCO, and in particular of its Institute for Lifelong Learning: to promote literacy, build capacity and enhance access to information about the issue," said Adama Ouane, Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).

As a problem that touches all countries and populations, there's a pressing need to share ideas, successful projects, information, and statistics about literacy – as well as find new ways to collaborate. Google believes that the Internet can be a powerful tool in connecting the organisations leading this fight. The more people that have access to reading tools, project ideas, and resources, the further we will go in combating this problem.

From Bollywood-inspired e-learning tools and book clubs, to classic children's books and scholarly articles about phonological awareness – users can find books, videos, articles, blogs, and groups about literacy, as well as share all of their own ideas and projects.

The site contains:

- **Books:** find and search within books about literacy, reading promotion, and education.
- **Academic Texts:** search for literacy-related content in peer-reviewed papers, theses, books,

...a resource for teachers, literacy organisations and anyone interested in reading promotion and education

abstracts and articles, from academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, universities and other scholarly organisations.

- **Video:** See what literacy organisations, schools, and educators around the world are doing to promote literacy – or share your own project with the world.
- **Blogs:** Share your knowledge and ideas about literacy with the world by creating a “blog” – short articles and stories that you write for others to read.
- **Groups:** Discover forums on literacy projects and ideas or start your own debate.
- **Maps:** From Kenya to Bangladesh, Canada to Mexico. Find literacy organisations around the world.

...users can find books, videos, articles, blogs, and groups about literacy, as well as share all of their own ideas and projects

“Google’s business was born out of a desire to help people find information. It’s exciting to see how literacy organisations and educators are using the Internet to share ideas and information. We hope this site will serve as a bridge to even greater communication and access to important information about literacy problems - and solutions” said Nikesh Arora, Vice-President, European Operations, Google.

For more information about the site go to: www.google.com/literacy



Acclaim for the Literacy Project

“Literacy changes lives. The new Google literacy site is a brilliant opportunity for literacy organisations around the world to share imaginative ideas and research about what really works. The opportunity to view videos showing how to engage a wide range of audiences to help raise standards is inspiring. We hope all relevant organisations and interested individuals will not only use the site but contribute to it. Together we can help to get the whole world reading, writing and communicating.”

- Julia Strong, Deputy Director, National Literacy Trust

“Booktrust exists to encourage people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. This new site could be a powerful tool for sharing information and ideas to improve literacy and encourage access to books across the planet - we’re very pleased to be involved.”

- Chris Meade, Director, Booktrust

“The Literacy Project has great potential to improve literacy and promote reading for pleasure and I welcome this exciting new initiative.”

- Lord Andrew Adonis, UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools

“In India, PlanetRead’s Same Language Subtitling programme enhances the entertainment value of Bollywood film songs while providing subconscious reading practice literally, for over two hundred million early-literates. The Google-Litcam Literacy Project presents a fascinating opportunity for PlanetRead to partner with literacy groups around the world who understand the power of a song... or even a story.”

- Dr. Brij Kothari, Founder and President, PlanetRead & BookBox, Inc.

“Only with combined efforts will we have the opportunity to fight illiteracy effectively. This initiative is a great move in that direction.”

- Ulrich Aengevoort, Director of The German Adult Education Association

“Fighting illiteracy is all about communication. Communication to get rid of the taboo, communication to raise awareness and communication so that we don’t have to reinvent the wheel, but make the wheel turn faster. Therefore I’m really happy with The Literacy Project. It gives us the chance to share our ideas and research but also to learn from and be inspired by other organisations in the world. After all, we can only fight illiteracy effectively if we work together.”

- Margreet de Vries, Director, Stichting Lezen & Schrijven, the Netherlands

Adults Continuing Education Awards 2006

By Emma Ramsey, Communications Officer, NALA



Ireland's second national adult literacy awards took place on Saturday 11 November 2006, at the Westin Hotel in Dublin. RTÉ Radio Presenter Joe Duffy was there to recognise the achievements and dedication of those participating and working in adult literacy. The tone for the evening was set with Joe's opening speech, beginning humorously and somewhat irreverently, but finishing with touching stories of real peoples' lives and literacy difficulties. After the excitement of the award presentations, followed by a lovely meal, the evening ended in a flourish with a live performance from Jack Lukeman (Jack L), who generously performed for free, singing classics such as 'Georgie Boy', 'Open Your Borders', 'Hallelujah', Gnarl's Barkley's 'Crazy' and even a Johnny Cash number.

Joe presented the awards to the six winners from over 70 nominees, with Flor MacCarthy (RTÉ) as MC. The awards, which were developed in partnership with EBS Building Society, focused on sharing good practice and celebrated the successful creation of high-quality learning opportunities for adults. The nominations from across Ireland were submitted by a wide range of individuals and organisations providing, or benefiting from, adult basic education (ABE). They showcase the high quality development of competence in adult skills being achieved, such as literacy, numeracy, ICT and communications, which supply the traits people need to fully take part in society. Those selected made the greatest impact on the selection panel.



Jack L performing at the ACE Awards

The awards highlighted the role of thousands of trained tutors and managers of adult basic education initiatives who have worked quietly in their local area for years, often volunteering their own time. In Ireland we have less than 1,400 paid adult literacy tutors, 92 % of whom only get paid for part-time work. This is extremely low given that approximately 3,775 trained volunteer tutors provide nearly 8,000 hours of literacy tuition each week. With the help of these people the State saves an estimated €10 million per annum in tutor training and salaries.

Speaking at the ceremony, Inez Bailey, Director of NALA said: "NALA has dedicated 26 years to creating accessible, high quality learning opportunities for adults wishing to improve their basic education. This year's awards presented a fantastic opportunity to share good practice, showcase innovative methods or projects and celebrate the successful creation of high quality learning opportunities for adults. They provide

**With the help
of...(volunteer tutors)...the
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the country with a chance to pay tribute to those people; projects or organisations that deserve recognition for their unique approach. We were delighted with the response and were happy to have received an increase in last year's nominations."

Commenting on the achievement of the award winners, Dave

Keenan, Head of Corporate Communications EBS said: "EBS Building Society is proud to be associated with the ACE Awards and wishes to congratulate all those who received an award and indeed all those who have participated in this unique evening. The primary aim of the ACE Awards is to highlight the tremendous amount of hard work and dedication of adult students and their tutors which can sometimes go unrecognised and unrewarded. This ceremony, which focuses on celebrating these achievements, is not only dedicated to those who have been given special recognition, but to all tutors and students nationwide who strive daily to improve and progress basic adult education skills. By highlighting examples of excellence it is our hope that others will be encouraged to look at successful ways of providing support and assistance across this vast area."

NALA and the EBS Building Society entered into a three year partnership agreement in 2004. A variety of projects in the areas of Financial and Family Literacy have been developed through the partnership. The joint launch of the ACE Awards demonstrates NALA and EBS Building Society's continuing commitment to developing exceptional learning opportunities for adults and recognising students' achievement. The six award categories highlighted examples of excellence, displaying high-quality provision, support and assistance in adult literacy.

NALA wishes to extend a special thank you to the selection panel who gave up their time to engage in a difficult and extensive selection process. Kathleen McCann of ICTU, Emma O'Kelly, Education Correspondent for RTE, Inez Bailey, Director of NALA and Aidan Power, Head of Marketing EBS, selected the overall winners for each category.

...a fantastic opportunity to share good practice, showcase innovative methods or projects and celebrate the successful creation of high quality learning opportunities for adults



Flor MacCarthy opening the evening

Now here is a little bit about the six winners: pictured being presented with their awards, by Inez Bailey (NALA), Dave Keenan (EBS) and Joe Duffy:

Unique contribution

Shortlisted:

- Tony Geraghty
- Bridie Daly
- Peggy Murphy & Nancy Mulvey
- Michael Sheils



Winner - Tony Geraghty

Tony learnt to read and write in his fifties, and he's never looked back. Tony's awareness work goes beyond being caretaker for the Dublin Adult Literacy Centre.

He also regularly visits people in his community who have literacy difficulties, reading the newspaper for them and to help them with any problems they may be having with letters or forms. He has appeared on TV, shared his experiences on the radio and visits the local Social Welfare Office to encourage people there to return to learning.

Tony's commitment to literacy, his bravery through publicly sharing his experiences and his outreach activity in the community, demonstrate how an individual can go from student to mentor by actively helping others to tackle their literacy problems.

Innovative methods

Shortlisted:

- Li Fan
- Catherine O'Brien
- Rodney Hodgins
- James Farrelly



Winner - Li Fan

Li Fan arrived in Ireland from China in 2002. Since then, she has worked hard through both classes and employment to overcome her own language difficulties. She progressed to part-time tutor in a Community Learning Centre, teaching topics as diverse as ICT, Origami and Chinese cooking. Through extra work in the Chinese food industry, she was able to identify ICT needs of the Chinese men in the industry.

Li Fan approached the Upper Bann Institute to facilitate a 12 week computer class for these men, which she taught at night to accommodate their shift work. Li Fan was able to find ways to help the needs of a diverse group of men with varying language and ICT abilities. Her work has overcome the normal boundaries of time conflicts, language barriers and shown these men easier methods of communicating with their families at home.

Breaking down barriers to learning

Shortlisted:

- South Tipperary VEC Adult Literacy Scheme
- Drama Workshop Group, Kerry Education Service
- HSE West, Mayo General Hospital: Ante Natal Educators, Frances Burke and Mary Sammon
- The Catering Project, HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster



Winner - South Tipperary VEC Adult Literacy Scheme

In 2005, the Traveller men attending the South Tipperary Adult Learning Scheme, were inspired by the work of the Cork Traveller Women's Network, to build a traditional Traveller barrel-top wagon.

This project brought literacy, numeracy and ICT to life with learning outcomes being defined by the participants. Having to secure funding and gain support from organisations such as FÁS, local authorities and the HSE helped to break down some of the barriers that exist between Travellers and settled people.

The relevancy of this project to its participants, meant that learning was made fun and meaningful. This project demonstrates a fantastic method for engaging an educationally disadvantaged group and producing a tangible example of their work and accomplishments.

Expanding community participation

Shortlisted:

- Kerry Deaf Adult Learning Programme
- St Munchin's Literacy Project
- Ilac Centre/DALC Book Club
- St John of God Carmona Services: Hilary Keppal and Audrey Carrol

Winner - Kerry Deaf Adult Learning Programme



This project aims to empower Deaf adults to participate and influence policy development in the areas of education, teaching methodologies, appropriate resource materials and accreditation through the medium of Irish Sign Language.

18 deaf adults requested that education and training opportunities for Deaf Irish Sign Language Users be provided locally. As a result, a training programme based on a British model was developed.

The participants are trained to become accredited Deaf Adult tutors and deliver the programme to other local deaf people, their families, and statutory and non-statutory bodies.

The programme uses Irish Sign Language as its communication medium, aided by the use of multimedia and ICT. The project has also developed Deaf related resources and reference materials. As a result, this project has developed one of the first models of deaf-led education.

Learning and development for work

Shortlisted:

- SMART programme, Co Monaghan VEC
- Moy Park Co Ltd
- Skills on-Line Project
- FÁS Services to Business: Paul Fennelly and Deirdre McGarry



Winner - The SMART programme, Co Monaghan VEC

The SMART programme was started as a pilot project in 2004. SMART which stands for Skills Management and Relevant Training, was designed to give basic skills training to employees in small to medium businesses in Co Monaghan.

180 employees were involved in the project, which was delivered through both Company-based training and Sector-based training. The training covered a range of areas, including literacy, numeracy, communications, IT and English Language.

The SMART programme extended the range of places and life stages where people can learn. The programme encouraged co-operation between employers and employees. And the training was customized to meet the needs of the participants. In this way, it demonstrated the concept of life-wide learning.

Encouraging learning at home

Shortlisted:

- Child Health Information Service Project: Edel Conway
- The Pink Group, Our Lady's Traveller Training and Education Centre
- Riverside Senior Traveller Training Centre
- Family Learning Project, Bray Adult Learning Centre



Winner - Child Health Information Service Project: Edel Conway

The Child Health Information Service Project produced resources based on information that 10 parent focus groups and health professionals felt was needed. Edel Conway wrote the three information packs about caring for a child from birth to 5 years old.

Each pack was piloted by literacy tutors in South Tipperary VEC to ensure that they were user

friendly. The packs were also awarded the Plain English Q Mark by NALA. For those who found reading challenging or time consuming, the packs were also produced on Audio CD.

The feedback the packs have received from parents has confirmed their high readability and the audio CD has proved invaluable. Indeed the packs have proved so useful, that they have now been rolled out across the whole Health Service at community level.

For more information on the ACE Awards 2007, please contact Emma Ramsey on 01 809 9180 or at eramsey@nala.ie

Understanding New Literacy Studies (NLS)

By Inez Bailey, Director, NALA



Introduction

In the last decade literacy has become centre stage in the policy agenda, most notably through the linking of literacy with the economy and the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 1997). It is hoped that from this article, the reader will gain an understanding of what NLS is and how it is different from the current dominant approaches to literacy, 'which sees it as simply applied, obvious and not in need of such theory' (Street 2001 p.9). What we can and cannot learn from this type of research will also be explored.

What is New Literacy Studies

NLS is a theoretical framework in which literacy is defined in terms of social practices. This means that literacy is approached from the perspective of its meaning to people as they use it in their everyday lives as opposed to simply whether or not they possess a set of discreet skills, as used in the tests for the IALS. New Literacy Studies proposes theoretical perspectives rooted in critical social and ecological research, which informs approaches to literacy that are participatory and student-centred. It sees literacy as a social practice rather than technical skills to be learned from formal education and therefore involves studying literacy as it occurs in social life, taking account of the context and its different meanings. In terms of practice, NLS sits well with the notion of the student as central to the learning process by bringing their understanding and uses of literacy to the learning situation which is built upon with the help of a tutor. (National Adult Literacy Agency 2005)

One of the leading exponents of NLS is Brian Street (2001; 2003). The back drop to the development of NLS is described by Street using the terms the 'New Orders' – the New Work Order, the New Communicative Order and the New Epistemological Order. The New Work Order relates to the shift from mass production to mass differentiation (Street 2001 p.3). This has impacted on literacy practices required in the workplace, with people needing to be able to work in teams as well as use language associated with computer software. This is described by Street as the New Communicative Order.

New Literacy Studies proposes theoretical perspectives rooted in critical social and ecological research

Street outlines what he understands to be the New Epistemological Order as where the commercial world and the academy view and hold knowledge very differently. This has led to a new type of mainstream researcher emerging, one which fits in well with the NLS approach. Street states that 'the practical epistemologist engages with knowledge in use, not simply with propositional knowledge, and he or she works with partners in real world contexts in the interests of equity and justice' (Street 2001 p.5). It appears this perspective is more accepted by practitioners but not those involved in policy-making, where traditional forms of knowledge and literacy predominate.

All of the above gives the literacy researcher who adopts this approach a very different agenda and framework than traditional approaches aimed at solving the literacy problem. Ethnographic approaches are explained as ‘using field work methods and sensitised ways of discovering and observing the uses and meanings of literacy practices to local people themselves’ (Street 2001 p1). When these are applied to literacy, they accommodate theory and practice whilst leaving space for the application to the local context to come through. Street (2001) describes his reason for taking on ethnographic research in literacy, as a way of exposing this approach.

During an anthropological field research trip to Iran in the 1970s he witnessed people represented as ‘illiterate’ displaying a great deal of complex literacy activity. He wanted to find a way of excavating and validating these different local literacy practices and relate them to the dominant literacy practices of Western society, thus challenging dominant stereotype. Many other ethnographic researchers have studied literacy practices in distinctive communities across the globe and in so doing have challenged many of the stereotypes associated with people thought to have literacy problems (Gillespie 2001).

Theoretical and methodological assumptions underpinning NLS

NLS sees literacy as a social practice and because there are many contexts in which literacy is practiced, there are many versions of literacy and these are constantly evolving. Street (2001) describes the view of literacy as a single uniform entity as an ‘autonomous’ model of literacy, seeing literacy in itself as having consequences irrespective of, or autonomous of, context. This, he believes, is often how literacy is understood and underpins the dominant approach to literacy. It pertains to be neutral and universal but in fact is laden with specific middle class Western conceptions of literacy. An alternative is the ‘ideological’ model of literacy which views literacy as different depending on the social context and cultural norms. This view of literacy is more culturally sensitive allowing literacy practices in their settings to come through. In effect you have multiple literacies. If these are recognised in the educational system, this would enhance equality in the classroom, in particular giving due recognition to the literacies of different minorities. ‘It is in this sense that literacy is always ideological – it involves contests over meanings, definitions and boundaries and struggles for control over the literacy agenda (Street in Crowther et al 2001 p18).

The ‘autonomous’ model of literacy, is described by Street (2001) as when people are taught the technical skills of literacy and then left to use their new tools as they see fit. However he argues that the model ‘disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it’ which in fact, impose the dominant Western conceptions of literacy onto other cultures (Street 2001 p.7). In other words a judgement is made that certain people lack adequate literacy skills and need to be given them. The ideological model of literacy alternatively sees literacy as a social practice, not simply a set of technical skills that is embedded in “socially constructed epistemological principles”. It is not neutral as literacy is ‘always rooted in a particular world-view and a desire for that view of literacy to

NLS sees literacy as a social practice and because there are many contexts in which literacy is practiced, there are many versions of literacy and these are constantly evolving

dominate' (Street 2001 p.8). This captures both the cultural aspect of this model as well as the place of power within literacy work. The latter is necessary as power is always present in literacy from the assumptions about what people can and cannot do, to how people use newly acquired literacy. There is always a need to ask valid questions about whose literacy is dominant and what literacy is valued because as much of the NLS work has shown, there is little recognition of literacy and its meaning to people at the local level.

Key concepts in the field of New Literacy Studies – literacy events and literacy practices

Conceptual frameworks provide a way to examine the world and make sense of the questions we ask and the answers we find. The focus of attention will now fall on the key concepts underpinning New Literacy Studies and how they shape the research conducted from that position.

'Literacy events' as a concept enable us to observe an event involving reading and writing and draw out its characteristics. This involves examining particular activities in which literacy has a role. It is descriptive but does not tell us how the meanings are constructed. 'Literacy practices', Street (2001) argues is a more robust concept to apply as it attempts to understand the events and the patterns around literacy and to link them to broader occurrences of a cultural and social kind. It looks at ways of using literacy that are carried from one situation to another, similar situation. These concepts are useful to researchers and practitioners because they provide a means by which to capture the meaning people give to their reading and writing in different situations and why they might do so.

Deficit model versus social transformation

It is felt that the dominant model of literacy espoused by Western governments fails to address the links between literacy and power and how power is necessary in the construction of literacy (Crowther et al 2001). This approach sees literacy skills as centrally defined and positioned along a hierarchical continuum that people normally attain throughout schooling. Those who do not acquire these skills are assessed as having a deficit and subsequently targeted to return to education and learn the skills they do not have.

An alternative to this model is to value how people themselves understand and value literacy and to build learning around what they know and what they wish to learn. The model of transformation follows from an ethnographic approach and is sensitive to context and to local need (Degener 2001). Instead of just providing centrally determined inputs to people with what is determined as insufficient levels of literacy, you look at the wider society within which these people operate in order to better inform programmes to provide literacy education.

The NLS sees 'the basics' as outlined within the UK National Literacy Strategy as 'surface features of language and literacy, such as rules of grammar,' as opposed to the true 'basics as

'Literacy practices'... attempts to understand the events and the patterns around literacy and to link them to broader occurrences of a cultural and social kind

generative, deep structures that facilitate learning and activity,..... of the ideological kind' (Street in Crowther p20). The marketisation of literacy and the needs of the global economy provide the wider frame within which to see the development of standardising frameworks for quality, curriculum and assessment in the UK. These developments are viewed with caution as they appear to operate from the one model fits all approach or out of the autonomous model outlined above (Hamilton & Merrifield 2000).

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Transforming Literacies: RaPAL annual conference, University of Glasgow, 2006



By Kieran Harrington, ALO, Galway City VEC

Kieran graduated in Spanish and Greek from University College Cork and went to Galicia in northern Spain, started an MA thesis on bilingualism in 1987, and returned in 1998 to finish the degree. He taught Spanish language in the renamed Department of Hispanic Studies in University College Cork and his thesis eventually finished up as a sociolinguistic study of language planning in Galicia. Kieran later joined Clare Adult Basic Education Service (CABES) as an ESOL coordinator and began delivering the ESOL modules for the Literacy Project of Waterford Institute of Technology. His PhD thesis focuses on the use of English as a lingua franca by a community of 300 multilingual asylum seekers based in a Reception Centre in County Clare. Originally, it was planned as a corpus linguistics study, but he has now decided that an ethnographic approach would be more appropriate. Kieran says “When I became Adult Literacy Organiser last year in CABES, the ex-incumbent of that position, Moira Greene, introduced me to the New Literacy Studies and the work of Hamilton and Barton in the UK, Shirley Brice Heath in the USA and Brian Street in Australia and their ‘social view’ of literacy, and I immediately saw the connections with sociolinguistics and with ethnography.”

In June NALA awarded me a bursary to attend the RaPAL literacy conference in Glasgow in June 2006 and has asked me to reflect here on my experiences at the conference with respect to adult literacy practice in Ireland and with respect to my own research in sociolinguistics. I’ll start though with a brief of explanation of what RaPAL is, for those of you who are not acquainted with the project and the journal.

RaPAL (established in 1985) stands for Research and Practice in Adult Literacy and is a network of students, tutors, organisers and researchers engaged in adult literacy and basic education. As it is a membership organisation, it is completely independent in its views and focuses on the role of literacies in adult life. It campaigns for the right of adults to have access to the full range of literacies, it critiques the notion of literacy as a simple skill, emphasises the importance of social context in literacy acquisition, encourages collaborative research and reflection on practice by all participants in adult literacy provision, and recognises that students are ‘central to a learning democracy and their participation in the decision-making processes of practice and research is essential’. The RaPAL network produces a journal three times a year and welcomes articles, reviews, reports, commentaries, letters and cartoons by anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. One of the principal aims is to forge a strong link between research and practice and for this reason the journal is not exclusive to recognised researchers and academics; there are invaluable reports and articles by practitioners and students on the nitty-gritty of everyday practice.

The Pre-Conference Seminars

The pre-conference seminars (Thursday, 22nd of June) were given by Professor Steven Reder from Portland University. The first one on the 'Lab School' especially grabbed my attention. I remembered having read something about the 'Lab' in an article by Fergus Dolan, NALA's ESOL development worker, in the spring edition of the NALA Journal, but Steve's video-clips made me wonder about my own struggles with poor recording equipment and the time I had devoted to taking extensive field notes.

Students and teachers in the 'Lab's' ESOL classroom are closely monitored by one way observation windows, video cameras that concentrate on pairs, and radio-microphones. Steve showed us a very revealing clip of two students who adjusted the language they were using and the way they were interacting with each other when the teacher approached. This shows how little ESOL teachers actually know about student interaction and student language and suggests that students may interact intelligibly far more than is thought. I had already come across something similar in my own research, when one day I was called out of a classroom of six recently arrived asylum seekers to answer the phone. The machine continued recording and I found when I played it back that the 'beginner' students had had a very lively discussion in very intelligible English on the merits of the teaching methods used!

The Conference

The conference began with the keynote speech delivered by Liam Kane from Glasgow University. We all sat up in our chairs when we were told that this speaker had shared a stage once with Paulo Freire. Liam spoke about 'Popular Education', clarifying that it is 'popular' in the Spanish sense of 'of the people', supplied some interesting statistics with regard to the minority possession of wealth and then outlined the characteristics of the movement, which will be familiar to literacy tutors who have come across Paulo Freire: the critique of the 'banking' method of education, the promotion of dialogue, the encouragement of people to become 'subjects' of change and the insistence of the view that education cannot be neutral. Liam wondered if it is too simplistic to view situations as oppressor versus oppressed, and suggested that some of the characteristics are not particular to education in the Third World, such as neutrality in education.

I was spurred to reflect on recent adult literacy and ESOL practice in Ireland against this background of popular education and the ideals of Freire which seemed to be the ideals of adult basic education services that started off in the 70s or 80s as charitable organisations. They used to run flag days to survive, now the literacy organisers need to be experts in finance and human resources and perform corporate tasks such as judging the merits of fat-cat information technology enterprise presentations on databases and websites.

RaPAL is a network of students, tutors, organisers and researchers engaged in adult literacy and basic education

Students and teachers in the 'Lab's' ESOL classroom are closely monitored by one way observation windows, video cameras that concentrate on pairs, and radio-microphones

Adult Basic Education in Ireland has been handsomely funded by the Celtic Tiger's reaction to the IALS 1995-97 survey and there is a danger that those of us who still have ideals will fall into the money trap: we tend to accept external decontextualised deficit statements and statistics without even thinking about asking the people, the students, what they think. Those people, those students whom we add onto our Departmental returns at the end of the year to convince ourselves (and the Department) that we are spending the money properly. Thus the students retain the status of 'oppressed', but perhaps we, the tutors who have become managers, have also become the oppressors.

We all sat up in our chairs when we were told that this speaker had shared a stage once with Paulo Freire

The Workshops

It was difficult to choose a workshop as all of them seemed of essential attending. There were workshops by tutors on everyday practice, workshops on policy mainly delivered by researchers. Juliet Merrifield's workshop; 'Toward a new model of accountability – and away from the tyranny of targets' was of special interest to me and to Irish adult literacy practitioners in general. The increased funding here translates into increased necessity for accountability, and most of us do not want to go the way of Skills for Life. I think one of the important things to remember, perhaps, is that accountability is not a synonym of assessment.

One of the workshops I was sorry I hadn't attended was Yvon Appleby's "What's in a name: Does it matter whether we use 'literacy' or 'literacies' in RaPAL?", as I was very surprised by the fearless use of the word 'literacies' by everybody at the conference. Although in Ireland in the last 15 years practitioners have taken the logical social practice approach, the word 'literacies' is spoken very rarely and the term 'literacy as a social practice' raises eyebrows. There seems to be a great phobia in Ireland in the field of adult literacy and ESOL of anything that sounds remotely academic. This is understandable perhaps in tutors who have had no academic training and even those who studied English in university and may have had the misfortune of tolerating lecturers who refused to call a spade a spade. But it is disheartening when officials from the Department of Education fall back on 'well he/she is an academic, isn't she' when one is trying to back up one's new literacy procedure by making reference to research.

...accountability is not a synonym of assessment

I went to Shirley Howitt's workshop 'Is Literacies making an impact on poverty in Glasgow' wondering exactly what was meant by 'poverties'. The target groups that were mentioned coincided with those for whom we provide literacy provision in Ireland: migrants, the unemployed, the disabled, people with specific learning difficulties, prisoners, psychiatric patients, alcoholics, drug addicts, people living in disadvantaged areas and people in low-income jobs. The idea that a lack of 'literacy' equates to misfortune and literacy equates to income, although very difficult to elude in the practical world, is unfortunate. We seem to forget notions like the recreational or community value of literacy and focus too much on the utilitarian. Further, the greater poverty is the powerlessness associated with the lack of opportunity to influence thought and policy and effect change. Of course, it is easier to quantify progress in terms of economic gain, because you can say things like so and so got such and such a job, and I could see by the feedback at this workshop that gains had

been made in Glasgow. The real value of this workshop was that it forced me to reflect on the impact of literacy provision in my own area, the impact not only on the quantifiable poverty, but also on the poverty of powerlessness. In Ireland at least, as far as I can see, people make gains in confidence at the community level. But socioeconomic gain is minimal, and power is out of reach.

Evening Reception

On a lighter note, and to conclude, on the Friday evening we were invited to a civic reception hosted by Bailie Ellen Hurcombe on behalf of the Lord

Provost of Glasgow. After dinner there was a ceilidh. I can't remember the name of the lady I danced with, but I'm sure she remembers me and hopefully she does not still have the imprints of my boots on her toes. I apologise publicly to her and promise not to dance again.

Final Thoughts

NALA asked me to talk about my experience principally to find out if it is a good idea to award people bursaries to attend conferences abroad. My experience has been totally positive in that I mixed with academics and practitioners alike and they are all more or less on the same wavelength. I was able to compare adult literacy practice in Ireland with England and Scotland, the latter apparently being closer to the Irish model, although at times I wonder myself if there is such a thing as the Irish model and if there

is, is it a social practice one. I met many people with whom I interchanged e-mails, and hopefully I can go back to them with queries and vice versa. I even came across someone from the Dublin Adult Learning Centre, Fionnaigh Connaughton, who I hadn't met before, and we shared views on the current debates in Irish Adult Literacy, such as assessment and curriculum (perhaps these are the recurring debates in all countries!). I found she had been researching for a thesis on a Nigerian student, which I hope I can read some day and refer to in my own research. Yes, I came back with ideas for both my own research and for adult literacy practice and I hope more Irish organisers and tutors will attend international conferences in the future.

The idea that a lack of 'literacy' equates to misfortune and literacy equates to income, although very difficult to elude in the practical world, is unfortunate

My experience has been totally positive in that I mixed with academics and practitioners alike and they are all more or less on the same wavelength

Towards greater participation of adults with literacy difficulties

By Margaret Murray, Regional Development Officer, NALA, Cork



The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) believes that organisations dealing with the public, including Government departments, service providers and community organisations, need to consider literacy issues more. Adults with literacy difficulties should be able to fully take part in society and access learning opportunities that meet their needs. According to the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey¹, one in four adults in Ireland has literacy difficulties. There needs to be more substantial funding by Government to impact on the literacy levels of the Irish population. The response to literacy needs go beyond the education sector to the workplace, family and other sectors. Organisations that are interested in public participation (such as community development projects, Partnerships) as well as those providing a service to the public need to look at literacy issues and take steps to make it easier for adults with literacy difficulties to get involved. Suggestions of ways to do this are made here and NALA calls for leadership on this issue.

Is it really a big deal?

Are we really concerned with building an inclusive society or not? You could say there is a type of social contract in democracy. Citizens agree to trust our institutions to hold power and to live within the rules and in return, citizens have certain democratic rights, for example a right to equality, to be treated fairly, to understand the rules of the game, to question those in power and to contribute to public policy. One in four Irish adults have literacy difficulties which can be a significant barrier to participation. Public institutions, service providers and organisations interested in bringing about change, need to make things easier to understand for everyone, not just those with high education levels. Literacy is not just an educational issue; it is a fundamental democratic issue.

Literacy is not just an educational issue; it is a fundamental democratic issue.

Adult literacy students² talk about how their literacy difficulties discourage them from joining organisations and seeking promotion in their jobs. For example, one student recently had been asked but turned down the option, to stand for election because of their literacy difficulties. Our society as a whole is missing out on the full participation of many people with literacy difficulties. In the United Kingdom, research has been carried out by the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament, which highlighted the fact that people with low basic skills or no qualifications show lower levels of public involvement³.

¹ Morgan M., B. Hickey, T. Kellaghan, A. Cronin and D. Millar (1997) *International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for Ireland*, Educational Research Centre, Dublin.

² NALA has been organising regional meetings of students since 1999. See reports on the forums for 2004, 2005 and 2006 on our website www.nala.ie

³ The Electoral Commission UK (November 2005) "Social exclusion and political engagement".

Taking part in Irish society often involves reading, writing and numeracy. People are also using technology more often in their everyday lives through computers, mobile phones or bank machines. Despite the efforts of NALA and others campaigning on the issue of literacy since 1980, it seems that our society is not really grasping the fact that there are so many people with literacy difficulties. In an environment that mostly assumes that we all have reading, writing and basic numeracy, many adults with difficulties hide their lack of skills. This can affect the person's confidence. Adults with literacy difficulties are more likely to shy away from taking on certain positions of responsibility for fear of being exposed. Adults with literacy difficulties may be excluded from:

- voting, standing for election and becoming a member of a political party;
 - helping to develop local communities and working with community development groups, non-governmental organisations and lobby groups;
 - reaching their full potential in the workplace, for example by not going for promotion;
 - contributing to society, for example by not volunteering in charities and support groups or by not offering financial support;
 - understanding the workings and responsibilities of major Government-funded organisations such as the Health Service Executive and local authorities; and
 - feeling a sense of belonging in wider society.
- So what can be done about literacy and taking part in our society? Below are a number of suggestions.

Could your organisation be more open to people with literacy difficulties?

Organisations and groups may not realise they are putting people off joining or taking part in events because of a strong reliance on written communication and a lack of awareness about literacy issues. Many people do not join groups and take part in collective action because of their literacy difficulties. Fearful of being asked to write, read or do numeracy tasks in front of others, people choose not to come forward.

What can you do?

Not assuming that everyone has good reading, writing and numeracy skills is a start. Being aware of this from the start will affect how you present the organisation to prospective people you would like to get involved. Think about the types of skills you need beyond literacy in your organisation. For example you might need people who can come up with new ideas. You might need someone who can drum up interest locally, someone who is a good communicator. There are many skills a person can bring to an organisation besides literacy-based ones. Being clear about the ways a person could contribute and recognising people's skills and talents beyond literacy and being clear about what you will not have to do could help get people with literacy difficulties involved. Frontline staff, for example receptionists, administrators, information officers could become more aware of literacy issues. Often they are the public face and sometimes voice of organisations and services. Their awareness and response can create a lasting impression on adults who may have low

People with low basic skills or no qualifications show lower levels of public involvement

self-esteem and feel embarrassed about their literacy difficulties. A positive or negative experience could ultimately impact on decisions to use the service or contact the organisation again.

Using plain English in information will help. Get a copy of NALA's "Writing and Design Tips" and our Plain English Guidelines. There are ways you can generate ideas and keep track of what has been agreed besides paper based ones. Where you do need to record information, read out what has been written up on flipcharts or in the minutes at meetings. Make a link with your local VEC adult literacy scheme because you might get a chance to refer people on there and because they might have further ideas about how to get people involved.



Writing & design tips – a NALA guide

Use plain English for all public information

Community groups, Government Departments, state bodies and those involved in communicating to the public need to take account of people with literacy difficulties when presenting and writing information. Organisations and readers benefit from the use of plain English, as clearer documents contribute to greater efficiency. Organisations spend less time dealing with questions or complaints that may arise from misunderstood information. People are more likely to take part or carry out their responsibilities if they can actually understand what is required. Plain English is a way of writing and presenting information so that the intended reader can understand it.

Information should be in language and formats that are clear, concise and relevant. NALA has two pages of 'Plain English guidelines' that can be downloaded from our website
http://www.nala.ie/download/pdf/nala_plain_english_guidelines.pdf

Support NALA's efforts to put literacy on the political agenda

NALA recognises that there have been increases in funding from the Irish Government to literacy in recent years. However the area of adult literacy remains under-resourced. Since 1997, when the findings for Ireland from the International Adult Literacy Survey were first published, the demands on adult literacy services have grown. Adult literacy tutors, centre managers and Adult Literacy Organisers in the VEC Adult Literacy Service (ALS) are working at full capacity and are severely under-resourced. A welcome development is the proper pay and conditions for those employed in the service, Adult Literacy Organisers and tutors. However there was no major increase in funding to reflect the increase being spent on wages. This meant that money given to the service provided less paid tuition hours for adults with literacy difficulties than before. There is as yet no clear career structure for adult literacy tutors.

Plain English is a way of writing and presenting information so that the intended reader can understand it

Another problem is that the Government has not developed a parallel initiative to support the literacy and language needs of asylum seekers and immigrant workers. In the absence of such an initiative, the ALS has responded to their needs for English language tuition. This has been done in a committed, flexible and student-centred manner.

Immigrant workers and asylum seekers now make up a quarter of all adult literacy students attending the ALS. Discounting English language students, the number of other adult literacy students has remained static since 2002. The VEC ALS needs more funding, with the average student getting one hour a week's tuition, equivalent to three weeks full time study a year. There needs to be more funding to pay tutors and to create a tutor career to keep trained people in the service.

In Ireland, 35,500 people representing 7% of those with the lowest level of literacy in the International Adult Literacy Survey use the VEC ALS. This is in keeping with many Western industrial countries where at best 10% of adults with literacy difficulties engage in an adult literacy programme. In order to reach more adults with literacy difficulties there must be an integrated approach to literacy involving the workplace, family, public services and other sectors, not just the education sector. NALA recommends that the Government fully put into practice the recommendations in the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science, *Report on Adult Literacy* (May 2006)⁴ and we call on our members and supporters to echo NALA's efforts to keep literacy on the political agenda in whatever way you have available to you.

Government departments and public bodies could 'literacy proof' their work practices

Managers of public services should be responsible to their target groups and make sure their work practices are reviewed so that barriers for service users who may have literacy difficulties are removed. This review, or 'literacy proofing', is important to make sure that organisations do not prevent any one section of the population from using its services.

An organisation can make a good start on literacy proofing its practises by arranging for frontline staff (for example customer service agents, receptionists, administrators, information officers) to receive literacy awareness training. The Government should devise a strategy to develop a whole Government approach to literacy through the Department of the Taoiseach as part of the Quality Customer Service initiative. Service providers should literacy proof their practices and provide literacy awareness training for frontline staff.

Are public consultations really open to all the public?

One in every four adults in Ireland scored at only level 1⁵ in the International Adult Literacy Survey. Organisations that rely on paper-based or electronic methods to assemble public opinion will exclude

Immigrant workers and asylum seekers now make up a quarter of all adult literacy students attending the Adult Literacy Service

⁴ The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science (May 2006) reported that "(the) high level of literacy problems in Ireland is unacceptable and it should be a national priority to reduce it within as short a time as possible".

⁵ A person who scored at level 1 had difficulty locating information from the back of a disin packet.

many people from taking part in consultations. Government campaigns and consultations should use methods that enable people with literacy difficulties to take part, if they choose to do so. Using plain English and the radio to share information and telephone contact to garner opinion are just a few ways of doing this. Other methods include working through community or issue-based groups and specifying what skills are needed to take part in consultation meetings. All these, combined will encouraged participation, reveal a real commitment to giving all people a chance to have a say on decisions and policies that affect their lives. NALA recommends that public services and people interested in active citizenship should make sure that their methods of engaging with the public are open to the 25% of Irish adults with a significant literacy difficulty.

Conclusion

NALA recommends that the Government take a lead role in highlighting and responding to the current reality of the number of people with literacy difficulties in Ireland. There needs to be further investment to create a flexible and responsive system that makes it easier for people to return to education and improve their skills. NALA also recommends that those who are: either providing services to the public or who are interested in community participation and bringing about positive change in our society, consider whether the way they operate is open and accessible to one quarter of the Irish adult population. This article is taken from NALA's Submission to the Taskforce on Active Citizenship, set up by the Department of the Taoiseach (September 2006).

For more information, please contact NALA on 01 855 4332 or view www.nala.ie for the full Submission to the Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

‘Skills for work’ works through adult literacy

Setting up a FÁS skills for work programme through adult literacy



By Catherine Flynn, tutor on SFW Workplace Communications course, Longford

The Adult Learning Centre in Longford is no stranger to workplace practice, working with Iarnród Éireann, Bord na Mona, Longford County Council and other companies on a continuous basis. So, when the Basic Education Co-Ordinator for the FÁS Skills for Work project approached the organiser, with a view to providing opportunities to help employees in the Longford area to deal with the literacy and numeracy demands of the workplace, the wheels were put straight into motion. The programme was aimed at employees with basic education needs and was funded through the Workplace Basic Education Fund set up by the Government under the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and managed by FÁS.



Meetings were organised with many firms in the locality to promote the benefits of the programme. This article deals with the programme that was implemented in the Longford area.

Having the business on board, selection of a suitable tutor then followed. The person assigned to deliver the project was required to be a trained and qualified Adult Literacy tutor and have completed relevant modules in the Higher Certificate in Arts in Literacy Development through WIT (Waterford Institute of Technology).

A ten-week programme was developed which consisted of a three hour, once a week on-site course.

The course objectives were:

- Address participants' basic skills needs
- Improve participants' confidence and ability to deal with the communication, reading and writing demands of the workplace
- Transfer skills into personal and social lives
- Integrate reading and writing skills with Health and Safety issues in the workplace
- Pilot relevant sections of the Safe and Well CDROM and workbook

Course outline:

- Listening and Speaking
- Understanding Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication
- Recognising words
- Finding Key Information
- Understanding Meaning and Purpose of Text

So, for at least the first two visits, the tutor was also a student, one who required the assistance of her students on more than one occasion

- Using different forms of writing
- Using the Rules of Writing
- Understanding and explaining food safety issues

First on-site visit

Firstly, accessing the classroom provided by the company entailed a precise ritual. On entering the first locker room, all jewelry and footwear had to be removed, suitable safety boots were provided together with a disposable hat to cover head and ears. On entering the second locker room, hands had to be washed and dried and a white coat was provided, to cover outer clothing. On entering the third area, hands were washed once again and at this point tutor and students were ready to access the classroom. On leaving the classroom, this ritual was carried out in reverse.

Initially for the tutor, following this procedure was difficult due to being unfamiliar with the premises and the routine. So, for at least the first two visits, the tutor was also a student, one who required the assistance of her students on more than one occasion!

Group dynamics at a glance

On the first day, the group consisted of four women ranging in age from early twenties to mid forties. These women were familiar with each other and seemed to be relaxed

in each other's company. However, on the second day a man joined the group, and the dynamic of the group changed completely. This man was older and held a more senior position within the company. He was referred to as a 'cell leader' There was less feedback from the ladies and the man sat with one vacant seat between himself and the next student. The tutor had to set about creating an environment whereby all present felt included and secure, so a game involving group interaction was introduced. The students were encouraged to help each other with various exercises and eventually the gap in seating arrangements was forsaken!

The taboo of adult literacy

Although this on-site workplace practice took place in the summer of 2006, old, ill-informed attitudes to literacy seemed to be alive and well and evident in the workplace. It emerged on the third visit, that the participants were very conscious of the course content and requested that the tutor ensure that no evidence of course work be left on white boards or flip charts. Reference was also made to the fact that other members of staff had referred to the course as the 'ABC classes', and because of this one lady left the group.

In order to counteract this scenario, the tutor requested permission to introduce computers as a means of deflecting the nature of the course. This permission was granted without hesitation, and in hindsight, was a most beneficial attribute to the development of the course.



...participants were very conscious of the course content... the tutor requested permission to introduce computers as a means of deflecting the nature of the course

The students were more motivated to carryout exercises and at the same time were learning basic computer skills. Because the emphasis was now on computers, the students were no longer reluctant to be seen with the tutor, and actually enjoyed carrying the laptops to and from the car. On these occasions it was rewarding to see other members of staff show interest in what was going on.

The positive effect of breaking down literacy barriers

Because we usually think of literacy in relation to reading, writing, listening and speaking, we must also bear in mind that it also has personal and social dimensions. It was in these areas that improvement was greatly evident and communication skills were greatly enhanced. As this project progressed, the confidence of the participants increased greatly.



Stock-taking can be a challenge to staff with a literacy difficulty

- The woman who, initially, refused to look at the tutor when she spoke, was now a more open and friendly person, who showed a keen interest in computers and an openness to learning that was not at all evident at the start of the programme. Her communication skills were greatly enhanced and she showed a better acceptance of her role within the company and a greater tolerance and understanding to the role of her supervisors

...previous studies have shown that poor literacy in the workforce is associated with lower profit and higher operating costs it stands to reason that more Irish businesses should respond to projects such as the FÁS Skills for Work Programme

- Another participant who had great difficulty in the area of reading and spelling became more confident and less conscious of this problem. She resolved to participate in a literacy class in her local Adult Learning Centre at a later date. She was introduced to the Drivers Theory Test and after much practice, managed to pass the test. Her delight was such that she was almost reduced to tears, as she explained to the tutor that she had “never passed anything in her life”, and for her this was the highlight of the course. This particular lady confided to the tutor that she was being considered for a small promotion within the company. But due to her desire to travel, (which to-date had been restricted due to her literacy difficulties and lack of confidence) she was reluctant to commit to this new position.
- The only male participant changed employment before completion of the course. However, he did confirm that the course met all his requirements and allowed him the confidence to seek further employment and promotion opportunity.

- The third lady in attendance had a learning disability, but she showed great improvements in the area of reading and writing. She liked to read a book and type out a synopsis of the story and read it to the class. In her evaluation of the course, she wrote that she was better able to 'stand up for herself' having completed the programme.

What's in it for the company?

Alan Rogers wrote:

"The question of participation is not just a matter of what the student-students in our classes and learning groups do in the process of learning. It is also about getting others to take advantage of the learning opportunities on offer. This will lead us to experiment with new formats of classes and groups, with new times, with new approaches to the subject-matter that will be more appropriate to different groups of students, with restructuring our contents and methods, to try to overcome the barriers that still exist in all societies". (Rogers, 2001:240)

Since previous studies have shown that poor literacy in the workforce is associated with lower profit and higher operating costs it stands to reason that more Irish businesses should respond to projects such as the FÁS Skills for Work Programme. According to 'The return to Learning Initiative Evaluation Report and Guidelines', NALA, Dublin, the projected benefits include:

- An increase in self-confidence
- Literacy skill development
- A re-awakening of an interest in learning

These benefits were clearly in evidence following the project carried out in Longford and are further proof of the results that can be achieved when a workplace education project is implemented.

Benefits to the tutor

For this tutor, to facilitate learning outside of her own place of work and within the environment of the student was certainly a great learning experience. It was a rewarding exercise to leave the security and familiar settings of her classroom to facilitate a group of students in their own environment. Especially in this case, where the student worked in the area of food preparation. Health and safety issues surrounding the food sector were now no longer only in theory, but had been put into practice.

Sadly, the negative attitude of other staff members to those with literacy difficulties was somewhat disappointing, but the confidence and improved self-esteem gained by those who attended the course, more than out-weighed this negative factor.

With the students demonstrating a renewed and positive attitude to workplace learning and displaying a desire to continue this learning programme, the tutor concluded that this was a successful project, one that should be promoted within the employment sector.

Compelling facts

The Adult Learning Centre in Longford is no stranger to workplace practice, working with Iarnród Éireann, Bord na Mona, Longford County Council and other companies on a continuous basis. So, when the Basic Education Co-Ordinator for the FÁS Skills for Work project approached the organiser, with a view to providing opportunities to help employees in the Longford area to deal with the literacy and numeracy demands of the workplace, the wheels were put straight into motion.

Need for immediate dialogue and planning to realise the goals set out in national policy for adult literacy



By John Stewart, National Adult Literacy Co-Ordinator, NALA

There were a number of very significant policy developments in relation to adult literacy between May 2006 and January 2007:

- the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science published its *Report on Adult Literacy*;
- the social partnership process produced “a strategic framework for meeting the economic and social challenges ahead¹” entitled *Towards 2016*; and
- the new National Development Plan 2007-2013 was announced on January 23rd 2007. This plan entitled *Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All* outlines strategic policy priorities and commits resources for their implementation.

So what are these new policy documents saying about adult literacy difficulties in Ireland? What has been the national response to this issue since the White Paper on Adult Education in 2000? To address this, I will set the context by providing a critique of the previous National Development Plan 2000-2006, and then identify some of the key elements of these policy documents and consider their implications for future development.

The increase in non-ESOL learners (in VEC adult literacy services) from 2004 to 2006 is just 132. This equates to 4 extra learners per VEC.

The National Development Plan 2000-2006

The national investment in adult literacy services was over €121 million for the period of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006. This was a period of sustained investment and annual budgets doubled from 2000 (€11.25) to 2006 (€23 million). Adult literacy services improved on many fronts during this period including:

- A significant increase in the number of learners (13,000 to 35,500);
- A widening and deepening of the range of services available (particularly in ESOL, WBE, and distance learning);

¹ An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern T.D. in his foreword to “Towards 2016”

- An increase in part time staff, including volunteers; and
- The quality of the service (including major developments in assessment, guidance, qualifications, quality assurance and training).

It is appropriate to acknowledge the many and varied advances made, as well as the flexibility and expertise demonstrated by adult literacy practitioners, over the last seven years. However, the progress made under the last NDP tailed off in very significant ways in the second half of the period of the plan.

While the number of ESOL learners has continued to increase, the number of other adult literacy learners has been static at between 25,000 and 26,000 learners since 2002 (See Table 1). The increase in non-ESOL learners from 2004 to 2006 is just 132. This equates to 4 extra learners per VEC over the two year period. The other significant trend from the adult literacy returns is the continuing decrease in the number of paid tuition hours provided through the adult literacy services. This is of particular concern as the total number of paid tuition hours has decreased steadily by nearly 50,000 hours each year from December 2002 to December 2005.

All these trends indicate that the increases in participation in the VEC adult literacy services over the last four years relate to ESOL. A significant increase in resources is required to take the adult literacy service to the next stage and make a realistic impact on the 500,000 adults identified at the lowest literacy levels by the IALS survey in 1997, particularly those from hard-to-reach groups as identified in the White Paper *Learning for Life*.

This is not to say that ESOL learners should not get the services they need. In fact there is an urgent need for a clear policy on ESOL and English services to meet the needs of migrant workers as well as asylum seekers and refugees, especially those with less than upper secondary level educations. NALA has lobbied for dedicated resources (€10 million over and above current adult literacy budgets) to be allocated to ESOL service provision.

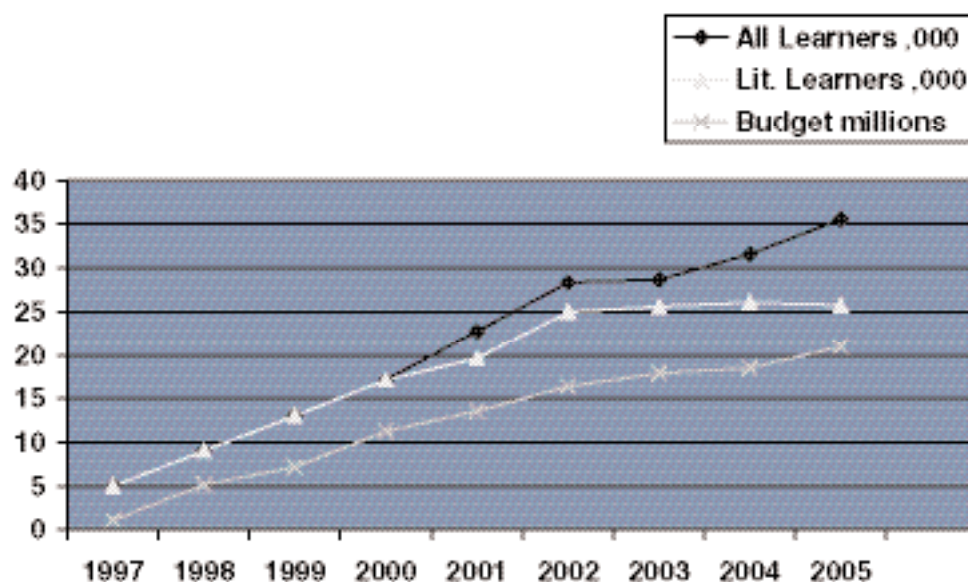
Report on Adult Literacy by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science (May 2006).

This Oireachtas Joint Committee includes senators and T.Ds from all parties and indeed most of the political party spokespersons on education. The committee received submissions, and then invited presentations, from 50 stakeholders, including NALA, VECs, adult literacy practitioners and others. This committee produced a hard hitting report which stated:

“that a high level of literacy problems in Ireland is unacceptable and it should be a national priority to reduce it within as short a time as possible. This requires the adoption of a long term programme with an objectively measurable target and an adequate budget”.

The total number of paid tuition hours provided in adult, literacy has decreased steadily by nearly 50,000 hours each year since 2002.

Table 1 Adult literacy students within VEC adult literacy services 2002-2005³



Key	2002	2003	2004	2005
Non-ESOL Students	25,028	25,632	26,073	25,764
ESOL Students	3,335	5,947	7,800	9,788
Total Adult Literacy Numbers	28,363	31,579	33,873	35,552

The report makes twenty-eight recommendations. It identifies an aim to reduce the proportion of the population at the lowest level of literacy³ by half within the next fifteen years. To achieve this target, it recommends that annual funding for literacy tuition should be increased significantly to reach €125 by 2013. The report gives a central place to the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Plan (NALNIP)⁴ which should

“be adopted and used as a starting point in the planning for the full implementation of the National Adult Literacy Programme, 2007 – 2013.”

The Report on Adult Literacy by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science, is quite specific in what needs to be done. NALA believes this report outlines a serious and comprehensive approach for the adult education sector to address the literacy issue in Irish society.

Towards 2016 (June 2006)

This is sub-titled a *Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006 -2015* and was negotiated between the Government, Employers, Unions with inputs from the community and voluntary sector. This document reinforces the position that adult literacy is the top priority in adult education and identifies ‘Priority Actions’ for 2006-2009 including

- an extra 7,000 places for adult literacy from 2006 to 2009

² DES Adult Literacy Returns 2002-2005

³ As defined by the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey

⁴ The NALNIP was developed by an advisory group of key stakeholders brought together by NALA and published in October 2004.

- a commitment to English language services
- development of appropriate structures taking into account the expanding role of adult literacy and the VECs and specifically the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Plan.
- identifies a particular need to develop literacy and basic skills in the workplace.

The document also refers to the importance of literacy development in other areas including at school level.



There are very positive elements in *Towards 2016*. The priority identified in the agreement for adult literacy and the specific reference to the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Plan as a basis for structural development are particularly welcome. The need to address literacy for young people and in schools is also crucial. The emphasis on basic skills and literacy development within the workplace could be a major affirmative development in literacy terms. Resources for these elements are identified in the NDP 2007-2013.

While the provision of 7,000 places in adult literacy is also appreciated, it is noted that this is less than the increase in participation over the previous three years⁵ and on its own, is an insufficient measure to significantly address the adult literacy issue in Ireland. The need to clarify policy on and resources for an English language and literacy service for migrant workers is also essential. Unless the focus on structures within the *Towards 2016* agreement is progressed, the substance of the literacy service element of this agreement will not live up to the rhetoric used.

There now appears to be a major opportunity for adult education players as there is a convergence of national policy and the availability of resources.

National Development Plan 2007-2013

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 identifies policy priorities across the areas of Economic Infrastructure, Enterprise, Human Capital, Social Infrastructure and Social Inclusion and commits investment of €184 billion over the seven years. For example, the plan identifies a package of €49.6 billion to address social inclusion.

The main headlines in relation to adult literacy include:

- €2.2 billion⁶ for further education sub-programme with priorities on addressing low literacy levels in the adult population and the large number who have not completed upper secondary. A National Adult Literacy Programme is the top priority.
- There is a very significant policy target to reduce the numbers of people in the workforce with a level 3 qualification or less to 7% by 2020.

⁵ DES Adult Literacy Returns 2002-2005

⁶ page 247-248.

- Continued support for the Workplace Basic Education Fund
- The NDP also commits to reducing the numbers of children with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools in disadvantaged areas by half, from 30% to 15%.
- NALA's submission is acknowledged and listed with the 76 other submissions.

These commitments are substantial and welcome. For example, last year the annual spend on further and adult education was €169 million. The NDP allows for an annual expenditure on further education of €314 million to 2013. These will cover the full array of programmes for adult literacy, community education, traveller education, Youthreach, BTEI, and PLCs. The impact on education in the workplace could be even more significant. There is currently 30% of the workforce (that's over 500,000 adults) with Level 3 qualifications or less. The NDP seeks to reduce that to 7% by 2020. The implication is that there will be a significant focus on the development of basic skills and literacy in a workplace context for the foreseeable future.



The Minister for Education and Science Mary Hanafin T.D. addressed how the resources identified in the NDP would be spent. In relation to adult literacy Minister Hanafin announced that **“The aim over the lifetime of the NDP is to halve the number of adults in the population who have a literacy problem, with over €358 million being provided under this programme.”**⁷ This equates to an annual spend of some €51 million per year, and compares to an adult literacy budget of €23 million in 2006.

No matter which way you look at this, to realise these commitments will require major planning, implementation and monitoring initiatives. There now appears to be an unprecedented opportunity for adult education players to tackle the ‘unacceptable’ adult literacy issue in Ireland, as there is a convergence of national policy and the availability of resources. NALA looks forward to engaging in the partnership, dialogue and planning needed to achieve the goals laid out in national policy. It is perhaps fitting to leave with the words of Taoiseach Ahern in the foreword to the NDP.

“With these resources comes responsibility: responsibility to ensure that they are deployed intelligently, in an optimal manner that secures and delivers real value for money.”

For more information please contact John Stewart at jstewart@nala.ie or on 01 809 9196.

Need for immediate dialogue and planning to realise the goals set out in national policy for adult literacy

⁷ press release 26 January 07

Political participation and literacy the theme for National Adult Literacy Awareness Week



By Tommy Byrne, PRO, NALA

National Adult Literacy Awareness Week (NALAW) had the theme of 'Political participation and literacy' for 2006. This theme was chosen in anticipation of, and preparation for, a general election in the spring of 2007. NALAW focused on the political establishment from government departments and their support agencies, politicians and political parties to individuals and organisations who are focused on the political system. The campaign assisted them with dealing more effectively and sensitively with 500,000 (OECD 1997) members of the public who are improving their literacy skills.

Literacy difficulties can be a barrier to accessing, understanding and using political information. As a result, adults with literacy difficulties may be excluded from:

- voter participation including voter registrations and understanding the elections / referenda
- participating in political parties such as
 - understanding party manifestos,
 - voting and canvassing,
 - knowing who the political parties are?
 - how the parties are organised?
 - what do they do?
 - how do you join?

Understanding government - how local, national and EU government works.

The goals of the campaign

The goals of the campaign were to:

- raise awareness of the issue of literacy as a barrier to political participation;
- assist organisations which shape the political scene, in promoting a clear understanding of their work to the widest range of people in society;
- draw on international experience and know how; and
- begin a national debate on the issue.

What did National Adult Literacy Awareness Week include?

NALAW 2006 included:

- Launch of NALAW and 'An A to Z guide to the EU' by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Noel Tracey at the Department of Foreign Affairs;

- Launch of a postcard campaign focused on literacy student voter registration;
- Launch of the publication 'A plain English guide to political terms'; and

A national conference on political participation and literacy at the National College of Ireland, with the following speakers:

- Alex Markham, Resources and Training Officer, Electoral Commission (UK) (see her speech on page 50)
- Ian Hughes, TASC political think-tank
- Minister Silé de Valera TD
- Bridie Daly, literacy student and NALA Executive member

'The A to Z guide to the European Union (EU)'

This guide is for anyone who wants to learn more about the EU, but it is particularly for adult literacy students. 'The A to Z guide to the European Union (EU)' comprises nearly 100 pages and covers nearly 150 terms. It has interesting facts and figures about the European Union, its members, history, culture and institutions. It will tell you more about each of the 25 Member States and the main EU institutions. The information in this guide also answers questions that adult literacy students have asked about the EU. In addition it contains information that EU experts think people in the EU should know.



'The A to Z guide to the European Union (EU)' can be viewed and downloaded from the NALA website at http://www.nala.ie/download/pdf/nala_eu_guide_20th_sept06.pdf

Electoral register postcard

Another item launched during NALAW was a 'Do you want to vote' postcard which aimed to encourage thousands of people with low literacy levels to get on to the electoral register. Using plain English instructions, the postcard campaign aimed to de-mystify the process of registering to vote.



The postcard outlines:

- Where to view the electoral register;
- Where to get a voter registration form; and
- What to do to get on the electoral register.

The launch of the postcard campaign was supported by 'Standing at the Crossroads' a short drama exploring students' knowledge and understanding about the process of voting and becoming active citizens. Ann Ryle, Mary Shanahan and John Russell, students with the Kerry Education Service Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programme, performed the drama. The postcard was launched by Councillor Vincent Jackson, Lord Mayor of Dublin at Dublin City Hall.



Kerry Dram Group performing at NALAW event

The postcard can be viewed and downloaded from the NALA website at http://www.nala.ie/download/pdf/postcard_2.pdf

'A plain English guide to political terms'

One of the outcomes of the campaign which caused greatest interest was the launch of the 'A plain English guide to political terms'. This publication is for anyone interested or involved in the dark art of politics, as they will find it useful in helping them clarify their communications.



Joe Higgins at the launch of 'A Plain English Guide to political terms'

The guide comprises nearly 60 pages and covers over 400 terms. It also contains a list of references and websites of the main political parties. Along with other elements of the campaign on literacy and political participation, this guide helps the public become more familiar with some of the most common political terms. NALA also hopes it will remove some of the barriers that may currently prevent people from getting involved in political activity - whether that means voting, lobbying their local representative or joining a political party.

'A plain English guide to political terms' was launched at the Dáil, by the well known political orator Joe Higgins TD. 'A plain English guide to political terms' can be viewed and downloaded from the NALA website at http://www.nala.ie/download/pdf/pe_guide_20th_sept06.pdf.

Wider activity

Leading up to and through out the campaign we targeted the media to gain coverage. In addition to support the campaign we distributed a range of printed support material (poster and postcard) to the political establishment and to 900 adult education centres, libraries, Citizen Information Centres and many other points of information. For more information about this contact Tommy Byrne by email attbyrne@nala.ie or by phone on (01) 809 9195.

Speech by Alex Markham at National Adult Literacy Awareness Week

By Alex Markham from The Electoral Commission in the UK



I work in the participation team at the UK Electoral Commission and today what I would like to do is to share our experiences of working with marginalised and harder to reach groups in the UK in terms of engaging them in the democratic process and talk a little bit about our campaigns and some of our resources.

First a little bit about the UK Electoral Commission. We were set up in November 2000. We were established by an Act of Parliament. We are responsible for 3 main areas of work.

- Regulation – that is regulating political parties.
- Registering them – all political parties when they are set up have to get registered by the Commission and we look at their finances as well. We do a lot around modernisation and research reports and investigation into modernisation.
- Systems like electronic voting, E-voting - Voting in shopping centres, anything to make the whole process easier and more accessible and of course public awareness work. In addition, to that we also manage referendums and review local government boundaries. But I won't be talking about the boundaries today the wonderful world of electoral maps.

**People aren't
apathetic. People do
go to demonstrations,
they sign petitions**

I am here today to talk about public awareness issues. To set the scene, this is from what we know, from our research from the 2004 European Elections and voters. It is not a pretty sight; it is not a pretty picture.

Research

With voter turnout at an all time low voter engagement is definitely a real challenge.

Why aren't people voting? We do an annual audit of political engagement. These are some of the issues:

- Apathy – lack of interest in politics
- Dissolution – the view that it makes no difference who wins
- Impact – the view that an individual's vote won't make a difference
- Alienation – the view that politics is not for me.
- Knowledge – not knowing enough about politics to cast a vote.
- Inconvenience – the idea that voting is simply too time consuming.

Just on these points, particularly the apathy issue, our research suggests it could be apathy but is

could also be antipathy. People aren't apathetic. People do go to demonstrations, they sign petitions. So clearly people are engaged in their communities. But they just don't see the connection between the political class, the political system and these local issues. Taking up these issues is not just up to community practitioners like ourselves. It needs to be a group effort. It needs to be addressed by politicians, the political parties, our political institutions, and people who run the elections, our electoral administration. In the UK it is a similar system where elections are run by the local authorities and of course the media. So it needs to be a real group effort to tackle these issues. So who does the electoral commission target in our campaigns? And why do we target them? All of our work is evidence based and research led. What we have found is that these are the groups are the mostly likely not to be registered and once registered the most likely not to vote are home movers and private renters. 33% of recent home movers are not registered to vote. That is quite a large chunk. 27% of people renting from a private landlord are not registered to vote. Of these groups it includes a lot of people from lower socio economic backgrounds.

We also target young people especially attainners. You can register to vote at 16 but you can't actually vote until you are 18. 28% of 16-17 year olds are not registered to vote. We also target young people outside formal education. These are the young people who don't have access to citizenship classes in schools and who aren't keyed into having access to information. And also particular ethnic minority groups, particularly Black Africans, 37% of Black Africans are not registered to vote. Of the Chinese community 30% of the Chinese Community are not registered to vote.

So this is just a bit of summary of non-registration and you can see that Black Africans and people at a new address are up there in terms of the non-registration stakes.

Black Africans and people at a new address are up there in terms of the non-registration stakes

Campaign Work

So our campaign work, what do we focus on? What strategies do we have to address these issues? Our campaign work and our public awareness work is really focussed about making politics relevant to our everyday lives so really linking in the issues that effect people everyday: How you get about, public transport; Where you work; The food you eat; Where you go out at night. All these kinds of things have political implications. People are making decisions about our lives everyday. We also focus on filling the gaps in knowledge. I have done work with groups of young people who don't know what a ballot paper is. They don't know about registering to vote. Really basic information that people don't know about. Our public awareness work really focuses on trying to fill those knowledge gaps. We have in the UK an annual canvass where people register once a year but you can also register to vote at any time of the year. 50% of people don't know that you can register to vote at any time of the year. That is really basic information that we need to get across...how do we tackle the challenge? We take a three pronged approach to our work:

We do campaigns. We do broad stroke multi-media campaigns that reach the whole society and then we have

People are making decisions about our lives everyday

micro campaigns, which target specific groups. So some of our target audiences such as home movers and students can be reached through these micro campaigns. That might include field marketing, housing or presswork. Other groups like young people outside formal education, like disabled people, and particular ethnic groups are much harder to reach. In these cases we

work with partner organisations to deliver workshops and information. We provide community grants to organisations working with these groups. For example, we have run registration drives with the Foyer Federation who provide supported housing and accommodation for young people. We have provided grants to Mencap, a learning disability organisation and they are running a peer education programme for people who are learning disabled.

Our campaign work - The main theme that runs through all of our campaign work is that if you don't do politics there is not much that you do do. This was an advertisement that was run on the television during the local 2005 elections. Did you see it? I see a couple of people nodding. Basically there are two characters - Tom and Mike. They go through their daily lives and you know 'I don't do politics' and they get up to some roadworks and the other one says 'Yes, you do. You know these roadworks are affected by politics. People are affected by this. Your local authority has responsibility for the roads'. So it is really trying to make that connection between what we do in our daily lives and the people who are making decisions about it.

Again some examples from our 2006 local election campaign 'Your town, your street, your say, another 5 reasons to register for the local elections'.

Ethnic minorities – this was a pilot campaign we ran during the 2006 local elections.

The interesting thing about this campaign is that we used street marketers in the Birmingham area. These street marketers were young people who would normally be selling mobile phones, SIM cards and things like that but in this instance we got them to get people in the community to register to vote. That really lent a lot of credibility to the campaign because there were people from the community who were talking about registering and the political process. Whereas if it was a bunch of people had just come up from London who were trying to get people registered to vote it wouldn't have had any sort of credibility. I guess the point I am trying to make is that we try to work with organisations who have access to the target groups rather than try to do it ourselves all the time. We try to take a real partnership approach....

Home movers and private renters - this another micro campaign

'Don't forget to take your opinions with you when you move Houses' make sure you get registered when you move. We have got a Royal Mail re-direction service so whenever you re-direct your mail you get a registration form. There is on-line advertising on home mover websites we have got with the National landlord association. Again home movers are made up, from our research, from people from lower socio-economic groups.

this work... really needs to be built into some sort of structured programme and made relevant

our research shows that people who have met a politician are more likely to vote



Alex with her fellow speakers; Minister Síle de Valera TD, Bridie Daly and Ian Hughes

Young people

Our work with young people started out as a direct delivery programme, where we were giving direct delivery workshops, to young people across the UK. What we found that as an organisation we didn't have the capacity to maintain this. There were two of us running up and down the countryside doing workshops with young people via voluntary services, youth services that kind of thing. The workshop was fantastic. The young people really engaged. They had never really talked about politics before and the idea was to make politics lots of fun and interesting. We did lots of group work activities, that kind of thing. But we found that as an organisation that we couldn't sustain that sort of thing so we have moved much more to a capacity building role where we provide training to youth workers and community workers to provide this. Where the workshops worked best was in terms of a structured programme for instance we did a lot of work with the Princes Trust who worked with young people who were outside of formal education and employment. They had a team programme which is 10 weeks long and we come along in week 6. So it was really built into a particular programme. Where it didn't work was where we come along and parachute into a youth drop in centre or community centre and try and convince people to register to vote. This applies across the board to all the target groups that I have been talking about. When doing this work it really needs to be built into some sort of structured programme and made relevant. It needs to come into basic life skills, part of the things that you have to do you know are, pay bills, register to vote, you have to...go shopping. Just try to normalise registering to vote as a thing that you do everyday or every year.

All of our public awareness materials we provide in Braille, audio tape and large format

Students

Students, this was an example of a student micro campaign that we ran. 'There are a million reasons to go home, voting isn't one of them!'. Students in the UK can register to vote in two places their campus address and their home address. So if you have run out of food, run out of money or you need your washing done you might need to go home but you don't have to go home to register to vote.

Resources and Activities

We have produced an easy read guide to voting for people with learning difficulties or low literacy levels. This has been extremely popular we have really identified a gap in information provision. The Disability Rights Commission also have a **Right to vote pack** for people with disabilities which some of you also may be interested in. You can download it from the website. All these materials you can download from our website. This has been really useful and what we are looking at now is looking at rolling out a lot more of our resources in an easy read format.

The Democracy Cook Book this is one of our key communication and education tools. It is a big binder. It is made up of ingredients with plain English information on the electoral process, our democratic institutions, how politics affects, you know all the things I have been talking about in the presentation. And then the recipes, ideas for group work activities that you can use in any context and you can adapt things like 'Build your own politician' which gets people thinking what their ideal politician is, what qualities an ideal politician can have. This really links in with our research which shows that people who have met a politician are more likely to vote. They see politicians as real people.

Politicians also need to become more personal and interactive, have the local element; be seen in their constituencies meeting people and not just at electoral time

This is one of the problems with the issue of disconnection is that people see politicians as white upper class men in suits, who don't have anything to do with their lives. Once you get them thinking, meeting with local representatives, often they find that actually they are real people just like you and me. Of course there are some really great politicians and there are some really bad politicians just like any profession there are good teachers and bad teachers. I guess what we try to do is connect politicians with people.

We have another activity called **Political speed dating** which we do with young people but I guess you could do with any kind of group. That is where we get politicians along, usually local councillors, and the young people have a score sheet and they go round, they have 5 minutes, 5 minutes with each person and they have a score sheet. You score them on their approachability,



what you think of their policies, whether they can relate to young people or not. It is a really a fun way of encouraging dialogue between the political class and citizens.

So some more of our resources... We have a website dopolitics.co.uk which you may be interested in. At the moment it is focussed on young people but we are rolling it out to become the 'Do Politics Centre' which will become the information hub mostly for electoral administrators. Electoral administrators



Political 'snakes and ladders'

now have a new statutory duty to promote public awareness. That is coming in next year. That is going to be really interesting as that is going to mean more local work is going to be happening around promoting public awareness. So that is the do politics centre.

We have the poster 'your town, your street, your say' again it is the idea that all of the things in that poster are somehow affected by politics. We have political snakes and ladders which is a giant floor game like a big twister mat. We use this with groups of young people or with groups of practitioners in training and you go up the electoral pencil that you use.. and you fall off the electoral register which is like the snakes. You ask questions about politics and that kind of thing. It is about making politics, fun, interesting and not scary. It is really about de-mystifying the whole process.

Participation

What else do we do in terms of encouraging participation? For practitioners we provide help, training and advice. We share good practice. We have an email list – do politics email list which goes out bi-monthly. That covers good practice studies and case studies and what going on in the field of research, that kind of thing. We help people come up with ideas for events. The local government association for England run the local democracy campaign that culminates in a local democracy week which is a fantastic opportunity for doing public awareness work. We also provide advice to youth forums, community groups and as I said before we run targeted campaigns and registration drives.

3 Ps - Principles for promoting public awareness. This is really about knowing your audience, making sure that the things that you write, the information you provide is in plain English and that you also provide it in different languages. All of our public awareness materials we provide in Braille, audio tape and large format.

Publicity – it is not just about television. We do run television advertising but what we have found is much more effective in engaging marginalised groups is this partnership work with community organisations. Working with what we call 'gatekeeper organisations'. They are the ones with the expertise in working with a particular audience. We have the expertise in the electoral process and in explaining it in an accessible way. We may not have the expertise in working with particular ethnic groups or people with disabilities so we really try to draw and work with partner organisations to do that.

It is also about relationships with local media. We often get practitioners to do a media map which looks at the audiences you want to target and what kind of media they consume. So there is lot of Asian and ethnic minority press which people don't really don't think about trying to get information in and we have found that is quite successful when we get articles in those types of media. And as I said it is very important to build partnerships with local authority and front line services, youth services, social services, housing associations and housing departments in local authorities and working with voluntary sector organisations.

One of the grants that we provided was to the Hibit Centre which was targeting Asian women in Bolton. As information what they came up with a community video newsletter which explained the electoral process. They ran workshops in community centres and they are currently planning a one day conference with the local authority, with the local council. They have also provided publicity through the Asian press and they produced the literature in community languages such as herdu... That is just a really simple examples of a fantastic project that applies all those principles. I can't stress enough the issue of different languages and that you provide information in different languages. I remember going to a focus group in Bradford with some Asian women. There was one woman at the back who said absolutely nothing for the whole focus group and then she realised that the facilitator actually spoke Urdu. Once she worked that out, she really had so much to say. So it is really important to know your audience and what their needs are. So what needs to happen?

Conclusion

As I said at the start of my presentation it is not just up to community practitioners like us. We need to have better, more relevant and clear communicative policies from the politicians. They need to be doing work in terms of accessibility and making sure that what they have to say people understand... Politicians also need to become more personal and interactive, have the local element; be seen in their constituencies meeting people and not just at electoral time. That is one of the things that has come out is that this cynicism really comes out when all people see of their MP is during election time. We try to leverage our work all throughout the year and we encourage politicians in all political parties to work around the year as well.

There is a role for education and the media. The media needs to really start the good news stories about which politicians are doing good work, and being more active political citizens and making it easier of course to register and vote. That comes with our work around modernising the electoral process, making sure that people know there is help available if they need help reading a registration form when they go into the polling station. In the UK the administrators have a statutory obligation to provide assistance if it is required.

The Electoral Commission website has all of our research reports. About my vote is our public facing website so you can register to vote there and go there to get information about the different democratic institutions and 'dopolitics' is our practitioner website at the moment for youth workers but it will be rolling out to community workers and electoral administrators across the board.

That's it!

For more information log on to www.dopolitics.co.uk

New FETAC Level 1 and 2 awards

By Andrina Wafer, FETAC

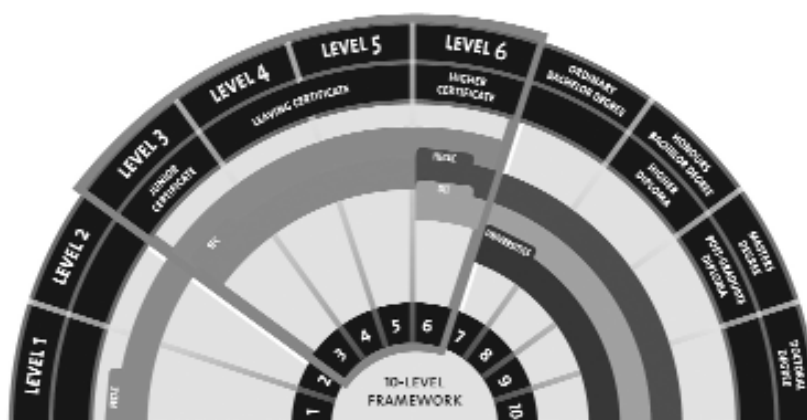
FETAC is pleased to introduce three new certificates at Level 1 and 2. Awards at Level 1 and 2 aim to meet the needs of students young and old, adults who may be returning to education and training or who may be engaging with learning for the first time, and students with few or no previous qualifications. This includes some students who are currently in the workforce.

They provide certification for students who may progress to higher levels and also for those whose principle achievements rest at these levels.

In consultation with an Expert Working Group FETAC has determined standards for three new certificates at Level 1 and 2:

- Level 1 Certificate in Communications
- Level 1 Certificate in General Communications
- Level 2 Certificate in General Learning

National Framework of Qualifications



KEY

- FETAC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (Department of Education and Science)
- HETAC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Universities

The Level 1 Certificate in Communications recognises elementary knowledge, skill and competence in communications in the preferred communicative and learning styles. It also reflects a capacity to use some learning resources and the ability to identify personal learning strengths in relation to communications.

The Level 1 Certificate in General Learning recognises elementary knowledge, skill and competence in a small range of learning areas of personal choice. It will reflect an ability to sequentially use some learning resources and to identify some personal learning interests.

The Level 2 Certificate in General Learning recognises basic knowledge, skill and competence in a narrow range of learning areas, including some key outcomes in literacy

To offer the new awards, providers must have their quality assurance systems agreed with FETAC, and must have their programmes validated

and Numeracy. Achievement reflects the capacity to complete straightforward tasks and processes to deal with choice and decision making, and the clarification of some personal learning interests. It is achieved in the preferred communicative and learning styles.

The features, characteristics and standards for all awards are published in the form of award Specifications. Each certificate comprises a number of components which the student can achieve at their own pace and accumulate over time towards one of the named certificates above. Specifications have been developed for each certificate and component. These will be published shortly on www.fetac.ie

While FETAC is responsible for setting the standard for the awards, the provider is responsible for the design of the programme. Programmes designed by the provider must meet the requirements for the awards as set out in the Specifications, and must offer the student the opportunity to achieve the standards of knowledge, skill and competence of the award.

As soon as the standards are available, providers are encouraged to examine existing programmes, approaches and practices that relate to these awards. A range of programmes, for example, may lead to the same award. Programmes may vary in content and delivery methodologies, but they must be designed to enable the student to achieve the learning outcomes specified in the award.

To offer the new awards, providers must have their quality assurance systems agreed with FETAC, and must have their programmes validated.

From early 2007 FETAC anticipates commencing the validation of programmes from quality assured providers, leading to awards at level 1 and 2. The validation process will take approximately 12 weeks. See www.fetac.ie/validationlevel1and2

FETAC acknowledges the key contributions made by members of NALA, the Expert Working Group and the range of stakeholders across all further education and training provision. The Council looks forward very much to seeing students throughout Ireland achieving recognition for their learning at these critical levels of the National Framework of Qualifications.

For more information please contact Andrina Wafer at awafer@fetac.ie.

Developing writing skills for ESOL - the Cinderella skill?

By Sue Hackett, Project Director at The Advisory Council for English Language Schools



What is the place of writing skills in the ESOL classroom? How many of us, particularly within the context of a communicative syllabus and the immediate needs of our ESOL students, tend to give precedence to the development of competence in speaking to the potential detriment of developing writing skills? When we ask our students what they need, it is rare that they will state writing as a primary need, and it is perhaps this perception too that influences how we design our courses and deal with the inclusion of a writing skills component.

The rationale of this article is to argue for the precedence of writing in an ESOL syllabus as a systematic, mapped component with clear learning outcomes. This is not least because pragmatically, in order to progress in education or lifelong learning routes, competence in writing will be the dominant mode of assessment and, with poor skills in this area, students are going to be fundamentally compromised in how they can progress and achieve their goals. We all know that, whether in first or other language, students often find writing the most onerous and difficult skill - in the classroom, it may well be perceived by the students as a necessary component of their course rather than one which they enjoy or gain a feeling of satisfaction from as a result of making tangible progress. It is perhaps also the most difficult skill to understand and teach effectively so practitioners may well lack confidence in this particular area - others may argue that writing comes 'naturally' as a result of learning the language and does not need to be taught or learnt explicitly.

students often find writing the most onerous and difficult skill

Whatever your position, there is no doubt that some organisations and individuals will consider that a student with poor writing skills is going to be judged as lacking in the outside world, and it is going to potentially influence his/ her opportunities in employment, education and social relationships. Therefore, it is essential that we pay attention to this skill in the language learning classroom and give our students the best chance possible.

Of course writing is not divorced from language. Writing is a highly complex activity which requires a number of micro-skills and related competences such as:

- a high degree of organisation in the development of ideas and information;
- a high degree of accuracy so that there is clarity of meaning;
- the use of appropriate and complex grammatical devices, sentence structures etc;
- careful and informed choice of vocabulary;
- awareness of stylistic features appropriate to subject matter and audience; and

- knowledge and application of the ‘mechanics’, e.g., spelling, punctuation.

Once you consider all these elements, it is clear that the writing syllabus is extensive and needs to consider and incorporate these aspects in a rationale and developmental way.

At beginner and elementary levels, writing tasks tend to have a strong element of language consolidation whether this is at sentence or text level. Exercises may often be sentence level tasks which provide further practice of the target language through the medium of writing. As students progress and their overall competence improves, writing tasks will tend to become more ‘authentic’, text-based and reflecting ‘real world’ needs and contexts. You can ask your students to brainstorm situations in their lives when they are required to do some writing and it will surprise them how many there are on an everyday basis - perhaps not essay writing but making lists, writing notes, taking messages, emailing etc. - to convince them of the value and need to be able to write competently and in a native speakerlike manner. For students in secondary level education, the need is obvious - without adequate writing skills, their potential for success in exams and academic achievement is going to be critically compromised.



As Tricia Hedge says (Writing, OUP, 1988): ‘Writing tasks which have whole texts as their outcome relate appropriately to the ultimate goal of those students who need to write English in their social, educational and professional lives.’ Therefore, ‘Classroom writing tasks should reflect the ultimate goal of enabling students to write whole texts which form connected, contextualised and appropriate pieces of communication.’

So what is needed in the classroom to help our students develop their competence in writing?

Providing a context: how many times have we all encountered writing tasks which require you to describe your summer holiday, argue the case for or against a topical issue, compare and contrast two people etc, and you ask yourself why am I doing this? Who is going to read it? Naturally, an impetus for any act of communication is to fulfil a purpose and to communicate with your respondent. Without knowing your purpose or audience, there is no context in which to situate your writing. This then makes it impossible for the writer to opt for an appropriate style, or select exactly what to write in fulfilment of the task. Knowing the audience or respondent for the piece of writing is essential if the writing task is to reflect real life demands and the writer is going to be able to communicate in writing effectively, so the audience or respondent needs to be specified in classroom tasks.

Knowing the audience or respondent for the piece of writing is essential if the writing task is to reflect real life demands and the writer is going to be able to communicate in writing effectively

Composing your writing: research shows us that we go through various stages in the process of producing written text. Firstly, we plan what we want to say and we think about this in relation to the intended audience. We then produce - or draft - a first piece of writing which may be quite rough and inaccurate in terms of language - even in note form. We then continue to craft and revise this until we are satisfied that the text gets our message across effectively, is coherent and appropriately organised, uses language accurately and in a way that reflects the intended style.

The implication of this for the classroom is that students need to be exposed to this process and given the opportunity to develop their writing skills within this cognitive framework.

Applying language knowledge to writing: knowledge of the language is fine if we are aiming to become linguists, but, if not, our aim is surely to be able to apply that knowledge meaningfully and correctly in our use of the language. Writing tasks provide an ideal opportunity for this as, unlike speaking, it is permanent, recorded and offers the writer the chance to draft and redraft until we are satisfied with our final product. Therefore, the teacher needs to require students to produce a variety of text types (narratives, descriptions, problem-solution etc) so that they will have to make decisions on what language to use to convey their message as effectively as possible.

Focusing on the ‘mechanics’: with the rejection of grammar teaching in schools, so first language users have become poorer at spelling, punctuation, text organisation etc. It is perhaps with hindsight that we can now say that students do not pick up these features naturally and writing teaching needs to focus on them. For the student for whom English is a second or other language, this becomes even more critical, as first language interference may well interfere with being able to acquire these skills. English is notoriously non-rational and frustrating for students with regard to its spelling system for example, so we need to incorporate tasks in the classroom which raise awareness of this. Equally, if the Latin alphabet is new to the students, there is a whole area of orthography which need to be practised and developed.

English is notoriously non-rational and frustrating for students with regard to its spelling system

Providing feedback: the processes used for providing feedback should aspire to supporting the further development of writing. Simply putting red lines on a page is discouraging at best, and even using an error code (which is favoured by many language teachers) emphasises the language issues within the text to the detriment of the meaning and communicative intention of the piece of writing. Enabling students to self-review and redraft/ revise their writing in a systematic way allows for writers to identify and improve themselves and develop independence in their writing at the same time.

Balancing your feedback, e.g. strengths and weaknesses, values the positives as well as provides information for improvement. Equally, focusing on pre-specified points for feedback rather than covering every error or slip enables the student to deal with key points without being distracted or overwhelmed by other errors or slips.



Feedback can be formative, i.e. provided after a first or second draft, and the feedback provided at the different stages of composition may have a different focus. This enables feedback to be part of the formative process of producing a final draft, and not a summary of all that was wrong with the writing once it has been finished. A variety of mechanisms for feedback should be used in the classroom with the overriding principle that they support the development of good writing skills and do not simply demotivate the student....which leads us smoothly onto the final and perhaps most important issue in developing writing skills -

Motivating your students to enjoy writing: in my opinion, this is the greatest challenge of all especially when you have students in the class who have low self-esteem as writers, or who may be poor writers in their first language. Group and collaborative writing tasks is one way of dealing with this, as the group works together and the interaction enables students to learn from each others' strengths and also to support the poorer writers. Prolific readers tend also to be good writers - there is definitely a connection between being a good reader and a writer - however, the essential key to becoming a good writer is by practising writing and this is what we need to provide for in our classrooms from a bank of interactive, varied activities which integrate writing into the daily work of the classroom in a purposeful and interesting way. The plea here is to guard against non-contextualised essay writing, to allow students to select topics of interest to them (rather than to you!), and to avoid pegging on a writing activity at the end of the lesson or for homework. The big challenge is to allow time for writing in your classroom and to make it a satisfying and enjoyable process!

Writing is a creative activity, one which allows us to express our individuality and helps us to better understand and interact with our environment and the people within it. It is intrinsically satisfying as well as a critical factor in how our students are going to be able to function effectively in the environment. The point therefore is that we need to ensure that developing writing skills forms a core part of the language learning curriculum and that students are given optimal opportunity to develop as writers.

For more information, please check the The Advisory Council for English Language Schools website (www.acels.ie) or contact Sue Hackett at sue@acels.ie

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Interview with Flor MacCarthy

Presenter of the Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers

By Tom O'Mara, Distance Education Co-ordinator, NALA



As a reporter with RTÉ News, Flor MacCarthy is certainly experienced in the cut and thrust of news stories, deadlines and hard hitting features. So how has she adapted to the less tumultuous world of presenter on the Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers? We caught up with her on the set of the show and asked her a few questions.

Can you describe what you do in RTÉ and how you got there?

One of the best things about working with RTÉ is the sheer variety of work and opportunities. Since I began with RTÉ in Cork twelve years ago, I've presented radio programmes on Arts, Education and the Law. Working as a news reporter has been the 'day job' for the past eight years and that has taken me everywhere from Mallow Mart to the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. And if that's not enough to be going on with, I'm lucky enough to be invited regularly to get involved with tv programmes such as Capital Culture last year and this year's Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers.

So, you're enjoying this work?

Yes, absolutely - it's been a lot of fun, but I've learned a lot as well.

Did you always want to work in TV?

Not really. But I did always want to be a journalist. I have three siblings who are newspaper journalists and so I started that way but very quickly realised that it was broadcasting that interested me most. Especially radio broadcasting. I love radio - the power of words, language, sound. I wish I had time to do more of it!

One of the best things about working with RTÉ is the sheer variety of work and opportunities

A question I'm sure every aspiring journalist thinks about - how did you get your first job in RTÉ?

When I realised that I really wanted to work in radio I volunteered a few hours a week with Hospital Radio. That's always a very good place to start. Two weeks later they had given me my own programme - they must have been badly stuck! After various courses in journalism and broadcasting, I did a month long work placement with RTÉ. That was thirteen years ago and I'm still there! All RTÉ reporters are encouraged to keep their skills up-to-date with in-house courses available in a variety of areas, such as interview skills, television reporting, journalism and the law, and even war reporting.

That's interesting. So even experienced reporters are still always learning. What does a typical day as a news reporter involve?

In the main RTÉ Newsroom in Dublin there is a news conference every morning at ten o' clock. There the editors decide what stories will be covered and which reporter will be assigned to each news story.

Once you have your brief - for example, a factory closure in Navan, you would usually make some calls. You might call the company management, somebody from the trade unions, talk to a few employees, or the local chamber of commerce, or maybe the town clerk.

Then you do some research of your own - what's the national or international profile of the company, what will the job losses mean to the town, how many factory closures have there been in the area, county, country this year?

The next step is to get to Navan, usually with the camera crew. We would take pictures of the town, the factory and interview the workers, and management.

All RTÉ reporters are encouraged to keep their skills up-to-date with in-house courses available in a variety of areas, such as interview skills, television reporting, journalism and the law

Then we do what's called 'filing copy', where we write up information on the story for use by other reporters, editors, newscasters, or on different programmes. This is one of the most important things to do, because you're the person who got the information.

Then it's a race back to base in RTÉ Donnybrook to edit, not forgetting to ring in a radio report or three on the way!

Updating the story for the rest of the day on hourly radio news bulletins and all the main TV bulletins is crucial and is the reason we work 12 hour shifts.

Of course, it often happens that a story simply happens and has to get 'on air' in minutes. Recent examples of this include the Concorde accident a couple of year back, the July 7th attacks in London, 9/11 and the riot on O'Connell St earlier this year. In cases like this, the reporter has no time for such luxuries as research but you still need to be accurate. That's when experience and instinct come into play.

So the 5-minute piece we see on TV is often the result of a full day's work?

Absolutely, sometimes a lot longer.

How is working in a studio different? Is being a presenter on the Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers any easier?

It's still a long day. I get up at 6.30, and then creep out of house without waking the 8 month old, his 4 year old sister and their Dad!

I then have to drive to the studio, which is Kairos Studios in Maynooth.

After that, there's hair and make-up, a review of the scripts, making any necessary last-minute changes. Then I meet the programme guests for a chat and a cup of tea. This is VERY important for everyone as it means we are all more relaxed, it is an enjoyable experience, and that comes across in the programme.

Then it's into studio, bit of craic with the studio crew – there can be a lot people in there operating cameras, sound, lighting, and the autocue. And finally action for the first programme!

I then have to do it all again for two more programmes, as we record 3 programmes in one day.

A studio day normally ends at around 5pm. So I drive home and sneak back in pretending I was there all along!

What have you most/least enjoyed about working on the series?

By far the best thing has been meeting the guests. While they're all very different, I really admire each and every one of them for their courage, determination, good humour and bravery to come on the show. I've learned a lot from them.

The worst thing is the short time with the guests. I'd love to meet them all again. Oh, that and negotiating the Red Cow at 7.45!!

I really admire each and every one of them for their courage, determination, good humour and bravery to come on the show

What do you like about working in TV?

I suppose it's telling stories - the little incidental ones that happen when you're reporting, but also the important ones that need to be told. To do this, it's important to be able to match pictures to words and work with creative people.

When you get home, I presume you look at a bit of TV yourself. What are your favourite TV programmes, apart from the Really Useful Guide of course?

I really like the Channel 4 News, but in terms of drama, I watch The Sopranos, and The Clinic. But I find Sponge Bob quite enjoyable as well!

Apart from TV, what else do you like to do to relax?

Paddle in the sea, drink a glass of red wine, read travel books, watch Winnie the Pooh DVDs with the four-year-old. Not all at the same time!

For more information on the 'Really useful guide to words and numbers', please contact Tom O'Mara at tomara@nala.ie or on 01 809 9181

Using creative methodologies to help adult students understand equality issues: findings from the Literacy & Equality in Irish Society Project (LEIS).



By Rob Mark and Lyn Tett

Rob Mark is Coordinator of Lifelong Learning in the School of Education, Queen's University Belfast & was also Coordinator of the LEIS Project.

Lyn Tett is Professor of Adult & Community Education at the University of Edinburgh and was involved with the LEIS project in her role as evaluator.

The project developed a *Resource Guide for Adult Students* and this Guide, together with the full text of the project evaluation report can be found on the web page www.leis.ac.uk

Introduction

The Literacy and Equality in Irish Society (LEIS) project is an example of a project which tried to shift the emphasis in adult literacy practice away from using printed material to encouraging students and tutors to explore together the liberating experience which can be found from using non-text based methods of learning. The particular focus for inspiring this new type of learning was the post-conflict situation in the North of Ireland and the need to understand how the inclusion of equality issues in literacy learning might contribute to peace building and reconciliation.

What was the LEIS Project and what did it set out to achieve?

The LEIS Project was an European Union financed project funded largely under the Peace & Reconciliation programme for Northern Ireland and Border Counties of the Republic. The key partners were the Equality Studies Centre, University College Dublin (UCD) and the School of Education at Queen's University Belfast (QUB). The project was also supported by other non-funded partners including the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), Waterford Institute of Technology and the Education Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) in Northern Ireland.

The LEIS project had three key strands – Literacy, Equality, and Creativity and the project partnership brought together different types of expertise to research, design and develop a package of innovative text-free teaching methods that could be used to explore equality issues in adult literacy education. The project explored five different text-free methods and these methods were

piloted with adult literacy tutors and tutor-trainers in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties in the Republic. The project was staffed by two full time development workers and by a number of part-time workers. The project lasted 16 months (ending February 2006).

What ideas influenced LEIS?

The project held as one of its core principles the belief that adult literacy is an equality issue, and that low literacy skills are a manifestation or symptom of inequality. This project set out to develop clearer links between the theoretical concept of equality and the practical approaches to teaching literacy. The linkages were to be created through the development of creative and non-text methodologies that literacy tutors could use in their practice. The methods selected were - Visual Arts, Drama, Storytelling, Image Theatre, and Making Music (using a Gamelan) .

The project set out to develop a set of innovative methodologies that could create spaces for the exploration of equality issues for tutors to use within adult literacy education. These methodologies were intended to empower both tutors and students to engage with key equality issues of relevance to the lives of literacy students. In view of the cross-border, peace and reconciliation focus of the project, it was intended that inequalities stemming from the experience of conflict within Northern Ireland and the border counties, would be included in this engagement.

In general, literacy definitions reflect the ideological perspectives of their creators as well as the social, cultural, political and economic environment of the time, making it almost impossible to find a definition that suits everybody. As society evolves, the multiple literacies required in order to make sense of our environment are constantly growing and changing. Some literacy definitions focus on a standard set of measurable generic skills while others tend to be more rooted in the context of people's lives. Definitions are also reflected in the services provided, with a very different kind of adult literacy education coming from a definition that focuses exclusively on technical skills, to the kind of education following on from a more holistic definition of literacy.

Clearly, there is a range of different approaches in relation to how literacy can be understood and defined. The LEIS project found that there were many different interpretations of literacy amongst individuals, between communities and in policies and practices that they examined on both sides of the border. The project held that while it was not necessary to have one agreed understanding of literacy, it was important for literacy tutors to have made their own exploration of the various approaches to understanding literacy, and to reflect on these in order to link theories of literacy and equality with creative methods of learning.



Participants in the Leis project

The project explored five different text-free methods and these methods were piloted with adult literacy tutors and tutor-trainers

A theoretical framework to understand equality

As in the case of literacy, equality is a complex concept to define and it is challenging to understand how inequality works in practice. Yet for literacy tutors it is especially important to have an understanding of how inequality in the structures of our society can impact on an individual's life chances. Literacy tutors work with the most some of the most marginalised groups in society. Unless tutors have some understanding of how society operates to discriminate against and marginalise some individuals, while privileging others, they will not be in a position to facilitate their students in exploring the equality issues in their own lives, a central tenet of this project.

The project used a theoretical framework developed by the Equality Studies Centre at UCD to facilitate a better understating of inequality. This theoretical model is underpinned by the belief that there are clear patterns that structure the level of inequality experienced by individuals and groups. This framework identifies five interrelated dimensions of equality namely:

- respect and recognition
- resources
- love, care and solidarity
- power relations
- working and learning.

These dimensions of equality can be used to describe and analyse the key patterns of inequality in the main systems in our society. The economic, political, cultural and affective systems of society are considered to be especially important in generating equality and inequality.

Creative non-text methods, equality & peace building

The methodologies in the project were developed using the framework outlined above. In keeping with the empowerment and inclusive focus of the framework, the approach used involved an inclusive, participatory approach in which tutors and students were invited to engage as equal partners with the project development team at all stages in the project.

The project saw adult literacy tutors as having a valuable role to play in supporting the process of peace and reconciliation. Peacebuilding is something that cannot be forced and must be approached freely. The project provided the opportunity for 'safe' spaces be provided for groups from both communities to explore the equality issues they consider to have had particular impact on their lives with a view to raising awareness of the commonalities that exist in relation to literacy and equality.

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The project directly promoted peace and reconciliation through the research, development and design of the resource guide and CD as this enabled tutors to develop more equal practice and also enabled students to participate in the debate about what equality means and how it can be enacted. Making available alternative methodologies to literacy tutors enabled them to facilitate adult literacy students in the exploration and understanding of the way in which inequalities in society have impacted on their lives. Students were given space to question previously held assumptions in the area of politics, economics, religion, and culture, consequently empowering them to challenge and question the deep structural inequalities existing in society. The process of peacebuilding was also enhanced at the individual level through facilitating literacy students and tutors to explore the inequalities that impact on their lives and the possibilities that exist for change.



Consultation with key partners

Project methodology

Literacy tutors and students played a major role in the development of the creative non-text methodologies. In the initial phase, staff worked with students and tutors to explore issues of equality that related to the experience of conflict and identify and how these experiences can inform the practice of adult literacy education. Some of the issues of concern to tutors and students that were identified were; lack of time, resources and support, how focusing on the conflict can mask other important inequalities and how to validate and justify non-text based methods. These issues were used to inform the research and development of the text-free methodologies that were piloted with tutors in both Northern Ireland and the Border counties.

The approach to literacy that LEIS took was about changing the arrangements of learning as well as people's perceptions of it because it challenged individually-based, deficit views of students and instead focused on people's ability to do what they wanted in their lives. In the words of one tutor 'it opened my eyes and mind to what is possible through using other methods'.

In addition the work of the project was based on the premise that literacy is far more than a set of basic skills, but rather, are a set of social practices. Using a **social practices** account of adult literacy means that rather than seeing literacy as the decontextualised, mechanical, manipulation of letters, words and figures this view shows that literacy is located within social, emotional and linguistic contexts. Literacy practices integrate the routines, skills, and understandings, that are organised within specific contexts and also the feelings and values that people have about these activities. The use of innovative, non-text based methods was designed to take account of the emotional context for learning for many literacy students who have often experienced failure at school and may have low self-esteem.

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What were the strengths and weaknesses of the project?

The strengths of the LEIS project were:

- It was cooperatively planned and developed by a cross-Border partnership
- It developed and produced a high quality Resource Guide and CD of text free methodologies
- A greater understanding of equality issues was developed by literacy tutors and students from Northern Ireland and the Border Counties
- Cross community relations were improved.

The weaknesses of the LEIS project were:

- One of the methodologies – the Gamelan - was not sufficiently accessible
- More materials were needed to convince sceptical managers and tutors of the value of the creative methodologies
- The underlying equality framework needed slightly more emphasis and development as a small number of tutors found it difficult to understand
- Accreditation could not be offered to tutors from the Republic using their own system although they were accredited through QUB.

What are the learning points?

- Creative text free methodologies, when combined with a clearer understanding of equality issues, enable literacy tutors to improve their practice and literacy students to have their voices heard on a more equal basis.
- The community of literacy students has been able to access a wider range of development opportunities through the use of text free methodologies that will enable them to fulfil their potential.
- These methodologies are transferable to other settings. For example they have been used in a community regeneration project as a way of enabling people to 'vision' the process of development.
- The work of the project contributed to the process of developing greater understanding of the complexities of Northern issues amongst those in the South and vice versa.
- Working across communities and traditions takes time and effort, however, because trust needs to be developed and differences in approach discussed and understood and this has to be taken into account when funding projects of this nature.
- The project has demonstrated that the outcomes of such cooperation have been very positive from the perspective of the partners, managers, tutors and students involved.

Conclusion

By focusing on equality and creativity, the LEIS project has shown how an understanding of equality & creativity can be used to develop new skills and understanding for adult literacy students through the use of non-text methodologies. This in turn can empower students to examine and understand inequalities affecting their own lives and the lives of others, and the underlying causes of these inequalities. It could, for example, include the social, economic, cultural or environmental domain. An understanding of such issues will not on its own provide a panacea for overcoming such inequalities. Such changes often require commitment from others including those responsible for the allocation of resources and those with political influence to bring about change. This lie largely outside the control of the individual. However, at the very least, a new understanding could be said to provide students with new skills and knowledge to bring about change. In the future, the challenge for literary educators will be to find ways to facilitate such learning.

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A tutor's perspective on Skills for Work

Skills for Work – A workplace programme to improve literacy and numeracy skills required for work and living.



By Maria Grogan, Part time Outreach Worker, Naas Adult Basic Education and Community Education Centre, Co. Kildare VEC
Co-Author: Communicating Europe Initiative
Co-Author: Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers

Background

The Skills for Work programme was set up in 2005. NALA and FÁS Services to Business established Skills for Work to address the basic education needs of the workforce.

Establishment of the Skills for Work Programme in the Workplace

Presently there are four Skills for Work Co-Ordinators. They cover FÁS Midland, Mid-West, and South West and South East regions. The co-ordinators establish the Skills for Work Programme by:-

- Raising awareness of the Skills for Work Programme as a means of addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of workers in the workplace
- Raising awareness of how the Skills for Work programme can improve the employee's performance at work
- Identifying the literacy and numeracy needs of the business
- Implementing programmes to improve literacy and numeracy living needs

My experience in adult literacy work

I always had an interest in becoming a tutor of adult literacy. In 1986 I moved to Naas, Co. Kildare. As I was at home all day with my young family I was looking for something to do for myself. I saw an advertisement looking for volunteer tutors with Naas Adult English Scheme. I did the initial literacy tutor training course and embarked on a journey of learning which has enriched my life. In 1986 the literacy movement was in its infancy. As the literacy scheme in Naas and nationwide developed, I too developed as a tutor and human being. I started as a volunteer tutor. Here I learned the skills which would develop my tuition skills as a one to one tutor, skills which are the foundation stones for group tuition.

These skills include:

- Listening Skills
- Designing worksheets to suit the needs and level of the student

- Learning how to adapt tuition to suit the pace of the student

Now as part time outreach worker I:

- Liaise with established groups in the Community to help them integrate literacy into their service.
- Deliver literacy and numeracy to established groups in the Community.
- These groups include Home School Liaison groups, Special Needs groups, CE Schemes
- Set up and deliver English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)



My experience tutoring on Skills for Work

The Midland Skills for Work Co-Ordinator contacted me in April 2006 inviting me to deliver a 25 hour Workplace Communications “Taster” Course. Tutors who tutor on the Skill for Work programme must be a registered tutor on the FÁS National Register of Trainers.

The Skills for Work Co-Ordinator is responsible for:

- Recruitment and Registration of students
- Obtaining a suitable training room within the workplace
- Arranging a suitable time for the course

First Day of Course

The Skills for Work Co-Ordinator met, briefed me and introduced me to the students.

The students were returning to learning after a long absence from formal learning. They were early school leavers. Although the Skills for Work co-ordinator would have stressed adult learning was very different to learning in school, the students were apprehensive at returning to learning.

The course began with an exploration of our fears; the tutor’s fears and the students’ fears at embarking on the Communications Course.

My fears as a tutor were:

- A fear of failing the students
- Nervousness at delivering the programme in an unfamiliar environment
- A fear of saying or doing something that would offend other workplace staff and management

Note: To counteract this latter fear I always came fully prepared. All course work was prepared before arriving at the workplace. I also brought my own classroom equipment i.e. pen, markers and writing paper. This is good practice as it means the course did not interfere in any way with the work time of any other employees.

The students' fears were:

- Fear of not being able to learn
- Fear of returning to education after a bad school experience
- Fear of being put on the spot to spell
- Fear of ridicule from fellow students for poor reading, writing and spelling skills
- Fear that course confidentiality would be broken

To ease fears the session began with a discussion on the adult approach to learning:

- Students and tutor seat around a table
- Learning is facilitated.
- Students and tutor learn from one another
- Learning is at student's own pace
- There are no spelling tests. As a group we will explore different strategies to improve spellings
- Students identify their needs
- Students' needs now become the course curriculum
- Students respect each other's opinion
- Confidentiality is a must; what happens in the group stays in the group



Group work

We included some of the approaches to adult learning in the course contract.

Different Learning Styles

When students know how they learn one thing, this helps them learn new things. We explored different learning styles.

In the workplace all the students had learned how to use new equipment. We looked how they learned to use new equipment. Did they learn by doing, by hearing or by seeing? We looked at ways of using their learning styles to improve their reading, writing and spelling. Students kept a journal which they completed at the end of each session. The journal helped them reflect on their learning and focussed them on what they wanted to learn on the next session. In this way the students took ownership of their course.

When students know how they learn one thing, this helps them learn new things

Course Objectives of Workplace Communications Course

The Course Objectives were to:

- Address participant's basic skills needs.

- Improve participant's confidence and ability to deal with the reading and writing demands of the workplace.
- Integrate reading and writing skills with Health and Safety issues in the workplace.

As all good adult literacy work begins with the needs of individuals we discussed what students hoped to achieve on the course. Their needs corresponded with the course objectives as they were to:

- Read Work Notices
- Read Health and Safety Notices
- Understand Health and Safety Words
- Read Work Health and Safety Handbook
- Fill in workplace forms i.e. accident report forms, and time sheets
- Write an Accident Report
- Learn how to spell
- Learn interview skills to gain promotion within the workplace



Role play

Workers have a fear of undertaking any training because of poor literacy skills

Key Objective of Course Tutor

My key objective as course tutor was to give the students a **positive learning experience**. Health and Safety training is now a requirement in all workplaces. Workers have a fear of undertaking any training because of poor literacy skills.

We now live in a world which is driven by technology. A positive learning experience would encourage students to learn information technology skills now required for the workplace and for everyday living. A positive learning experience would give students the confidence and self esteem to believe in themselves. A positive learning experience would encourage students to undertake further learning.

I promoted positive learning by focussing on the achievements of the students. The students' achievements presented throughout the course.

Early on in the course it became evident some students were very neat writers. As soon as the use of capital letters and full stops was learned,

Staff morale was given a huge boost as students felt much respected in being allowed time to engage in training

hand written work quickly improved and looked well presented. Other students had good organisational skills. These skills now helped organise their learning.

When learning interview techniques I focussed on their achievements in the workforce. All the students worked within a team. They had learned the skills of teamwork.

They worked in a demanding fast paced environment where they were required to multi-task and meet deadlines. Upon naming these skills students realised their achievements. We had great fun creating role-plays for a workplace interview and designing Curriculum Vitae.



Outcomes

The reading writing and spelling skills of the students improved. There was a noticeable improvement in the confidence and self esteem of the students.

Staff morale was given a huge boost as students felt much respected in being allowed time to engage in training. Training was something they regarded as being for more qualified members of staff.

As students gained confidence, they also gained pride in their role in the workplace. This pride and confidence is a benefit to their employer. Health and Safety standards should improve leading to an increase in output and quality of work.

My wish for the students is now that they have improved their reading, writing and spelling skills, they will be encouraged to engage in further learning. Further learning will enable the students achieve their full potential in their work lives and every day lives.

For more information, please contact Marie Grogan at mgrogan@o2.ie or mgrogan@abce.ie

Being Sold a Pup?

A starter's guide to commissioning educational media content

By Tom O'Mara



Tom spent six years working for e-learning, media and TV production companies, writing proposals, developing solutions and charging clients for developing media education resources. Since 1998, he worked as a teacher, an Instructional Designer with two large e-learning companies and a producer with a TV company. Since 2002, he has worked almost exclusively on literacy learning content.

It seems that everyone nowadays is talking about using technology in education. We're constantly told of the all the wondrous advantages that e-learning and new media can bring to students and teachers alike. This short article is not about whether media can be useful or not in education – every situation is unique and you'll have to judge that for yourself.

Personally, I believe it has the power to reach and teach people that other approaches don't. This article is about value for money, about looking at what different media can do for you and what you should be paying for it. The costs I outline here are based on my experiences. So, if you're thinking of commissioning some educational media resources, this article might give you some food for thought.

The media covered in this article are:

- Print
- TV
- Radio
- Video
- DVD
- CD-ROM
- The Web

**everyone nowadays is
talking about using
technology in education**

Each of these methods presents a way of letting people access information or learning. Let's look at each of them in turn.

Print

Everyone is familiar with print media as we've all read and used textbooks, workbooks, newsletters, article and journals. More than any other medium, print has proven itself to be one of the most effective ways of providing information and opportunities for learning.

But it isn't all good news unfortunately:

- Books take time to produce;
- They can be expensive;
- They use up lots of paper so are not very ecologically friendly; and
- If you make a mistake when writing a book, it may haunt you forever.

To give you an idea of what goes in to making a workbook, let's look at the example of The Really Useful Guide workbook. This might be a simple breakdown but using print as an educational resource job involves 5 discrete phases:

- Writing of content
- Design
- Printing
- Binding
- Storage and distribution

If you're considering using print media, your most significant cost will be the design and printing.

40,000 copies of the Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers are printed. Because of the numbers and the cost involved, a printer has to be selected after an open tendering process. This can be a very time-consuming business.

The printing only took a couple of days, using Web presses, which are much cheaper than lithographic presses. You can achieve real cost savings by ensuring quotes for using Web presses are included in any tenders.

How much does printing cost?

What you pay for printing depends on a lot of factors such as:

- Design – there may be significant cost in designers supplying images, photographs and other artwork. You should also find out how many times you will get to proof the final copy before it goes to printing.
- Number of pages
- Type of paper used – there shouldn't be too much of a difference in this cost, so you can go for matt, silk or gloss finishes without much variation
- Choice of binding – perfect bound is far cheaper than wirebound for instance
- Number of colours used – 4 colour printing now should only cost a couple of thousand more than 2 colour printing

If you ask companies to reply to a public tender, you'll be amazed at the difference in printing costs. My advice on printing costs is simple. Ask for as many quotes as you can manage and then spend some time considering the reputation of the company, their previous experience, and whether they can deliver on-time. But remember, it doesn't always boil down to costs – you also need to consider how flexible they will be during the project and the personalities involved.

TV

Television is what's known as a 'mass medium'. This means that it can reach a large number of people. We know for example that in Ireland, 99% of households have a TV, with 49% having a second TV. While some people have access to lots of TV stations thanks to cable and Sky, we know that everyone has access to the 'free to air' channels; RTE, TG4 and TV3.

It makes sense then that TV is a great way to get information to people. But there are two basic

problems with TV programmes:

- They're expensive – between €40,000 and €80,000 per half hour depending on what you want to do.
- It can be difficult to get someone to broadcast them or at least to broadcast what you'd like to broadcast.

TV has been used successfully in Ireland for literacy learning in the form of the five Read Write Now (RWN) TV series and the new Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers series (RUG). The table below shows how many people watched these programmes and shows that there is a demand for educational content on TV.

Series	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3	RWN 4	RWN 5	RUG (to mid Series 1)
Average Number of Viewers	154,000	239,000	165,000	157,000	49,000	90,000
Average Percentage Share	16%	11.1%	10.3%	8.8%	5.4%	10.9%

But what is TV good for?

It's a great way to raise awareness by showing human interest stories – people who have gone back to learning for instance. However, because it's only shown once (unless you record it) and because you are limited in how you can do and show things on TV, it's probably not the best way to teach spelling and writing skills. For this type of information and skill acquisition, it's probably best to give a 'taste' on TV and then support it through other media such as print and the Web.

In Ireland, we have probably been more successful than any other developed country in using TV for literacy learning. In fact, Ireland is considered a shining example of how TV works for this purpose. A company in the Netherlands, eTV have made their own version of Read Write Now, called 'Lees & Schrijf Vandaag', which is due to be broadcast next Spring.

A further advantage of TV is that you have the option of putting TV content onto video or DVD after broadcast.

So TV is effective and can capture a large national audience, but is expensive to produce and you will need the support of a broadcaster to put it on air. In addition, you will need to make a significant commitment of resources during production to ensure your message is carried in the content. When you add to this the need to produce support materials such as workbooks, you can see it is an expensive option. It really only becomes an option on a national level.

Radio

Radio has been used for distance education and information projects across the world, particularly in areas where people do not have regular access to other forms of media such as television and

ask companies to reply to a public tender, you'll be amazed at the difference in printing costs

newspapers. It has also played a significant role where people have difficulties with reading and writing. For example, radio has been used for farming education in countries such as Canada, India, and Malawi.

NALA ran the Time 4 Learning radio series on numeracy on RTÉ Radio 1 in 2002. Mayo VEC has just completed broadcasting the successful 'Survival English' series for non-Irish nationals working primarily in the Food industry in their area. This was broadcast on local radio.

However, because radio only communicates through audio, it's important to produce and distribute other supporting materials such as workbooks and Web sites.

How much does radio cost?

It's certainly cheaper than TV, with average costs ranging from €1,000 to €4,000 per 30 minutes of broadcast quality content.

With the amount of local radio stations in Ireland, radio presents more options than TV for local organisations and projects.

TV is effective and can capture a large national audience, but is expensive to produce and you will need the support of a broadcaster to put it on air

Video

Video, like TV, is a powerful means of communicating with people and can be used in a lot of different ways. By video, I mean the filming of people and activities and then putting this content onto video tape such as VHS, DVDs, or even CD-ROMs and the Internet. Because this content is not broadcast, it can be cheaper to produce.

There are two costs involved in making videos:

- Production; and
- Post-production.

Production refers to the process of shooting the video footage. You may even see this cost broken into pre-production, which is research and planning, and production, which specifically refers to the actual shooting. Bear in mind that a day's filming may include costs for travel, wages for several crew members, location fees and equipment hire.

How much does video cost?

You should expect to pay between €200 and €1,500 for a day's filming, depending on the location and quality.

The post-production cost includes digitising of the tape content onto a computer, editing of the material, adding in voiceover, graphics, text and music and then putting this onto a master tape or DVD.

With the amount of local radio stations in Ireland, radio presents more options than TV for local organisations and projects.

A day's post-production can cost between €500 and €1000.

Once you have a master tape or DVD, you may then want to make copies to distribute.

DVD

DVDs are now widely used as a replacement for video tapes. A basic DVD player can be bought for as little as €50. Simple DVDs can be played on your TV through a DVD player and on your computer.

There are different types of DVDs. The simpler ones show you a menu where you select Play and the entire piece plays. Other DVDs might have two or more menus where you select different parts of a DVD. For example, the RWN4 DVD allows you to play individual Learning Points or Student stories.

It is also possible to include basic interactivity on DVDs. For example, the BBC has produced a DVD featuring Eastenders stars who ask you questions. You use your remote control to answer the questions and if you get the correct answer, you get to see a vintage clip from Eastenders. This is relatively easy to do, but the company making the DVD will charge you 'authoring' or 'development' fees for this type of work.

Other content can be included such as games and Web sites that you can see when you put the DVD in your computer. These will not be visible when you play the DVD on your TV though. This type of DVD is not yet common, but it may become increasingly popular in the future.

How much do DVDs cost?

Companies will charge for making DVDs in different ways. One way is to charge for creating the graphics for the menu and then linking or authoring the various parts of the video file. There may also be a charge for putting this onto a separate master tape or disc. This part of the process can cost between €500 and €2000.

The cost of replicating or duplicating the DVD, will depend on the length of the tape or the size of files on a DVD. The more copies you make, the cheaper it becomes. You may also need to factor in extra costs for the design, printing and insertion of covers for the DVD cases.

When making DVDs, you should consider commissioning a company to produce the Master DVD and then handling the replication yourself. There are lots of companies in Ireland who are happy to deal with you directly and you will avoid the added costs of margins being added. However, if you do go down this road, you need to be very specific with the company making the master that it is delivered to you in the correct format with all relevant files.

CD-ROMs

CD-ROMs are much smaller than DVDs and so are generally not used for holding large amounts of video files. These are the most common form of media used for electronic or 'e-learning', which is using computers to read and interact with learning content.

Ireland has been home to some of the world's largest e-learning companies. You may have heard of Skillsoft, Riverdeep and Electric Paper for example. In addition to these large e-learning production companies, there are hundreds of smaller companies.

E-learning can be expensive to produce, mostly because of the time it takes to produce and test. It is also worth noting that different technologies can be used to create this material, depending on the expertise of the company hired to make it. Some of the common terms you may hear include:

- ‘Software Authoring tools’ such as Macromedia Flash, Director, Authorware, Breeze, Microsoft Producer, and RealPresenter
- Other software applications such as Dreamweaver, Home Site, and Photoshop
- Computer languages such as HTML, DHTML and XML
- Video and sound editing packages such as Avid, Final Cut Pro, Premier and Sound Forge
- Virtual Learning Environments
- Content Management Systems
- Student Management Systems

Each type of technology carries with it its own advantages and disadvantages. Depending on your requirements, you may be limited in what technologies you can use. For example;

- You may be required to make your product accessible to people with disabilities and certain technologies won’t allow this; or
- You may want to put the same content up on a low bandwidth Web site, in which case some technologies are completely unsuitable.

How much do CD-ROM’s cost?

Working out costs for making educational CD-ROMs is difficult. The key figure to look for is the cost of a developer for a day. This can range from €300 up to €1000 depending on the technology and the complexity of what you’re trying to achieve. If you do get several quotes, compare them to see if everyone is quoting for the same number of development days.

But not all development companies are the same. Some are large organisations with sophisticated Quality Assurance systems. Others are small 3-person organisations. As a general rule – with e-learning development, you’ll get what you pay for. However, you must be careful not to pay for features and functions you don’t necessarily need.

Some technologies don’t allow for easy changes late in the development process, and some require you to return to the original company to get changes made – this may be enshrined in a Change Control clause in the contract.

You should also investigate the possibility of being able to change things yourself after the project has finished. For example, you may want to revise a product two years later to take account of new developments. Some questions worth bearing in mind include:

- Do you have to go back to the same company to make changes?
- How will you be charged for change?

Ireland has been home to some of the world’s largest e-learning companies. In addition to these large e-learning production companies, there are hundreds of smaller companies

- Will they have archived source files?
- Will that company still be around?
- Can you get source files from the development company for instance?
- Can they build you an admin function where you can make changes within agreed limits?
- Can the content be reused later on another CD-ROM?
- Will the content work on the Internet?

Each type of technology carries with it its own advantages and disadvantages

A final word of caution on e-learning development – development companies often have teams of developers trained in a particular technology, so it may suit them and not you to have your CD-ROM developed using this particular technology. Spend some time getting familiar with different technologies and find out which is the best one for your needs before engaging a company to build it.

The Web

Also referred to as the Internet, the 'net and the World Wide Web, the Web is probably the most powerful form of communication today. Once you have a computer and access to the Web, there is no limit to the type of information you can find.

E-learning content is widely available on the Web. Many of the courses that were previously available on CD-ROM are now available over the Internet. However while you only need a telephone line to get your computer on the Internet, you need a special type of telephone connection, known as broadband to be able to play video. Broadband is also available via satellite and microwave signal but most people will be using a phone line for broadband.

For examples of how useful the Web can be, go to:

- www.rug.ie: lots of games, videos and quizzes based on the Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers TV series. www.literacytools.ie: lots of games and exercises to help people improve their reading and writing skills.

In terms of developing content for the Web, there is often an overlap with materials developed for CD-ROMs. The most commonly used authoring technology for creating CD-ROMs now is Macromedia Flash. If agreed at the start, this can be easily put up onto certain types of Web sites later on.

Another important consideration in putting together a website is the cost of keeping it up to date. If you'd like to add new content or change existing content, then you should look at buying, or licensing, a Content Management System (CMS). This allows you to change things like text, graphics and media files.

Depending on the system, you may even be able to create your own interactive elements such as games and quizzes. If you do decide to invest in a CMS, be sure to find out just what you can change, how easy the system is to use and what the costs of buying and maintaining the system are. Some companies expect you to pay an annual 'license' fee for their CMS. This can be a very costly arrangement.

How much do websites cost?

Websites can cost anything from €5,000 to €200,000 to develop. To find out if you're getting value for money, you should look at the cost of development days for a start. Then compare how much you're being charged for certain functions – you may find one company charging you €5000 for one feature and someone else providing it for €500! You should also try to get as familiar as you can with the technology being used – sometimes you will find that there may be a smarter and cheaper way of achieving your desired end result.

Finally, look at the costs of hosting your Web site per year – if you have other sites, you may be able to get a deal by hosting them all together for instance. There will also be a maintenance charge, which is often calculated as a percentage of the total fee.

Conclusion

There are books written about matching technology and education and this short article should only be seen as a starting point. The table that follows provides a simple comparison of DVD, CD-ROM and Web technology in terms of what they can do for you and how much they cost.

**the Web is probably
the most powerful form
of communication
today**

To be sure you're getting the best value for your money, you should consider hiring an external e-learning consultant for advice. However, it is important to ensure this person is independent and not connected to any of the companies or technologies they are recommending!

For more information about the use of e-learning in education, NALA run training courses several times a year. Contact fdolan@nala.ie for more information on these. For more information on the open tendering process go to <http://www.etenders.gov.ie/>, where you will find specific requirements relating to your work.

Appendix 1 – Comparing DVDs, CD-ROMs and the Web

DVD	<p>Strengths</p> <p>At the top end, interactive DVDs are playable on set top and PC-based DVD players.</p> <p>High production values – broadcast quality video can be used.</p> <p>High levels of interactivity in PC mode – because of the size of a DVD, anything that can be put on a CD-ROM can also be put on a DVD.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>PC content is only available to ICT-competent PC users</p> <p>Only playable on PCs with DVD drives</p> <p>Limited interactivity in set top mode (when just seen on TV)</p> <p>Lack of visibility of content (i.e. person in set top mode not aware of other PC content on disc)</p> <p>Complex authoring and testing processes can be expensive.</p> <p>Duplication costs</p> <p>Distribution costs</p>
CD-ROM	<p>Playable on all PCs</p> <p>High levels of interactivity</p> <p>Robust platform</p> <p>Can be used in conjunction with Student Management System</p>	<p>Only available to ICT-competent PC users</p> <p>Limited capacity – need to reduce size or volume of video content</p> <p>Integration of TV content creates dependency on broadcast timelines</p> <p>Duplication costs</p> <p>Distribution costs</p>
Website	<p>Available to all Web-enabled users</p> <p>High levels of interactivity</p> <p>Topicality - updated regularly</p> <p>Can grow organically as part of future extended Distance Education initiatives</p> <p>Can be used in conjunction with Student Management System</p>	<p>Web competence required for use</p> <p>Bandwidth of audience may restrict type of content available</p> <p>Complex hosting issues if streamed video included</p> <p>Complex project management – co-ordination of TV content being treated and uploaded</p>

Appendix 2 – Comparing DVDs, CD-ROMs and Web Costs

DVD Costs

Low end - €50,000

High end - €250

Basic interactive
set-top DVD
Duplication costs
will impact on
interactivity levels

Interactive set-top DVD
Integrated interactive
PC content

CD-Rom Costs

Low end - €30,000

High end - €250,000

Basic interactive CD-Rom –
text, graphics, some audio,
no video, limited connectivity,
no significant additional materials
Duplication costs will impact on
interactivity levels

Interactive CD-Rom –
video, audio, graphics, text,
LMS compliance

Web Costs

Low end - €5,000

High end - €200,000

Basic HTML-based site with
graphics and limited
interactive elements -
content updated during series

Interactive site with graphics, text,
text, animations, interactive
elements, streamed video and
audio, with content management
system for scalability and continuous
update through moderator

Glossary of terms

Accreditation

A process that allows a person to get credits from a particular institution, such as a college or university for a course that they have completed

Ad hoc

Something that is not regular or planned and happens only when necessary

Analyse

A process of studying the details of something to understand or explain it

Asperger's Syndrome

A complex brain disorder within the range of autism, where a person may be very intelligent, but may have difficulty mixing and communicating with other people

Assessment framework

A guide to knowing what stage a student is at when they start tuition and how well they are progressing

Attribute

A quality or characteristic that someone or something has

Benchmark

A point of reference

Best practice

A term to describe good quality work or good working habits

Brainstorming

A method of giving ideas and opinions freely within a group of people to generate new ideas about a problem

Collate

A way to analyse and compare information to identify points of agreement and differences

Consensus

Agreement between all members of a group on a particular subject

Consistent

Something that happens or behaves in a similar way

Curriculum

A set of topics that make up an educational course

Distance education

A form of learning that takes place in a person's home without supervision

Educational Disadvantage Committee

A Government committee devise solutions to tackle educational disadvantage

Empowerment

A process of transferring power from influential people to poor communities and individuals who have been traditionally excluded from decisionmaking

Ethos

An idea or belief or a particular person or group

that guides their actions

Evaluation

A process of studying something carefully to see how good or bad it is

Facilitator

A person who helps a group to develop and work together effectively towards their common goal 73 NALA Annual Report 2003–2004

Focus group

A group of people who are brought together to discuss what they think about something

Framework

A basic structure that supports something, such as a building, and gives it its shape

Generic

General, not specific

Guiding principles

Values or rules that guide an action or decision

Holistic

A way of describing something that deals with the whole of something or someone, not just their parts

Implement

A system or plan to make something happen

Library Council (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna)

An organisation set up to

advise local authorities and the Government on libraries

Local government

Local and regional bodies, including County Councils, City Councils, Urban District Councils and Town Councils, set up by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, that provide services to local communities

Mentor

An experienced person who gives help and advice to a less experienced person

Mission statement

A statement that explains a person's, group's organisation's main aim

Monitor

A process of watching something carefully and recording your results

National Development Plan

The Government's plan to use EU and other funds to develop the economy and to help spread resources more equally between different groups in society

National Literacy Expert Advisory Group

A group made up of all those with an interest and input in adult literacy that oversees how the adult literacy sections of the Government White Paper are implemented

Networking

A process of using social events to meet people who might be useful to you

Partnership

A process of two or more people or organisations working together to achieve something

Performance indicator

A way to measure whether a person or an organisation is meeting their objectives

Plain English

A way of writing and designing material that makes it easier to read and understand

Process

A series of actions to achieve a result

Qualitative

A way of describing something that refers to how good it is

Quality

A way of saying how good or bad something is.

Quantitative

A way of describing something that refers to its how much (or how many) of it there is

Return to Education

A nine hour a week basic education programme for people on Community Employment schemes

Social cohesion

A process of bringing together economic, social, health and educational policies to help people take part in society

Social exclusion

A process of preventing certain groups from accessing power and decision-making

bodies or building up social and community networks because they are poor or they do not have enough education or life skills

Social inclusion

A process of making sure that people who are poor or marginalised can take part in the decision-making process so that they can raise their standard of living and improve their quality of life

Social interaction

A process of talking to or doing things with other people

Social partnership

A way of reaching agreement between the Irish Government and various social partners – employers, trade unions, farmers and community and voluntary groups – on pay, tax, working conditions and social welfare, and other economic and social issues

Social partnership agreement

A document outlining a range of steps agreed by the Government and the social partners on economic and social issues

Stakeholder

A person who has an interest in an organisation, a project or an issue

Statutory

Something decided or controlled by law

Strategic intent

A statement of what a person, group or organisation intends to do

Tender

An application by a person or group to do a piece of work, describing how they plan to do the work, when, and how much they will charge

Traveller Training Workshop

A local organisation that provides vocational training to adult Travellers

White Paper

A document produced by the Government that outlines its future plans on a particular topic

Youthreach Centre

A local training unit that provides vocational and basic skills to early school leavers under 18 years of age

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ABE

adult basic education – the development of competence in adult skills, such as literacy numeracy and communications, that people need to take part fully in society

ADM

Area Development Management – an organisation set up by the Department of An Taoiseach that funds and oversees local development projects

AEOA

Adult Education Organisers' Association

AGM

Annual General Meeting

ALO

Adult Literacy Organisers

ALOA

Adult Literacy Organisers Association

ALS

Adult Literacy Scheme

BETA

Basic Education Tutors Association – an organisation representing paid adult literacy tutors

BSA

Basic Skills Agency – an organisation that supports and develops ABE in England and Wales

CAIT

Community Application of Information Technology Initiative

CDP

Community Development Project

CE

Community Employment – a FÁS employment training programme

CEEEOA

Chief Executive and Education Officers Association – an organisation representing Chief Executive Officers and Education Officers in VECs

CEO

Chief Executive Officer – the most senior management

position in a VEC

CIF

Construction Industry Federation – a body representing employers in the building sector

CTC

Community Training Centre – a training unit, in different centres around Ireland, providing vocational and adult basic education skills to early school leavers over 18 years of age

CWC

Community Workers Co-op

DES

Department of Education and Science

DETE

Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment

ESOL

English for Speakers of Other Languages

EU

European Union

FÁS

Foras Áiseanna Saothair – the national training and employment authority

FSAI

Food Safety Authority of Ireland – a body established by the Department of Health and Children to oversee food safety improvements

FETAC

Further Education Training Awards Council

IBEC

Irish Business Employers

Confederation – the organisation representing all employer bodies and associations

ICCPE

Irish Centre for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education

ICT

Information and Communications Technology

ICTU

Irish Congress of Trade Unions – the organisation representing all trade unions around the country

ISC

Information Society Commission – which is devising a strategy for development of ICT in Irish society

ISME

Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association – an organisation representing small and medium businesses

ITUT

Irish Trade Union Trust

IVEA

Irish Vocational Education Association – an organisation representing Vocational Education Committees

NALC

National Adult Learning Council – a body established by the Department of Education and Science to oversee the implementation of the White Paper

NALP

National Adult Literacy Programme

NAPS

National Anti-Poverty Strategy – a Government plan to tackle poverty

NCCA

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NCGE

National Centre for Guidance in Education

NDP

National Development Plan – a Government medium term plan for economic and social development

NQAI

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland – a Government-funded body that manages qualifications at national level

NTDI

National Training and Development Institute – an independent education organisation that provides courses in different centres around Ireland for disabled people

SIPTU

Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union

Teagasc

The Irish Agricultural and Food Development Authority

VEC

Vocational Education Committee A committee that manages adult and further education at county (and sometimes city) level

VTOS

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

VTSU

Vocational Training Support Unit

WAI

Web Accessibility Initiative – an international group of companies, disability representatives, universities, governments and research centres that have developed guidelines for making the Internet easier for disabled people to use

WIT

Waterford Institute of Technology

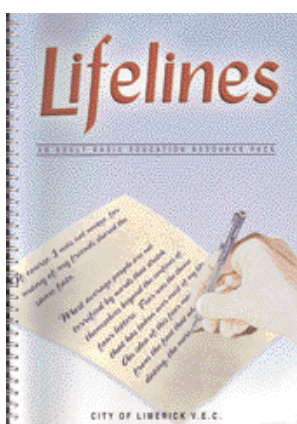
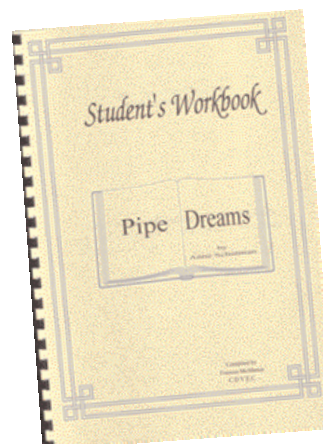
Notes

Resources available from NALA

Pipe Dreams Book and Student Workbook

Meany Freeny lives up to his nickname by never spending more money than he has to. When his old girl friend turns up he has to change his ways if they are ever to marry. Part of the easy reading Open Door series for adults. This student's workbook has been designed to compliment the reading book.

Book: €6.50, Workbook: €5.00



Lifelines

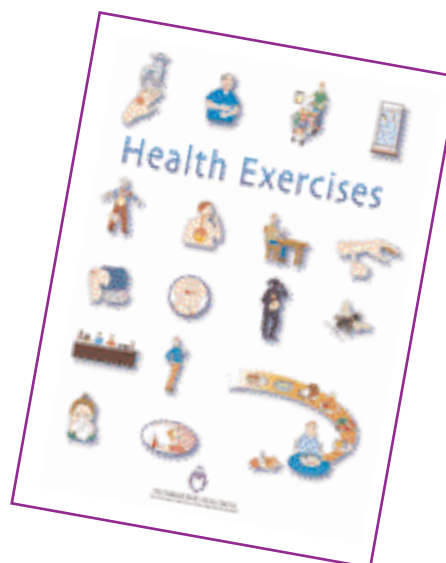
Lifelines are a collection of photocopiable worksheets and photographs based on dynamic, everyday life themes.

€25,00

Health Exercises

This is our new health publication. It was written by Maureen Neville with the help of literacy and health practitioners. An interactive version is available www.literacytools.ie.

€25



Order resources from
NALA Resource Centre
76 Lower Gardiner Street
Dublin 1

Tel: (01) 855 4332

Fax: (01) 855 5475



National Adult Literacy Agency
An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Irish ICT materials available from NALA

Read Write Now CD 1

Read Write Now is for adults who want to brush up on their reading, writing, and spelling skills in the comfort of their own home.

This interactive CD uses clips from the first TV series.

€15.00



Read Write Now CD 2

This interactive CD uses clips from the second TV series. The TV workbook is also available with this CD.

€15.00

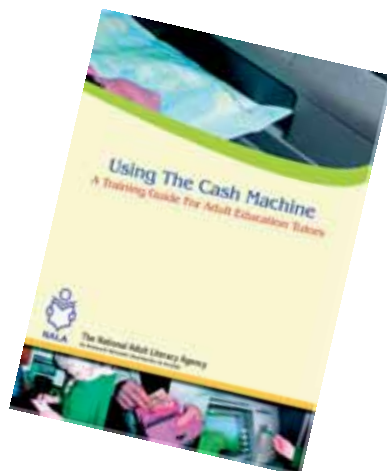
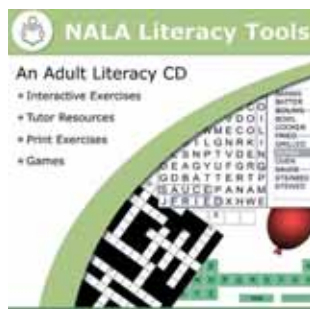
Literacytools CD

Interactive CD based on the website www.literacytools.ie

Providing:

- interactive exercises;
- printable exercises;
- games; and
- tutor notes.

€15.00



Using the Cash Machine

NALA training guide for adult tutors. This guide provides resources material for tutors working with learners who want to know how to use a cash machine. It provides step-by-step instructions on how cash machines work along with sample worksheets and activities.

€10.00

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