



National Research and Development Centre
for adult literacy and numeracy

PROGRESS REPORT



Adult Learners' Lives project: setting the scene

Progress report, April 2004

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Published by the National Research and Development Centre
for Adult Literacy and Numeracy

This report may be downloaded as a PDF document from
the NRDC website at www.nrdc.org.uk

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ISBN 0 9546492 9X

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NRDC is a consortium of partners led by the Institute of Education,
University of London, based in the Bedford Group for Lifecourse
and Statistical Studies at the IoE. www.ioe.ac.uk/bedfordgroup

Design: Chapman Design Limited

Photography: Taxi

Print: Starfish

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This report is funded by the Department for Education and Skills as part of **Skills for Life**: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department.

Acknowledgements

Collaborative research would not be possible without the co-operation of many people, and the Adult Learners Lives team would like to thank everyone who has participated in and supported this project so far.

This project is essentially about individual adult learners. We would like to thank all those people who have shared their stories and insights with us over the past year. We could not have met these people without time and co-operation from the colleges in which we have been working and we would like to thank:

The managers and staff of Community Studies and the Basic Skills Department at Blackburn College and in particular Patrick McKinley, Jane Hassall, Janet Prescott, Wendy Simms, Doug Kelly, Andrew Hudson and Lesley Prosser. Also Nancy Cookson, Lynda Mason and Russell Hodson at Accrington and Rossendale College. The managers and staff of the **Skills for Life** Department at Lancaster Adult College, particularly Meriel Lobley, Gill Burgess, Carol Woods, Lesley Buckley, Ann Wilson and Martin Wakelin.

The managers and staff involved in the delivery of basic skills at Liverpool Community College, especially Jan Walker, Daniel Sellars, Kathleen Gilbert and Dianne Beck.

In addition, our work has been enriched by gaining some understanding of basic skills provision in the wider community. Thanks to: in Blackburn, the Lifelong Learning Forum, the Lifelong Learning Team and the Asylum Support Team; and in Liverpool, Local Solutions and Merseyside Accredited Childcare Training and Assessment Centre.

We would also like to thank the following people for their interest and support: Jane Ward and all those involved in the North West **Skills for Life** Research Forum, Helen Deacon from Lancaster and Morecambe College of Further Education; from further afield Elsa Auerbach from Boston University, Steve Reder from Portland State University and the Rutgers University Classroom Research Group.

At the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre, we would like to thank all of those who have contributed to and supported the development of the project, including particularly Mary Hamilton, Kathryn James, Sue Burrows, David Thorley, Euline Cutrim, Kathy Pitt, Robin Pettitt and Jessica Abrahams.

Executive summary

This report covers activities on the Adult Learners' Lives project from September 2002 to June 2003. It provides an overview of activities at the three case study sites, Blackburn, Lancaster and Liverpool including negotiating access to the sites and establishing the relationships for the research. Sections of the report cover the data which has been collected in the three sites and the initial data analysis. The Teacher-Researcher programme has been an essential part of the project and the process of setting up and running this is described in detail, along with initial reports of the six projects, covering Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL, which the teacher-researchers have been carrying out. In the first phases of the project we carried out focussed reviews of topics which fed into and informed the research. Summaries of these reports are provided. Firstly, we surveyed the earlier ethnographies of literacy which have been carried out. Secondly, we investigated the term informal learning, which is central to our project. We also reviewed work on retention and achievement, key concepts in **Skills for Life**. For the teaching and learning part of the project we completed a review of the literature on the relation of teaching and learning. In addition, we focused on a specific social issue, the relation of literacy and health. Finally, we were also able to link up with work in prisons and carry out a small questionnaire study into ESOL provision in prisons. The report also discusses: overall themes which have arisen in the first year of the research; the approach to impact which is being taken; and future plans. Further details on specific aspects of the project are provided in the appendices, including a list of impact activities.

This is an interim report covering a wide range of initial activity. These are some of the initial findings from the research:

- Relationships matter in learning, including teacher/student and student/student relationships, also the networks of support learners are part of.
- Learning environments often offer structure and stability in learners' lives.
- Being in control is a key motivation for learning.
- Health is often a barrier to learning, both physical and mental health.
- The need to recognise small gains in LLN and the wider benefits to the learners.
- There is a complex relationship between teaching and learning: learners don't learn what teachers teach.
- There needs to be more interagency response to the social and learning needs of students seeking asylum.
- In ESOL classes learners often express satisfaction with their classes, but issues remain, including needing more free use of language and "bringing the outside in".
- Involving teachers in research projects can have great impact, on the teachers' professional development, on the culture of their work-places and on regional networks.

Section 1

The first year of the Adult Learners' Lives project

1.1 Introduction

The NRDC Adult Learners' Lives project started in September 2002. It is a detailed longitudinal study of learners' lives. The aim is to understand the connections that adults make between learning and their everyday lives. The research is addressing questions about the significance of language, literacy and numeracy in the lives of adults who have difficulties, including their experience of learning programmes; it is exploring the relation between how people deal with difficulties and their classroom experiences, investigating the ways in which factors related to provision interface with factors related to the learners. In the classroom we are looking at links between teaching and learning, participation, motivation and persistence. We are interested to know what motivates and engages adult learners. Through collaborative research we aim to identify teaching and learning strategies that are more effective at encouraging and supporting adult basic skills.

The key achievements of the first phase of this longitudinal study are:

- Detailed understanding of the three research sites which provides a strong platform for the following years.
- A broad database forming the foundation for reports on the uptake of learning opportunities due later in the year.
- A set of reviews which can inform the project and this area of research more generally.
- The development of a coherent programme of teacher-research.
- A strong presence locally and regionally which can form the basis for effective impact.

1.2 Structure of this report

This report covers activities on the Adult Learners' Lives project from September 2002 to June 2003. The next subsection, Section 1.3, provides an overview of activities. Section 2 provides background on the three case study sites. An essential first step was negotiating access to the sites and establishing the relationships for the research. This is described in Section 3, which also describes the data which was collected in the three sites and the initial data analysis. The Teacher-Researcher programme has been an essential part of the project and the process of setting up and running this has been an essential part of the study, as described in Section 4. Another starting point was four reviews which we carried out in areas salient to the project. These are summarised in Section 5. The final section discusses themes which have arisen in the first year of the research, the approach to impact which is being taken and future plans. Further details on specific aspects of the project are provided in the appendices.

1.3 Summary of activities September 2002 – June 2003

After extensive negotiation we established core sites in three contrasting cities: Lancaster, Liverpool and Blackburn. We began initial mapping of learning provision in these cities and commissioned a small demographic comparison. We organised practitioner involvement in the project including meeting with groups of practitioners in the three cities and establishing a programme of teacher-researchers. This included working out principles of teacher research. We are now working closely with two teacher-researchers based in Lancaster Adult College, two based in Liverpool Community College, one in Blackburn College and one in nearby Accrington and Rossendale College. We linked into their professional development by contributing to the research training course they received and by supporting them in their colleges. We also appointed advocates in each of the colleges to ensure good liaison and impact of our research within the colleges.

The detailed ethnographic study in the three sites began with initial mapping. In all three sites we began work on the teaching and learning aspects of the project by working with basic skills classes. As part of the initial phase we have written reviews of ethnographic studies, of motivation and persistence, of informal learning, of literacy and health, of the research on the relation of teaching and learning and have carried out a small study of ESOL provision in prisons.

The team meets weekly and we have held four half-day retreats to develop our work and a two-day retreat with the six teacher-researchers to develop the analysis. We have been involved in the planning meetings for the North West *Skills for Life* Research Forum and we contributed five workshops on aspects of involving practitioners in research and developing a regional research agenda to the initial North West *Skills for Life* Research Conference in February. We also presented five papers on evidence at the NRDC International Conference in March (Appendix 1). We presented a discussion paper at the BERA SIG on lifelong learning, also in March. We contributed a workshop to the RaPAL (Research and practice in adult literacy) Conference in June. Within the university we contributed to the launch of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre in October, we made a presentation at a meeting of the University Council and our work has been featured in local newspapers and radio, as well as in the annual report of the university.

In February we hosted NRDC researchers from all national projects for a day devoted to methodology; through this we established links with researchers on other projects which we are pursuing. We have close links with the NRDC ESOL case study project, we developed small sub-projects on prisons and on health and we participate in the cross-centre NRDC numeracy group.

We have developed into an effective research team. David Barton has overall direction of the project. He is also responsible for the everyday life aspect of the project, for the development of the Ethnographic Resource and for links with other NRDC projects. Roz Ivanic is a co-director of the project and is responsible for the teaching and learning aspect of the work, as well as the overall co-ordination of the teacher-researchers. Yvon Appleby is responsible for the Liverpool site; she also provides an overview of all three sites, is developing the work-place aspect of the work and co-ordinates the impact and communication strategy. Rachel Hodge is responsible for the Blackburn site and for the ESOL aspects of the project, including linking with the NRDC ESOL case study. Karin Tusting is responsible for the Lancaster site and is pursuing particular interests in numeracy and in working with people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Systems of data management are being developed by Jessica Abrahams, who also organises the translation and transcription activities.

Section 2:

The case study sites

Three sites in the North West of England were selected as case study sites for the Adult Learners' Lives research. Blackburn, Lancaster and Liverpool were chosen as different enough to each other to provide populations of different size, composition and background. Each has a distinct economic and social base and each has a individual history and identity. Lancaster was selected as a small geographically independent city with a relatively stable population. It is the smallest and least 'deprived' of our three case study sites. Blackburn has a higher than average ethnic minority population of South Asian origin and has felt the impact of recent refugee and asylum seekers' dispersal policy. It is connected to the large industrial and manufacturing conurbation of the North West region. Liverpool was chosen as a large city that has experienced socio-economic decline and regeneration. The city has many different communities established throughout its history as a major seafaring port.

2.1 Blackburn

Blackburn is part of the Blackburn and Darwen Unitary Authority within the county of Lancashire. It has a long history. The original grammar school was founded in 1509 and the cathedral in 1826. The industrial revolution brought momentous changes to Blackburn. In 1750 Blackburn was little more than a village but by 1850 had become a boomtown with a tenfold increase in the population. By the end of the nineteenth century Blackburn had become the cotton weaving capital of the world. The growth of the town required the provision of new services to improve health, welfare and recreation. Many public buildings were established at that time including the Town Hall, Museum, College and the Cotton Exchange. Football was and is still a popular recreation and the morale of the town seems to fluctuate with the changing fortunes of Blackburn Rovers! During the twentieth century the textile industry went into a rapid decline causing mass unemployment, the effect of which is still felt today. During and after the Second World War many Polish and Ukrainian refugees settled. There has been, in response initially to the Government's recruitment drives in the 1960's for the textile and service industries, a growing population of residents of Indian and Pakistani origin. The Government's recent dispersal policy has led to an increasing number of people seeking asylum and refugee status living in the borough, now approximately 800 people from a wide range of countries. There is a rich music and arts heritage and community arts programmes. The annual multicultural 'Mela' event is the largest of its kind in the region. There are 12 major parklands and the town is surrounded by beautiful Pennine countryside.

The population of the district in the 2001 census was 137,471 people (Office of National Statistics). Within this figure there is a higher than national average number of young people under sixteen making up 25.2 per cent of the local population. Conversely there is a lower than national average number of people over 60. The Adult Learners' Lives commissioned a demographic report 'The Demographics of Blackburn, Lancaster and Liverpool' (Appendix 2). This shows the population of Blackburn with Darwen as having slightly higher than average lone parent households, higher than average health problems and a higher percentage of people who look after their home or family.

The population of Blackburn is the most multiracial of the three sites. The white population

makes up 79 per cent of the borough's residents compared to the national average of 91.3 per cent. The largest minority ethnic groups are the Indian (10.7 per cent) and Pakistani (8.7 per cent) groups. The greatest proportion of the population are Christian, 63 per cent. But with 19.4 per cent, the borough has the third highest ranking of Muslim residents in England and Wales.

The borough has a slightly higher than national and regional average unemployment figure. By comparison these unemployment percentages are higher than Lancaster but not as high as Liverpool. The largest employment sector by far is manufacturing and Blackburn has a higher than national and regional proportion of people employed in skilled trades.

Blackburn with Darwen has retained its selective grammar school and has three independent schools. There are two FE colleges. Blackburn has a level of school performance in line with the national average. The current number of adults in the borough estimated to have basic skills needs is 15,000. It is estimated that up until 2007 221 school leavers per year will have basic skills needs. Low literacy levels in the borough are estimated at 19 per cent compared with the national average of 15 per cent and low numeracy at 16.5 per cent compared to the national average of 12 per cent. (*Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Education & Lifelong Learning Dept.*)

2.2 Lancaster

Lancaster is a small city in the North West of England, part of Lancaster District within the county of Lancashire. The 2001 census revealed a population of 47,159 within the Lancaster urban area. Lancaster is generally regarded as a fairly pleasant place to live, offering a relatively high quality of life. This is borne out by the statistics on health and crime in the area. The demographic study (Appendix 2) cites Lancaster's general Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) in 2000 as 103, close to the national average (100), below the regional SMR of 107 and much lower than Blackburn's SMR of 119 and Liverpool's of 129. Deaths from heart disease, while again slightly higher than the national average at 105, are significantly lower than Blackburn (132) and Liverpool (130) and deaths from breast cancer and prostate cancer are significantly lower than both the national average and Blackburn and Liverpool's rates. Crime rates for violent crime, robbery, burglary and vehicle theft in Lancaster are all well below national and regional averages.

The demographic report shows that the proportion of full-time employees in Lancaster is below the national average, however, employment figures have improved since then. There is a relatively high proportion of the adult population as economically inactive students, related to its status as a university town. The demographic report shows the dominant employment sector as the service industry and percentages of people working in both health and education were higher than the regional and national averages. The percentage of professional households in Lancaster was higher than the regional or national average but the proportion of unskilled workers was also higher.

Lancaster has an ethnic distribution close to the regional average, with the feel of a fairly cosmopolitan city, for a town of its size, largely due to the international student population attracted by the nearby university. A significant proportion of ESOL provision at the Adult College is related to this, catering for partners of people studying or working at the university, people studying for IELTS tests with the aim of entering university, or with people studying or

working at the university already. Other significant groups of people from ESOL classes are people of Chinese backgrounds working in the catering business and people from Lancaster's established small community of people of South Asian heritage.

Lancaster is split by the river Lune, which divides it into 'North' and 'South' Lancaster. Despite the generally good quality of life statistics cited above, Lancaster is a city which includes significant pockets of deprivation and unemployment, particularly in some of the North Lancaster estates. These gradually shade into the seaside town of Morecambe which has areas of very high unemployment and includes a transient population placed temporarily in the many bed-and-breakfasts in the area. Lancaster has many local people whose families have lived here or in the area for some time. The town is split up into a series of identifiable, named neighbourhoods, many of which – particularly in the poorer estates – are home to long-established family and friendship networks and communities. This close-knit local network has effects on provision in the *Skills for Life* area. People coming to the college for English and Maths classes cannot hope to be anonymous. One long-term volunteer in ESOL mentioned that the reason she specialised in ESOL was because she knew 'everyone in Lancaster' and she would therefore feel uncomfortable as a literacy tutor. This was in part because of the stigma which some still associate with literacy classes but also because she felt she would inevitably encounter people whose own and whose family histories she would know a great deal about.

There are two principal providers of basic skills in education in the area, Lancaster and Morecambe College of Further Education and Lancaster Adult College, in which the first year of the Adult Learner's Lives research has been primarily carried out. Lancaster and Morecambe College is seen locally as catering principally for the 16–18 audience although the college does draw in students from a wider age range. Lancaster is also home to a university which offers basic skills provision through its Staff Learning Centre. The other higher education provider in the town, St Martin's College, offers teacher training courses and other specialised vocationally oriented degrees in subjects such as nursing, occupational therapy, community and youth studies.

2.3 Liverpool

Liverpool, situated on the mouth of the River Mersey, is a vibrant city of just under half a million people – 439,470 in the 2001 Census (Office of National Statistics). It contains many diverse and multicultural communities linked to its history and identity as a flourishing and significant passenger and mercantile port. Most of the large passenger liners docked at Liverpool and the huge docklands handled a significant amount of British cargo, anything from bananas to coal. Sailors and ship workers from many countries settled over the years and developed the diverse communities that exist today. The Albert Dock, now a heritage site, is a testament to this history as Napoleonic French prisoners of war built it and today it houses the Maritime Museum with its Transatlantic Slavery display. Liverpool has been a denominationally divided city with two imposing cathedrals (Anglican and Catholic) overlooking the city and river. These religious tensions appear to have eased, although the city saw massive social unrest and riots in the 1970s, resulting in the Toxteth Riots. These were attributed to massive unemployment and the decline of the dockland communities (Lane, T. 1987 **Liverpool: Gateway of Empire**. Lawrence and Wishart, London).

In recent years Liverpool has seen massive urban regeneration that has included the

waterfront and dockland area. New offices, houses and community buildings have revitalised previously derelict dockland areas and areas of sub-standard housing. This has had a positive impact on the economic success, fabric and confidence of the city. This re-emerging confidence culminated in Liverpool's successful bid to be European City of Culture in 2008. The bid was supported by Liverpool's proud cultural assets: The Beatles, Liverpool and Everton football clubs and the Three Graces that adorn the waterfront. The city spreads out from the river and is made up of many communities that have their own distinct identities. Families live nearby and there is a local as well as city identity. People talk of going to the city, a bus ride from where they live in Huyton or Knotty Ash.

Although there is much evidence of regeneration, there are many socio-economic indicators that show Liverpool's continuing underlying problems with higher than average unemployment rates, below average health and low educational attainment. The loss of employment in manufacturing and the docklands means that unemployment rates in Liverpool at 11.6 per cent are almost twice the national average of 5.6 per cent (for these and following figures see the demographic report, Appendix 2). Those who do work are employed in the service industry, in manufacturing, distribution and finance with a higher than average percentage of clerical and secretarial workers. Liverpool has a lower than average percentage of professional households (4.2 per cent compared to the national average of 6.0 per cent) and an above average number of partly skilled (17.1 per cent compared to the national average of 13.4 per cent) and unskilled households (7.0 per cent to the national average of 4.5 per cent). In terms of health Liverpool has a higher overall mortality rate than the national average and higher than average rates for heart disease and breast cancer. Educational attainment measured by percentage of pupils gaining five GCSEs between A-C Grade is lower than the national average, with 44.3 per cent of pupils in Liverpool achieving this level compared to 51.5 per cent nationally.

Liverpool boasts of being 'the world in one city' in its promotional material to support its bid to become European City of Culture 2008 (see www.liverpoolculture.com). Whilst having a 96.23 per cent white population (compared to national average of 93.81 per cent), Liverpool has proportionally higher Black and Chinese populations than the North West region as a whole. Other ethnic groups in Liverpool communities include Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other Asian ethnicities. Liverpool, with NW partners Wirral and Blackburn, has been engaged in the DfES funded ESOL Pathfinder project to assess ESOL needs and provision responses. The ESOL Pathfinder project has been run by Liverpool Community College.

Liverpool City Council's Lifelong Learning service offers over 1,000 courses for adults in eighty centres, which include college venues and community settings (learninliverpool.co.uk). There are several independent and training organisations that offer basic skills in their programme for example Blackburne House which is a women's technology and education centre and Local Solutions, a former Community Voluntary Service (CVS), which links basic skills to New Deal provision. In addition there are organisations that embed basic skills in support of vocational training, for example Merseyside Accredited Childcare Training and Assessment Centre (MACTAC). One of the biggest providers of adult education is Liverpool Community College serving over 27,000 students with over 1,000 staff. The college, now more than ten years old (having been amalgamated from four existing colleges in 1991), has a national reputation in student support. It has achieved high inspection marks and promotes student support on its linked website. On a dedicated website for Chinese students it states: 'The government judged this college to have one of the best student support systems in the country' (www.chinalink.org.uk/livCCollege.html).

The majority of basic skills delivery in Liverpool Community College is organised through the Drop In Study Centres (DISCS). The college has 21 Community Learning Centres, including 15 DISCS, which are situated within the college's own sites or are attached to externally funded provision which include community centres, libraries and church halls. The DISCS provide a range of support and classes for maths, spelling, IT and ESOL. They are multipurpose teaching and activity rooms that offer simultaneous support for learners wanting help with maths, English or IT within the same teaching room. The Community Learning Centres and DISCS are located in areas where learners have previously had little adult education services. Liverpool has many large pre-war estates that lack community or learning amenities and bus fares to the city are expensive enough to be discouraging to people on low incomes. The Community Learning Centres and DISCs provide local learning, including basic skills, in these areas of Liverpool and Merseyside.

Section 3:

Research reports and emerging themes from the three main sites

In this section we describe in more detail the different college sites in which we have been working. We outline the issues that were raised in the process of gaining access to each research site and then describe the sites in more detail and the way research has been carried out in each. We describe the range of data that has been collected in each site. We give examples of the data analysis which we are beginning to carry out and flag up issues which are emerging from the research so far in each site; these are significant themes which we will address in more depth as the project develops.

3.1 Access

The first task for the researchers was to negotiate access to the college sites. The process of access was similar in each site. Initial contacts had been made by David Barton and Kathryn James before the start of the project, during which time the three colleges expressed interest in being involved. Between October and December 2002, the researchers each made direct contact with the colleges and engaged in a process of negotiating access to classes for the Adult Learners' Lives research in general and recruitment of practitioners to the teacher-researcher fellowship programme. This was a process which raised different issues, some relating to the particularities of each setting involved, others which were more general.

We were in fact asking for a major commitment from the colleges. We were asking for long-term access to a range of classes; we wanted to work with different levels of management, including managers and practitioners; and we were wanting to recruit existing staff as teacher-researchers.

In all three of the sites, management and staff were experiencing pressures relating to the changes associated with the *Skills for Life* strategy. Many staff were already committed to engaging in curriculum training and other training events and managers were reluctant to release valuable, experienced members of staff for the one day a week Teacher-Researcher programme.

We were also unsure about whether to approach the colleges at the levels of principals, basic skills managers, line managers or directly through individual practitioners. We discovered very quickly that we were far from the only researchers negotiating access with colleges. All three of the colleges with whom we worked were engaged with other research projects either going on at the same time or having recently finished, most related to *Skills for Life*, including Pathfinder projects, NRDC projects and LSDA projects. Enthusiasm for participation in research was therefore tempered by a wariness of being 'researched to death' and a diminishing pool of available staff and classes to work with.

However, there were also things which facilitated access. All the colleges expressed interest both in the topic of the Adult Learners' Lives research and in our research approach, appreciating the sensitivity of an ethnographic approach and the links we were aiming to make between research and practice. Where there were existing good relationships between the research team and the college we were able to build on these in gaining access. For instance, some of the colleges had already participated in Lancaster-based research; in others, researchers had existing links from their previous experience as practitioners. Finally, in all three of the sites it was the interest that was shown in the research by particular individuals which enabled us to circumvent the other obstacles. We built on this by having one individual at management level in each site who had expressed interest in and support for, the research as our 'advocate', assisting with teacher-researcher recruitment and discussing the shape and framework of the research with them. We have kept the advocates informed about what has been happening in the project through occasional meetings and updates throughout the year and have incorporated their feedback into project development plans.

Once teacher-researchers had been recruited most communication happened between them and the researchers direct, with teacher-researchers also facilitating access to other classes and practitioners. When these relationships had been built up, the process of access became much smoother. In interviews, several teachers have said that they particularly appreciate the approach taken in the Adult Learners' Lives research, which has encouraged them to co-operate with the research. They felt that the presence of the researcher in classes over a long period of time, the slow building-up of relationships of trust with learners, the situating interview work within other more ethnographic forms of data collection and the positioning of the learner at the heart of everything we are doing were all aspects of the research that made it more acceptable to them than a more detached approach would have been. They were therefore happy to facilitate access to classes and to students. Teachers have also said that being engaged with the research has made them more aware of students' lives outside the classroom, and that this has proved to be of benefit to their practice. We would hope that these positive relationships that we have built up this year will facilitate the development of the project over the coming months.

3.2 Site reports

After gaining access, the three full-time researchers spent most of the first year of the project working in the different research sites. In this section we describe the college sites, the way we have each worked in them and the sorts of data which the research has generated.

3.2.1 Blackburn College

As well as developing an overview of the college, Rachel has been working mainly with students seeking asylum and refugee status attending Entry 1 (E1) and Entry 3 (E3) levels of the National Curriculum ESOL classes at Blackburn College within the context of an ESOL case study which she has worked on in collaboration with Kathy Pitt. In the autumn of 2002 the NRDC commissioned five ESOL case studies to run from January to July 2003. At the same time, during discussions about a possible focus for the Adult Learners' Lives research, ESOL teachers at Blackburn College raised issues they had been concerned about for some time around the particular needs of students seeking asylum and refugee status and the role of educational provision in providing support. The Adult Learners' Lives team therefore decided that the ESOL case study would provide a useful framework for carrying out Adult Learners' Lives research which related to this particular group of learners. Adults seeking asylum and refugee status currently make up the large majority of the ESOL student body in Blackburn. They come from a wide range of countries including Afghanistan, Rwanda, Iraq, Congo, Colombia and Angola. This is a fairly recent development related to Home Office dispersal policy.

In the period between October 2002 and December 2003 Rachel made regular visits to the faculty of Curriculum Studies and the Basic Skills department in order to share information about the Adult Learners' Lives project. Issues of access for carrying out the research were discussed, and current issues for the department were identified, such as which classes to work in. Rachel also helped to facilitate recruitment of a teacher-researcher for the Teacher-Researcher programme. Since January 2003 she has been visiting first E1 and from mid February also E3 on a regular basis carrying out participant observation in classes and interviewing students. The main research questions focused on students' perceptions of their learning experiences and the link between learning and social issues which concern them as recent in-comers to the town.

ESOL provision – E1 and E3

Students are mainly recruited at the beginning of the academic year but there is a 'roll-on, roll-off' facility when there are vacant places in the class. There is often a waiting list. Students are given an assessment on arrival and placed in a class at the appropriate level. Classes follow a systematic modular syllabus based on the National ESOL Curriculum. For E1 there are seven core modules and for E3 six modules, each based on a different topic. For each module the syllabus is organised into the four skill areas as used in the core curriculum and the curriculum reference numbers for each component skill are stated. Teachers are encouraged to supplement this by responding to the particular needs of students in their groups. Functions, grammar and phonics are taught systematically within the topic areas. Assessment is rigorous; it consists of assignments carried out in 'test' conditions which are added to a portfolio of evidence of skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Students gain full achievement at Level 1 by completing the work and reaching the required standards in all four skills. They have individual tutorials each term to review their learning targets and progress. They keep their own record books which contain induction checklist, timetable, student agreement, targets for each module, and record sheets for daily work, individual reviews and the final review. E1 students study 'full time' which means 15 hours a week, Monday to Friday from 9 am – 12 pm. E3 students study eight hours a week, Monday to Thursday 9 am – 11 am.

E1 class

There are about 12 students in the E1 class, who come from Angola, Rwanda, Congo, Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, Colombia and Iraq. This is a mainly young group, most

being between the ages of 18 and 25, with two students of 30+ and one 50+ student from Hong Kong (who is not an asylum seeker). Attendance levels are very high and if anybody needs to miss a class they normally phone the teacher. There is a very strong class culture of commitment to full attendance, punctuality, keeping to task, strong peer support, co-operation and friendship in the learning environment. The students are very highly motivated to learn English and seem to make rapid progress on this fast-track programme. The students typically come from countries with very traditional schooling and perhaps that is why they seem to be very comfortable with a learning environment which is very much teacher led with a great deal of language input and whole class drill work. Classes are carefully pre-planned by the teacher rather than negotiated and there is very little diversion from this plan. The teacher teaches from the front using a white board and the students sit in a horseshoe arrangement. The students sometimes work in small groups or pairs but this is also very much teacher directed. Students seem to respond very positively to a very prescriptive, systematic approach to language teaching and if they lose concentration it seems to be more related to personal issues than to the learning tasks.

This is a very supportive learning environment. The teacher is very empathetic and responsive to individual learning needs within this pre-planned framework and students are very supportive of each other. They draw on their individual learning strategies and resources such as their linguistic repertoire particularly in individual and group work. Learning materials are mainly drawn from ESOL textbooks such as 'Headway' and no use of 'real' materials was observed. Students' spoken language production is mainly through drills and controlled practice in groups. Listening practice is from ESOL tapes and from the teacher, reading is from text book materials and writing is mainly on worksheets. There is very little spontaneous 'free' speaking and writing. Every Tuesday there is an IT class when students work at individual computers. Here there was some negotiation. The teacher intended to use this session to work through ESOL software but she changed it to respond to students' expressed needs to also learn to surf the internet and write emails.

Most of the students have recently come through very traumatic experiences in their home countries and in travelling to Britain. Despite demonstrating high motivation to learn English and a wealth of resources for surviving and building a new life here, they are living with a high degree of uncertainty and worry about their families and their future. Social issues related to this E1 group impact heavily on the learning environment; these include doctor's appointments, child care needs, meeting lawyers (mostly in London), travel claims, need for information/directions, need for resources such as furniture, benefits cut off on losing appeal, worries related to status and depression. Every day Rachel spent there, one or more of these issues affected students' attendance and concentration and it often involved the teacher in providing some support such as making phone calls to other services, offices and agencies.

E3 class

In the E3 class, the student profile is different to E1 in that only one third of the students are seeking asylum (mainly young, both male and female, from Angola, Iraq and Lithuania) and two thirds are young women of South Asian heritage. Teaching style and materials are similar to E1 but there is no IT class. The main difference is that the asylum seeker/refugee students seem to have developed their own coping strategies more than the E1 students (probably because they have lived here longer, or have a higher level of former education, or both) and the South Asian heritage students live in strong well-established communities, so perhaps this is why social issues do not appear to impact on the learning environment very much. Attendance levels are high but not quite as high as E1. The students do not seem to be

dependent on the teacher's support and encouragement for 'out of class' issues. The teacher expects the students to take full responsibility for their own attendance and study. The learning group is cohesive and co-operative but the students are not as closely supportive as in the E1 class where the learning group is also a very strong social group in college, as well as outside college to some degree.

Research approach and activities

Rachel has been working within a qualitative/ethnographic, multi method, collaborative approach carrying out observations of classes as a participant observer and audio-recording some of these, taking fieldnotes of classes and meetings with teachers, interviewing students, collecting learning materials and facilitating a photography project in which students took photos representing their feelings about living in Blackburn.

Working with the teachers

Regular, paid meetings with the E1 and E3 teachers were central to a negotiated research process. We built up relationships of mutual trust and respect for our different expertise. Rather than Rachel *explaining* the methodology, this allowed us to *discuss* methodology and make joint decisions about issues around what research activities to carry out and how, the roles of the researcher in the setting, interpretation of data and how to acknowledge students' time and co-operation in the research. Taking account of their agendas, preferences, experience and expertise in this way enhanced the quality of the activities, the relationships of all involved and the richness of the data and its analysis and interpretation.

Working with the students

Allowing *time* was the key to working successfully with students: time to build up rapport, by going to a few classes before carrying out any audio-recording or interviews; putting their time agendas before ours; taking time to give information and explain the study; and allowing time for proper negotiation about the content of activities and interviews, such as discussing which language to use. Relationships with students were shaped by valuing them and trying to lessen distance; by acting as a 'participant observer', rather than purely as an 'observer'; by Rachel telling them about herself when asked; by involving them as co-researchers in the photography project and in the collection of documents; by valuing their co-operation with a gift (as suggested by the teacher); by negotiating with them and offering choice where possible; and by withdrawing gently and gradually at the end of the study while still visiting occasionally and keeping some email contact.

What were the benefits of collaboration?

All participants – students, teacher, interpreters and researchers – said that they enjoyed being involved in the research. The principle of 'quality of life' was followed and achieved in this research encounter. We were all learners and experts, sharing reciprocal skills, experiences and opportunities. For example, Wendy invited Rachel to meetings and set up a focal group discussion with other teachers. Both she and Doug gave creative suggestions related to activities, shared relevant paperwork and acted as 'research and consultant' advocates with the students and the management. This was invaluable in terms of access, relationships, data generation and understandings.

3.2.2 Lancaster Adult College

Over the past year, Karin has conducted ethnographic research in the **Skills for Life** department of the Adult College in Lancaster. The Adult College is a relatively small

institution and the pattern of activities is very different from that found in Blackburn's large FE college setting. Students attend classes on a weekly basis, some attending only one class, some two or three and a few attending several different classes; but there are no full-time students or teachers. Some students also attend courses at the college outside the **Skills for Life** department, such as pottery and creative writing. Some also attend classes at other colleges, particularly some of the ESOL students. For others, one class a week is enough; this is especially the case for some of the students with health difficulties.

All of the **Skills for Life** provision in the college is done on a 'roll-on, roll-off' basis, although the paperwork is organised on a term-by-term model and the roll-on, roll-off policy is often debated. In ESOL, there is quite a high turnover of students, with a constant stream of students coming in for initial interview to be placed in classes and a similar stream leaving for a variety of reasons. The population in the literacy and numeracy classes is more stable, with some students having attended classes for many years, although here too there is also a steady turnover of students coming and going. The students who leave do so for a variety of reasons: some leave having completed a particular certificate or a term's work; others because they have reached a point where they have achieved what they wanted to in coming to class, whether or not this is externally accredited; others find that a particular class no longer suits them, either for social reasons or in subject matter; and for many people external factors such as illness, work or family commitments lead to them leaving either for a while or permanently. Other students come to basic skills classes and move on very quickly to pre-GCSE and GCSE classes or to vocational classes at the Adult College or elsewhere. But for some of the longer-term students coming to college has been a stable point in their lives for some years. However, there is an increasing pressure now to move people on and demonstrate progression and there is debate within the college as to the educational value of students staying long-term in one class without moving on'.

A great deal of paperwork is required from staff and students and at particular moments in time – such as at the start and end of term – the paperwork can seem to take over. At the start of term students fill out enrolment or re-enrolment forms, for both the college and the County Council. At the beginning of each term students work with tutors and/or volunteers to write out a new Individual Learning Plan (ILP), which includes space for a general aim and for a small set of specific learning goals. Once the student has filled these in, the goals are then cross-referenced to the curriculum by the tutors. The ILPs are drawn on in planning each student's work and in planning the group sessions to cater to the needs of as many students as possible. Each tutor fills in a standardised session plan' for each lesson. At the end of each session, a 'work done' sheet is filled in which includes spaces for what work has been done, for any comments the student has about it (with prompts such as 'this was easy/hard, I feel confident in ... /I want to do some more work in ...') and for future work or homework. This work done sheet is then used by the tutors to fill in another form which tracks what work each student has completed in each session. At the end of each term, the ILP and work done sheets are used as the basis for a review of what has been done over the course of the term and how the students and tutors feel about it. Given that some students are only in college for two hours a week, dealing with the paperwork can take up a significant proportion of their learning time.

In all of the classes, a great deal of effort is put into setting the classroom up as a friendly place. Relationships between students and teachers are informal and teachers are addressed by their first name (although some students found this difficult – one saying I would have been beaten at school if I had called the teacher Lesley!). Many students said in interview

they had been surprised at how friendly the college was as an environment and that they had been afraid before coming that people would be 'snobby' or 'snotty'. Supportive relationships are built up between students in classes too, although once in a while there are inevitable tensions, particularly when people have very different ways of interacting socially. However, in general, the college prides itself on being an accessible and friendly place.

Classes attended

Karin has attended four classes on a more or less weekly basis: an ESOL workshop on a Monday morning, a Tuesday afternoon English class, a Wednesday evening spelling class and a Friday morning maths class. She has also visited some other classes for observation and has participated in other activities in the college, such as a Writing Day and some **Skills for Life** tutors' meetings.

Tuesday English and Wednesday Spelling classes

Teaching in literacy classes has recently been re-organised. It used to run largely on a workshop basis, with classes consisting mainly of individual tuition supported by volunteers working one-to-one with students and tutors who had an overview of what was going on in each class. With the introduction of **Skills for Life**, tutors have been encouraged at curriculum training events to incorporate group work into their practice. The English and maths classes that Karin participated in included time for individual and group work.

The typical pattern for both the Tuesday English class and the Wednesday spelling class was as follows. Both of these classes were team taught, with two tutors running the class, supported by a number of volunteer tutors. At the start of the session, students would arrive, take out their folders from the box for that class and would decide on their individual work for that session, in conjunction with a tutor or a volunteer tutor; or they might continue with work from a previous class. For the first hour of the session the class would work as a workshop, with tutors circulating to check students' work. Then there would be a break and most students would go up to the Gallery, the college coffee bar, for a drink and a chat; classes normally sat together around large round tables. The final hour of the class would normally be a group session, prepared between the two tutors running that class. Topics for this were decided on a half-termly or termly basis, largely by looking at individual student's learning plans and finding topics which would address the needs of all, or most, of the students. While most students would participate in the group session, some preferred to continue with their individual work.

In the individual work time students worked on a variety of different things depending on their level and aspirations. Some of these were common to many students. For instance, many of the entry level students were working through a series of Dolch word worksheets. A Spelling Support programme was used, based on a worksheet framework on which students recorded new words one week, learned them using the look-cover-write-check method, were tested on them the following week and were asked to use them in dictation the week after that. A series of photocopied punctuation exercises were drawn on, often relating to apostrophes which were a theme in both classes during the time Karin was attending them.

Some students had come with specific requests for functional work relating to their everyday lives, such as form-filling or booking holidays. These students worked both using worksheets for practice and using real examples of forms and official documentation which they filled in during the class with a tutor's feedback.

In addition to this more structured work, these classes also gave students the opportunity to engage in broader writing activities. Many students engaged in writing different types of letters or personal writing. One student in the Tuesday English class used it primarily as a time to produce a 'page of writing', personal writing on a wide variety of topics, which was then used as the basis for working on spelling, paragraphing and punctuation. Another was working on a local history project, relating the history of Lancaster using old photographs and writing text captions for them. Other students were working on creative writing around themes which they were interested in. A woman in the Wednesday evening spelling class brought her personal letters and emails to class for checking and editing and also wrote colourful accounts of meaningful events in her life such as going to a rock concert.

The Tuesday afternoon English class was a very popular one, with at some points up to 15 students attending, plus a number of volunteer tutors. The Wednesday evening spelling class attracted smaller numbers of students, with a maximum of seven or eight learners. However it also attracted higher numbers of volunteer tutors, and at times there would be more tutors than students in the class. This contributed to a lively, chatty atmosphere. The two classes had a slightly different feel to them. The pace of the Wednesday class was faster, in general. It attracted a constituency primarily of people who were working or who had been working. The Tuesday afternoon class included several people with learning difficulties and/or mental health issues who were not employed. Students in both classes were at a variety of levels, from pre-entry to Entry 3. In both classes the age range was very broad, from students in their late teens and early 20s through to people of retirement age.

Friday Maths class

The pattern of the Friday maths class varied from week to week, sometimes being primarily group work, sometimes individual work. This was taught by a single tutor and was a smaller group of up to six students, most working at levels up to entry level 3. Again, all students had an individual learning plan and the tutor planned activities for the classes relating to this. Most students in the class identified themselves as having learning difficulties and it is possible that the class remained small because it was perceived by other potential students as catering primarily for this constituency.

Monday ESOL workshop

The Monday ESOL workshop was a purely workshop format, with students on separate tables working either alone or with volunteer tutors. There were two tutors directing the workshop activities, one of whom specialised in dealing with students preparing for their IELTS test. Karin worked principally with the students of the other tutor, Gill Burgess, one of the ALL teacher-researchers. Gill had an overview of what each student was working on, which in this class was entirely driven by the student's individual learning plan. Students might be working on reading, writing, speaking or listening and this might relate to almost any topic area. Within this structure, different volunteers in the workshop had different levels of autonomy. Some of the more experienced volunteers planned their student's work almost entirely, while other pairings were provided with work by Gill each week.

This was another busy class which attracted up to 12 or 13 students some weeks. Given the focus on individual work, at times this could become quite difficult to manage. It attracted a variety of different types of students, including au pairs from different countries in Europe who were looking to improve their English while they were here, spouses and partners of people in Lancaster temporarily to study or work at the university, occasionally people who were themselves studying or working at the university but wanted to work on another aspect

of their English, people of Chinese origin primarily working in local restaurants and take-aways, people of South Asian heritage from Lancaster's small, established South Asian community and people who had come to England to work and/or to marry. There were few refugees or asylum seekers in these classes.

Research activities

In the classes, Karin has acted as a participant observer, with the agreement being that she was there to observe, to get to know people and to act as a 'spare body' if there was anything helpful that she could do. In the event, in most of the classes it was found most helpful for Karin to act almost as a spare volunteer tutor, working principally on a one-to-one basis supporting several learners over a period of time. Detailed participant-observation based fieldnotes were written up as soon as possible after each class attended. This ongoing presence in the classes allowed her to build up good friendly relationships with teachers and students.

Karin was initially introduced to each class as being from the university and doing research work relating to the classes. After being in the classes for a couple of months, she gave a more detailed presentation during the group session explaining the aims of the project and inviting learners to participate in interviews if they so desired. The presentation was supported by an information leaflet which was designed in conjunction with teacher-researchers to be accessible to learners. These presentations were followed by group discussions about the reasons why people had come to college and what sorts of things they had got out of the experience, which proved enlightening for researcher, teachers and students.

Following the presentation, a number of interviews were carried out with learners relating to the meaning of learning in their lives. Some of these learners have been identified for more detailed longitudinal work. In addition, some learning events – both one-to-one work with volunteers and group sessions – were audio-recorded in the English and spelling classes. This has generated a large corpus of data, related to students' learning experiences in provision (fieldnotes and recordings) and students' lives more generally (fieldnotes and interviews).

3.2.3 Liverpool Community College

The first step in the Liverpool site was to find out about the range of basic skills provision in the city. This initial mapping meant visiting several providers, including community and training organisations, meeting practitioners at training events and gathering information via web sites. Contact was made with the basic skills manager at Liverpool Community College, which had been agreed as the site for the pedagogic research in the first phase of the Adult Learners' Lives research. The two teacher-researchers attached to the Adult Learners' Lives project, through the Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme, teach at Liverpool Community College and the college agreed to support them in this collaborative research partnership.

Liverpool Community College delivers most of its basic skills in drop-in study centres (DISCs). These multipurpose flexible teaching rooms, often delivering several areas of learning support at the same time (maths, English and Information Technology/Computing (ITC)), have been designed to respond locally to individual learning needs. Students can drop in for additional support if they are taking other courses or they can follow a programme of work.

Programmes of work can be delivered either as a course for a group of people or individually through self-directed study supported by worksheets. In some cases both types of learning are offered. Subject specialist tutors do the initial individual assessment and guidance procedures at the DISC in private interview rooms. These procedures have been developed by the basic skills management team within the college and are supported across all the college DISCS. There is a whole college basic skills approach with regular basic skills manager meetings and a faculty internal review and assessment quality procedure. Each DISC has computers available for discrete ITC learning which also provide additional learning resources for maths, English and ESOL.

As the DISCs provide for a range of learners within different communities Yvon located her research in two so that she could observe different DISCs, different tutors and different subjects being delivered. It was decided in collaboration with the basic skills manager to focus the Adult Learners' Lives research in Rotunda DISC in Kirkdale and Dovecot DISC in Dovecot. These represent different learning environments and local populations. Rotunda Community College is an independent community college serving the area of Kirkdale, which is a mile or so out of the city centre near Bootle. It is a dockland area that shows evidence of extensive regeneration and rebuilding alongside large areas of industrial decay and neglect. The college itself is housed in several Victorian buildings that form a rabbit warren of stairs and rooms on different levels. It is due to be replaced by a new purpose-built building in the near future. Dovecot DISC is housed in the newly refurbished library at Dovecot. Dovecot is on the outer edges of the city near to Knotty Ash and is a mixture of old council housing and new build. It is an area where people use local facilities because transport to the city centre is expensive and time-consuming. The small shopping centre which houses the library is currently being regenerated with new community facilities being added and existing ones modernised. The DISC is a modern purpose-designed room, set within the library, with a suite of computers and new furnishing creating a modern learning environment. Yvon joined the maths drop-in session at Rotunda on Wednesday mornings where teacher-researcher Kath Gilbert taught, and a spelling group at Dovecot DISC on Thursday morning with teacher-researcher Dianne Beck.

Classes attended

Maths drop-in, Rotunda

The maths drop-in at Rotunda is delivered in a large room that has an administrative office at one end and an English class at the other end. It is a noisy and hot environment with the sound of phones ringing and being answered at one end and students talking in the English group at the other. Because of the layout of the building there is also continual background noise from other classes and people on the staircase.

The maths drop-in session is delivered to a small group of between six and eight learners at different levels who vary in age and in the maths that they are learning. There is one male in his mid 30s and the rest are female. The oldest student is in her mid 50s and the youngest is 19. The students gave two main reasons for attending the class: to improve their own chance of employment (either indirectly or directly) and to help give them confidence and the ability to help their children or grandchildren with maths. The youngest student is working at E1 level and came because she had difficulties telling her left from right and also in telling the time, causing her problems with her child care training. She was supported in attending the drop-in sessions by her placement officer in the training organisation nearby, where she is completing an NVQ in child care. Another student was receiving study support for GCSE maths and statistics in other GCSE coursework and was expected to achieve a grade A or B.

She was a single parent with two small children and explained that although it was very difficult to find time to study, her motivation was to improve their material circumstances by being able to buy a house and have a foreign holiday *'for the kids'*. She also wanted to provide a model of educational success for her children to aspire to. The male student described his motivation for attending as twofold: to provide structure in his day as an unemployed person and to make himself employable again. He had had a serious road accident several years ago that left him with depression and anxiety as well as physical injuries that prevented him from doing the heavy work he had previously done.

Attendance at the drop-in session varies from week to week although there were four or five regular students coming to this session. The tone of the drop-in is welcoming and informal. Students are greeted by the tutors and other members of the group when they arrive before settling to work individually. There is no 'official' start to the session, each student arrives, gets their work out of the file drawer and individually discusses the content of their learning with the tutor. By using individual learning plans and records (some of which the students complete themselves) the tutor is aware of progress made from the week before and discussion identifies what the student wants to concentrate on in that particular session. Each student works individually on a worksheet in the area of study that they have requested. Topics that were being studied included multiplication (two and three times tables), measurement (including conversion from inches to centimetres), fractions (including conversion to percentages) and ratios. All college materials and worksheets have been mapped to the core curriculum. The tutor spends time with each student, moving around the table and responds to requests for help or clarification. The drop-in caters for students attending for specific skills support who attend for a term or two and also for those who attend over a longer period of time relearning many maths basic skills not acquired in school.

Spelling, Dovecot

The spelling class at Dovecot DISC is being delivered in response to student requests for spelling, punctuation and grammar. The session is delivered at one end of the DISC, which is a large modern purpose-built room within Dovecot library. There is an ITC drop-in session delivered at the same time as the spelling session in the top half of the room on the 20 computers that are housed there.

The students in the spelling session vary in age from late 20s to almost 70. In the group of ten regular attendees two are men. One student who works part time described his motivation for coming as being social as well as to improve his spelling skills, something he had always found difficult. A female student in her early 40s, who had been off work for nearly two years with depression, described her motivation for attending as wanting to improve her skills and self-confidence in order to be able to find work again. Another female student in her late 20s, who lived with severe depression, described her motivation for attending as giving structure in an otherwise empty day and as a way of improving her self-confidence. The oldest learner, who was nearing 70 and who had been deaf all her life, described her motivation as discovering a love of learning. She had missed a lot of early education because of her deafness and a subsequent large family had prevented later study. One other learner, who in her mid 30s had never managed to hold down a full-time job, also described the social aspects of learning and the importance of learning English to be able to help her with maths, which she was also studying. The students range from working at E1 to L1 and L2 in the core curriculum.

During sessions the tutor, Dianne, used the flipchart at the front of the group to explain and

demonstrate to the whole group. Students were also invited to contribute to the discussion and tasks, adding material to the flipchart themselves. The atmosphere was friendly and informal; students arrived and were greeted by the tutor and other group members before sitting and waiting for the start. The tutor started the session by recapping the work done the week before, including homework and checking levels of understanding. The session was conducted using the flipchart and worksheets, using a mixture of group and individually focused work. Students discussed their homework or other writing done individually with the tutor either in the session or as it closed.

Research activities

Conducting ethnographic research 'at a distance' (making the regular 100 miles round trip from Lancaster to Liverpool) has meant finding ways of working that have relied less on using systematic observation of these two classes and more on developing collaborative working. This development included video recording a teaching session in each of the two focal learning environments. Initially Yvon attended both classes over many weeks getting to know the classrooms, the students and other staff in the DISCs. This was done by informally talking to students and recording classroom interaction in fieldnotes. In building up a collaborative framework Yvon worked closely with the two teacher-researchers Kath and Dianne who provided access into the classroom, additional information and support. Reciprocally Yvon provided support for Dianne and Kath's individual research that was developed as part of the ALL project and for the Diploma module that was part of the Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme at Lancaster University. In addition to weekly attendance at the focal classes at Rotunda and Dovecot DISC additional planning meetings were held with Kath, Dianne and Yvon at Collquit DISC in the city centre where they both also taught.

Some of the questions that we addressed in the focal classrooms generally in this first pedagogic phase of the Adult Learners' Lives project were about teaching and learning: questioning what the relationship is between them and links to everyday learning. As the site-specific research developed it presented an opportunity to compare teaching and learning in two similar but different classes in Liverpool. In the maths class Kath used a mainly individually negotiated style of teaching using worksheets based upon learners' stated needs and individually tailored responses. An experienced tutor, Kath voiced concerns that she did not do enough group teaching in the maths drop-in and the group lacked cohesion. We acknowledged that group teaching is one of the measures of a successful class, as outlined in the Common Inspection Framework used by the ALI Inspectorate. The spelling class, in contrast, used a lot of group teaching with front of class delivery on the flipchart supplemented by small paired and group tasks. Although individual learners were consulted about their progress, the group tackled the tasks, which Dianne had prepared mainly as a whole class activity with breakaways using worksheets. These were often done in pairs unless a student requested to work on their own. The group was consulted about the subject matter of the next course, whether it should be punctuation or grammar; once the decision had been made students assumed the tutor would make the decision about the style and pace of delivery. Dianne, as a relatively new basic skills tutor, questioned whether individuals had enough support and choice within this style of delivery.

As the research developed both Kath and Dianne agreed to be videoed teaching a session of their own class to provide detailed classroom data for the project and also to help them reflect on their own teaching practice as part of their professional development. Both expressed considerable reservations about their own performance but were determined to overcome this and contribute to the Adult Learners' Lives project. Together it was possible to

work out a time-scale for working with the students to discuss videoing, getting students involved in the videoing, interviewing the students before and after the video, watching the video with the students and discussing their reaction and watching the video with Kath and Dianne and recording their observations and comments. This process of negotiation across two focal classes was started in February 2003, the video was recorded in early April and the cycle completed in May 2003. In each of the two focal classes Yvon discussed being videoed with the class explaining what would be happening and that the tutor (Kath or Dianne) would also be videoed. Students asked questions and were interested in the research.

In the following session (one week later) the video camera was taken into each of the two classes for the class to 'play' with and to decide on seating arrangements to capture the best recording of the session. In the Dovecot spelling class this was particularly important as two students were happy to take part in the class but did not wish to be recorded. This was satisfactorily negotiated in the class with one student being positioned out of shot and the other agreeing to operate the camera. The students in both classes agreed to be interviewed briefly before the video to audio-record what they hoped to learn in the session being videoed and also after the session to record what they felt they had learned. It was agreed by them that they would be happy for Yvon to have photocopies of the work done in that session for analysis. In both cases a selection of students were interviewed both before and after the videoed session (four at Rotunda, five at Dovecot), with interviews focusing on student learning aspirations/expectations and teaching delivery.

The video was also shown to the students. Comments from both groups watching were very positive about the content and they felt it reflected their learning environments accurately. Comment from watching the video included how much fun the class looked and what a friendly informal feel it had. This contrasted with the tutors' perceptions and self-critical comments about how slow the lesson had gone and how many interventions they had made.

A great deal of additional material was generated from the videoed session of the two focal classes. This included: the mini-interviews before and after the session; copies of work generated by both students and tutors; taped video footage of the session; tutor profiles of the students; tutor pre-session plan and post-session evaluation; and audio-recording of students' and tutors' comments and analysis of the video recording. This material provides a rich multilayered source of information of the learning and teaching occurring in these focal sessions, providing different but complementary inside-out/outside-in views. Early analysis of the focal classroom, as a site of learning and teaching, has concentrated on using grounded theoretical approaches to see what is emerging from the data (see section 3.4.3, below). It will be possible to look at the relationship between what the learners learn and what the teachers teach, both through observation of the 'learning event' and through the words and reflections of all the participants.

3.3 The overall database

A list of all the data that has been collected in each of the different settings can be found in Appendix 3. Each site has generated a different sort of data, because the work that has been done in each place has been different, in response to the particular characteristics of each site, the logistical issues involved and the constraints and opportunities within which the project was operating.

3.3.1 Blackburn

Rachel has worked primarily in two ESOL classes, mainly with refugees and asylum seekers, because this part of the Adult Learners' Lives project was contributing to the NRDC series of ESOL case studies. Therefore her data is very focused on these two classes, consisting of classroom observations and participant-observation fieldnotes, interviews with learners and photographs and documents provided by learners about their needs and perceptions. She has not worked directly with the teacher-researcher fellows in Blackburn or in Accrington in data collection, although she has met with them on a regular basis to discuss the development of their own projects.

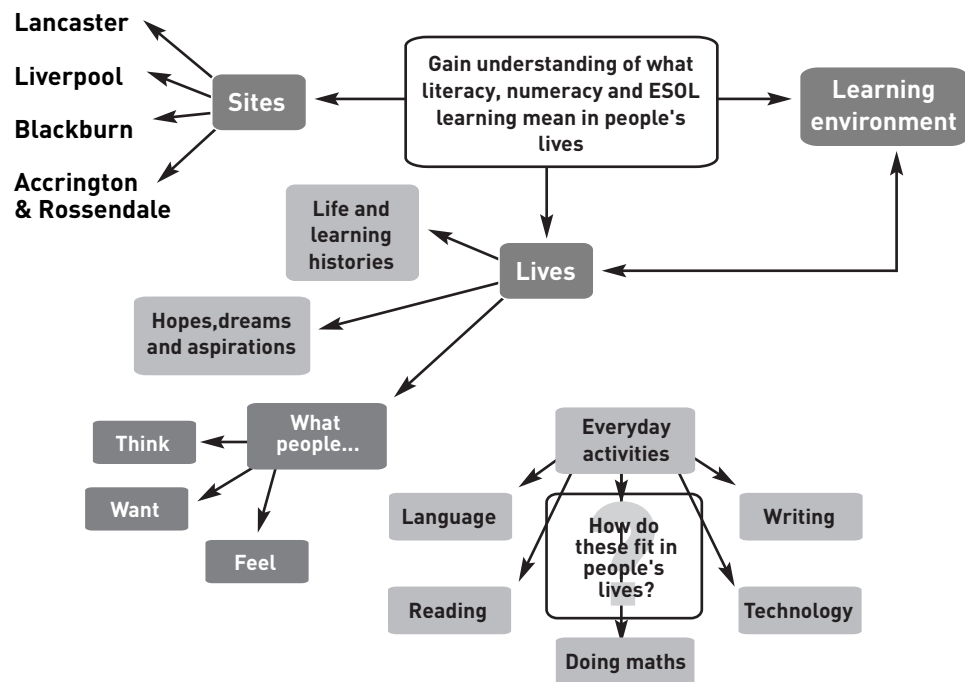
3.3.2 Lancaster

Karin's work was the most straightforward logistically speaking, since the research site was very close both to the university where the Centre is based and also to her own home. She was therefore able to take a broader ethnographic approach of 'just being around' the college over the year as a whole, taking ongoing fieldnotes relating to all the interactions she was involved in, getting to know learners slowly and informally and only later on supplementing this data with recorded interviews and recordings of classroom interaction. This built up relationships of trust and mutual support which enabled students to be open with her about their lives, challenges, hopes and aspirations.

3.3.3 Liverpool

Yvon's work has been much more closely tied in with the teacher-researchers in Liverpool. Because of the logistical difficulties involved in carrying out fieldwork at a distance, particularly given the organisation of Liverpool Community College basic skills provision into drop-in study centres across the city, she has been forced to take a more focused approach, working directly with the teacher-researchers. She has worked in detail with one of each of Kath and Dianne's groups, interviewing learners repeatedly and video-recording classroom interactions, taking a very collaborative approach which directly involved teacher-researchers and learners in the data collection process.

While this approach to data collection has generated different types of data in the different sites, taking this varied approach was appropriate in terms of some of the basic principles of the Adult Learners' Lives project: being responsive to the setting and allowing the research to evolve. Many of the differences between the datasets were for the most part imposed by the setting. For instance, Yvon was able to video classes because learners were enthusiastic about being video-recorded and it was something that teachers were also willing to try, whereas this was not a possibility for either Karin or Rachel as the teachers they were working with felt that video-recording would be too intrusive. Other differences emerged as a result of different working relationships with teacher-researchers, often being due to logistical factors. However, these differences in the dataset existed for a purpose: they enabled each of us to address, in the best way possible given the particular circumstances in which we were each placed, the central questions of the project about the relationships between people's learning and people's lives. The different elements of the Adult Learners' Lives project may have different datasets, but they are all addressing ultimately similar questions and comparing similar issues.



This diagram was first produced in the early weeks of the project, based on the team's discussions around the initial research proposal. It has been further refined over the course of this year. It summarises the broad research aims, questions and interests which we are pursuing in the Adult Learners' Lives project.

3.4 Data analysis

This year has been principally focused on gaining access and data collection, so analysis is at an early stage. Rachel's work is the most developed since analysis of much of the Blackburn data has been completed, in conjunction with Kathy Pitt, for the ESOL case study work.

This section begins with a summary of the principal themes that have emerged from that. The section moves on to include examples of the analyses that Karin and Yvon have been working on. They have been working within a different timeframe and are currently in the first stages of data analysis.

3.4.1 Data analysis – Blackburn – students' needs and the E1 class

This analysis focuses on E1 students' learning and social needs and the constraints on meeting these needs as expressed by them and as they impact on their learning experience, reflecting the research questions of the ESOL case study. It outlines the different needs students have expressed: for learning, friends, integration, security, control over their actions, work, counselling, etc. It addresses the possibilities that exist for students to meet those needs, by drawing on their own inner resources such as motivation to learn and individual strategies, on informal networks and peer support and on external resources such as college, church and material resources. The various constraints students experience are described.

These include inner constraints such as trauma and health issues and external constraints related to the experience of living in Blackburn, lack of access to networks, lack of legal and language support, racism and lack of infrastructure and interagency response. The ESOL class is described in terms of how it meets students' needs – offering haven, structure, peer support, sensitivity, use of L1, humour and IT – and what students bring in. We also address those areas where needs are not being met, particularly in the need for a bridge between learners' lives inside and outside the class. Finally we raise issues related to ESOL provision and institutional frameworks: the teacher's needs for professional support in carrying the load, the need for pastoral care, thinking through progression, the lack of response which has been experienced to staff recommendations and the problems associated with student services not being trained to assist.

What do students say about their needs?

All the learners focused on in this study had been sent to Blackburn because of the government dispersal policy, not because they had people that they knew in the area. In addition, they all had very little fluency in English. Therefore, all, on arrival, shared needs for housing, health registration, benefits, opportunities to meet and make friends and for ESOL provision. All these learners expressed a desire to integrate into the communities they were now living in and saw the need for English to do this:

F. When you know the language it's much easier to integrate yourself.

C. Because without English you can't do anything, how are you going to integrate into the society?

P. We wanted to learn how to live here.

In addition, although not all wanted to talk about their lives before coming to England, it is clear that many have been through traumatic experiences and needed support with emotional and health issues.

L. There were problems in my country, so, so with that, that caused me some problems, yes. With the troubles there are in my country.

F. To see my parents is maybe something that hurts a lot.

C. My mind isn't very good to play football ... (there are) some thoughts in my mind.

Another aspect of the traumatic experiences of these students is the lack of control over their lives that led to them becoming asylum seekers, or that results from the condition of being a seeker of asylum or a refugee. This lack of opportunity to act for themselves, or make their own decisions, is voiced in various ways:

C. I didn't come here because I wanted to, I was transferred by the Home Office.

F. He took us to Morocco – at that point we were at a loss, we were in his hands.

F. The fact is that you need and it's not possible, and you can't stay like this, you need to get something to make – to earn your own living, because expecting others to give it to you ... that's not good.

This lack of control is coupled with a need to feel secure physically, mentally and emotionally and a desire for some structure in their lives. It also contributes to a strong motivation to learn English in order to be able to move towards independence. Students seized on every opportunity to act and take initiative where they could, despite their present and past restrictions. Some of the students gave voice to this need to be positive as follows:

P. Everyday we said thanks God because we can stay here. How many people can't?

E. (interviewer) and how do you feel being here in Blackburn?

F. How can I feel? I am feeling the best possible.

It is important to note that the needs of these students are always changing rather than static, and this change in need can be seen in their interviews when we asked them to think back to when they arrived:

J. Now I can speak, I can speak English and I have many friends speak.

O. Before me, very very shy, not, never ever I can talking with anyone because the English, eh my English not good, some very very little, little bit, now some little good I need something go to the market and shop and eh, anyone understand me, what do you say what do you want, now very good speaking, I, me very very happy about it.

M. Last week I found job – part-time job – cleaning a bakery.

How are students' expressed needs being met?

One of the most striking characteristics of this particular group of learners is their enthusiastic and dedicated approach to the learning of English. Their attendance level at the daily three-hour class was very high and they worked hard both in and out of the class. Here are some of the comments of their teacher W.:

They've been very, very motivated (-) eager to learn and want to fit in.

They're just so responsive to everything – they bring so much to the lesson.

In their interviews we asked them to talk about their learning and these are some of the strategies they talked about:

F. [TV] helps a lot ... the more I watch ... and sometimes the coin drops, many times something that wasn't clear in the lesson, you saw that word but it wasn't clear, then you hear the word again on TV and then you understand the meaning.

L. I make an effort to read English, to know ... sometimes I go to Darwen library.

M. Homework is very good as well, anyway I do. If [the teacher] gives us, I will do. If doesn't give us anything, I will do.

Students come with resources for learning such as their experience of formal schooling and other languages which they draw on to aid their own and their peers' learning of English. This

positive attitude, coupled with the informal networks that they have built up on arriving in this town in order to meet their needs for friendship, for emotional support and for social activities, are strong coping strategies. One African learner, for example, when asked what helped her get used to life in Blackburn, replied:

L. If we see friends I have the time to talk, to tell them things, we tell each other things.

She named these friends as Congolese, Rwandan and Tanzanian. Another student told the class about his need, at times, to be with a friend from the same background:

F. Sometimes I'm sit my home, there no place to go, I think oh I have my friend, yeah I go to my friend, I talk to him – my friend is same my count[ry] I talk to everything of my country.

Having the opportunity to meet with people from similar cultural or linguistic backgrounds can help these learners through the difficulties of settling into a new location and language. The absence of such people is noted by a Colombian learner talking about her first experiences in Blackburn:

P. But they [Spanish speakers] coming a few months ago. But before we, just, we, Latin people here. Anybody [nobody] speak Spanish. We don't speak English.

This is a learner who experienced severe relationship problems in her first few months and needed medical support for depression both for herself and for her young son, although she has since built up friendships with her classmates. These friendships and contacts are also important for the learners to help them survive officialdom, negotiate the minefields of seeking leave to remain and get to know what facilities they can access in Blackburn:

F. I met her [a Brazilian woman who sometimes interprets for Portuguese speakers] through another Angolan guy that was already living here when I arrived.

C. When I notice that he [the lawyer] can't understand me because it's very difficult, I call a friend.

M. My friend he can speak Urdu and he talk with my neighbour, and sometime he help us. He was from Pakistan and he speak Urdu with him, and he explain to him, and he help me ring. I have cousin in Cardiff as well.

The learners strongly support each other with their learning of English, even though they may not be close friends with people from the same country, living in the same house.

Outside of the class it seems to be church communities that provide the most opportunity for the learners (at least, for those who come from church backgrounds themselves) to meet and socialise with local people, so meeting their needs for integration. It was striking that no other outlets were mentioned. Several learners specifically talk about attending different churches and sometimes being given support to attend:

L. Sometimes they come to pick me up from the house, as well, to go [to church], I don't have transport, sometimes.

C. Every other Friday (-) I am going to a meeting in D, a church.

For these learners, church attendance may be enabling them to address their spiritual needs, but they also provide further learning opportunities as one learner explains:

F. There we have the opportunity to exchange opinions, at the church it's very good because we have there a youth group that gives you the opportunity.

On arriving in Blackburn the immediate needs of these students for housing and practical orientation were perceived to have been met by all but one student:

C. It has everything that you can have in a house (-) they support us.

M. You can go ask for house if you need any furniture for house, if you need any help for your money, they help you, they tell you Post Office.

The material needs of these students, therefore, were seen to be met. These houses become places of both refuge and withdrawal as the students attempt to cope with their new lives.

Constraints students face in meeting their expressed needs

Although the students' material needs were met, we found a complete lack of interagency support for their mental health, social and legal support needs as they arrived in Blackburn. As we have seen in the first section, all of these students have gone through traumatic experiences and most were living in constant anxiety about their families back in the countries they had left, their applications for asylum and refugee status and their future prospects:

F. I am back home I am very tired, and go bed, I think for my life, you know – I think of everything for my life, I think of father, my mother, my brother and everything because long time I don't see my mother or father – twenty-five years I not see my mother, yeah ...

P. But I really worry about my family, they live in Israel very poorly – my sister now a little better but my mom ...

This insecurity and anxiety impact on their learning:

Fi. – I cannot think about anything. I cannot learn English, I am always thinking, thinking.

During class observations Rachel noted several times a student's strong mood swings and appearance of depression. One student, a former boy soldier in Angola, has severe problems:

W. said that when visitors have come previously he has stared them out for quite a long time and has pretended he cannot read and write. I am glad she has told me this because C. takes one look at me, stops dead in his tracks frozen to the spot just inside the door and gives me a very long hostile stare and his body seems very tense and quivering. He looks very fearful and very wary and very ready to take some action if necessary. (Fieldnotes 7 March 2003.)

The ESOL teacher and their friends give support but there is no counselling provided which

could assist the ESOL teacher to meet their needs. Only one student has managed to access support for her own and her son's emotional and mental problems. On her arrival in Blackburn P. went through a lot of difficulties with her partner, who eventually left her and her children:

I had problems, big problems with myself, with depression, with all my life.

Through the visits of the health visitor to the family she was introduced to support through the women's centre and her son is now receiving psychiatric support, part of which is his mother's membership of a weekly parent group run by the local hospital. She is also the only student to have gained significant access to English-speaking networks; partly through this support system and partly because she now has a relationship with a local resident:

It's a friend. He help me a lot. English friend. Yes, he is important – yes, material things for the home and to communication with me.

Gender, ethnicity and being a parent play a role here in both access to support and language learning. P. is the only South American student in the group and the only student to have achieved any kind of integration. Her spoken English is noticeably more fluent than that of her classmates. Having young children does give these students more opportunities to meet expert English speakers.

There is no systematic or formal support for these students to integrate into local communities, nor are they given access to any kind of activity set up to meet their social needs. All the students talked of not having anything to do after their ESOL class and during college holidays:

F. We wake up in the morning and we don't know where to go, sometimes we spend the whole day at home.

C. There is nothing for the time being, we can't do anything.

Fi. I couldn't really. Once a week maybe to discothèque – I don't like the disco, just when I go to disco, and then I forget everything.

This lack of any social provision reinforces their sense of isolation, a situation that is compounded by the fact that Blackburn is a small town which has not previously experienced a diverse mix of peoples, even though a large proportion of its population is of Asian heritage. The African students in particular have experienced racism:

L. There was one day, I was on the telephone in the phone box, I saw English people, they saw me and they started to say "BLACK, BLACK".

F. Black people have started coming here very recently – we walked in the streets and they looked at us in a way that we didn't know what to say -everybody looked, they were scared.

F. Sometimes you didn't feel like going out in the streets ... because when you just think that you will go out and people will look at you.

As you can see from the last quote from F., this negative attention, when in public areas, sometimes leads these students to withdraw. This withdrawal, resulting both from a lack of opportunity for social activities and from racist reactions, serves to increase their anxieties and insecurity.

These students also receive no support in Blackburn for the legal processes they have to go through. Only one student, P., has a local solicitor. All the others have solicitors in either London or Dover, and have to manage their affairs through phone calls and occasional bus trips for appointments to see them. There is no language support, either:

F. If you are lucky to find an interpreter, but I didn't have this luck here with my lawyer, I had to take someone with me who could speak English.

These needs to phone, answer letters from the Home Office, pick up vouchers, sign at the police station and go and travel to see their solicitors are the main reasons, apart from ill health, that the students' attendance in class is interrupted. In addition, they often turn to the teacher W. for help, to make a phone call or discuss a letter, as she is the only support they have:

MA. She is very kind. If you ask any help, if you tell her I have to ring somebody I don't understand how to speak, she help you.

W. never refuses these requests for help, but they do place an extra burden on her:

At the end of the lesson there's always something to deal with, and even at other times, coming to the staff room to ask for this done or that done.

We wish to record that very sadly, Faisullah, a 19-year-old student from Afghanistan with whom we had been working, took his own life on 4 July, the last day of term. Earlier the same week W. had talked to Rachel about each of her students as individual learners. The following extract written from Rachel's fieldnotes (1 July) records what W. said about Faisullah.

Faisullah learns from everything – all stimuli. He learns a lot on his own – he listens in the street, to the radio, TV. He asks about what he has heard and he reads a lot on his own – news on the internet, newspapers, magazines. He has a very good ear. His biggest problem is spelling. The speed at which his other language skills have developed highlights the fact that his spelling development has not kept pace. He has had periods of serious depression and paranoia. He is quite convinced that his repatriation to Afghanistan is imminent and he's terrified as his family have already fled to Iran and are living as illegal immigrants there. It doesn't help that he seems to have less status than the others even and has to sign in at the police station every two weeks. He can't stay out of Blackburn for more than five days at a time. After the Christmas holidays he went backwards in his language development and the drugs he was taking for sleeplessness made it impossible for him to concentrate. He was constantly tired and lost the ground he made. He needed a lot of support at that time and it really affected his health. He kept getting infections and abscesses and he looked really tired and unhealthy. He sometimes used to panic and go home in the middle of lessons. I rang him and talked to him and M. (an Afghan classmate) and I finally

convinced him to come and he snapped out of it. He almost had a relapse when a lot of Afghans were being repatriated but he got over that and is now blossoming. He's very sensitive and artistic – a skilled craftsman – a stonemason. We once had a lesson about favourite places and he described his favourite place where those huge Buddhist statues were that the Taliban destroyed and he said it made him feel really sad. He wants to get into the building trade eventually. He'll move on to E3.

Summary of analysis

Despite these constraints the three-hour daily language class is a rich and supportive learning environment which builds on the informal support systems and desire to learn that these students bring to it. Some of the elements that contribute towards this positive classroom culture are:

- **The teacher's relationship with the students.** W. seems to strike the balance between structure, discipline, support and friendship which she thinks the students need, responding to each student as an adult. All the students appear without exception to respond very positively to W.'s teaching and facilitation of the learning group.
- **Students' support for each other.** Strong peer social and learning support is an integral feature of this classroom culture, encouraged by the teacher.
- **Resources students bring into the class.** Peer support is offered particularly by students drawing on their own linguistic resources and shared knowledge of different languages including English. Although the classroom space is often a multilingual one, the overriding shared motivation of these students is to learn English and linguistic resources are used mainly to this end. Humour is a common feature in student interactions, often taking place in activities such as mechanical drills, making these more meaningful and enjoyable through play, with the teacher often joining in.
- **Barriers to learning.** The class observations revealed that at any one time one or more students were visibly struggling with physical and mental health problems. Class observations also showed that there is very little use of strategies to bring the 'outside' into the class and for the spontaneous free use and practice of available spoken and written English.

ESOL provision/institutional frameworks

It is clear that the E1 teacher is acting as ESOL teacher, social worker and counsellor with very little institutional support, which inevitably takes its toll. Interviews with the teacher and students clearly signal the need for the college to act on suggestions staff have been making related to the needs of these students. ESOL staff would like to see the college playing a wider role such as providing social space and activities and providing counselling for progression, training and job-seeking by properly trained counsellors in the college Student Services, who understand the particular needs and issues associated with students seeking asylum and refugee status. The college could also play a role in more interagency joined-up thinking and support for this group of students.

Future plans

During the next year Rachel will move out from the college context into basic skills provision in the community. She hopes to begin by working with some learners who are involved in a basic skills initiative with Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery as well as following up contacts already made with other providers. As part of the longitudinal study, Rachel will be continuing to work with a small number of the students seeking asylum that she has already interviewed. She will follow their learning journeys, both formal and informal and study their uses of language, literacy and numeracy in everyday contexts outside the class.

As a final glimpse of the students' lives the next page shows photos taken by some of the students.

Lisette is an E1 ESOL student from Rwanda who came to Britain in July 2002 and who is seeking asylum in the UK. As part of the research she and other students took photos to represent their feelings about living and being students in Blackburn. (These photos are reproduced with the permission of the participants. Copyright Lancaster Literacy Research Centre).



Lisette with fellow ESOL students who come from a wide range of countries and linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The class is an important social space as well as a learning environment, the students offering each other much needed friendship and support. Their teacher is continually offering social and learning support related to their status as asylum seekers.



Lisette and the other students began by just using ESOL software but their teacher then responded to their requests to learn to use email and the internet. This helps them to communicate with family and friends where possible, to get information and to read their own language newspapers.

Lisette spends a great deal of time in her room as she has little money to go out and she feels safe and secure at home. She does various personal, as well as college related, reading and writing activities. She says she also spends a lot of time thinking and worrying about her situation as an asylum seeker and about her future.



3.4.2 Data analysis, Lancaster – the individual learner

The research work in Lancaster has focused on long-term ethnographic participant-observation, building up relationships with students over time. To illustrate the sorts of understandings which are emerging from working in this way, we present here an initial analysis of all the data that has been collected so far relating to one particular student, D. We first describe D. and her experiences of learning and then move on to address the benefits she experiences in coming to classes, the things that help her with her learning and the things which make her learning more difficult. Finally, we summarise the themes that are emerging from this work.

About D.

D. is a woman in her late 30s who lives independently in a rented flat. She is assisted in everyday life by a group of carers from a local network which supports adults with learning disabilities. She lives in a small town near Lancaster, where she was born and grew up. Her parents ran a grocer's shop in the town and her grandmother ran a pub, so she is well-known and has lots of personal contacts in the local area. She does not work at the moment. She has a boyfriend who she sees about once a week and her family are very important to her. She has been coming to college since September 2002, attending the Tuesday afternoon English and the Friday morning Maths classes.

Karin has worked with D. one-to-one in both the English and the Maths classes over the course of the year. D. has so far participated in two research interviews, one held in college relating to what learning has meant in terms of her everyday life and one held at her flat, in which she asked to talk about her family. This second interview also addressed her everyday literacy practices and the influence of the learning she had been doing at college. She also agreed to have a one-to-one session with her regular volunteer in the English class recorded. She is happy to continue to participate in the project longer-term and often expresses positive interest in being involved. Karin and D. have built up a good friendly relationship over the course of the year.

D. used to live in a mobile home with her mum, but moved into a flat after her mum died a couple of years ago. Losing her mum, who used to be her principal carer, was a difficult experience for her and dealing with this has shaped much of her life since. When she first arrived at the flat where she now lives she was very distressed and cried 'all the time'. She had had insufficient support in the mobile home after her mum's death, having a bad experience particularly with an unreliable carer who used to turn up late. The network which supports her now meets her needs much better. Carers come in daily to assist with shopping, cooking and everyday needs and stay overnight four nights a week as D. prefers to have company, although she is learning to spend more time alone and getting better at it. She takes care of a lot of her own daily chores, such as doing the washing and vacuuming the house, sometimes with help from carers. A poster is put up in the kitchen each day by one of the carers, to remind D. and her carers about what is planned for the day, in words and images.

It was the manager of her support network who first suggested D. might like to try attending the Adult College. She was initially very reluctant and suffered a panic attack before her initial interview. She had already had some negative experiences of education. D. attended the Further Education college in Lancaster briefly at the age of 18, after having left school at 15, but she found the experience difficult and unpleasant and this put her off formal education for

some time. She said that the things she did at the FE college were *boring*, that they only did *'cooking ... went out ... things that I thought it was boring'*. There were also practical difficulties. She had to make two bus journeys on her own to get to and from college, which was both personally challenging for her and expensive for her mother. She has health problems which can make long flights of stairs difficult, but was told she was not allowed to use the lifts at the FE college. So she did not attend classes there for long. She has also attended computer courses at Preston College but did not enjoy the experience. In general she does not report her prior educational experiences positively, saying that *'at the other school we didn't learn much'* and that she remembered doing only:

boring things ... We didn't do much really, only morning service and went to watch programmes about this, that and the other. ... Didn't learn, not a lot.

However, she enjoys coming to the classes at the Adult College. She attends both of her classes on her own without carers and participates in both individual and group work. She is sociable and friendly and enjoys chatting and joking with tutors, volunteers and other students. Her skills, abilities and confidence have developed significantly in the time she has been attending classes.

Benefits D. experiences from attending classes

There are significant social benefits associated with D.'s attendance at classes. When we talked about the difference that coming to classes has made in her life, she said without hesitation that it has changed:

the way I feel ... it's made me happier, made me better, not sad ... I don't cry any more.

She said that she was a mess' after her mother died, but that coming to college has made me more happier ... I'm not down, not sad any more.' She finds that:

It's the way to get it out of my mind, working ... It's better than staying at the new flat and crying all the time. ... It takes it off my mind. A bit, not a lot though, but it does help with you and J. [volunteer tutor], making me laugh. You both make me laugh.

When asked what she gets out of coming to classes, her first response was:

Fun, laughter ... interrupting, like M. [another student who had been particularly rowdy that day]. Things like that. It's just good to come. Instead of staying in the flat, being lonely on my own, I thought I'd come here to college.

In the second interview she said that:

English, I love that, we have a laugh and a joke, you see.

D.'s gains in self-confidence and self-esteem were visible in the way she interacted with other students. Karin did not attend the classes until late October, by which time D. was coming into classes on her own, but the teacher-researcher in the class reported that when she first attended in September 2002, she could not come to class alone and was accompanied by one of her carers. In October and November she was participating in the group work portion of class in a cautious way; fieldnotes record comments like *D. spotted rhymes – quietly*, or record her spelling out words with a lot of support from the tutor. A few months later, she

was one of the most willing and vocal participants in group work and even contributed to managing other students' behaviour. For instance fieldnotes from 29 April 2003 record:

P. [male student] was excited and talking a lot, it was starting to make P. [female student] uncomfortable, she was frowning and making slightly unhappy noises, so D. said his name sharply several times to try and make him be quiet.

Later in the same class she spontaneously entertained the students by doing Basil Fawlty impressions at an appropriate moment: *Sibyl – no!* She will also joke with tutors:

20 May 03: D. behaves as if she is very happy and confident in class now. While L. [one of the class tutors] was checking over some work, there was a loud call from around the corner where D. was working with J.: L.! I can't read your writing!

One of D.'s care workers told us that both the care team and D.'s family have also seen a big change in her since she has been coming to college. She is happier, more confident and a lot more assertive than she has ever been before. Her body image has changed, she is confident enough to wear trousers now which she was previously not willing to do. (D. makes a real effort with her appearance, she often buys new clothes and looks very well turned-out.) The carer said that the initial aim of D.'s college attendance had been to expand her network of connections so that she was less reliant on the carers in different situations and that it has worked very well.

These social benefits have been accompanied by subject-specific learning gains. Having worked with D. throughout the year, Karin was able to see progress in a number of areas. Her handwriting became clearer and her knowledge of how to spell different words improved. She became much more confident in using the computer, both in using the keyboard and the mouse. For instance on 20 June 2003 we did a diagnostic assessment in the Maths class using the computer, and fieldnotes report that:

D. is now quite at ease with using the mouse and clicked away happily.

This was a new skill which she acquired over the course of the year. She reported in her first interview that:

I do money better and I do my writing better than I did.

By the end of the year, she was writing letters to her carers with support and writing short stories based on picture stimuli. She has also started going to the library with one of her carers and getting books out and she enjoys reading books, especially animal stories. If one of the carers brings a newspaper in she will always look at that, and enjoys looking at catalogues and magazines. One of her carers says (2nd interview) that she is now able to read out telephone numbers over the phone accurately and confidently and that this is a skill which has definitely improved since D. has been attending college. She also enjoys writing Easter cards, Christmas cards and birthday cards to friends and relatives. All of this is significant progress for her.

Things that help D. with her learning

D. says that the main thing that has made this possible for her is the help that she has

received, particularly working one-to-one with a regular volunteer in the English class and with Karin in the maths class. She said that her principal concern before she came to college was 'getting no-one to help me'. She finds maths more difficult than English and is very clear that she will only continue with the maths classes next year if she can be confident that one-to-one support will be available to her. However, she is quite pro-active about getting the help that she needs. At the beginning of the year, she was not enjoying the maths class, in which she was working without a regular volunteer tutor. After Karin's first research visit to the Tuesday afternoon English class, D. approached her and asked if Karin could also come along and work with her in the maths class.

She is also very clear about the things that she likes working with. For instance, she uses plastic money to support her sums work in the maths class and whenever Karin or the class tutor suggested she try without the money, she would say, 'No, I use money.' Towards the end of the year she was gradually starting to do more sums without the mediation of the coins, but only when she was ready to do so herself. She enjoys working more when she is able to select activities and mediational tools in this way and can sometimes become frustrated if her needs are not listened to.

It is also important to her that the class is a safe environment in which she can progress without experiencing too much pressure.

K. So do you think that it really was starting to come to college that made the big difference for you?

D. Yeah. With a bit of talking, a bit of listening, a bit of confidence. Not pushing me but just ... just said, go try it and see if you like it or not.

Things that make learning difficult for D.

Several factors have been identified that can make learning difficult for D. The most important thing is for her to have someone available to work with her and where this is not possible she can become frustrated or feel stuck.

Another thing which she finds difficult is being in a noisy environment with lots of interruptions. Having people around her who are noisy or who interrupt make it hard for her to concentrate on her work:

K. What sorts of things do you not like doing?

D. Mmm – not being interrupted ... I hate that because you don't get on, do you?

From fieldnotes:

11 Feb 03: *D. is thinking of dropping out of the Maths class on a Friday, partly because she finds it hard and partly because she finds it difficult to work in a group with R. [another student], who she finds 'rude'.*"

7 Mar 03: *D. finds it very difficult to concentrate when M. is working with her, as he is very noisy.*

A major difficulty D. experiences is that she often has to miss classes for health-related reasons. Notes on this are spread throughout the year's fieldnotes:

3 Dec 02: D. has been ill, she collapsed last night and looked very tired. She is seeing the doctor on Thursday.

10 Dec 02: D. had seen the doctor since she collapsed the day before class last week, and her blood pressure was slightly high, so the collapse could have been a combination of that and of having been very tired. She was going to get the results of some more tests today. She still looks tired, she had very dark circles under her eyes.

31 Jan 03: D. has been ill, her cold lasted for a long time, she still has a sore neck and had a temperature last Friday which is why she didn't come to last week's Maths class.

18 Feb 03: D. said that she was ill last Friday with deafness and chest pains so hadn't made it to class.

11 Mar 03: D. is still not well and is very tired. She said that she had had diarrhoea three times that day and isn't sleeping – the circles under her eyes were very, very dark today. She is seeing the doctor again on Monday at 2 for a check-up.

20 May 03: D. was ill yesterday, and said she was sick all day – she had very dark circles under her eyes – and didn't feel like coming to college today.

As well as suffering illness, D. has had a number of accidents which have affected her health during the year. She fell and hurt her ankle in spring and her arm in summer:

6 Jun 03: D. had hurt her arm and was in pain. ... She slipped in the kitchen and banged her arm and her head ... She is in pain now and thinks she may need to go and see a doctor next week if it doesn't sort itself out. Her ankle is still bad, too.

20 Jun 03: D.'s ankle is playing up again, she is waiting for an appointment at the hospital. She was also rubbing her arm where she fell.

She also has a heart condition which requires monitoring and has had eye operations in the past.

Finally, D. is still dealing with the grief associated with losing her mother and there are times such as important anniversaries when she finds it difficult to concentrate for this reason:

17 Dec 02: D. said she was a bit tired today and feeling a bit sad, because it was exactly a year since she had moved into her flat today.

28 Mar 03: Today was a difficult day for D. as it was her mum's birthday, so she was thinking about her a lot.

Emerging themes

Many of the themes which are emerging from the work that has been done with D. have also emerged from work with others in the Adult College.

- **The importance of support being available** which is appropriate to the learner's needs.
- **The importance of the learner having control** over learning activities and over the environment.
- **The importance of the learning environment as a safe space**, in which friendly and trusting relationships are built up, which make it possible to integrate subject-specific learning with discussion of broader life issues.
- **Health issues** as a principal barrier to learning.
- **The very significant individual and social benefits** emerging from this learning which do not necessarily relate to testable achievement.

Future plans

In the next few months, we will be working through the data which has been collected relating to other learners in a similar fashion, pulling out the emerging themes and patterns which are relevant to understanding the relationships between people's literacy, numeracy and ESOL learning and their lives as a whole.

Over the next year, Karin plans to carry out similar ethnographic work moving out into the community provision that exists in Lancaster. Most of this is offered through the Adult College which will facilitate access, since this provision involves many of the same teachers, and teachers who have been involved with the research so far have given positive feedback about the impact of having a researcher in the class and the benefits which this has offered for teachers and students. She will also continue to work with a smaller number of the learners she has got to know this year, as a basis for the longitudinal element of the project. Ten of these students have been identified as being potential 'longitudinal people', and will be followed up with regular formal and informal interviews and visits throughout the life of the project. These are also the people with whom more in-depth work about their everyday literacy and numeracy activities will be carried out.

3.4.3 Data analysis, Liverpool – the focal classroom

First analysis in Liverpool has concentrated on looking in depth at one focal classroom, a drop-in Maths workshop, so that emerging themes can be compared and contrasted across both, looking for differences and aspects of synergy between them.

Concentration and engagement

The Rotunda maths group video shows clearly that in spite of the very poor learning environment (it was noisy, hot and 'old fashioned') the students displayed enormous concentration and attention to task. This was not simply a 'video effect' as this was also recorded in observational fieldnotes on other days. Students were engaged in their worksheet and were able to communicate with each other, both individually and as a group, then return to their own learning.

Pace and support

The issue of pace and not getting lost in lessons, was significant as each of the four students in their pre-video interview had described themselves as having been very shy at school, where they had been left behind as they were unable to ask for help when needed. The students in their pre-video interviews all described the maths drop-in as friendly and informal, an atmosphere that supported their learning. They also all described being motivated to learn particular skills, some connected to employability and some to coping with everyday life, which strengthened their feelings of individual self-worth. The video analysis showed how these two things co-existed in the maths drop-in where there was social activity and group interaction alongside focused individual work, with students being able to move easily from one to the other. K., the 19 year-old learner, described this:

Sometimes I can work better on me own. When I'm on me own I can concentrate more and get more done, but like sometimes if you're with a mate you tend to talk, and I work as well as go to a mate if it's in a different part. And then I work sometimes with Kath (tutor) as well. When Kath's helping me I feel, 'Oh I can do it now 'cos she's showed me step by step'. It's just different, like you come in and if you oh like you're like don't fancy doing maths or like I want to work on me own and don't want to talk, or I want to gab to someone 'cos I don't want to do maths. Or, I've got a hangover so you want to talk to your friends like after. But if you come in and you think you want to do it you want to work as a team or get Kath to come and help you.

The friendly, informal, noisy atmosphere, with continual interruptions and a calm supportive figure, may mirror everyday learning at home rather than formal learning in college settings; it may therefore be known and comfortable. For many learners noise, lack of private space and interruption is part of their everyday experience in family settings. For these learners this learning environment clearly worked as they were motivated and engaged in their individual learning tasks and in their immediate learning community.

Negotiation of learning

Another theme to emerge from the first analysis, particularly in the video, was the level of negotiation between student and tutor. This was a constant and multilayered dialogue built on trust and recognition of teaching and learning roles that also related to everyday lives. There were clear expectations of the tutor and of the students, in negotiating what was to be learnt. K. identifies this above and in her comment:

Kath comes up to you after you've done like this week and she says, 'What would you like to work on?' So I thought, well I've done me times, me like times on the clock. I've done me left and me right. So me adds and take aways – thought well I'm not that good on me times so I'll do that instead of like doing me clock again because then I'm going over the same thing again. I get bored of it and I start thinking, oh I won't learn.

J., the male student in the drop-in, also describes a similar process:

Say for two to three weeks you might like spend time on a like different ... so you might do addition say for three weeks and then she might say, 'Oh you're getting better at that,' then she'll move you up to the next level, like subtraction. And then when you can do that and then say multiplication again. Say for a couple of weeks at that, then say fractions or whatever you feel. Like your confidence is there and you know yourself, in your head, as well that you've got the ability to do it. And then she'll move us.

Links to everyday life

Links to the everyday were made both in the teaching material used and in the interaction between tutor and students. The pre- and post-video interviews showed that the students were able to relate what they were learning in the material to their everyday lives. Examples of learning gains were given as learning about weighing helping with personal use of scales, of number recognition helping with computer keyboard use, of timekeeping and record-keeping improving at work and also of being able to understand temperature ranges when booking a holiday. There were moments of teaching and learning that moved from clear tutor–student role negotiation to more informal learning. In one moment the learners and the tutor responded in patterns more linked to everyday gender behaviour, breaking some of the patterns of previous interaction. A student-led example of this was the ‘measuring episode’ where a tape measure was used to measure objects in the classroom, including parts of the body. Instead of asserting authority simply as a tutor in the ensuing hilarity Kath responded as a person with warmth and humour. She and the learner, who was standing, laughed standing close and giggled. It would have been hard for an outsider to identify who was the learner and who was the tutor. This episode suggested that the negotiation was two-way, where roles moved between formal and informal teaching and learning roles and where links to everyday life behaviour could occur.

Emerging themes

Emerging themes from this first analysis of the focal classroom focusing on learning and teaching include:

- **Negotiation between learning and teaching based upon response to individual learning motivation.** This included previous life experiences and future plans and aspirations.
- **Learning engagement linked to everyday life in learning materials and learning progression.** Learners linked their engagement to the relevance of skills learned to their lives, including future employability and monitored their progress.
- **Social aspect of learning and the importance of a learning community.** This was expressed as a relationship between individual achievement and group support; learning was a shared but individual enterprise.
- **Adult learning preferences: relationship to skills acquisition and subject content.** The desire to work individually and at their own pace was linked to previous experiences of learning ‘failure’ at school. Uses of learning and teaching methods including self-directed learning, individual demonstration and instruction provided a range of learning supports.
- **The tutor and her role.** Although the classroom was an informal atmosphere there was trust that the tutor would help to achieve learning identified by the learner.
- **The learner as an active agent.** The learner shared some individual responsibility for outlining and monitoring their learning.

Future plans

As the analysis develops, these and other emerging themes will also be looked at in relation to the spelling class at Dovecote. Insights into motivation and engagement from these focal classrooms will be supported through the longitudinal aspect of the study by repeatedly interviewing these learners in other contexts of their lives.

In addition to the focal classroom study, eight learners were identified from these classes to participate in the Adult Learners' Lives project as longitudinal participants. They will be interviewed over the next two years, establishing links between everyday lives and learning in greater detail. Introductory interviews have been carried out with all eight, and second interviews have been carried out with five of these learners. From autumn 2003 onwards, Yvon will be following up links which have been made with a domestic violence support group and a tenants' association, to pursue the Adult Learners' Lives research in community settings.

Section 4:

The Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme

This one-year programme started in January 2003. It was aimed at experienced ABE practitioners, in full-time or substantial part-time posts, with a first degree or equivalent in a relevant area. The programme aimed to ensure an active role for practitioners in the developing programme of the research of the National Research and Development Centre, and to build capacity for organisations to carry out research and reflective practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The involvement of teacher-researchers ensured that the work done is relevant, geared to the needs of adult learners and that its value is recognised by teachers.

Six teacher-researchers were recruited from within institutions which are research sites for the Adult Learners' Lives project –

- The Adult College Lancaster – 2.
- Liverpool Community College – 2.
- Blackburn College – 1.
- Accrington and Rossendale College – 1.

Teacher-researchers have been supported by one day per week fellowships (approx. £6000 per year) lasting one year, paid direct to colleges for full-time teachers to release them from work and paid directly to the teachers in part-time employment. In addition, research expenses such as travel and fieldwork costs have been covered by the project. Fees for enrolment on one research training module were also paid.

The scheme has enabled practitioners involved to take time out of teaching to learn ways of doing research, to design and carry out a piece of research in a supportive environment with the Adult Learners' Lives research team and to feed back their work to colleagues in their work-place. In this way the six practitioners have taken an active role in the developing programme of the research of the National Research and Development Centre through the Adult Learners' Lives project, helping to build capacity for their institutions to carry out research and reflective practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

In addition to carrying out their own studies, the teacher-researchers have been working with groups of learners, conducting interviews and observations in collaboration with the Adult Learners' Lives project researchers. They are involved in the interpretation and analysis of Adult Learners' Lives data and are contributing to the dissemination of findings of the research project as a whole. They have had important contributions to make in decision-making at each stage of the research process: aims, methodology, data collection, interpretation and dissemination. The involvement of teacher-researchers has ensured that the work done has been relevant and geared to the needs of adult learners.

4.1 The process of setting up the Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme

October – January 2003

- Regular meetings (5/6) of the Adult Learners' Lives team, national evaluator and diploma module leader to plan all aspects of the programme and to link the research practice module with needs of the Adult Learners' Lives project.

November and December 2002

- Contact and discussions with basic skills managers (Advocates) at Adult Learners' Lives research sites (colleges).
- Advocates advertised Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme to staff and sought agreement from college management.
- Adult Learners' Lives researchers at each site had informal discussions with interested teachers.
- Formal agreement made with each college.

As mentioned in Section 3.1, recruitment to the Teacher-Researcher programme was more difficult than we had imagined it would be. Staff were already committed to work and managers were reluctant to release experienced staff to the programme. Changes to the qualifications framework at the time also meant that staff were unclear whether the fellowship fitted in to the new framework and pressures to gain level 4 qualifications took priority for most people.

December 2002 and January 2003

- Informal interviews of applicants took place.

Mid-January 2003

- Introduction day – Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme and Research Practice Diploma module.
- Partnership working agreements signed with the six teacher-researchers.

Teacher-Researcher Fellowship activities

- Attended an introduction day.
- Participated in regular meetings of the group at the Literacy Research Centre.
- Participated in a residential seminar for teacher-researchers.
- Completed a credit-bearing module on action-research/reflective practice.
- Designed a personal development plan and discussed this at intervals with their research mentor.
- Kept a research/learning diary during the year.
- Disseminated their experience to colleagues within the organisation in which they work. This will feed into the national seminar at which they will disseminate their experiences and findings to other practitioners at the year end.

Support from teacher-researcher affiliated colleges

In order to embed the work of the teacher-researchers the colleges involved have:

- Made available adequate resources to the teacher-researchers to carry out their work (e.g. protection of release time, provision of consumables, computer access).
- Taken an active interest in the research project being carried out in the organisation through regular meetings with the teacher-researchers and full-time researchers, supporting them through participation in decision-making and helping to facilitate dissemination of findings.

Support from the university and Adult Learners' Lives project

The university has acted as a resource and information centre, meeting place and source of research expertise, by:

- Providing mentoring support, including virtual and face-to-face group meetings, individual tutorials.
- Providing project supervision for research secondment.
- Providing training in research methods.
- Providing meeting/study space and access to computer facilities.
- Providing library access.
- Organising a dissemination event in conjunction with other host universities around the country.
- Giving professional development advice on registering for higher degrees, diplomas and research degrees offered by higher education institutions represented in the consortium.

4.2 The teacher-researchers' projects

The teacher-researchers have been carrying out individual projects within the framework of the Adult Learners' Lives project. Each project has been designed by the teacher-researchers to research issues arising out of and directly relevant to their own practice, but at the same time to contribute to the overarching research aims of the Adult Learners' Lives project by studying language, numeracy and ESOL in learners lives, and/or language, numeracy and ESOL learning opportunities.

Dianne Beck is studying the literacy practices and literacy needs of members of a domestic violence support group. She is a participant observer in this group and is collecting data through observation and interviews with the founder of the group, survivors and volunteers. She is also collecting and analysing documents and texts associated with the work of the group.

Gill Burgess is studying the way in which women learning English cope with issues relating to childbirth and the care of small children and the ESOL demands of these aspects of their lives. She is interested in their informal opportunities for the acquisition of spoken English. She is interviewing five women with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and people in the community who interact with these women and provide support for them. She intends also to observe and record episodes of interaction in these informal settings which provide ESOL learning opportunities.

Kath Gilbert is studying the numeracy histories, numeracy practices and informal methods of learning numeracy of students she teaches. She has interviewed students who are approaching Level One Numeracy, in order to get closer to their own starting points and contexts. She has also designed a questionnaire to be circulated more widely in the centre where she works, investigating people's attitudes to maths, practical strategies for coping and preferred methods of undertaking different types of calculation.

Russ Hodson is studying the role of referral agencies in learners' take-up of provision and how the services of referral agencies might be improved in order to better respond to learners' needs. He is interviewing learners, tutors, partners in the referral process and others associated with the work of referral agencies and is developing a questionnaire to distribute more widely on the basis of his findings from interviews.

Andrew Hudson is studying the numeracy practices of his students, who come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. He is interested in their uses of numeracy in everyday life, their perceptions of maths and numeracy, the way classroom numeracy translates into everyday life, and vice versa. He is investigating these through individual interviews, encouraging students to collect numeracy artefacts from their lives and teaching sessions exploring the transference of understanding between the abstract and the concrete and vice versa.

Carol Woods is studying the barriers to learning which students have encountered before joining adult language, numeracy and ESOL classes later in life. She is particularly interested in those barriers which are not so easy to identify or resolve by practical provision: for instance, lack of child care can be solved by providing crèche facilities, but low self-esteem is more difficult to identify and resolve. She has interviewed four people who joined classes much later in life to discover what caused them not to seek classes before and what they hope to gain from them now.

More details of these projects are included in the teacher-researchers' interim reports at the end of this section.

The 'Reflective research and evaluation for professional practice' module of the Diploma in effective practice in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

The teacher-researchers were six of a group of 18 adult language, numeracy and ESOL practitioners taking a research methods module provided through Lancaster University. It involved an induction day followed by five units of distance learning work. For each unit, the participants read extracts from articles, mainly about research methodology, took part in a 'posted' (asynchronous) online discussion and in a 'live' (synchronous) discussion on set topics. The teacher-researchers formed a separate live discussion group led by Roz Ivani, who also acted as their academic mentor. She was able to provide connections and continuity between their work on the diploma and other aspects of the fellowship. The diploma took a significant amount of the teacher-researchers' time, focus and energy in the first six months of the fellowship, but now that they are completing their assignments it is giving way to other aspects of their work as teacher-researchers.

Academic mentoring

After the end of the diploma distance learning activities, Roz Ivani established a fortnightly live discussion between the six teacher-researchers and her as academic mentor which was no longer driven by diploma activities. This is providing a way for them to keep in touch with each other and to have a chance to discuss their work together regularly. This is especially important now that the Adult Learners' Lives researchers are to some extent withdrawing from the research sites associated with the teacher-researchers in order to concentrate on analysis and to set up new research contacts to start in September. In addition, most of the teacher-researchers also send a monthly 'reflection' to Roz on what they have been doing and thinking as teacher-researchers during that month.

Teacher-researchers' residential: 6 – 7 July 2003

This event created a strong sense of unity and common purpose for the Adult Learners' Lives team. It made a big contribution to the Adult Learners' Lives project as a whole, helping all those of us there to establish focus, to identify key themes and ideas, to develop a common approach to analysis, to develop policy on ethical issues and communication strategy and to see new directions for the future.

4.3 Interim reports from each of the six teacher-researchers

Dianne Beck

Background

I have only been teaching since September 2001 and viewed the partnership with Lancaster University as something of an acceleration in my development as a practitioner.

Diploma

I feel relatively inexperienced as a teacher. The emphasis in the diploma module at Lancaster is on researching practice to inform and share good practice. This has helped me enormously in making me analyse my relationships with the students, the subject, the college and the curriculum. In a way, I am being forced to think all of the time, nothing is too small for scrutiny, no policy too big it can't be analysed or changed.

Involvement with the Adult Learners Lives project

I was very protective about the students who would be interviewed, taped and videoed for the Adult Learners Lives' project conducted by Lancaster. The guarantees of confidentiality and the care taken to put the students at ease has enhanced them – they feel proud to be part of a national research project but, more importantly, have gained self-respect because they have been listened to and not taken for granted. They have been pleased, as the consumer, to be asked for their input on what and how they want to learn, rather than having it imposed upon them.

(For my own part, being videoed is about as pleasant as being observed but just as informing.)

Individual research project

One of my students had founded a domestic violence support group and was attending a business English session to learn how to present the project in a professional way, verbally and in writing. She asked me to become involved in what was then the steering group.

As the Adult Learners' Lives project is also committed to research marginalised areas, such as domestic violence, my involvement with this project offered a unique opportunity for insights into the links between education and domestic violence and what marginalised individuals and groups, such as this, want or need from education.

Since becoming involved with the project, I have been trained, along with the other volunteers, in setting up a company and registering it with Companies House and the Charities Commission. I have learnt a lot about community enterprises and how to fund them and have been involved in team-building with the volunteers. I have also been elected Company Secretary and Chairperson. It has been necessary to spend as much time as possible with the group to make fieldnotes and gather data and documentation to enrich the research.

In addition to the fieldnotes and documentation I am collecting, I have taped interviews with the founder of the group, with a volunteer and with a survivor. (Six tapes in all.) The first interviews were loosely structured, the second pick up on emergent themes from the first. The third set of interviews will be with the volunteers who have been involved in training for the management of community enterprises, their comments on the training and their reasons for involvement.

Conducting and taping interviews on such a painful subject has been quite harrowing for the interviewees and interviewer alike. However, the tapes and research will not only be useful for the Adult Learners' Lives project in Lancaster, they will also be used in the educational projects the domestic violence company is now forming. A short course in recognising and dealing with domestic violence is being prepared for college for the autumn term.

The interviewees have found relaying their experiences and thoughts cathartic – so if nothing else comes of this research, it has made some individuals feel a little better about their lives.

Gill Burgess

My research is about ESOL women learners and their lives, in particular women who have had to cope with issues relating to childbirth and the care of small children. I am trying to find out how ESOL women build up involvement in social networks and if/how this has provided informal opportunities for their acquisition of spoken English as well as support in accessing services and information.

In terms of practical outcomes for my college I am looking for ways to support the learning of spoken English for this group of women who find attending formal classes difficult.

I'm looking at two areas:

1. The women's own accounts of their experiences of moving to the UK and having and bringing up children alongside their learning of spoken English.
2. The nature of interactions between ESOL women and native speakers in an informal community setting, specifically within a parent and toddler group and the learning opportunities these might provide.

At the moment I am in the process of collecting data for (1) from five women from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Egypt, Mexico, S. Korea, China, India). They are all current or former learners from my ESOL classes. I have so far used semi-structured recorded interviews with four of the women (the fifth interview is planned for next week). I've broadly transcribed three of the interviews and begun some preliminary analysis. I'm looking for any emerging themes and also at the language the women use to describe themselves, their roles and their experiences of coping and learning.

Some ideas which are emerging from the data I have analysed so far are:

- The importance of feelings and attitudes in getting involved and accessing support and learning opportunities.
- Balancing individual fulfilment against responsibilities as wife and mother.
- Effect of prior learning experiences.
- The role of the church and related community groups.
- How having children can help women access groups in the community through commonality of experience but make access to formal learning opportunities more difficult because of child care issues.
- Literacy skills supporting oral skills as a coping strategy.

In the autumn I am planning to approach (2) by:

- Interviewing some of the native speakers involved in the community groups identified by the learners about their perceptions relating to ESOL women.
- Observing, recording and analysing episodes of interaction at a parent and toddler group.

I'm also thinking about designing a written questionnaire to use with a wider sample of women at the college based on my findings from (1).

Kath Gilbert

Since January this year, Dianne Beck and I have been involved in small research projects funded by Lancaster University. Part of the work has been based on looking at teaching and learning, with Yvon, the research worker, videoing classes and talking with students. The other part consists of following up individual themes, in literacy in Diane's case and in numeracy for me.

I felt it could be interesting to look more closely at how people use maths and how they cope in everyday life, which links back to their past experiences and feelings about maths. I think that we all try to get closer to students' own starting points and contexts, rather than relying on the curriculum entirely, but as numeracy tutors we often tend to have a more external view of students' lives compared with English tutors. So I've taped a series of interviews with a mixture of students and workers in the Rotunda, where I'm based, to find out more about their individual maths histories. The interviews (about an hour long) are semi-structured, so based loosely on some questions, but quite informal. Because the sample was too small to be representative of anything in any way, I've restricted it to people who I think are around or approaching Level One, in a very general way. The questions attempted to cover the early experiences in school and perhaps work, peoples' feelings about these and also their current experiences, strategies and attitudes.

The results have been really interesting and have helped to give me a much greater perspective – like the difference between a two-dimensional image and 3-D. At the moment I'm trying out a short questionnaire based on attitudes to maths and the practical strategies people have for coping and I am aiming to use it for anyone in the centre, rather than maths students alone. I don't anticipate any particular conclusions and the intention is mainly to collect more information on numeracy practices by extending the scope. I hope it will add another perspective to the interviews, a degree of triangulation perhaps. It has a different basis too, in that I am not personally involved, since I neither know the students nor ask the questions.

I'm not sure whether any of this could be of use to maths practitioners – we obviously don't have time to go round interviewing all our students! However, I hope that some ideas may eventually emerge that we can use. For example, I wonder whether the use of questionnaires could be helpful as part of our practice, stimulating discussion with students and giving a more rounded picture, to supplement what we learn from initial interview and reviews. I'm confident that the staff in the Literacy Research Centre in Lancaster are very serious about using student centred research to affect policies in the long run – are qualifications and curricula necessarily relevant to all students' needs, for example? I'm hoping next term that it will be possible for me to work on maths for ESOL students and look at different language uses and assumptions.

Russ Hodson

The role of referral agencies in basic skills provision in Stacksteads and the implications for basic skills learners.

Aims

- Investigate how the learners' journeys have progressed to date and to evaluate the role of local referral agencies in this process.
- Compare/contrast learners' experiences.
- Evaluate the collaborative approach of ARC and the referral agencies and how this impacts on learners' experiences.

Data collection

- Classroom observation (fieldwork).
- Semi-structured individual interviews with learners.
- Interviews with key informants – partners, tutors.
- Photos.
- Questionnaires.

Progress update

- Classroom observations with two tutors have taken place.
- Interviews have taken place with two learners and the lead tutor.

Next steps

- Interview(s) with chief partners.
- Follow-up interviews with two students identified above.
- Identification of contact number/address for Learner 1.
- Interviews with a number of key partners.
- Development of questionnaire.
- Distribution of questionnaire.
- Collation of answers.

Emerging issues/conclusions

- Lack of joint-planning/cohesion in Stacksteads regeneration area.
- Lack of shared goals amongst partners.
- Very different experiences of quality of referral agencies.
- Lack of follow-up by local agencies.
- Very different prior learning experiences of student group.
- Widening participation strategies clashing with funding pressures.
- Possibility of LSC funding project to deal with issues raised above.

Andrew Hudson

Aims

The general aim of the research is to find out something about the numeracy practices of my students beyond the classroom in their everyday lives. I put together the following key questions:

1. What are the numeracy practices used by students in everyday (including work) life?
2. What are the students' perceptions of maths and numeracy?
3. How is classroom learning translated into everyday numeracy practices?
4. How are numeracy practices translated into formal classroom learning?
5. What evidence is there of numeracy, as a cultural phenomenon?

Methods

Through regular meetings and discussions with my mentor I formulated my approach. Approach is the best descriptor of my activity; I was trying to feel my way into the work without too many set methods or views. Nevertheless, it was evident that I would mostly likely be involved in:

- Individual interviews with students.
- Helping students record their numeracy practices. Photographs would be helpful.
- Helping students collect numeracy artefacts from their lives.
- Teaching sessions exploring the transference of understanding between the abstract and the concrete and vice versa. The bridge between numeracy and maths.

Data

I have currently completed five interviews between 20 and 30 minutes long.

Semi-structured interviews are used, these ensure focus using a checklist of key questions. These questions are intended to be a stimulus to discussion around certain topics. The questions need not be answered directly, allowing the interviewee scope to lead the discussion into areas pertinent to themselves. I formulated the following questions and used them as a written checklist to focus the interview:

- What do the words numeracy and/or maths mean to you?
- When do you use your maths skills?
- What difficulties do you have in everyday life with maths?
- How have you used your maths skills in a job or in your job hunting? What difficulties have you had?

All students have agreed to further interviews if needed to increase the depth of my understanding after my initial analysis of the transcriptions.

Carol Woods

Barriers to Learning

This research into barriers to learning is an attempt to justify courses which are non-accredited. The fashionable drive to accredit all learning via documentary evidence and quantifiable data appears to ignore, or dismiss, learning that adds quality or value to life but which is non-quantifiable.

All of my working life has been spent with non-achievers, all met within different professions but at any age, either sex, the non-achievement has been, for the main part, because of personal difficulties in that individuals have low self-esteem, lack confidence and are unable to approach the means to progression.

Progression should not have to demand 'testing': progression could be simple things such as writing their own greetings cards, shopping more effectively, understanding the paying of bills, whatever. I think it is difficult for us to really understand how much these seemingly basic skills can impact on someone's whole outlook on life if they can be set as targets and reached.

Recognised barriers to learning include: lack of child care, work/family commitments, recognised learning difficulties, long-term illness etc. Those categories are easy to quantify and categorise for statistics and there is currently attention paid to addressing those barriers.

The removal of physical barriers, for certain potential students, will ensure courses of education can be pursued.

There are measurable outcomes against inputting of resources in those cases. That makes funding viable but, how to measure the inputting of resources in the cases of students who have non-quantifiable barriers?

The current emphasis of funding related to accreditation suggests teachers will be entering into a 'payment by results' arena at the same point. This will ensure that students who need **Skills for Life** courses may be deprived of access simply because many basic tasks within the **Skills for Life** remit are non-accredited.

Examples of some students' life-enriching experiences that cannot be accredited:

- I don't lie in bed all day now, I'm not going back to that.
- We can shop better, we can read the labels on the tins.
- I can say, I can't read if someone points something out, without feeling the shame I used to feel.
- I've got my passport now, I can go on holiday.
- I writ [sic] my Christmas cards on my own.
- I can read where buses go, I don't need to ask now.

Section 5:

Initial reports and reviews of research

In the first phases of the project we carried out focused reviews of five topics which fed into and informed the research. We surveyed the earlier ethnographies of literacy which have been carried out. This report, A review of ethnography and literacy, is by Rachel Hodge. We also investigated the term 'informal learning', which is central to our project. This report, A review of theories of informal learning, is by Karin Tusting. We also reviewed work on retention and achievement, key concepts in *Skills for Life*. This report, A focused review on retention and achievement, is by Yvon Appleby. For the teaching and learning part of the project we have just completed a review of the literature on the relation of teaching and learning. This report, a review of how learning is accomplished in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL educational settings, is by Lydia Tseng and Roz Ivanic. Here we provide summaries of the reports. Each of the full reports will also be made available as a separate report.

In addition, we focused on a specific social issue, the relation of literacy and health. A short report, Literacy and health by Uta Papen, was produced. This has been developed with additional funding from Lancaster University and will be published in due course. An initial report is provided in Appendix 4.

We were also able to link up with work in prisons. Anita Wilson carried out a small questionnaire study into ESOL provision in prisons. An initial report of this work is provided in Appendix 5 and a full report will be made available in October 2003.

A further report was written as a result of our experiences when we first went into the research sites in the first few months of the project. Everywhere we encountered managers and practitioners overwhelmed by the pace of change. This was affecting the research and it is also affecting the implementation of the *Skills for Life strategy*. We produced a short report on these issues written by Yvon Appleby, Rachel Hodge, Roz Ivanic, Karin Tusting and David Barton with input from a local basic skills. This report is in Appendix 6, and it was considered at an NRDC meeting in January 2003.

The Department of Geography at Lancaster University was commissioned to provide a demographic profile of the three research sites, Blackburn, Lancaster and Liverpool. This was carried out by Gemma Davies and Ganiyu Agbaje and has been referred to already in an earlier section of this report and appears in Appendix 2.

5.1 Summary: A review of ethnography and literacy

Synopsis

This focused review discusses eight studies selected to represent the most recent body of work on ethnography of literacy. Ethnography starts by describing, in detail, the particular. It also connects the particular to a larger context of patterned practices showing how specific people and processes are related to their social and historical context. Ethnographers of literacy in these eight studies are concerned with the lives of people at the margins of mainstream dominant culture. They bring significant insights into the diverse worlds and lives of different people making examples of everyday literacy intelligible within the theoretical

framework they have adopted. Each of these studies broadens and extends our understanding of social meanings related to literacy practices in different contexts and taken together they provide a very powerful analysis of the link between literacies in specific contexts, broader social practices and people's values and meanings related to literacy.

Key Points

- Insight into literacy practices of different communities. There is a significant earlier body of literature to which these studies contribute to providing insight into literacy practices in different communities. Studies from a sociolinguistic and education perspective examine how adults and children in working class communities learn and use language and literacy. Other studies refer to literacy practices of children at home and school, literacy within families and of children's non-formal literacies in and out of school. Other studies focus on the literacy practices of adults including the uses of literacy in minority bilingual communities. Different literacy practices include the significance of networks and experiences of literacy practices at work.
- Literacy as social practice. All these ethnographic studies share a theory of literacy as social practice. These diverse studies illustrate the fact that there is not a single literacy but many different literacies. They are primarily concerned with documenting the vernacular 'everyday' literacies which exist and with exploring their relationship to more dominant literacies and discourses. The studies reveal how literacy practices of people from linguistic minority groups are rooted in specific historical processes: a post-colonial order, international labour migration, movement of refugees, minority rights movements or in global social and political changes.
- Theories of learning. Any theory of literacy implies a theory of learning. These ethnographies show the importance of understanding the nature of informal and vernacular learning strategies and the nature of situated cognition. Theories of local social relations are drawn on, such as the notion of community and of networks to describe how people relate within social groups and how this impacts their literacy practice. The link between social theory and theories of language and discourse is discussed examining the way in which literacy, language and communication is produced including the way that this is embedded in institutions or settings which are linked with other wider, social, political and cultural processes.
- Methodological insights. Ethnographic studies of literacies can describe and share underpinning methodological approaches. Some studies make their methodology explicit in order that it might be evaluated by others and encourage further development. It often uses a multi-method approach drawing on a variety of research techniques. This can include collaborative research methods.

Implications

These ethnographies show the kind of detailed evidence which provides a firm basis for revisiting policy and practice in literacy provision which will take more account of learners' perspectives and contributes greatly to provision being made more relevant and effective. They highlight the power of ethnography to reveal, bring insights and critically interpret the links between literacy, learning and everyday life that help us to shape policy and practice which is more inclusive and relevant to people's aspirations and needs, posing questions which can be asked in other localities and contexts.

5.2 Summary: A review of theories of informal learning

Synopsis

While 'informal learning' is a commonly used term there is no general agreement as to its meaning. This review addresses the variety of definitions of this term used by different researchers and theorists in the field.

Key points

The review identifies four different characteristics which have been drawn on to distinguish between formal and informal learning.

- **Institutional setting.** This relates to whether learning takes place within or outside a formal educational institution, frequently the key criterion used in making the distinction between formal and informal learning. There is often an elision between the element of setting and the other elements identified below. However, it is not necessarily the case that learning which takes place outside a formal institutional setting is unplanned, unaccredited, or non-hierarchical and informal in style.
- **Incidental learning.** This definition relates to learning which is unplanned, as opposed to learning in which some form of curricular content has been prepared in advance. This distinction is often made by theorists of workplace learning in particular. Unplanned learning arises from learners bringing their own lives and concerns into their learning experiences, so it can be of direct benefit in addressing their current issues. It can therefore be seen as something to be encouraged, in contrast to the idea that it is the teacher's role to plan or control all the learning that is happening in the classroom.
- **Formal accreditation.** The third indicator used to distinguish between formal and informal learning is whether learning is formally accredited, or not, in some way. This has become particularly significant in the UK in recent years when all funding for adult education became tied to accreditation, arising from changes in the Further Education Funding Council policy in the mid 1990s. But research in this field suggests that there is no necessary correlation between accreditation and the other elements of formality or informality.
- **Interactive Styles.** Another significant characteristic used by some to define a difference between 'formal' and 'informal' learning relates to the style of interaction adopted in the learning situation and the effect of this on the relative formality or informality of the teacher-student relationship.

Implications

Informal learning is a hybrid concept. Account needs to be taken of how this term is used in speaking and writing about 'informal learning', since the meanings of this term can vary so much. It is therefore useful to specify clearly exactly which of the elements above are being referred to when talking about 'informal learning', rather than leaving the definition implicit. This review will inform the Adult Learners' Lives project by suggesting potential avenues for investigation in terms of specifying the different formal and informal elements of learning in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL and of being able to identify the ways these interact in a variety of learning situations.

5.3 Summary: A focused review of retention and achievement

Synopsis

Retention and achievement, retaining students and ensuring that they gain a qualification, is a primary concern for most education providers. In post-16 education, where attendance is not compulsory, issues of retention and achievement become especially significant. It is possible to discern changes over the last two decades in the significance and meaning of retention and achievement for both the student and the educational provider. This review looks at the work of the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in the area of retention and achievement. This body of work illustrates how retention and achievement became recognised as 'an issue'. It also shows how the perceived cause of low attendance and poor achievement changed from being simply blamed on external factors (i.e. poorly motivated students from poor backgrounds) to the quality of educational provision being offered to students. The impact of this has been the many quality initiatives and staff development programmes in FE provision.

Key points

- **Early concern with high drop out and non-completion rates.** Early work into retention and achievement was prompted by high non-completion in vocational courses in the 1970s. The issue became more widely visible in the early 1990s when successive government reports (particularly 1992/3) showed high drop out rates across the whole FE sector creating widespread concern. It became apparent that although still affecting vocational courses retention and achievement was a widespread and national issue affecting all college provision. Moreover, after incorporation colleges and other FE providers were not just rewarded for student numbers, but were also financially penalised for losing students or for students not achieving qualifications.
- **The students' experience of learning.** The most significant finding of the research in motivation and retention was that non-completion wasn't simply linked to external factors but was actually linked to student experience of college. It became an internal issue about the quality of the educational experience that colleges were offering. The work found that the quality of the student learning experience was the most significant factor in completion rates. In summary they found that: completion is less affected by demography than experience at college; drop out factors included wrong course, timetabling, quality of teaching and support and teaching relationships; the significance of student sociability; information support and management systems had an impact; local and context specific action research improved quality and attention should be paid to socio-economic factors affecting students. These findings changed the focus from 'blame out there' to a critical view of the college itself and changed the focus to the learner and their learning experience, thus highlighting issues of pedagogy and of the social aspects of teaching and learning.
- **Change generation.** This body of work shows how the FE college sector has been 'turned around' using the key axis of retention and achievement. Most of the quality measures in the FE sector, including advice, guidance, student support, reporting and monitoring progress, stem from concerns over retention and achievement. The recognition that sociability is an important aspect of learning has impacted upon student experience of learning as the focus has changed to the learner and notionally, at least, put them at the centre of delivery.
- **Socio-economic factors and learning.** The various papers and reports in this body of work suggest socio-economic factors are not as significant, or central, as was previously assumed

by educators and policy makers. This provides the framework for a critical dialogue in this important area.

Implications

NRDC, along with other agencies involved in basic skills, is beginning to use the term 'engagement'. International material on motivation, persistence and engagement can extend thinking around motivation and persistence. Engagement offers potential for thinking about adult learning as it focuses on the learner's perspective. It can drive questions such as: why and how is the learner engaged and with what? What makes for successful engagement and what is disengagement? Motivation and persistence can be aspects of engagement but potentially lack the active aspect of agency that engagement could bring. These concerns can be seen as a precursor to issues around retention and achievement in formal learning environments.

5.4 Summary: A review of how learning is accomplished in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL educational settings

This review summarises research on learning in relation to teaching. There has been little study on the relationship between teaching and learning in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL educational settings (hereafter adult LNE); however, the English Language Teaching (ELT) field has taken up this topic for research in terms of their particular concerns. One of the overriding aims of the review is to evaluate insights obtained in the field of ELT to seek for their applicability in adult language, numeracy and ESOL and thereby indicate fruitful areas for future research and practice.

Findings

Four major sets of factors contributing to learning are proposed: beliefs and intentions of participants, resources available for learning, policy context and socio-cultural climate. Theory and research suggests that learning is not shaped by one single factor but a combination of them emerging differently in different contexts. In reviewing research on classroom interaction, we particularly focus on those theories and studies relevant to consequences for learning. The concept of learning opportunities is used in the literature to take account of the dialectic interaction between teaching intervention and individual learning, resulting in variation in learning from one learner to another in any given learning context. Another key concept in the literature is engagement, referring to the nature of learners' involvement in different aspects of classroom life and its consequences for their uptake of learning opportunities.

Implications

Some implications are drawn in the conclusion. The complexity of the learning-teaching relationship implies that there is no one-to-one correspondence between what is taught and what is learnt. There is little value in looking for generalisations about relationships between teaching methods and learning outcomes; it is more useful to examine how learning opportunities and possible outcomes emerge in context. Reflection on the interplay between factors contributing to learning, classroom interaction and possible accomplishment of learning is critical for understanding how learning is accomplished.

Section 6:

The broader context

6.1 First themes across the research

Individual themes come out of the specific pieces of research: each of the reviews contributes to our understanding of adult learners; then the research in each of the sites provides rich data which is being analysed; in addition the six teacher-researchers are in the middle of projects which develop from their practice. Although the research is at an early stage we can identify some strong themes across this range of data which are likely to prove significant in our understanding of learners' lives. The themes overlap and interact.

Firstly, there is a cluster of issues around *relationships* when learning and the importance of social aspects of learning. Support is important in terms of students deciding to come to classes; feelings of being supported and operating in a safe environment are essential for motivation. Within the classes across our data we have identified some of the ways in which teachers are often meeting social needs. This is a complex issue: teachers have differing perspectives on supporting social needs and there are often differences between their stated views and their actions within the class. Peer support is also often cited within the classroom context and we wish to pursue the appropriateness of ideas of classes as communities of practice and describe how these relationships support learning. The classes provide a structure and stability in people's everyday lives.

Issues of *affect, emotions* or *feelings* arise repeatedly and we wish to understand more about how they impact on learning. Part of this is how insecurity and anxiety impact on learning. This is true for the ESOL students we are studying, how issues of trauma and depression can be important and with other students, where issues of family violence have arisen. These can all create barriers to learning.

Being in control is a repeated theme. Learners often talk of being in control, or not being in control. This is often related to content and views are expressed about things being or not being appropriate. Engagement in learning seems to be closely linked to perceived relevance. We also see ways in which students take active responsibility for learning.

We identify repeated *conflicts over terminology*. Teachers go back and forth between different discourses when discussing issues of teaching and learning; they often comment on terms and dispute terms; this is true of basic terms such as 'teacher', 'student', 'learner'. This seems particularly strong at a time of rapid change in the profession. We also see this in terms such as 'motivation', 'persistence', 'retention', 'dropout', 'engagement', where there is a cluster of terms around a concept, none of them quite adequate. The basic term 'motivation' seems to be used in some quite different ways. We will explore the discourse here and aim to understand this more. Several of the terms, such as 'retention', are terms used from the perspective of the college, in that only the college talks of 'retention', a student wouldn't use this word. We are interested in identifying the terms and discourses which the students use, in order to get their perspective on these issues and in particular to identify terms where students are seen as actors or agents, rather than as passive recipients. We believe it will be valuable to rethink how this whole area is conceptualised.

Throughout the history of adult basic education, *confidence* has been one of the most often quoted terms in relation to what learners gain from classes. It is in our data from learners and it is reported in the research literature. We want to examine this in more detail, examining different types and sources of confidence, seeing how it relates to reflection, autonomy and identity. In particular we distinguish confidence for enabling learning from confidence in its own right. This is an area where there may be differences across literacy, numeracy and ESOL; we are also interested in identifying how confidence issues are distinct in basic skills classes, when compared to other areas of adult education.

The significance of *health as a barrier* to learning came up in our reviews and in our data in all sites. Issues of health need to include mental health, which is sometimes included in discussions of health and sometimes is ignored.

Issues which arise around *assessing learning* and which come from both our data and our reviews include how to acknowledge small gains, as well as issues of identifying, naming and valuing the wider benefits of learning. The tension of recognising language, literacy and numeracy outcomes alongside other outcomes is a repeated theme.

Within the teaching and learning part of the research, we repeatedly return to the idea that there is *no single factor* or factors which *cause* learning, rather learning is situated and contingent. These ideas need developing more and we are focusing on articulating a model of learning appropriate to adult language, literacy and numeracy.

Obviously these themes will develop as analysis continues. Appendix 7 contains further themes generated at the retreat in July where the full team, including the teacher-researchers, discussed emerging themes from the different forms of data.

6.2 Methodological developments

One of our concerns has been to reflect upon qualitative methodology and its usefulness in contributing evidence appropriate to practice and policy. These issues were taken up in the papers we presented at the NRDC International Conference, described in Appendix 1. In terms of the specific methodology, we began largely from the approach described in the *Local Literacies* research (Barton & Hamilton (1998) chapter four: Routledge) as our approach to methodology for the everyday lives part of the project, complemented by methods common in classroom research. Already we can identify ways in which the work on the Adult Learners' Lives project is developing beyond these in terms of methodology. Very briefly, firstly, we are extending notions of collaborative research in our work; secondly, by working in three distinct sites, the work is comparative throughout; thirdly, we are developing notions of teachers as researchers and involving teachers in all aspects of research; fourthly, we are integrating data of distinct sorts in systematic ways; finally, we are reconceptualising methodology to make impact central, impact both on practice and on policy. We wish to explore in more depth how ethnographic research can contribute to policy, the strengths and limitations of such research and how it can complement and challenge other data. We see these as exciting developments for the research and its impact.

6.3 The involvement of practitioners

The current Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme will come to an end in December 2003. Although the six teacher-researchers will no longer be funded by NRDC, we are confident that they will continue to bring their experience as teacher-researchers to their work as practitioners and this will continue to benefit their institutions. They will maintain informal links with NRDC and the Adult Learners' Lives project, and develop their career paths in individual ways.

The Adult Learners' Lives project will greatly benefit from continued involvement of practitioners and, while we enjoy working with the current cohort, we recognise the advantages to the field of involving a new cohort in the coming year. While the fellowship programme we have operated this year has been very successful and has, we believe, greatly benefited the teacher-researchers, it has been very costly for the Adult Learners' Lives research team, both financially (the fellows' enrolment on a research training module, academic mentoring, and the residential) and in terms of time (running the programme, the support given by the Adult Learners' Lives researchers, time spent by the teacher-researchers on training-related activities). We therefore plan to develop a different model of practitioner research partnership to integrate with the coming year's research activities; this will be developed in conjunction with the evaluation of teacher-researchers being undertaken by NRDC.

6.4 The impact of the project

Concerns about the lack of effect of research on policy and practice have been raised across social science and educational research. There is interest in rethinking the impact which research can have. In Britain the ESRC and the LSDA have been central in promoting discussion of new ways of conceptualising research impact. At the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre this fits in with a longstanding interest in the relation of research and practice in adult literacy. The aim is to overcome the perceived gaps between the research world, the teaching world and the policy world, broadening out from narrow notions of dissemination as something which happens just at the end of the research process.

In the Adult Learners' Lives project, rather than talking of dissemination, with its connotations of a one-way process, we prefer to talk of impact. This is a richer and more complex notion. We are working within four principles of impact:

- **Consider impact at all stages of research.** Impact depends upon building up relations with other stakeholders from the beginning. Within established relations, research can then have an effect.
- **Address multiple audiences.** The needs of policy makers and practitioners may well be different and there are many other stakeholders. It is important to build up different ways of communicating with these different groups.
- **Impact is dialogic.** The relationship between researchers and other stakeholders is two-way and can develop as a dialogue; the research gains from good relations with stakeholders as much as the other way round.

- **Impact is more than findings.** The impact of research can take many forms, including changing the discourse, changing the ways in which issues are talked about.

Thinking through impact has been an important aspect of the first year of the Adult Learners' Lives project. We have built up relations locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. A particular focus has been the teacher-researcher programme and we have shifted from seeing the impact as primarily being on the individual teacher, to seeing the impact as being equally on the whole college. Appendix 8 lists the forms of impact we have been involved in and includes ways of impacting upon the college at all levels, including the other teachers in the institutions and the effects on the learners in the colleges. Regionally we have been central in developing the North West *Skills for Life* Research Forum and have participated in its activities. Nationally we have been involved in a range of NRDC activities and we are writing papers addressed to different audiences. We have arranged a national advisory group for the project; this will support impact. We have begun an international dialogue with researchers in North America, Europe and Australia and in March 2003 Roz Ivani visited NCSALL colleagues at Rutgers University, reported in Appendix 9. The six papers on the nature of evidence which we contributed to NRDC international conference also discuss issues of communication and impact. Abstracts of these papers are listed in Appendix 1.

6.5 The work-place strand of the ALL project

A key part of the Adult Learners' Lives project is the strand relating people's literacy, numeracy and language learning to their work-place experiences and practices. In thinking about how to approach this strand, we started with an idea that we might include an ethnography of a single workplace to give insight into the particular literacy, numeracy and learning practices involved in the work environment. However, further discussion of this idea revealed a number of problems for the project in this approach. First of all, 'the work-place' is not a singular entity. Work in contemporary society is very varied and any single workplace that we looked at could give only a very partial understanding of questions around literacy, learning and the work-place in general. Secondly, taking this approach and making 'the work-place' central to the ethnography would be taking a different perspective from the rest of the Adult Learners' Lives project, which places the individual learner at the centre of what we do. Thirdly, given the constraints on all our time and resources and our existing fieldwork commitments, this significant element could end up in danger of becoming a cursory 'bolt-on' to the project.

On thinking about this further, we realised that there was a better approach that we could take. The solution we developed was to situate this element of the project within the same frame as the rest of the Adult Learners' Lives work, that is to say, by taking the individual adult learner as the starting point. So we have been collaborating with our existing research participants in talking about and coming to understand their own work histories and practices, including their experiences of work-place learning. This has enabled a focus on the work-place to become an embedded and integrated part of the Adult Learners' Lives study, as a strand of inquiry across all of the research sites and with all the adult learners.

Taking this perspective has opened up a wide range of possibilities for research. Karin Tusting has encountered people with a variety of work experiences in Lancaster, including people working in farming, running a chip shop and a pub, bricklaying, teaching, in office work, in care work and in workshops. In Liverpool Yvon Appleby has interviewed a caretaker, a nursery

nurse, people looking for work, those who are too ill to work and those who work part time. The students seeking asylum in Blackburn where Rachel Hodge has been researching this year have a wealth of interesting and different experiences, relating to both their work histories in the country of their first language and their current situations of working (or trying to find work) in the country of their second language.

By embedding work and work-place learning in the research we are maintaining our focus on the learners themselves. In addition to talking with people about their work experiences and histories, we will be focusing on a smaller number of learners, accompanying them from the classroom into their everyday lives and also into work (or their attempts to get it). This gives us an integrated way of viewing the learners and of incorporating work-place into their lives and into the study as a whole. It is allowing us to explore the meaning of work in people's lives more generally, by combining attention to the work-place with the other elements of people's lives that we are addressing, including life histories, everyday practices and family relationships. It is challenging reductionist and deficient models of adult learners, by shifting our attention to the existing skills and aspirations demonstrated by many of the learners we are encountering.

6.6 Immediate plans

In September 2003 work on the three sites will broaden out to include data from community-based provision in addition to the college provision. We have specific plans at each site for moving to community provision. We will maintain links with the colleges through the focal learners. In both parts of the study, the everyday life part and the teaching and learning part, we will collect further data on language, literacy and numeracy and continue analysis in order to prepare the reports due in the next year. In addition we will contribute to the evaluation of the teacher-researcher programme and develop models for practitioner involvement based on the experience of the Adult Learners' Lives project. The programme of impact will continue, especially through the North West *Skills for Life* Research Forum; we are planning a seminar on offenders in November 2003, and there will be a regional impact conference, as a precursor to a national conference in the following year. The initial work on literacy and health has led to a separate project directed by Uta Papen; this starts in October 2003. In order to support other researchers the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre is planning a research summer school in July 2004. Lancaster is also hosting the 2004 RaPAL (Research and practice in adult literacy) conference and we will contribute to both events.

We have set up an advisory group for the Adult Learners' Lives project covering people and organisations with a wide range of interests in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. This initial report of the project will be discussed at a meeting of the advisory group in the autumn, as a way of providing feedback on our work so far and influencing the future direction of the project.

Appendix 1

Abstracts of papers on evidence, presented at NRDC International Conference, Nottingham March 2002

What counts as evidence in an ethnographic approach to research in language, literacy and numeracy.

David Barton, Karin Tusting, Rachel Hodge, Uta Papen, Yvon Appleby, Mary Hamilton and Samantha Parsons.

Introduction

This double session is concerned with the sorts of data produced by ethnographic research, the range of questions it can address, and how such approaches can contribute to the work of NRDC. David Barton introduces the topic by discussing what is meant by evidence and outlining what ethnographic studies of literacy have offered so far. Karin Tusting introduces the NRDC Adult Learners' Lives project, locating it in the need for multiple sources of evidence. Rachel Hodge looks in detail at a particular methodology, that of using photographs as evidence. The next two papers take a broader look. Uta Papen examines how ethnography can inform policy, while Yvon Appleby discusses the significance of involving practitioners in the research process. Finally Mary Hamilton and Samantha Parsons discuss issues which have arisen when they have brought together qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The methodological turn

David Barton

Qualitative methodologies have developed in the past two decades with an array of courses, books and handbooks. This has had a great impact on research in language, literacy and numeracy, including rethinking the relation of research and practice. These developments can be seen as part of methodological debates within the social sciences, but they are also part of a broader societal questioning of academic knowledge, of professionalism and of certainty in the contemporary world. As part of this broader debate, users of research in many fields have become more demanding. Policy makers and practitioners in particular have been raising questions about the relevance of research, the nature of evidence and the certainty of claims. In educational research in the US and in Britain, calls have been made for rigour, for systematicity and for evidence of what works.

In this paper I will provide a short overview of the current debates around evidence based policy and practice in educational research; I argue that qualitative educational research can and should enter these debates; that ethnographic research can offer a great deal to understanding what counts as evidence, what is rigorous and what is systematic. I will review recent ethnographic studies of literacy, showing what they offer to policy and practice. First of all this body of research exposes myths about literacy and it provides scepticism about oversimplistic claims; it offers new ways of talking about literacy and provides new framings for

the field of language, literacy and numeracy. This approach to research also provides information about learners' lives, learners' needs and learners' motivations which is essential to successful policy and practice.

Why we need multiple sources of evidence

Karin Tusting

The answer to the question 'what counts as evidence' logically follows from your model of what the world is like and how best you can develop understandings of it. If you understand social reality as being generated by the actions of a small set of laws which play out in the same way in all settings, it makes sense to try to understand, explain and predict what is going on by using instruments such as large-scale surveys of randomised samples of the population, or double-blind experimental trials, to locate and describe the actions of such universal laws across different contexts. However, another way of looking at it is to see the events of the social world as being emergent in unpredictable ways from the multitude of different causal mechanisms which interrelate in every local interaction. From this position, in order to develop an understanding of what is going on in any given context, it becomes necessary to amass and analyse evidence which addresses the detail of those interactions. Ethnographic research draws evidence about this detailed interaction from observation of and participation in the events and relationships of everyday life, seeking to develop insight into how these mechanisms are interrelating in a particular local context. In order to develop such an understanding, it is necessary to draw on multiple sources of evidence, developing insights as the research evolves and testing these insights against evidence gathered and analysed in many different ways.

This in-depth understanding is what we are seeking to develop in the Adult Learners' Lives project. The paper goes on to describe the wide variety of sources of evidence on which we will be drawing to build up understandings of the interplay between people's learning and the wider context of their lives as a whole. These sources include (but are not limited to) participant observation both within and outside the classroom, non-participant classroom observation, interviews with learners and tutors, collaborative work with practitioners, photographs, videoed data, the collection of texts and other multimodal artefacts, learning diaries and logs. This body of data lends itself to a variety of forms of qualitative analysis, and requires a great deal of synthesis work to produce a rich and complex picture.

Of course, this involves an intensive use of resources – in terms of people, ideas, and time. However, our contention is that if we are to develop better understandings of learners' lives, needs and motivations, it is necessary to generate a full understanding of the interplay of factors involved through using such a multi-method approach.

Using photographs as evidence in literacy research

Rachel Hodge

Photographs, film and other images are now widely used in different fields of Social Science research – Educational Research, Media Studies, Anthropology, Sociology and Socio-Linguistics. To introduce this paper I will give a brief background to the use of photography in qualitative/ethnographic and collaborative literacy research. Photographs produced collaboratively combine the intentions and agendas of both researchers and informants.

Photographs are not just tools for obtaining knowledge, they can be used in interviews or conversations as a reference point, where participants can produce and represent their knowledge, self-identities, experiences and emotions (Pink 2001). Photographs are not simply visual records of reality but are representations or visual metaphors to be interpreted in terms of different understandings of reality. Both Pink and Rose (2001) among others, argue the importance of this kind of explicit 'critical visual methodology' which sees photography as a social practice, takes images seriously and thinks about the visual in terms of the cultural significance, social practices and power relations in which it is embedded.

Using photographs taken and analysed collaboratively with informants in a range of literacy research contexts, I will illustrate ways in which photographs can provide significant and valid qualitative/ethnographic data and I will show how photographic data can be interpreted, supported by other data in literacy research. I will discuss critical issues related to this methodology and summarise the benefits and uses of photography as a research tool in literacy research which is addressing the realities, needs and aspirations of learners.

How can ethnography inform policy?

Uta Papen

In recent years, there has been much discussion around the potential of ethnography to inform policy. Crucial to this debate is the question of what evidence ethnography can provide and how valid, reliable and useful this is. Two fields of research where this is extensively discussed are social development (see for example Spiegel, Watson and Wilkinson 1999, Gardner and Lewis 1996) and literacy (Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Rogers et al. 1999, Robinson-Pant 2001). In both fields, ethnography is heralded as being able to provide the kind of detailed, contextualised information, which can help policy to become more responsive to its beneficiaries.

The purpose of this paper is to review some of the debates surrounding the relationship of ethnography to policy and to assess their relevance for the **Skills for Life** strategy and the work of NRDC. Ethnography has been particularly significant for literacy research, enhancing our understanding of the essential role of reading and writing in people's everyday lives (see for example Street 1993 and 2001, Barton and Hamilton 1998). The paper will argue that on the basis of ethnographic accounts of learners' lives a fuller picture of their literacy- and numeracy-related needs and aspirations can be compiled. The same kind of approach can be applied to studying learners' experiences with the forms of provision set up by **Skills for Life**, the aim being to feed these results back into the evolving policy. Ethnography here has a crucial role to play in the processes of policy formulation, implementation and monitoring/evaluation. Furthermore, as a research method that harnesses the active collaboration of its research subjects, ethnography is ideally placed to support a participative approach to policy (Yeatman 1998), which engages the skills and creativity of all those involved in making it happen.

Practitioner involvement: a good idea but does it mess up the evidence?

Yvon Appleby

Research is a highly contested terrain where there are many competing ideas and approaches about the position of research, the researcher and the researched in relation to knowledge

generation and the status of evidence. The evidence generated by ethnography as 'situated research' is definitely and positively affected by participation and collaboration, particularly where the participants are practitioners. Rather than being something to be guarded against, protecting the evidence from contamination, practitioner participation and collaboration can be incorporated to produce relevant research and useful evidence.

I will look at the use of ethnography in the Adult Learners' Lives project where participation and collaboration are central concepts within the research. This will show what employing ethnography as 'situated research' means and the type of 'evidence' that is generated. The Adult Learners' Lives project is working with six teacher-researcher fellows who are practitioners and participants; they are actively engaged in developing the research at many levels. An exploration of the relationship between this research and practice will allow an exploration of the different types of evidence that our research will produce and the different audiences that it may be useful to.

Culture shock: challenges of linking qualitative and quantitative evidence within research

Mary Hamilton and Samantha Parsons

The idea of linking qualitative and quantitative research evidence is an aim of many current projects. There are a number of ways in which such links might be made within different research designs. In the Changing Faces project we have entered into one version of such a collaboration, where life history interviews are being conducted with a carefully chosen sample of existing members of the National Child Development Survey cohort. The study is a collaboration between different institutions. Researchers working on the project have a range of research skills, training and backgrounds encompassing both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The Changing Faces strategy has presented unpredicted challenges to the research team. Some of these challenges are specific to the procedures and characteristics associated with the data sets we are using. However, the issues raised by our experience are of much broader interest. They can be seen as emerging from the meeting of different research cultures and traditions with their associated expertise and assumptions. Life history interviews entail close and in-depth encounters between researchers and interviewees. They generate qualitative data in the form of biographical narrative accounts. Longitudinal survey research, on the other hand, is carried out by a team of market research interviewers using a highly structured questionnaire. This generates large-scale, quantitative databases analysed by researchers with statistical expertise who have not been involved in the data collection phase.

This presentation will discuss the following issues (1) research skills, training and approaches to data collection; (2) relationships between researchers and researched during data collection and analysis; (3) assumptions about and approaches to ethical issues, such as anonymity, consent and feeding back research findings to participants. A discussion of our practical experiences so far will move forward understanding of what it means to link qualitative and quantitative approaches to evidence and help devise protocols for future research.

Appendix 2

Demographic Report on Blackburn, Lancaster & Liverpool

Commissioned by Lancaster Literacy Research Centre (David Barton)

Undertaken by Lancaster University Geography Department (Gemma Davies and Ganiyu Agbaje)

7 May 2003

This report summarises the demographic profile of three towns in North West England, Blackburn, Lancaster and Liverpool, contrasting the towns and where possible comparing them to regional and national averages. Its purpose is to illustrate how representative these towns are for the purpose of studying the lives of adult learners.

Each of the towns are located in the North West of England. Blackburn is part of the Blackburn and Darwen Unitary Authority, within the county of Lancashire. Lancaster is part of Lancaster District again within the county of Lancashire, while Liverpool forms the Metropolitan part of the county of Merseyside. Both Liverpool and Lancaster have city status. Figure 1 illustrates the relative location of the three towns within the North West.

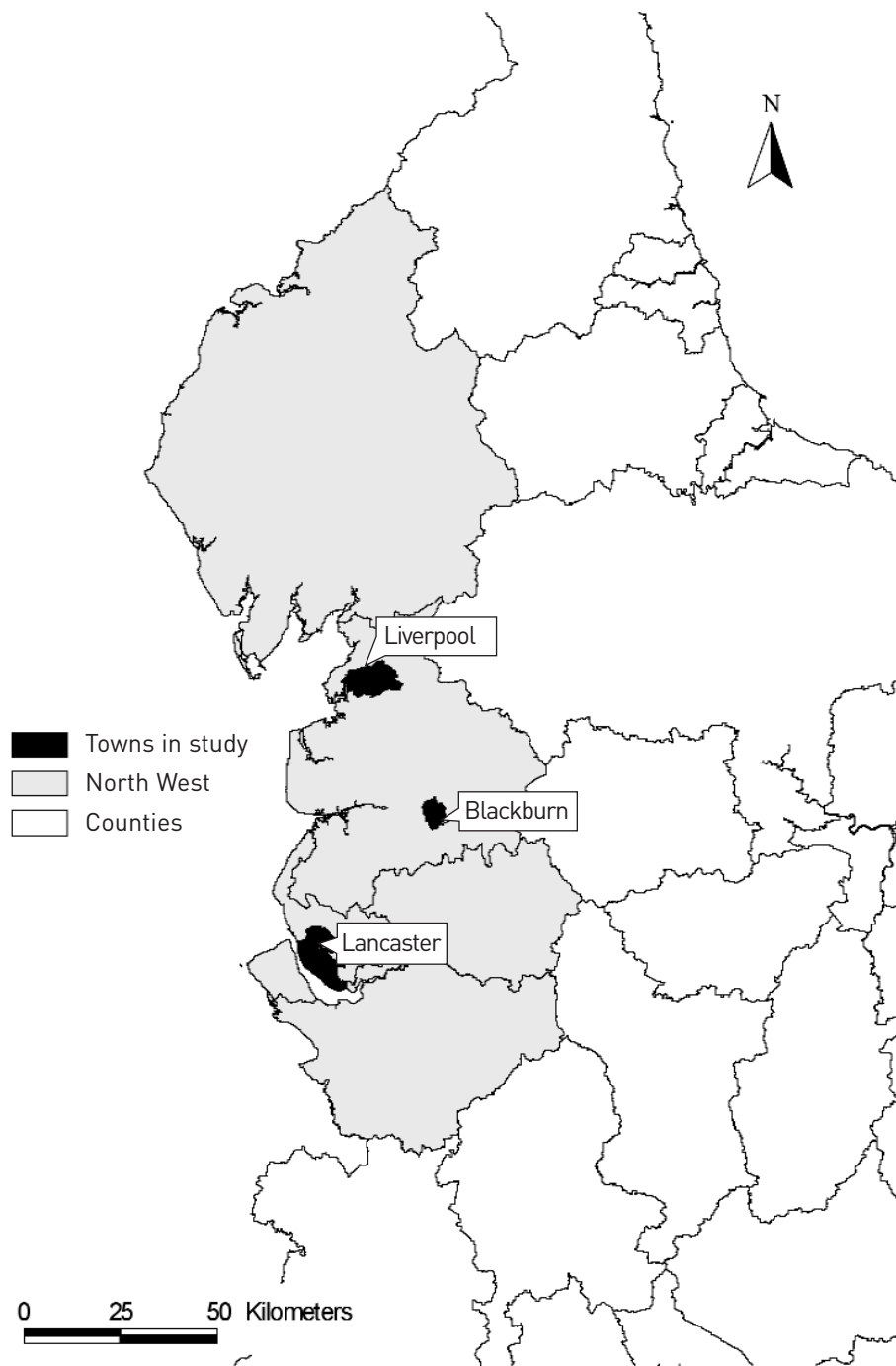


Figure 1: Location of Towns in study

General Demographics

Total Population	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool
1991	100,974	47,962	452,450
1998 estimate*	**101,580	55,600	461,500

Figure 2: Population totals

Source: 1991 data from 1991 Population Census <http://www.census.ac.uk/casweb/>
1998 data from Office of National Statistics <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/> Oxford University population estimates for wards in England in Mid 1998

*1998 population estimates were used, as they were the most recent population figures currently available at ward level. 2001 census data was not able to be used as this is currently only available at Local Authority level. For the purposes of this study the towns of Blackburn and Lancaster formed only part of the Local Authority in which they were situated, hence more detailed, ward level information needed to be used.

** Figures for Blackburn were derived using the per cent population increase from 1991 to 2001 for the Local authority, as a 1998 estimate matching the wards for 1991 was not available. The rate of population increase was taken from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council website <http://council.blackburnworld.com/>

It can be seen from the population totals that the three towns included in this report vary considerably in the size of their population, with Blackburn approximately twice the size of Lancaster and Liverpool almost ten times the size of Lancaster. The population of Lancaster appears to be growing faster than that of Blackburn or Liverpool with Blackburn seeing the slowest rate of growth. Note, however that 2001 populations statistics for Liverpool suggest that the population of Liverpool has fallen to 439,473, rather than the slight increase seen in the 1998 estimate.

Education

Secondary Schools	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool
Comprehensive	7	3	32
Grammar	1	2	0
Independent	3	0	2
Selective	0	1	2
Independent /Selective	1	0	1
Total	12	6	37

Figure 3: Number and type of secondary schools

Source: Department of Education and Skills - School and College Performance Tables
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performancetables/>

Over the last 30 years the structure of schooling in England has changed considerably, with a shift from a two-tier approach of secondary modern and grammar schools, to a widespread system of comprehensive schools. However, although this has occurred in Liverpool both Blackburn and Lancaster has retained selective grammar schools. Blackburn also has a relatively large number of independent schools.

% 5 A-C's at GCSE	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	England
	51.6	60.0	44.3	51.5

Figure 4: Percentage of pupils entered for GCSE examinations gaining at least 5 grades A–C.

Source: Department of Education and Skills - School and College Performance Tables
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/>

Average school performance based on the percentage of students achieving A–C grades at GCSE varies considerably between the three towns considered in this report. Figure 4 shows that while Blackburn has a level of school performance in line with the national average Liverpool falls well below this and Lancaster is well above the national average.

Colleges and Universities

Blackburn has two colleges, Accrington and Rossendale College and Blackburn College of Technology, while Lancaster has the one college, the Adult College and two Universities\University Colleges, St Martins University College and Lancaster University. The provision of higher education varies considerably between the towns, with Lancaster having a high level of provision relative to its size and Blackburn being without any higher education provision. Meanwhile Liverpool has three Universities\University Colleges, University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool Hope University College as well as further education provision.

Health

Mortality

SMR	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool
All Causes	119	103	129
Heart Disease	132	105	130
Breast Cancer	97	83	106
Prostate Cancer	104	71	97

Figure 5: Standardised Mortality Ratios (SMRs) for year 2000

Source: 2000 Small Area Data from the North West Regional Office (Original source: Office of National Statistics)

Standardised mortality ratios (SMRs) represent a ratio between the number of deaths associated with a given disease relative to the expected number of deaths, given the national average and the size and structure of the population in an area. SMR values greater than 100 therefore represent a higher number of deaths than would be expected against the national average and values less than 100 represent a lower than expected number of deaths.

Of the three towns it is clear that the population of Lancaster experiences better health than either Blackburn or Liverpool. SMR values for heart disease and all causes are marginally above average, but rates for breast and prostate cancer are much lower than average. In both Blackburn and Liverpool it is the higher incidence of heart disease, which stands out most compared to the national average.

Access to health care

	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool
Hospitals	5	2	16
General Practices	31	10	44

Figure 9: Number of Hospitals and General Practice Surgeries

Source: Yellow Pages (www.yell.com)

Data for number of GPs per practice was not available for individual practices therefore the number of people per GP could not be calculated.

Crime

Offences per 1000 pop.	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
Violence	12.7	9.2	15.6	13.4	12
Sexual	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8
Robbery	1.1	0.6	3.2	2.4	2
Burglary	9.7	6.3	11.8	22.8	17.1
Theft-Vehicle	19.8	10.2	32	37.1	28.5

Figure 10: Criminal offences per thousand population (April 2000 - March 2001)

Source: Home Office (2001) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/1202data2.xls>

The figures above represent reported crime over the period of a year (April 2000 – March 2001). These figures show that for most types of crime recorded here, Lancaster experiences the least crime with the exception of sexual offences where Lancaster has a rate higher than the regional or national averages and higher than either Blackburn or Liverpool. All towns included in the study suffer less from burglary than would be expected looking at the regional and national averages. Of the three towns Liverpool appears to experience the highest level of crime, with robbery and violent crime above both the regional and national averages.

Housing tenure

% Households	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
Owned Outright	28.2	26.5	16.9	25.0	24.1
Owned Mortgaged	35.8	44.2	33.7	42.5	43.5
Private Rent (Furnished)	2.0	4.7	3.5	2.8	3.6
Private Rent (Unfurnished)	1.9	2.7	6.7	3.2	3.8
Housing Authority Rent	4.6	3.7	8.6	3.7	3.2
Local Authority Rent	26.0	15.1	38.3	20.6	19.9

Figure 12: Housing Tenure

Source: 1991 Population Census <http://www.census.ac.uk/casweb/>

The pattern of housing tenure shows the proportion of owner occupied properties to be highest in Lancaster (70.7 per cent), this is above the regional and national averages, with Lancaster demonstrating a lower than average proportion of local authority rented properties. Blackburn has a higher proportion of local authority rented properties than Lancaster and a slightly lower percentage of owner occupied dwellings. It also has a level of private rental below that of either Lancaster, Liverpool or regional and national averages. Liverpool shows the greatest variation from both the regional and national average, with only 50.6 per cent of properties owner occupied. This is accompanied by a high proportion (38.3 per cent) of households renting from the local authority. Liverpool also sees a higher number of households rented privately or from housing associations.

Ethnic group

% of population	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
White	79.64	96.68	96.23	96.33	93.81
Black Caribbean	0.11	0.1	0.34	0.33	1.05
Black African	0.17	0.15	0.55	0.14	0.44
Black Other	0.26	0.1	0.72	0.24	0.37
Indian	10.29	1.07	0.29	0.83	1.75
Pakistani	7.78	0.52	0.15	1.15	0.95
Bangladeshi	0.27	0.02	0.09	0.23	0.33
Chinese	0.16	0.31	0.73	0.27	0.3
Other Asian	0.45	0.19	0.16	0.14	0.4
Other	0.87	0.38	0.75	0.36	0.58

Figure 11: Ethnic Group

Source: 1991 Population Census <http://www.census.ac.uk/casweb/>

The distribution of ethnic minorities varies noticeably between the three towns. In Liverpool the Black and Chinese population are proportionately higher than for the North West as a whole, while the Indian and Pakistani populations are lower than average. Lancaster has an ethnic distribution closest to that of the region as a whole, with a slightly lower than average black population. Of the three towns Blackburn demonstrates the greatest variation from the regional or national averages, with over 10 per cent of its population Indian and nearly 8 per

cent Pakistani, this is approximately ten times the average for the North West. The North West as a whole sees a lower proportion of ethnic minorities when compared to the national average, with the proportion of Pakistanis the only group above this average.

Economic Profile

% of total population	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
Employed full time	34.7	34.8	29.6	36.3	38.0
Employed part time	8.1	11.6	8.5	9.8	9.9
Self employed – with employees	1.9	2.0	1.3	2.3	2.4
Self employed – no employees	3.4	4.1	2.4	4.0	4.8
On government scheme	1.0	0.9	1.6	0.9	0.8
Unemployed	7.8	5.0	11.6	6.3	5.6
Students – economically inactive	3.8	5.9	4.5	3.8	3.8
Permanently sick	7.1	5.9	7.9	5.5	3.8
Retired	20.6	19.8	20.0	20.0	19.0

Figure 13: Economic profile of households

Source: 1991 population census 10 per cent sample <http://www.census.ac.uk/casweb/>

In all three towns the proportion of full-time employees is below the national average, with the lowest levels found in Liverpool. Lancaster has a slightly higher than average proportion of part-time employees, while both Blackburn and Liverpool remain slightly below average. Although Lancaster has a slightly lower than average rate of unemployment, both Blackburn and Liverpool experience higher than average unemployment, with Liverpool experiencing the higher rate of 11.6 per cent, which compares to a national average of 5.6 per cent. Liverpool and Blackburn also have above average percentages of people recorded as permanently sick.

Industry

%	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.5	1.9	0.1	1.4	1.8
Energy and water	1.7	2.8	1.0	2.0	1.8
Mining	2.5	2.2	2.0	3.7	2.8
Manufacturing	32.4	12.3	15.2	20.3	17.9
Construction	4.9	7.1	6.6	6.9	7.3
Distribution and catering	20.5	18.2	17.5	21.2	20.7
Transport	4.9	5.7	8.3	6.1	6.5
Banking and finance	5.7	7.4	10.5	9.8	12.5
Other Services	25.8	41.5	37.6	27.7	27.9
Not classified	1.1	0.9	1.2	0.8	0.9

Figure 14: Employment by industry

Source: 1991 Population Census 10 per cent sample <http://www.census.ac.uk/casweb/>

Figure 14 illustrates some of the key types of industry and the number of people employed in these industries. Of the three towns it can be seen that Blackburn has the highest proportion engaged in manufacturing (32.4 per cent), well above either the regional or national averages, whilst levels of manufacturing in Lancaster and Liverpool are below average. In both Lancaster and Liverpool the dominant sector is the service industry, with figures for both towns above the regional or national average.

Occupation

% of population	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
Managerial	13.1	11.4	9.7	14.7	16.2
Science and Engineering					
Professionals	3.3	3.1	3.2	4.5	4.6
Health Professionals	3.0	7.6	3.09	3.5	3.1
Teachers	3.5	5.4	3.8	3.6	3.5
Other Professionals	4.6	6.1	5.3	5.0	6.2
Clerical and Secretarial	12.5	13.2	18.7	15.9	16.3
Skilled trades	19.7	13.3	12.8	15.1	14.5
Service sector workers	15.8	18.8	17.7	16.6	16.2
Industrial workers, drivers	15.1	8.5	12	11.7	10.1
Other	9.3	12.7	12.8	9.4	9.2

Figure 15: Occupation

Source: 1991 Population Census 10 per cent sample <http://www.census.ac.uk/casweb/>

Each of the three towns have a lower than average percentage of managerial workers. Lancaster has a higher proportion of teachers and health professionals than either Liverpool or Blackburn, with percentages significantly above the regional and national averages. Blackburn has a particularly high proportion of people employed in skilled trades, while Lancaster and Liverpool are below the regional and national averages.

Social Class

% households	Blackburn	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
Professional	4.4	7.2	4.2	6.1	6.0
Managerial and technical	21.6	28.0	20.5	28.2	31.0
Skilled non-manual	10.6	14.5	13.6	13.4	13.6
Skilled manual	30.9	23.6	25.5	28.0	26.4
Partly skilled	20.2	15.8	17.1	14.9	13.4
Unskilled	5.9	7.5	7.0	5.0	4.5
Armed forces	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.9
Government scheme	1.1	1.1	1.8	0.7	0.7

Figure 16: Social Class of household as defined by occupation of household head

Source: 1991 Population Census 10 per cent sample <http://www.census.ac.uk/casweb/>

The percentage of professional households in Lancaster is higher than the regional or national average, however, in both Blackburn and Liverpool it is significantly lower and below the average. A similar pattern can be seen with regards to managerial and technical households, where Lancaster has a proportion of households in line with the regional average, (28 per cent), while Blackburn and Liverpool remain well below this figure. Blackburn has a lower than average proportion of skilled non-manual households but a higher proportion of skilled manual households than either Lancaster or Liverpool. Each of the three towns has a higher than average percentage of partly skilled and unskilled households, with Blackburn having the most partly skilled and Lancaster the highest number of unskilled households. The proportion of households involved in government schemes is higher than average in each of the three towns with Liverpool having the highest proportion of people on government schemes (1.8 per cent), over twice the regional or national average of 0.7 per cent.

Deprivation

	Blackburn ^{\$}	Lancaster	Liverpool	North West	England
Average index for town	54.1	27.8	60.4	29.2	21.6
Quintile 1 (Most Deprived)	83	40	87	36	20
Quintile 2	17	10	13	23	20
Quintile 3	0	30	0	14	20
Quintile 4	0	20	0	20	20
Quintile 5 (Least Deprived)	0	0	0	7	20

Figure 17: Index of Multiple Deprivation

Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (IMD) published by the DETR. Obtained via, Office of National Statistics <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>

^{\$} Data for Blackburn is derived from just a subset of 6 wards within the town, as data was unavailable for all wards

The index uses the following domains:

Income; employment; health & disability; education, skills and training; housing; geographical access to services.

These are used to give each ward a rank based on performance in response to a range of relevant indicators. The overall score is a sum of the weighted domain score. Higher scores indicate greater deprivation.

The quintiles represent data ranked for all wards from the most deprived to least deprived out of the 8,414 wards for England and divided into equal fifths depending on their rank. The data in the table above represents the percentage of the wards for each area that falls within each quintile.

The statistics show that Lancaster is the least deprived of the three towns considered in this study with an overall pattern of deprivation in line with the regional average. Blackburn and Liverpool, however, show indices well above average, suggesting that these are relatively deprived areas. The extent of deprivation will vary considerably within these towns with pockets of higher and lower deprivation seen in each of them. A more detailed study would be required to explore the spatial variations within towns. The North West is relatively deprived compared to England as a whole.

Summary

The size of each of the three towns in terms of total population varies considerably and this is likely to have an effect on the amount of variation within the towns themselves. This is something not considered by the current extent of this research. Lancaster, the smallest of the three towns has the most favourable indices in terms of health, crime, social class, which is also reflected by an IMD score considerably lower than either Blackburn or Liverpool. Both Blackburn and Liverpool appear to suffer from significant deprivation compared to the region or nation as a whole. Blackburn also stands out for its notably high proportion of ethnic minorities, particularly Indian and Pakistani.

The North West appears to be relatively more deprived compared to England, with a higher index of multiple deprivation. This is accompanied by a higher than average rate of unemployment and number of people reported as permanently sick. There also appears to be a higher rate of crime in the North West than for England, with vehicle thefts standing out as highest against the national average at a rate of 37.1 per thousand population for the North West compared to 28.5 per thousand for England as a whole.

Overall the three towns reflect a range of experiences across the region as a whole. However as two of the three towns have a deprivation status that is significantly worse than the average, they may not be completely representative of the region as a whole.

Appendix 3

Data collected from the three case study sites

Summary

Across the three sites in this first year of data gathering eight classrooms have been observed in detail. These include three ESOL classes, two spelling classes, two maths classes and one English class. Observational notes, audio and video recording have been collected to support analysis of teaching and learning activities in these different learning environments. Six of these classes are focal classes in the pedagogic phase of the research and will generate detailed information relating to what learners learn and what teachers teach. Over 12 basic skills tutors have been interviewed providing a direct comment on the practice being observed and recorded. Many managers and policy implementers who organise and support basic skills delivery in these three sites have contributed their knowledge and understanding providing a bigger picture of the provision we have observed.

We have talked with over 100 adult learners in the classes that we have visited and have interviewed over 30 learners across the three sites. Learners have explained their reasons for attending, including their hopes and aspirations. They have explained the difficulties and barriers to learning, particularly when they have refugee or asylum seekers status. Through the use of photographs and visits to homes and workplaces we have made links between everyday life and learning. We have responded to distance and time constraints and have explored the use of email and telephone communication to fit in with the learners lives.

Our data includes records of working with the six teacher researchers attached to the Adult Learners' Lives project, records that chart the development of the research in the sites and of our collaboration with them.

Lancaster

Data generated from field research at Lancaster Adult College.

Participant observation fieldnotes

- **ESOL class November 2002 – June 2003**
These comprise of weekly fieldnotes of one class with additional notes from a second class observed.
- **Skills for Life English class November 2002 – June 2003**
These are weekly fieldnotes.
- **Skills for Life Spelling Class January 2003 – June 2003**
These are weekly fieldnotes.
- **Skills for Life Maths class November 2002 – June 2003**
These are weekly fieldnotes.

Audio recorded classroom interaction

- **Skills for Life** English class, three sessions May 2003
This includes two one-to-one interactions and one group session.
- **Skills for Life** Spelling class, session May 2003
This includes two one-to-one interactions and one group session.

Learner interviews

Initial interviews have been recorded on mini-disc with:

Two ESOL learners
Five SfL English class learners
Four SfL Spelling class learners
Two SfL Maths class learners

Teacher/volunteer interviews

Interviews have been recorded on minidisk with:

Five Basic Skills tutors
One Basic Skills volunteer

Teacher-researcher notes

Notes of meetings have been recorded with teacher researchers Gill Burgess and Carol Woods from Lancaster Adult College and Adult Learners' Lives researcher Karin Tusting.

Additional material

- Notes of staff and college basic skills meetings attended, November 2002 – June 2003.
- Notes from visit to Beaumont College, February 2003.

Blackburn

Data generated from field research and the ESOL case study at Blackburn College.

Participant observation fieldnotes

- ESOL E1 (Entry Level One) class January 2003 – March 2003
This comprises of detailed observational fieldnotes of six sessions.
- ESOL E3 (Entry Level Three) class February 2003 – April 2003
This comprises of detailed observational fieldnotes of three sessions.

Audio-recorded classroom interaction

Supplemented by observation notes

- ESOL E1 class one session in February 2003.
- ESOL E1 class one photography session March 2003.
- ESOL E3 class two sessions in March 2003.

Learner interviews

- ESOL E1 seven learner interviews:

Three conducted in English
 Two conducted in Portuguese
 One conducted in French

With accompanying interview notes.

- ESOL E3 four learner interviews all conducted in English.

Teacher interviews/teacher generated material

Interviews conducted with three basic skills tutors.

Tutor profile of students for: E1 class
 E3 class

Case Study field reports

Reports including meetings with college practitioner and management meetings at Blackburn College, learning partnership representatives and representatives of local asylum support team.

Additional data

- Photographs from ESOL E1 class photo journal project (March 2003).
- Copies of learning materials used in E1 and E3 class sessions.
- Copies of students' Home Office asylum seeker and refugee communication/documents.
- Emails from learners.

Liverpool

Data generated from fieldwork at Rotunda and Dovecot DISC (drop-in study centres), Liverpool Community College.

Observation fieldnotes

- Maths drop-in Rotunda DISC January 2003 – June 2003.
- Spelling class Dovecote DISC January 2003 – June 2003.
- Notes from other DISC visits and Second Chance lesson at Liverpool Community College.

Video recorded classroom interaction

- Maths drop-in at Rotunda DISC, 45 mins. April 2003.
- Spelling class at Dovecot DISC, 45 mins. April 2003.

Learner interviews

- Pre-video minidisc recorded mini-interviews with:

Four learners from Rotunda maths group
 Five learners from Dovecote spelling group

- Post-video minidisc recorded mini-interviews with:
 - Three learners from Rotunda maths group
 - Four learners from Dovecote spelling

- Recorded group discussion about the video for Rotunda maths groups and Dovecote spelling group. April/May 2003.

- Long term Adult learners' lives interviews:
 - Initial interviews with eight learners (three from maths group and five from spelling group). May 2003 – June 2003.
 - Second interview with five of these learners. June 2003 – July 2003.
 - Notes from telephone updates. July 2003.

Teacher interviews/teacher generated material

- Minidisc recorded interview about the video with teacher-researcher tutors Kath and Dianne.
- Tutor pre-plan and post-plan notes from focal class.
- Tutor profile of students for:
 - Rotunda maths group
 - Dovecote spelling group.
- Two individual minidisc recorded interviews with teachers Kath and Dianne.

Teacher-researcher notes

- Notes of weekly meetings and planning correspondence with teacher-researchers Dianne and Kath.
- Notes from meetings with teacher-researchers and college advocate.

Additional material

- Copies of learner material from videoed focal class.
- Student photographs from Rotunda maths class and Dovecote spelling class showing link between literacy, numeracy and every day life.
- Minidisc recording of class discussion about photographs.
- Email correspondence with two learners.
- Learner essay on 'being interviewed' for the Adult Learners' Lives project.
- Notes from mapping visits.

Appendix 4

Literacy & health

Uta Papen

Background

The support provided by the NRDC was initially used to carry out a literature review of the topic including recent work in North America and Australia. The main purpose of the review was to develop a thorough understanding of existing research and development in the field of literacy and health, to identify main issues of concern for further research. On the basis of this, I developed a research proposal on the topic of health and literacy (including numeracy and ESOL).

The literature review initially focused on the available medical literature (including research in the field of health education and health promotion). In a second step, we perused the relevant literature in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The review was primarily carried out by the research associate, supported by the project manager.

Further activities of this initial period included liaising with the Institute for Health Research at Lancaster University, with NIACE and with the new NHS University.

On the basis of the literature review and further readings in the field of literacy and health, I then developed a project proposal – entitled Literacy, learning and health – which I submitted to the Lancaster University's Small Grants Scheme. The main purpose of the application was twofold:

- to obtain funding that would allow me to continue to employ a research associate (who would then be able to extend the literature review).
- to further develop the design of the proposed research, with a view towards preparing a major grant application.

As a result of my successful application, I obtained funding to employ a part-time research associate for a further six months (40 per cent, April to September 2003).

Since April, we have extended the literature review to include current policies related to health and literacy, both in Britain as well as in North America. We have also made initial contacts with adult education providers in the North West, in view of identifying possible sites for research. A visit to an ESOL class in Preston provided interesting insights into the role of health as a topic, which appears to respond to learners' interests and needs.

My main activity throughout spring was to develop a project proposal for a major research project on literacy and health. I submitted this proposal to NRDC in May 2003 and it has been funded to begin in October 2003.

Health and literacy: An overview of existing research

Introduction

This summary of existing research in the field of literacy and health covers both the medical literature and research within the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The main purpose of this review was to examine the current stage of research in the field, to identify gaps in the existing knowledge and, on the basis of this, to select topics and concerns for further research.

Summary of the literature review

Research that explores the links between health and education/literacy.

There is ample evidence that socio-economic status, educational attainment and health are linked. Findings are consistent across countries with similar pictures emerging from the UK (see for example Black, D. et al. 1980, Royal College of General Practitioners 1998), the US (Pamuk et al. 1998), Canada (Health Canada 1999) and Australia (Harris et al. 1999). People who have low levels of education are more likely to suffer from ill health than those with better incomes and higher educational achievement. However, most of the existing research was carried out in the US and Canada, and to a lesser extent in Australia. Relatively little has been done in the UK. Recent research in the UK has focused on the correlations between learning, as measured by years of education and a person's physical and mental health (see for example Feinstein 2001 and Hammond 2002). A recent study carried out by NIACE has examined the effects of participation in adult education on health (Aldridge and Lavender 1999). NIACE has also reviewed existing learning initiatives for adults that focus on health issues (James 2001). However, none of these two reports looks specifically at adults with poor basic skills or those whose first language is not English, but are concerned with adult education more broadly.

With regards to health and literacy more precisely, much research has been undertaken in North America, particularly in the US. However, many of the existing studies come from the medical field and focus on a narrow view of health literacy. The main focus of research has been twofold: to design tools to assess patients' literacy levels (see for example Davies 1991, Parker, Williams and Nurss 1995, Baker et al. 1999) and on the basis of this to assess people's likelihood to benefit from health care services. Such research has for example found that people with low levels of literacy are also less likely to make use of existing prevention and screening facilities (Davis et al. 2001), to adhere to prescribed courses of treatment (Kalichman et al. 1999) or to be knowledgeable about their chronic disease (Williams et al. 1998).

Existing research on health-related documents

A second major strand of research in the field aims to measure the readability of health documents such as consent forms (Molina 2001, Raich et al. 2001) or patient leaflets (see for example Basara and Juergens 1994, Newton 1995, Glazer et al. 1996, Guidry et al. 1997, Molina 2001). One of the few studies carried out in the UK looked at the readability of patient information booklets on breast cancer. Using tools developed in the US, the study found the information booklets to have a high reading age and to be unsuitable for many women (Beaver and Luker 1997). More recently, research on written health information has been extended to a concern with information provided through the internet (McLellan 1998, Kalichman et al. 2001, Berland et al. 2001).

What is missing from existing research is an understanding of lay people's strategies to access, comprehend and use the written information they receive from health care providers. Furthermore, there is little knowledge about how concretely low literacy skills impact on a person's ability to access written information about health and to make use of existing health care facilities. None of the existing studies on readability levels or patients' literacy skills has looked at whether and how patients make use of written texts, how they fill out forms and whether they feel that the information they are given is relevant and accessible. As part of a recent study in a hospital in Montreal, patients were interviewed about the usefulness of written information material displayed in the wards and received from health care providers. The majority of the 117 patients interviewed did not find the materials useful (Shohet 2003).

Accordingly, we know very little about the difficulties people with poor basic skills experience in dealing with the health care system and the particular skills that could help them to improve their health literacy. Some research has been carried out in the US, following people with low levels of basic skills through a hospital (Rudd forthcoming). The aim of this research was to identify the literacy-related problems these people experienced. No such research has yet been done in the UK. We also know very little about how people in the UK process and understand health-related information and how they deal with medical forms. One of the few existing pieces of research is a small study that looked at the experiences of students with a particular form to apply for support with health care costs (Fawns and Ivanic 2001).

The existing research on health and literacy has repeatedly shown that health education materials, consent forms and other documents are written at a level far too high for the average patient. On the basis of these findings, plain language has been advocated. However, many researchers have questioned whether the use of plain language in itself will be able to address the problems of low literacy patients and those whose first language is not English (Perrin 1998 – quoted in Shohet 2002, Hohn 1998, Rudd 2002). These cautionary remarks indicate that the issue of 'readability' is complex and not a matter of functional skills alone, but that other considerations such as the cultural appropriateness of materials, the necessity for contextual knowledge and the role of visual presentations need to be taken into account.

Health as a content area for literacy, numeracy and ESOL

As far as the role of health as a content area in literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision is concerned, very little research appears to have been done. No study was found that examines the role of health in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes. A national survey of adult basic educators in the US carried out by NCSALL (Rudd and Moykens 1999) has found that health as a content and skill area is given high priority in many ABE and ESOL programmes. The survey found that practitioners valued health as a content area because it contributes more than other topics to students' motivation, interest and participation. A similar survey of adult basic education and ESOL teachers in Massachusetts (Rudd, Zacharia and Daube 1998) supports these findings and indicates that health units help to support the teaching objectives of reading, writing, vocabulary building and speaking skills. No similar research exists in the UK.

A number of initiatives that link health and literacy or that use health-related materials in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes implemented in the US (see for example the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Programme, www.sabes.org/health/index.htm, HEAL: breast and cervical cancer, a curriculum that offers health lessons linked to basic skills development, quoted in Rudd 2002) and in Canada (Norton 1992, Norton and Campbell 1998,

Canadian Public Health Association 2000) have been documented. These programmes have recognised health as an issue of critical importance to adults and therefore aim to incorporate health issues into existing curricula or even to create health literacy programmes that serve the double aim of teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills and increasing students' health knowledge. Similar initiatives may exist in the UK, but they have not been documented or researched in any systematic way. An exception is the recent report by the Community Education Development Centre (Summer 2001). This report suggests that improving people's basic literacy skills is a way of tackling health inequalities. It discusses evidence that shows how poor basic skills can affect an individual's health. The report describes several initiatives in Harlow (Essex) that link health to literacy. These include a course on first aid that includes basic skills training and a practical course for staff working in the health sector and in other public services to design and produce written material which takes account of the needs of people with low basic skills.

It is reasonable to suppose that other such initiatives exist in the UK, but none of these appear to have been documented or studied in a systematic way. A further question that has not been researched in any detail is how experiences of ill health could relate to learning and to participation in adult basic education. Several studies have shown that health and illness are important matters of concern for many learners in adult basic education classes (see for example Frank 2001, Rudd et al. 1998). Illness, in particular when prolonged, serious and chronic, frequently can trigger people's desire and need to learn (as documented in Barton and Hamilton 1998). Furthermore, there are indications that initiatives which combine health and basic skills may be successful in recruiting those individuals who are in need of skills improvement but would not come forward to regular ABE classes (Shohet 2002). Yet no research has yet been carried out in the UK that has asked students in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL about possible health-related motivations or has examined the effects of participation on their health.

Conclusions: A broader concept of health literacy?

Overall, research in the area of literacy and health appears to reflect the concerns of medical professionals and health education specialists. Researchers in the field of literacy seem to have paid little attention to the potential of health as a curriculum area for literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Furthermore, very little research has been done that explores the skills requirements and the language and literacy practices of health care settings. Existing studies tend to be locked in a narrow framework which construes literacy and numeracy as abstract skills and pays little if any attention to the contextual and institutional nature of literacy practices in the health care sector. These studies assume a straightforward relationship between reading and writing skills, access to health education and the ability to act upon information obtained.

A strikingly different understanding of the role of literacy with regards to people's health is suggested in WHO's recent definition of health literacy:

Health literacy represents the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health.

Health literacy means more than being able to read pamphlets and successfully make appointments. By improving people's access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively, health literacy is critical to empowerment (WHO, 1998).

The above definition presents a significant step towards acknowledging the contextual nature and complexity of health literacy, extending beyond earlier functional models. However, it leaves much scope for interpretation, in particular with regards to the notion of 'empowerment' that is stated as crucial to health literacy.

On the basis of the above definition and drawing on Freebody and Luke's (1990) four-dimensional concept of literacy, Nutbeam (1999, 2000) has proposed a model of health literacy that encompasses three levels: functional health literacy, interactive health literacy and critical health literacy. Nutbeam's model presents a significant advancement from the narrow view that informs much research in the field of health and literacy. It provides the ground for thinking of health literacy as a range of situated practices rather than a single set of skills. Using data from their own research among health professionals, Freebody and Freiberg (1997, 1999) show how such a concept of health literacy can be applied to examine the role of written texts in patient-doctor communication, allowing us to pay attention to the social relationships in health care settings, the institutional nature of text and talk in these contexts and the role of power in relation to medical knowledge.

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Appendix 5

ESOL students in the prison system

Anita Wilson

I have carried out a brief study of aspects of ESOL need and provision in the prison setting. The initial thoughts, observations and findings reported here will go on to form the basis of a full report.

This is a marginal topic both in general educational research terms and also from the prison perspective as most learning in prison is concerned with the leveraging of basic skills for the general prison population and the remit to link education with training and resettlement. ESOL students are only a very small percentage of prison learners. However, they are a disparate group with complex issues. Some are 'foreign nationals' and as such will be deported during or following their incarceration. Some may be asylum seekers or detainees who are considered to have committed criminal offences while awaiting the processing of their claims. Many are obliged to choose prison employment over prison education as they need to send money home or need money for phone calls, and postage.

For this study, education managers from each prison were invited to answer questions on how many ESOL students they currently catered for, what languages these students spoke as their mother tongue, and the classes they attended. The questionnaire also asked for constructive suggestions on what improvements could be made in terms of provision for this group of students. Given that some prisons do not hold 'foreign nationals', that some prison education departments may be unaware of the presence of ESOL students within their prison and that education managers operate under considerable pressure, the response rate of 72 prisons from a total of 139 contacted was excellent.

On the basis of the information gathered, the number of ESOL students within the whole population of prison learners varied considerably, ranging from between five per cent to 20 per cent. 55 languages were identified but it is important to bear in mind that German, Portuguese, French and Spanish extend beyond any single country and so the range of languages does not represent the full range of ethnicity and cultural heritage of prison ESOL students. Due to the dispersal of prisoners within the system, there was also a wide variety in the numbers and profiles of prison ESOL students. Within London, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, for example, recorded that prisoners spoke Italian, French, German, Turkish, Spanish, Ethiopian, Somalian, Armenian, Slovenian, Algerian, Pakistani, Chinese, Iranian, Farsi, Hindi, Portuguese, Arabic, Punjabi, and Russian. From the women's perspective, HMP Holloway recorded that its prisoners spoke Spanish, Somali, Romanian, Chinese, Serbian, Iranian, French, Portuguese, Russian, German, Czech, and Arabic. Prisons located in other parts of the country had different profiles – and, given the fluidity of the prison – population, one response rightly noted 'it varies depending on our intake'. The data also shows the need be aware of gendered language differences. HMP Holloway, for example, holds female prisoners, many of whom are incarcerated as drug mules. Their country of origin and the current geography of the drug trafficking trade is reflected in the priority of languages such as Spanish, Chinese and French.

In terms of improved provision, there were a number of helpful and insightful comments in

the questionnaires. Many were practical and asked for teaching aids such as videos or more learning support assistants to help in the classroom. Others recognised that ESOL students might not be brought to their attention by the prison, or that prisoners who had English as a second or other language would be put to work in other areas of the jail where language barriers would not be an issue. Some felt that ESOL students themselves would opt for prison jobs that paid a higher rate than education, suggesting that they 'be paid a little extra so that they don't drift off to the kitchens or piece work, in order to earn enough to pay for international phones or occasionally to send money home'.

The two most prevalent responses were concerned with additional funding and better links with the rest of the institution. Comments on additional funding included 'most education contractors cannot afford to pay the necessary salaries and instead offer part-time sessional contracts at hourly rates which does not attract high calibre staff' and:

students don't get enough time in ESOL – a couple of hours once a week feels like too little to make much impact! Frustrating for us all. Inevitably, funding (or lack of) is the perennial excuse for not making more time available.

Frustrations with the institution as a whole were also highlighted. Comments such as '[ESOL students] needs should be given a priority so that they are not taken from education and asked to take on other duties in prison' were linked to wider institutional frustrations such as staff shortages:

students need to actually be able to come to class to access the support and wide educational provision for them here ...currently Education is closed almost all the time due to a shortage of [prison] officers' and prison protocols. No induction tailored to their needs. No accurate assessment is made until students come to classes.

In conclusion, initial findings would suggest that ESOL in prison is a contentious and complex issue. The politics of funding and supporting a small group of minority students who may well be deported after imprisonment or who are 'better off' working rather than learning in prison is not something that is easy to resolve. Lack of English still seems to be considered an indicator of lack of intelligence, as one manager noted, 'I was surprised to discover they seem to equate ESOL class attendance with "not being clever"'. Societal prejudices about who learns, when and how would appear to continue to remain a factor regardless of the arena in which the learning takes place.

A full report on the findings from this study will be made available in October 2003.

Appendix 6

Accelerated experience in teaching Basic Skills

Yvon Appleby, David Barton, Rachel Hodge, Roz Ivanic, Karin Tusting

January 2003

The issue

One of the most significant problems that is emerging from our entry into the basic skills field (across various institutions, training environments and practitioner groups) is a clash of resources: where recent changes required by the *Skills for Life* strategy mean an increase in staff training but where the staff pool to cover staff to do this training is qualified but not experienced. The root of the problem is a shortfall of experienced trained staff to provide cover. The effect of this shortfall is exacerbating the stress of introducing so many changes in the field of basic skills: both in the curriculum (i.e. core curriculum) and in teaching qualifications (FENTO standards). The overall impact that is felt by managers and institutions is of being overwhelmed and not having adequate time, or human resources, to introduce the new changes: even though these are embraced as positive steps forward.

The effectiveness of the implementation of the *Skills for Life* strategy is seriously being hampered by this single problem. This is not a long-term problem but one that is associated with the process of implementation of the *Skills for Life* strategy. The solution, is also therefore a short term one and geared explicitly to the problems being encountered as a result of this process of implementation.

Proposed solution

One of the ways of alleviating being overwhelmed is to increase the pool of experienced practitioners. This would enable institutions to provide cover using experienced staff, which would be less detrimental to students and would assist the ease of introduction of the core curriculum. It would also provide the possibility for institutions and experienced practitioners to gain from the benefits of research and professional development, currently being offered by many agencies and HE institutions. Presently many are unable to participate because of the shortage of experienced practitioners to attend or to cover for those attending.

Double staffing, as a method of accelerating acquisition of teaching experience, has been used in the past by some community education to provide 'on the job' experiential learning for new staff. This method has been used as an effective way of enhancing and accelerating the experience of qualified teachers from different teaching backgrounds, providing practical experience of the new teaching environment. This method uses peer support, with the possibility of team teaching, to provide a supportive, concrete learning environment that encourages reflective learning. Although recognised as an effective model, funding issues have curtailed its general and widespread use. This type of model has also been used in the United States under the name of 'internships' or mentoring.

Accelerated experience in teaching basic skills: implementing and testing this support mechanism.

Based upon the good practice within mentoring, peer support, internships and reflective practice, it would be possible to implement an accelerated experience in teaching basic skills using insights from these models. The accelerated and enhanced experience in this proposed model is based upon double funded teaching where an experienced basic skills tutor works with a qualified but inexperienced tutor. This 'practical acquisition' would be supported within a structure of critical reflection supported by a mentor and supporting institution.

Providing institutions do not have adequate funding to provide the resources for double staffed teaching or for adequate critical reflection and development time. Additional development money would therefore have to be made available – either nationally through BSA, or regionally through LSDAs or LSCs. A two-fold strategy is suggested that both tests the effectiveness of using an accelerated experience in teaching basic skills method whilst simultaneously collecting evidence that our original hypothesis of the problem is as widespread as we anticipate. By implementing a small pilot research study it would be possible to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of this model and its cost implications. This could either be new research or could effectively be attached to an existing NRDC project –for example the Adult Learners' Lives project. Simultaneously the NRDC, or an existing centre like Lancaster, could conduct a survey of practitioners and some sample interviews, to assess how widespread the problem of the lack of experienced staff is. At the point of the survey findings, the evaluation of the accelerated experience in teaching basic skills pilot would also have been completed. It would be possible within a relatively short space of time to assess the nature of need and to have a 'tested' practical solution to offer fixed to a specific short-term timescale.

Background Discussion Paper

Time and overwhelm: initial impacts of the implementation of change in the Basic Skills sector

Since September 2002, the Adult Learners' Lives project has been engaged in the first stages of setting up research in three sites in the North West. This has involved negotiating access, with managers and practitioners, to basic skills departments and learning groups, as well as recruiting teacher-researchers.

It is clear from the work that we have been doing so far that managers and practitioners are experiencing high levels of stress with regard to the implementation of the **Skills for Life** strategy. One of the main issues is time. Over and over again, we have been told the same story. Practitioners are generally very positive about the basic principles behind the strategy and the initiatives that are being introduced. However, they cannot do the impossible. The kinds of changes required by the strategy, and the speed at which they are being imposed, are unrealistic, given the levels of resources people are currently working with. There are so many initiatives coming out at the moment that, as several practitioners have told us, 'as fast as you're doing it, there's something new to take into account'.

This does not appear to be a question of resistance to change. We have come across very little resistance to the changes associated with **Skills for Life**, indeed we have found a great deal of enthusiasm for many of them. It is simply a question of what it is possible to do in a given time period, and the order in which changes have to be made. The professionalisation of the

field and the need for trained practitioners and high quality provision is generally welcomed. But it takes time to train people and perhaps more significantly, it takes time for newly-trained people to gain the experience to be able to provide high-quality teaching.

In many areas, there exists a pool of people with City and Guilds or other qualifications in adult literacy. However, these have now been superseded by the new FENTO standards and so many of the already experienced basic skills staff will be expected to do Level 4 qualifications as soon as possible. This has been made even more difficult by the fact that the introduction of the new qualifications has not kept pace with the introduction of new provision, and therefore many managers have had to use the old qualifications in the interim period, which will need topping-up over the next couple of years.

At the same time, the introduction of the new curricula has meant that some teachers are being pulled out of classrooms for three-day curriculum trainings, some going to several three-day events in several different fields, eating into even more of their teaching time. The implementation of these complex new curricula is a demanding and very time-consuming task in itself, both for experienced teachers required to change their practices accordingly and especially for newly-trained teachers.

At the same time, several colleges and providers are also involved in other initiatives related to the **Skills for Life** strategy, such as the Pathfinder projects. All of these take the time of experienced basic skills staff, some of whom can potentially be involved in several initiatives at once, with all the headaches that entails in terms of the need for teaching cover. This also raises a serious question as to the quality of research that departments can carry out when there is already such a strain on resources of time and staff.

Although people have been attracted to the profession through the 'Get On' campaign and newly-trained teachers are entering the field, they need to accumulate experience before they are ready to take on the responsibilities associated with some of the new initiatives. Many of these are highly creative and innovative, for instance community provision involving ABE practitioners working alongside other specialists and mapping basic skills provision on to a particular subject area. This would be challenging for an experienced tutor, let alone one who has just come out of a few months training.

Another issue is the mismatch between the roles of college principals and LSCs, who have targets to meet in terms of numbers of students in basic skills provision, and the main task of the basic skills manager which is to provide learners with a high quality learning environment. Conflicts are being experienced when basic skills departments are trying to deal with a sudden influx of learners before the human resources are in place.

The phrase that comes up time and again is that practitioners feel they are being sent 'mixed messages from those at the top'. On the one hand, they are being told that the need is for professional, trained staff and high quality provision, which takes time and experience. At the same time, they are being told that they need to get out there and develop and expand innovative work now.

What all of this means is that human resources are stretched beyond capacity. There is no redundancy in the system to allow time for development or embedding of new practices. Managers are struggling to find staff to cover the provision that currently exists, let alone to allow staff time to participate in other external initiatives, even where there is money available for this time to be bought out.

It is to be welcomed that new training opportunities are being made available to basic skills teachers and that the field is becoming more professionalised. In general terms, people are very committed to best practice and are working hard to implement recommendations and new initiatives. However, it needs to be recognised that these things do not happen overnight, and that there is a natural logic to the process. Teachers need to be trained and then to accumulate experience, before they are experienced and confident enough to implement some of the initiatives that are being brought in now. The current small pool of trained and experienced teachers is simply not sufficient to meet the demands being placed upon them. When colleges are stretched to the limit or beyond just in terms of staffing the learning provision, engagement in further research and development initiatives is simply not feasible.

Another vital issue impacting this situation is the different range of pay, conditions and contracts which are offered to basic skills practitioners. Some practitioners have commented that there is a mismatch between, on the one hand, standardisation of curricula and the demand for professionalisation and quality across the board and on the other, poor pay and conditions and short contracts which undervalue and demoralise staff, driving them away from the sector. We know of at least one case where prison basic skills practitioners are paid only in the region of £14,000 full-time for teaching basic skills to young offenders in compulsory provision. This is some of the most demanding teaching and yet it is seriously undervalued by the terms offered.

The danger is that by placing impossible demands on people from above, the current shortage of resources will be exacerbated, as people take time off with stress or vote with their feet and change jobs, a situation that is already taking its toll. Morale in the FE sector is very low and people are already leaving. Words like basic skills departments 'haemorrhaging' staff and 'drowning' have been used. This is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible, because the more people that start to leave the sector or become unavailable to work in the sector, the more skills and experience will be lost and the more severe these problems will become. It would be more efficient, in terms of time, money and human resources, to take some steps towards addressing these issues now, rather than to deal with a more severe crisis later.

What is needed is not more materials or more training. What seems to be desperately needed is a search for creative ways to allow teachers the time to implement, reflect on and embed new initiatives before further changes are introduced.

The Adult Learners' Lives project has encountered all of these issues in the difficulties that we have faced negotiating access to colleges for the research as a whole and for the teacher-researcher part of the programme. Although managers and teachers have expressed a great deal of interest in the programme, it has been very challenging to find teachers meeting the criteria for involvement who could be released for the required time, when they are clearly a vital resource for their department at this time of rapid change. Similar issues were encountered when negotiating access. Even making contact with management to talk about involvement with the project proved difficult in some sites, not through any lack of enthusiasm but simply because they were engaged in so much front-line activity that research involvement of this kind had to take second place.

Appendix 7

Overall emerging themes and future issues

At an awayday in early July, the full-time researchers, teacher-researchers and project directors engaged in a reflective exercise which generated a jointly produced list of themes which were beginning to emerge across the project. These themes are listed below. This list and the discussion in Section 6.1 of the main report will serve as the basis for future analysis across all the data which the project has generated so far and for planning the project's development.

Learning environment

Providing a place where students are not labelled failure/different.

The positive label of 'learner'.

Safety of learning environment – a safe haven from everyday difficulties.

A place that acknowledges trauma – previous and current around racism.

Social activity within learning group.

Structure to an otherwise unstructured day.

Funding issues

Finding money for learning opportunities, especially informal non-accredited learning.

Funding – students being paid to attend.

Barriers to learning

Barriers often explained in existing (institutional) categories.

Families – students do balancing act between needs and roles of others in their life.

Fear and panic response to previous learning.

College systems – bureaucratic and not sensitive to individual needs.

Policy – especially accreditation, which puts some learners off.

Lack of self-confidence and self-esteem in individual learners.

Gender issues – particular for some ESOL female learners.

Individually experienced blame and responsibility for failure.

Overcoming learning barriers

Making links between past and future and the role of education in this.

Engagement, concentration and commitment from students even in challenging environments.

Recognising hidden and presented barriers.

Recognising roles and responsibilities in home and community.

Recognition that social contexts of learning can be threatening as well as supportive.

Coping strategies – overcoming everyday life barriers

Students coping in their everyday lives generally.

Proactiveness of women in education, family and community.

Amazing coping strategies already used through informal networks (although limited).

Informal community networks – these are area specific and often local (variety between sites).

Church as a supportive community

The significance of maths/numeracy

Maths is abstract, numeracy is everyday and concrete.

Numeracy as a cultural phenomenon.

Lives are shaped by maths abilities.

Numeracy needs in everyday lives - do literacy tutors know more about their students' everyday life than maths tutors?

Existing feelings of fear about maths.

Issues of confidence.

Maths as a social activity.

Joined up maths – linked to everyday uses and understanding.

The significance of language/literacies

Language used to describe experiences.

Used to tell painful stories and life narratives.

Used for coping with children and accessing services.

Used to access provision, including health and child care.

Having a voice through participating in research.

Importance of oracy linked to literacy.

Teaching and learning issues

College responds to practical outcomes from research.

Issues of full-time/part-time courses for students.

Need for fast tracking on assessment for ESOL.

Recognising and responding to the changing needs of students.

Issues of accrediting prior learning and learning gains that can't be quantified.

Flexible student friendly provision like drop-in study centres.

The uses of group and individual teaching.

The use of different materials and artefacts (e.g. worksheets) to support learning.

Understanding what happens in the classroom.

Social engagement, negotiation and concentration in learning environment.

Challenging our assumptions about what is 'good' teaching.

Subject specific learning – abstract (decontextualised) and concrete (contextualised) teaching.

Classroom versus theory and real life practices.

Working with students who do not apportion blame for previous failure.

Students know what they want to learn.

Wider benefits of learning

Empowerment – new roles in the classroom.

Empowerment in life.

New skills acquisition including speaking practice.

Change in feelings and attitudes to learning, adds quality to life.

Insights about learners generated from research

Enabled greater understanding of learner's roles in learning.

Getting to know individuals, understanding existing abilities and feelings.

Considered how students bring individual circumstances to learning.

Recognised that student's potential and resources are unique.

Greater insight into individual learning experiences.

Recognised commonality of needs and commonality of experience.

Enabled understanding of variety of experiences and individual motivation.

Encouraged valuing each individual learner within a huge variety.

Appendix 8

Forms of impact of the adult learners' lives project

This list underlies the discussion in Section 6.4 of the report.

College impact at all levels

Held meetings with advocates, managers and college principals for dissemination, information and awareness-raising.

Engaged in collaborative involvement with practitioners – reciprocal skills-sharing – individually and in group forums (college meetings, etc).

Organised dissemination events for college staff.

Impact to learners

Through participating in the project, learners have engaged in critical reflexive dialogue about their learning, needs, hopes and aspirations, through interviews, individual talk, photography, email correspondence and informal feedback.

Increased opportunities for learners to practise their communication skills in real situations.

Feedback has identified interest in and commitment to participation in university and national policy research.

Impact to teacher-researchers

Developed research capacity through engaging with theory, developing research skills, and connecting this to practice.

Changed practice through developing relationships with learners, developing new materials and exploring different ways of teaching.

Created local and regional networking through exchange visits, involvement in research forums, teacher-researcher real and virtual meetings.

Suggested potential developments in research and practice.

Developed writing and presenting skills.

Developed critical reflective abilities which will continue to inform practice.

Impact to other teachers and practitioners

Involving teachers as consultants has raised awareness, reciprocal skills-sharing, recognition of their expertise, and inspired their interest in participating in further research. Encouraged involvement in regional research forums.

Has had direct impact on teaching strategies, has created a reflective space for teachers which has led to development of awareness of teaching strategies which reflect learners' lives more closely.

Has created space for evidence-based critical professional dialogue between teachers and management.

Broken down barriers between research and practice through building up relationships with colleges and individuals.

Met with Helen Deacon from Lancaster and MC 11 December.

Gave presentation for diploma students' induction day 18 January.

Impact to research community

Challenged presuppositions about good practice and ways of working.

Created more meaningful dialogue between different research traditions.

Gave presentations at Nottingham NRDC international conference 20 March 2003, developing theory and methodology around collaborative qualitative research in social practices and learners' lives.

Attended Edge Hill Linguistic Ethnography meeting 8-9 April – lots of interest expressed in project.

Attended international conference on basic skills provision in Northern Ireland, in Belfast.

Attended NATECLA conference.

Attended SCUTREA conference.

Attended BAAL Annual Meeting Leeds.

Developed links with researchers in the field internationally – Roz Ivanic's visit to Rutgers.

Impact to region

Developed networks and sharing information through:

Attended All our Voices conference Garstang 5 February. Led workshops on practitioner research, links between research and practice, policy history.

Co-ordinated setting up North West **Skills for Life** Research Forum.

Led regional research seminar, Bolton Institute, attended by managers, practitioners, researchers, representatives from learning partnerships, LSCs, Regional Intelligence Agency, TUC, and local authorities.

Participated in lifelong learning forum in Blackburn area.

Met with Liverpool learning partnership, East Lancs learning partnership and North Lancs learning partnership.

Made links with Merseyside LSC including visits from representatives to Literacy Research Centre.

Met with MACTAC and Local Solutions (providers in Merseyside area).

Supported development of Chrysalis, an independent voluntary group to support and train women experiencing domestic violence in Liverpool, including basic skills training.

Awareness-raising and dissemination

Launched project and centre 17 October attended by practitioners, managers, researchers, NRDC representatives, Vice-Chancellor and other senior university representatives, learning agency representatives, policy-makers and implementers. Developed an information pack for this event which was subsequently distributed widely.

8 February gave presentation at University Court, to senior representatives of local and regional agencies and organisations.

Developed website.

Maintained ongoing contacts with Workplace Basic Skills Network addressing issues around research into workplace basic skills.

Impact to NRDC

Acted as a conduit from local and regional level to national level.

Wrote 'time and overwhelm' report.

Participated in numeracy advisory group and numeracy review expert seminar.

Produced ESOL case study and contributed to development of ESOL research network.

Attended northern national ABSSU/NRDC conference Manchester Airport 14 November.

Developed collaborative methodologies that include the voice of the learner.

Organised methodology-focused researcher day at Lancaster 27 February.

Contributions to research literature

Wrote reviews of work in motivation and retention, informal learning, ethnography and literacy, teaching and learning.

Developing national research and practice links

Attended RaPAL (Research and practice in adult literacy) and contributing to organising RaPAL conference 2004.

Joined RaPAL journal editorial group.

Participated in ESRC ABE seminar series linking policy, practice and research communities.

Appendix 9

Visit to Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA

Roz Ivanic visited the NCSALL research team at Rutgers University on 21 March 2003. She was hosted by Hal Beder and met Patsy Medina and other researchers who were relatively new to the team in a full-day seminar. The purpose of the visit was to exchange experience of researching classroom processes in adult literacy classrooms.

In the morning the Rutgers team presented the background to their current research projects and details of their research methodology. They are moving on from the exploratory study entitled 'Dynamics of adult literacy classroom interaction', investigating issues which emerged from that study. The furthest advanced of these follow-on studies is focusing on the concept of 'engagement', motivated by the observation of a high rate of 'tuning-out' and 'drop out' in the initial study. The team are working in several classrooms in a local Literacy centre, studying the classroom practices of different staff members, the categories of engagement which they observe, and what appears to promote engagement. In addition they were at that time about to embark on what they called the 'lab-site study' undertaking in-depth, longitudinal case studies of students who had volunteered to attend a class at the Center which has been designated as a research lab. In this study they hope to observe change over time in learning processes and progress. They were also discussing a third study which was at the design stage, looking at the ways in which classroom learning might provide a scaffold for naturally occurring 'acquisition' of language and literacy outside the classroom.

One of the most valuable and striking benefits of the visit was discussion of their methodology. They are committed to taking a grounded theory approach, insisting on collecting only naturally occurring rather than experimental data. They video-recorded classrooms and identified telling moments within these video-recordings which they later discussed a) individually with selected students (not always the same ones), and b) in a research team meeting consisting of all university members of the research team and the teacher of the class. These discussions were audio-recorded and constituted additional data, providing multiple perspectives on the classroom event itself. In addition, the lead researcher for each classroom was responsible for producing a transcript of the chosen extracts with initial annotations, and circulating it electronically to other members of the research team in order to build up multiple codings of the same data. They had already completed three such data-sets, and were aiming to record between three and ten sessions in each of the classrooms they were studying. So far, they had identified three types of engagement in the classrooms: cognitive, social, and procedural, and they had evidence of students displaying strong engagement even in quite unfavourable circumstances. This process was producing very rich insights, but the patterning of these had yet to be established. There is much the ALL team can learn from the Rutgers NCSALL team's work. In particular, it drew attention to:

- Ways in which the teachers of classes we observe can be more fully involved in the research process.
- How a particular construct such as 'engagement' can provide a productive focus.
- The difference between the classroom as the main unit of analysis, in their case, and the adult learner as the main focus of analysis, in our case.
- The value of multiple codings of data in order to arrive at interpretation and explanation.
- Some similarities between issues arising in US literacy classrooms and UK literacy

classrooms, for example: the ways in which teachers exercise their authority with adult learners; the motivations which keep learners engaged, even on what appear to be quite routine tasks; and the nature of classroom interaction when learners are working on individualised learning plans.

In the afternoon Roz presented a variety of aspects of the work of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre. First she gave a broad overview of the various activities of the centre, including the different types of NRDC work going on there. The Rutgers team showed particular interest in the work we were doing developing the Diploma in effective practice in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, in developing the Teacher-Researcher Fellowship Programme, and in evaluating a range of models of practitioner involvement in research. These are all issues of great concern to them as they work closely with practitioners and are facing similar issues regarding the best sorts of relationships between research and practice.

She then outlined the key tenets of a social view of literacy which underpins the research at Lancaster. This was also of great interest, particularly to Patsy Medina as the lead researcher in the team, and the lively discussion suggested that this view of literacy might be taken up, particularly in their proposed study of ways in which classroom activities can scaffold acquisition outside class. Finally she presented the framework for identifying discourses of literacy (Lancaster Literacy Research Centre Working Paper 1), which is likely to be drawn upon in the ALL project. This also elicited a great deal of interest, with several of the researchers responding that they could see how they might use it in the Rutgers projects.

The day was highly successful in achieving its main aim of exchanging information, in such a way that the two research teams can benefit from each other's current and future work.



This report is funded by the Department for Education and Skills as part of **Skills for Life**: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department.

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- The University of Sheffield
- East London Pathfinder
- Liverpool Lifelong Learning Partnership

- Basic Skills Agency
- Learning and Skills Development Agency
- LLU+, London South Bank University
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
- King's College London

Funded by the Department for Education and Skills as part of **Skills for Life**: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.