



National Research and Development Centre
for adult literacy and numeracy

Annual Report April 2002-March 2003

August 2003

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This report covers the period April 2002 to March 2003 i.e. the government's financial year

1. Getting Started: the first year

NRDC was established by the DfES with a unique remit. Firstly, we placed emphasis on 'development' as well as research. The Centre brings together the best UK researchers in the field, together with talented and experienced development professionals.

Skills for Life is an all embracing literacy, language and numeracy strategy, covering all 16+ learners on pre-entry up to Level 2, discrete and embedded provision, classroom, community and voluntary and work based learning with assessment through Key Skills, GCSE Maths and English and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills certification. It also engages with the emerging 14-19 strategy, the initiative for encouraging young people to commit to continued learning, whether in school, college or the workplace.

The contract for the National Research and Development Centre was awarded in January 2002 to the Institute of Education, University of London as the managing partner and contractor for the NRDC consortium of universities, national development agencies and practitioners. NRDC became operational to a limited extent in February 2002. The interim management team was headed by Professor John Bynner with Tom Jupp as acting Centre Manager. They established the initial priorities as:

Research: Commission an initial programme of surveys and reviews, which will underpin later field-based research and commission agreed longitudinal research which requires substantial time before any results will be available.

Development: Commission projects for initial teacher education and for staff development because of the urgency of this work for **Skills for Life**.

Strategic Planning and Networking: Prepare a first draft of a strategic plan and consult on it with policy makers and practitioners.

Effective Management: Set up administrative and organisational procedures for the running of the NRDC consortium.

Staffing: Appoint key permanent staff to run NRDC and to undertake the research and development programme.

ABSSU: Work closely with the DfES Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) as the commissioning body for NRDC and with other key stakeholders.

This report sets out the results of these plans for the period April 2002 to March 2003. There are substantial achievements to show for this first year, such as: a programme of 24 research and development projects commissioned and set up and 10 of these completed by April 2003; substantial contributions to teacher training; and the organisation of a number of symposium and conferences – particularly the Ministerial **Skills for Life** Conferences in November 2002

organised jointly with ABSSU in London and Manchester with over 1,200 participants.

But equally important for the future is that the NRDC core team is established at the Institute of Education with a dedicated Director, Associate Directors and Operations Manager supporting the consortium infrastructure. Teams of researchers, including teacher researchers (a total of 88 full time and part time staff by March 2003), are conducting the work led by senior academics in all the NRDC universities.

The permanent Director, Dr Ursula Howard, took up post in February 2003, decided to undertake a radical review of how NRDC was developing and to reconsider the earlier draft Strategic Plan. The conclusions from the research and development work set out in this Annual Report have been incorporated into the new and ambitious NRDC **Strategy 2003 – 2007** which was officially launched on 8 July 2003 with the Minister for Young People Skills, Ivan Lewis MP.

This report uses the framework of the new Strategy to report on the first year's work. This will enable continuity and ease of reference for later reports.

2. About NRDC: visions, aims and values

NRDC's vision

To become an internationally recognised centre of excellence for research, development and effective practice in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

About NRDC

NRDC is the national centre dedicated to research and development on adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. It was established by the DfES Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) in 2002 as part of **Skills for Life**, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. It is funded by the DfES for five years. It is an expert and experienced consortium. It aims to provide an independent voice through rigorous and relevant research.

The NRDC consortium partners are:

- Institute of Education, University of London
- Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University
- School of Continuing Education, The University of Nottingham
- School of Education, The University of Sheffield
- East London Pathfinder Consortium
- Liverpool Lifelong Learning Partnership
- Basic Skills Agency (BSA)
- Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)
- London Language and Literacy Unit, London South Bank University
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).
- King's College, University of London

A wider group of associates contribute to the Centre's

work, including: The University of Leeds; Read on, Write Away!; Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD); Centre for British Teachers (CfBT); Portland College.

Our Strategic Aims are to:

- become, within five years, an internationally recognised centre of excellence for research and the development of effective practice in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- create a coherent and reliable research resource which develops literacy, numeracy and ESOL policy, improves practice and identifies further research needs
- establish reliable and useful research evidence drawn from quantitative, qualitative and experimental methods and develop a strong international dimension to our work, sharing ideas

- engage with, refresh and help take forward the **Skills for Life** strategy
- create new theory, scholarship and innovative thinking in the field, engaging interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches
- contribute to establishing a strong professional identity for teachers and other practitioners, through new training and development frameworks
- devise new ways of transforming research and development, so that they are effectively and routinely used to develop policy and practice, and support researchers in communicating with practitioners about research findings
- build research capacity, reflective practice and career development, through the systematic engagement of teachers and other practitioners in the Centre
- systematically engage the users of research – particularly: employers and unions, teachers and the wider **Skills for Life** workforce, and agents of change in communities and the wider social context
- draw on research and good practice from across the world, developing and sharing ideas and outcomes.

What we stand for:

The values and principles underpinning NRDC's activity are:

- to ensure that the needs of learners are the central focus of our work
- to address equality and diversity in all our activities
- to engage practitioners in all stages of our work
- to exemplify good partnership, working within and beyond the consortium
- to work in accordance with accepted ethical frameworks for research
- to make NRDC's operations as transparent as possible
- to work towards a world-class standard in our research and development.

3. Programme One: Economic development and social inclusion

Programme One investigates the benefits of literacy, numeracy and ESOL to productivity and economic development and employability; and to social and individual well-being. The consequences of underachievement and low skills will also be investigated. The definition of 'basic skills' will change in the future. Research needs to focus on preparing people to live and work to their full potential in the 21st century, with changing skill and technology requirements.

Key Questions:

What are the economic and social consequences of literacy, language, numeracy and ESOL problems for individual adults and for society?

What are the economic, social and personal benefits of literacy, numeracy and English Language Skills?

The following projects started during 02/03:

1. British Cohort Studies: 1958 and 1970 British birth cohort studies enhanced to include literacy and numeracy measures

. The major work of the project will be to include literacy and numeracy assessment in the whole of the February 2004 sweep and correlate with educational achievement, employment and other aspects of life histories. This will multiply ten-fold the scope of previous work done on the cohort studies. This project is also extending work on the existing body of birth cohort data by analysing it in additional ways.

During 02/03, work was undertaken on recruiting and training staff; secondary analysis of existing data, particularly in terms of changing performance between 11 and 16 years of age and in terms of subject qualifications achieved; design and piloting of the basic skills assessment instrument so that it matches the Baseline Survey and appointment of the fieldwork agency.

Research director: Professor John Bynner, Institute of Education
Start date: April 2002 Finish date: March 2005

Geographical Scope: UK-wide
Outputs 02/03: paper to NRDC International Conference

2. Adult Learners Lives

A resource for detailed ethnographic research on the roles, uses and meanings of literacy, language and numeracy in adult learners' lives, based on data from at least 250 learners across multiple sites. This comprises a series of studies of designated populations in workplace and community settings linked in an integrated programme. The study includes people from non-English speaking backgrounds, adults with learning difficulties, disabled adults, and older and young offenders. The research will enable understanding of learners' social and economic contexts and their experience of learning programmes.

During 02/03, four research staff were recruited and trained, the research core sites were identified and established together with maps of provision and demographic comparison in the three areas. Data collection began with observations of the classes involved January-March 2003.

Research Director: Professor David Barton, Literacy Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

Start date: September 2002

Finish date: March 2005

Geographical Scope: Accrington, Blackburn Lancaster and Liverpool

Outputs 02/03: review of ethnographic studies of motivation, persistence and informal learning. Five papers on evidence and on practitioner involvement at the North West **Skills for Life** Research Forum, and the NRDC International Conference.

3. Workplace basic skills

Identifying effective workplace basic skills strategies for enhancing employee development and productivity. This project focuses on workplace-linked basic skills initiatives that are delivered in the workplace or recruit through employers or unions. The objective is to identify when and how such programmes are effective in improving adults' measured basic skills, as well as the effects on productivity and other life-course variables.

During 02/03, the team has been reviewing previous research, understanding the range of provision, making contacts for research fieldwork and developing the necessary research tools for the project. Sites have been visited and pilot questionnaires and interviews conducted for quantitative and qualitative data collection. Assessment measures are being developed for measuring basic skills and for measuring effective lifelong learning skills.

Research Directors: Professor Karen Evans and Professor Alison Wolf, The Institute of Education

Start date: September 2002

Finish Date: June 2004

Geographical and occupational scope: Pilot work in Oxford, London and Humberside covering health, care and food processing.

Outputs 02/03: A literature review: the benefits to employers of raising basic skills.

4. The impact of adult literacy and numeracy levels on small businesses in rural Lincolnshire and Rutland: a case study

This small scale sixth month project is examining issues of basic skills and small businesses in a rural setting through the analysis of questionnaire and interviews with businesses and with providers.

Research Director: Dr Chris Atkin, University of Nottingham

Start date: February 2003

Finish date: August 2003

Output 02/03: research report August 2003.

4. Programme Two: Participation, agency, motivation

Programme Two explores how to stimulate demand for learning; how to widen participation in formal and informal literacy, numeracy and language learning; and how to encourage motivation and persistence.

Key Questions:

- How can we attract more learners and enable them to persist and succeed in learning?
- What impact does participation in learning have on learners' lives and how can this be assessed?
- How do people cope with, use and develop their skills in, and knowledge of, literacy, numeracy and language in daily life?

The following projects were started in 2002/03:

1. Adult Learners' Lives

See Programme One above. The methodology of this project will provide data for a strong focus on motivation and persistence.

2. Improving the literacy and numeracy of young offenders and disaffected young people

This project focuses on post-16 learning for young offenders, both in custody and in the community. The project aims to establish:

- How to deliver a promising pedagogy to this group.
- Whether or not such educational intervention can significantly improve these young people's literacy, numeracy and English language levels relative to a comparison group.
- Whether this, in turn, will significantly reduce subsequent offending, unemployment or uptake of benefits.

During 02/03, the team has: a) completed a needs analysis for the project and a comparison of this with the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) PLUS programme and with the **Skills for Life** curriculum; b) developed tools and procedures for assessing the young people before, during and after the interventions; c) negotiated with INCLUDE and the YJB in the selection of groups for the intervention

Research Director: Dr Jane Hurry, Institute of Education
Start Date: September 2003 Finish Date: March 2005
Scope: 120 young people in intervention and 120 young people control
Outputs 02/03: ongoing

3. Making numeracy meaningful

This study investigates the relationship between the numeracy taught in learning environments and learners' practices in numeracy and mathematical literacy in their everyday lives. Financial literacy is also a focus. The project will test the hypothesis that adults will be able to function more efficiently, and progress at work and in society, because they are able to study on numeracy programmes that use their own contexts and purposes.

During 02/03 (four months only), the project staff have been appointed; they have studied relevant research and theory and the three research sites for the project have been established.

Research Director: Dr Diana Coben, King's College, London

Start date: December 2002 Finish date: August 2004
Output 02/03: ongoing

5. Programme Three: Effective Teaching and Learning

Programme Three addresses how we improve teaching and learning practices in education, work and community settings so that learners' progress and achieve their goals in effective learning programmes.

Key questions:

- How can teaching, learning and assessing literacy, numeracy and ESOL be improved?
- What factors contribute to successful learning?

The programme seeks to develop a body of evidence on effective practice in the teaching and learning of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL – in a variety of contexts and with a comprehensive range of different groups of learners

The following projects were started in 2002/03:

1. Adult literacy and numeracy interventions and outcomes: a review of controlled trials

Systematic reviews of controlled trials relevant to adult literacy and numeracy, plus an 'expert' review, were undertaken. The aim was to provide complementary answers to the question 'What is known from research about effective pedagogy?' The scoping and systematic reviews provide rigorously-derived answers to the question 'What factors in teaching cause adult learners to make progress in adult literacy and numeracy?' The expert review broadened the scope to look at evidence from correlational studies and expert opinion and to take in the evidence on using ICT to boost adults' skills, and on workplace learning. The reviews concluded that there were very few studies (only 18 controlled trials in the USA were found from 4,500 references). There is a particular lack of empirical evidence about ICT, workplace provision, numeracy and writing.

Research Directors: Carole Torgerson, University of York and Professor Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield.

Start date: February 2002

Finish date: March 2003

Output: published review

2. Assessing adult literacy and numeracy: a review of assessment instruments

NRDC needs valid, reliable and manageable assessment instruments for its own research and development programmes in support of **Skills for Life**, and the research community in general needs such instruments. This report was therefore commissioned to provide a review of existing instruments for assessing adult literacy and numeracy.

The conclusions of this analysis were that no wholly suitable instruments – secure (unpublished, or not readily available), aligned to the new National Standards, and (for use in intervention studies) having parallel forms – could be identified.

Research Director: Professor Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield
Start date: February 2002 Finish date: August 2002
Output: published review

3. Development of an adult literacy assessment tool

As there is no suitable research assessment tool for adult literacy (reading and writing), calibrated to **Skills for Life** levels, NRDC has commissioned the NFER to develop such an instrument. The instrument is being designed, field tested and standardised for use on NRDC literacy research projects.

Research director: Professor Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield and Professor Alison Wolf, Institute of Education.

Start date: March 2002 Finish date: October 2003
Output: two parallel forms of an assessment instrument of adult literacy (reading and writing) across levels from Entry 2 to Level 2.

4. Models of adult learning: a literature review of models applicable to Skills for Life

This review draws out the different models of adult learning in existence and the significance of them for research and development in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. The review aims to cover work which has looked at learning in settings other than compulsory schooling. The review suggests that a full understanding of adult learning must be a complex one which, rather than seeing learning principally as an individual, cognitive phenomenon, takes into account the interrelationship of many factors in the learning situation, while placing the learner's contexts, purposes and practices at the centre.

This review is wide-ranging and covers ideas from many fields about how adults learn. The theories which are covered are ones which have proved useful in other areas of the education of adults.

Research director: Professor David Barton, Lancaster University
Start date: June 2002 Finish date: March 2003
Output 02/03: The literature review

5. ICT and adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Previous work looking at ICT and adult literacy and numeracy (e.g. Hopey 1998, Mellar *et al* 2001) has mainly been based on surveys or interviews with managers, tutors and learners, and whilst this has given us an insight into some of the principal variables that may be involved, we have little detailed account of what tutors actually do when they are using ICT. In this study we developed the methodology to carry out a detailed observational study over 11 classes in order to begin to identify more closely the factors involved in effective teaching with ICT within college settings. Close working with the tutor-researchers was invaluable in gaining insights into present practice.

Research Directors: Dr Harvey Mellar and Dr Maria Kambouri, Institute of Education
Start date: August 2002 Finish date: April 2003
Geographical Scope: East London Colleges
Output: a full report on the project's methods and findings.

6. Effective approaches to the teaching and learning of writing

The first phase of this project has two parts, a review of literature and a review of current practice. The literature review addressed three questions:

How do relevant studies, which conceptualise writing and writing development contribute to an understanding of how adult literacy learners develop as writers?

What factors in adult literacy programmes enable learners to develop effective writing skills?

How have successive policy directions and initiatives in the UK addressed the acquisition of writing by adults?

The first and third questions have been addressed through narrative reviews; The second using a systematic approach. During 02/03, the searches for the review were completed.

The review of practice includes a series of focus groups followed by 10 in-depth case studies. During 02/03, the focus groups were completed and a report was

ready by the end of April. This is informing the detailed planning of the interview and observation schedules for the case studies. Ten practitioner researchers have been recruited and trained to undertake these case studies during May and June.

Research Director: Sue Grief, Learning and Skills Development Agency

Start date: July 2002

Finish date: July 2003 (check)

Geographical Scope: UK-wide

Outputs 02/03: Report on practitioner knowledge collected from the focus groups.

7. Developing adult reading skills: an exploration of text -, sentence-, and word-level reading difficulties in adult literacy learning.

This was an exploratory project designed to find out what is going in reading instruction for adult literacy learners. In particular the project team sought to investigate what particular areas of reading are crucial to fluency and which of these appear to present special difficulties for adult learners. The project explored areas of reading difficulty through focused observation of practice and close study of learners. This was done through fieldworkers, who conducted observations of 27 basic skills classes, interviewed the 27 tutors of those classes, and assessed a total of 53 adult learners. The observations and interviews focused on reading instruction and were designed to collect data on strategies used to teach reading and to elicit tutor perspectives on their students reading difficulties. The learners were assessed in the following areas: word identification, comprehension, and phonological awareness. In addition, four focus groups were conducted with 27 further practitioners from different teaching and learning contexts. A review of recent British school-level literature for possible relevance to adult learners' reading difficulties complemented the fieldwork.

The main outcome of this exploratory project was the development of informed hypotheses on first, the nature and scope of adult readers' difficulties, and second the relationship between current teaching practices and learner difficulties. Whilst these hypotheses on the latter should lead to further investigation, the data from the diagnostic reading assessments have the potential to provide important insight into the reading problems of adult learners.

Research director: Professor Greg Brooks

Start date: September 2002

Finish date: May 2003

Geographical Location: six provider sites in the East Midlands and the North.

Output: the full report of this project was completed in May 2003

8. Adult numeracy: review of research and related literature

This study reviews UK and international research and related literature on adult numeracy. It first considers conceptual issues in adult numeracy in the context of **Skills for Life**, numeracy/mathematics education as a research domain, reviews of research and the survey evidence of adults' numeracy skills.

It then examines numeracy in context, which includes its context and transfer, the investigation of the use of mathematics in everyday life, mathematics and employment and financial literacy.

The review goes on to look at learning and teaching in adult numeracy, which embodies policy and provision of adult numeracy and literacy in England, teacher education and diverse learners.

Finally it considers factors affecting learning. It investigates affective factors, mathematics anxiety, dyscalculia, brain function in mathematical activity and research methods and methodological issues in research on adult numeracy.

Research director: Dr Diana Coben, University of Nottingham and King's College, London

Start date: February 2002

Finish date: March 2003

Output: Literature review of 168 pages and a selected bibliographical database with approximately 2, 500 annotated entries.

9. Teaching and learning common measures especially at entry level

This project is investigating the teaching and learning of common measures, a key numeracy skill. The project – working with teacher researchers in three sites – seeks to investigate how adults effectively learn measures, how teaching can be effective and to produce learning materials.

The first phase – September to November 2002 – established the project in terms of staff recruitment and training and the design of the research. Initial fieldwork was undertaken between November 2002 and March 2003, piloting instruments and analysing data. The main fieldwork began in April 2003.

Research Director: Dr Diana Coben, University of Nottingham and King's College, London

Start date: October 2002

Finish date: August 2004

Location: three providers in London, including a prison

Output 02/03: no reports

10. Adult ESOL Pedagogy: a review of research, an annotated bibliography and recommendations for future research

This report focuses on learners who need English for the UK workplace, for study in further and higher education and for living in the community. The review concentrates on research that has taken place in the last 15 years and it has attempted to include all of the research that has been carried out within the UK. As most of this has been fairly small scale or not directly concerned with pedagogy, research that has been carried out in the USA, Australia, Canada and Europe is also included and its relevance to the UK context is discussed.

The main sectors of the report cover:

- processes of language learning
- relationship between teaching and learning
- ESOL literacy
- organisation of provision
- research methods

Each of the main sections contains a list of research issues which arise as a result of the review of the literature and the report concludes with a set of recommendations for research. Accompanying the report is an annotated bibliography of all the research that has been consulted.

Research director: Professor David Barton, Lancaster University
Start date: February 2002 Finish date: July 2002
Output: published literature review and annotated bibliography

11. Case Studies in ESOL Provision and Learners' Needs and Resources

This project focuses on individual classrooms and relates the micro-processes of learning and teaching to how students perceive their learning and the issues which affect it.

Five case studies have been selected to cover different types of provision, different groups of learners and different levels of language competence from which some common themes will be drawn. Case study methodology is being used and the results are intended to provide information on practice in dedicated ESOL classes and distinctive features of ESOL learners.

The five case studies are

1. Perception of the learning experience of refugees and asylum seekers attending Blackburn College (University of Lancaster)
2. Bilingual students learning in ESOL and numeracy classes: a contrastive study of classroom delivery (University of Leeds).
3. The *Bridge to Work* project: A study of an advanced ESOL course as preparation for work (CETS Croydon and Schellekens Consultancy)

4. Individual processes and group activity in the heterogeneous community based classroom (King's College London and the London Language and Literacy Unit, London South Bank University).
5. Exploration of the teaching of reading to adult ESOL learners (Institute of Education)

Research director: Dr Celia Roberts, King's College, London

Start date: November 2002 Finish date: July 2003

Locations: Blackburn, Leeds, Croydon, inner London

Output: full report in September 2003

12. Literacy and numeracy for adults with disabilities and learning difficulties: a review and exploration

This exploratory project was designed to gain a detailed picture of literacy and numeracy provision for physically disabled adults with learning and communication difficulties. The aims of the project were: to supplement a recent US literature review on literacy and numeracy for adults with learning difficulties and to carry out a parallel review on literacy and numeracy provision for adults with physical disabilities and/or communication difficulties; to carry out observations of literacy and numeracy teaching and learning provision at Portland College, one of a small number of specialist colleges in England; and to use the outputs from both the literature review and the fieldwork to inform future practice and to develop hypotheses for further investigation.

Research directors: Professor Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield and Dawn Green, Portland College, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire

Start date: September 2002 Finish date: March 2003

Output: published final report

13. Community-focused provision in adult, literacy numeracy and language: and exploratory study

The starting point for the study was that community-focused provision is under-conceptualised, under-researched and possibly insufficiently appreciated in the current policy context. The study therefore aimed to add to current understanding by searching for, and building on, relevant previous research and then conducting case studies of providers in England thought to be taking a community-focused approach.

A sample of 11 providers was then chosen for case studies on the basis of their answers to a set of screening questions identifying them as likely to be taking a community-focused approach and so as to be representative of different kinds of providers (LEAs, voluntary organisations, partnerships) in different parts of England (North, Midlands, South, South East, South West). The research team visited providers, interviewed the relevant director or strategic manager,

interviewed a related provider in the area, interviewed at least one learner and, where possible, conducted brief observations of provision.

The general conclusion of the project is that community-focused provision is an appropriate and reasonably robust concept for understanding one way of meeting the needs of adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL learners. Issues that may be helpful for understanding community-focused provision have been identified and over 70 studies or reports identified that had a bearing on community-focused provision of adult literacy, numeracy and language.

14. Access for All and ESOL: a literature review

ABSSU is planning a development project to produce guidance on how teachers can use the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum with learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. As a preliminary step, NRDC has produced a modest literature review of research relevant to this field in UK, Australia and USA. As expected, it was found there was very little research literature relevant to adults who have settled in the UK and this is described. The review also discusses key issues and includes recommendations on further work.

Research director: Dr Derrick Armstrong, University of Sheffield
Start date: February 2003 Finish date: March 2003
Outcome: literature review for ABSSU/DfES

15. Developmental dyslexia with reference to adult basic education and ESOL – a literature review

This research review was undertaken in order to provide an informed position for NRDC in relation to the controversies created by the literature on developmental dyslexia and relationships between social exclusion and reading failure. NRDC wishes to take a non-partisan stance in relation to the range of views, which are argued with conviction on this subject.

A substantial draft reviewing the literature on this subject was completed by the end of March. This is now subject to peer review and to finalisation by September 2003.

Research director: Professor Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield
Start date: October 2002 Finish date: March 2003
Output: draft report undergoing peer review.

6. Programme Four: Professional development and the *Skills for Life* workforce

Programme Four will work to build capacity: to develop a fully professional workforce with recognised career structures; to research and develop effective practice in the professional development of teachers, managers and others who support learning; and to collaborate on strategic development work with key national bodies.

Key questions:

- How can improving initial training and the professional development of the *Skills for Life* workforce enhance learning?
- What are the major issues and challenges in delivering ITE (Initial Teacher Education) and CPD programmes?

Skills for Life has set out a challenging agenda for creating a new framework and professional identity for teachers and others engaged in the delivery of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in post-16 education and training.

The new level 4 programmes cross the interface between HE and FE and require combinations of subject expertise not previously found in post-compulsory education and training. They require new models of delivery that demand the development and accreditation of both subject knowledge and teaching skills.

NRDC recognised from the outset that there was an urgent need to commission some major projects immediately with a view to both helping to build capacity and to ensure experience is being evaluated and good practice shared from the outset.

The following projects were started in 2002/03

1. Evaluation of pilot PGCE/ Certificate of Education programmes for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL teachers.

This project has been investigating new PGCE/Cert Ed programmes offered by 11 institutions during 2002-3; drawing general lessons on best practice from these; ensuring that all participating institutions benefit from and contribute to this evaluation process; and making recommendations to ABSSU and providers about best practice and future national roll-out of such courses. The areas of focus of the project are:

- How are the courses taught/organised?
- How is subject knowledge (theory) related to teaching knowledge (practice)?
- How is existing experience and teaching knowledge used to make sense of the subject specifications?

- What questions and approaches can we raise and share that will help providers to organise and improve their courses?
- Diversity of cohorts.

Research directors: Helen Casey, NRDC Core Team and Norman Lucas, Institute of Education.

Start date: February 2002 Finish date: July 2003

Outputs: Consultation workshop with stakeholders: July 2003

Project report: August 2003

2. Development and evaluation of a national programme of post-graduate continuing professional development (CPD) through open and distance learning (ODL)

NRDC is funding work at four consortium universities to enable the development of a number of free-standing CPD modules at MA level. All modules will ultimately be available nationally through ODL. The new Institute of Education MA has completed its first year of operation (April 2002-April 2003) and has been evaluated. At Lancaster, the new Adult Literacy Education module ran for the first time in October 2002, and the Research Methods module ran in January 2003. At Sheffield, new modules in aspects of literacy education for all ages have been developed and are going through the approval process. At Nottingham, a new module on working with adults with learning difficulties and disabilities is currently being developed, following a restructuring of the MA in Lifelong Education.

Project director: Dr Diana Coben, University of Nottingham

Start date: September 2002 Finish date: October 2003

Outputs 02/03: see above

3. A longitudinal study of the impact of *Skills for Life* on teachers' qualifications, their classroom and organisational practice, role definition and concept of the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

During September to December, the study was designed: Sampling design, research questions and pilot questionnaires. Piloting was undertaken during January and February with teachers and managers and the preparation for the first stage of data collection was completed in March for commencement in April. (At the request of ABSSU, the first phase did not run to allow for redesign to broaden the range of teachers included in the study.)

Project director: Helen Casey

Start date: September 2002 Finish date: March 2005

Scope: England-wide

Outputs 02/03: Specification and piloting. There will be a full interim report in September 2003.

4. Analysis of participants and evaluation of teacher training needs from core curriculum training

This project has produced an analysis of the participants on the national core curriculum training programme and of the indications for future training needs.

Research director: Professor Norman Lucas, Institute of Education

Start date: April 2002 Finish date: ongoing

Output: report

5. On-line core curriculum training modules for adult literacy, numeracy, ESOL and Access for All

This project aims to make elements of the core curriculum training available as online modules. Introductory modules to all four core curricula will be offered for teachers who have not been able to access the face-to-face core curriculum training. This work has been undertaken with the Basic Skills Agency, the London Language and Literacy Unit, London South Bank University, NIACE and the Open University. Feedback on test modules was obtained from eleven providers

Project director: Helen Casey, NRDC Core Team

Start date: February 2003 Finish date: ongoing

Outputs: Five on-line modules.

Training in on-line authoring

6. Strategic development work with key national partners

The Associate Director with responsibility for teacher development was a member of five national committees concerned with workforce development and professional accreditation. She also worked with QCA, FENTO, BSA and ABSSU on the development and drafting of guides for level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications. She undertook joint production with FENTO of guides for teacher training and awarding institutes on specialist pedagogy.

Responsibility: Helen Casey, NRDC Institute of Education

Start date: September 2002 Finish date: ongoing

Outputs 02/03: see above

7. Communication and impact

All NRDC's research, development and other activity is aimed at improving adult literacy, language and numeracy provision for learners in all relevant settings. To achieve this, we must influence the development of **Skills for Life** policy and maximise the impact of our research and development on practice and, through this, on learning outcomes.

Under the NRDC Communication and Impact strategy, each research and development project identifies at the planning stage how the evidence and advice it generates will be disseminated, engage relevant practice and policy communities and have impact on learners.

Key tactical approaches

- Work proactively with research, policy and practice communities to develop better understanding of how/where research can have impact.
- Use limited communications resources (both project and centre-wide) effectively, focusing on activities with the greatest potential for impact, and working with key partners – especially ABSSU, BSA, LSDA London Language and Literacy Unit, London South Bank University and NIACE – to share networks of communication and influence.
- Be realistic about our ability to engage proactively with other organisations, and use newsletters, briefings, website, etc., to keep them informed.
- Support training and development for the research community on how best to present and communicate research and research findings. And how to engage productively with practitioners.

Work carried out during 02/03

Activity around communication and impact was limited during our first year. There was no dedicated staff until the Associate Director for this area of work started in February 2003.

1. Conferences

Understanding the learner and the learning process: **Skills for Life** Conferences 2002:

Organised jointly with ABSSU, November 2002 in Manchester and London.

Outputs: Participants: 1200

Analysis of issues raised in workings on NRDC website.

What counts as evidence for what purposes in research in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

NRDC's first International Conference held at the University of Nottingham, 20 – 22 March 2003 with work presented from USA, Canada, Australia, OECD, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa and UK.

Outputs: 115 delegates, including from other parts of the UK. Conference papers are being edited for publication by NRDC.

2. Workshops and expert seminars

Symposium between the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (Harvard, USA) and NRDC

At the Institute of Education, 22-23 April 2002 to inform NRDC of experience of the comparable centre in USA. The symposium covered research and organisational issues.

Outputs: 20 participants. Report available on NRDC website.

Expert seminars

All appropriate NRDC research and development projects have organised regular expert seminars and consultations with stakeholders and practitioners. These have been held in London, Sheffield, Lancaster and elsewhere.

Outputs: direct contribution to planning, organising and evaluating the relevant projects.

3. Contribution of papers, support and participation in seminars organised by other NRDC network partners

- ESRC seminar series on research and policy in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL:
 - Adult basic education as a social practice, Lancaster University, 18 October 2002
 - Literacy, language and bilingualism, University of Edinburgh 24 January 2003.

Further seminars in the series to follow in 2003-4

- Adults Learning Mathematics (ALM): A research forum - London, July 2002
- Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) Conference – Nottingham, July 2002

- Adult ESOL Research Network – Leeds, February 2003

4. NRDC Contributions to other events

Members of the NRDC management team spoke at many events throughout the year. The Associate Director: Teacher Training and Professional Development spoke at 14 FENTO and ABSSU dissemination events between September 2002 and February 2003.

5. NRDC Newsletter

This was launched in July 2002 and four issues were produced during 02/03 distributed electronically to the research, policy and practice communities and through 1,000 hard copies of each issue.

6. Website and IT Strategy

Work was undertaken from autumn 2002 on specifying an IT Strategy and on specifying and constructing a website for NRDC. Hardware was also purchased. The website went live in April 2003: [**www.nrdc.org.uk**](http://www.nrdc.org.uk)

8. Engaging practitioners in research and development

NRDC aims to engage practitioners in all stages of its work. Two members of the Consortium are large provider groups: The East London Pathfinder Consortium (through Tower Hamlets College) and the Liverpool Lifelong Learning Partnership (through Liverpool Community College) and a representative from one of these partners is a member of the Consortium Board, the Management Group and the Research and Development Group.

The following work has been undertaken during 02/03:

1. Research and Development Programmes

Practitioner involvement at design, implementation and conclusion stages has been funded as part of all appropriate projects. Projects which involve field work have included teacher fieldworkers, teacher researchers and practitioner consultants. Training has been provided and 30 teacher researchers/fieldworkers have contributed to projects during 02/03

2. Evaluation of the Teacher-Researcher Model

This project is evaluating models of good practice in supporting Teacher-Researchers in the fields of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL using the first year experience of the NRDC's Teacher-Researcher Programme and by reviewing evidence from the US, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia and the UK. The purpose of the project is to study the promotion of reflective practice through the engagement of practitioners in research. During 02/03 information was collected about teacher-researchers from all sites and interviews were conducted.

Research Director: Professor Mary Hamilton, Lancaster University

Start date: October 2002 Finish date: January 2004

Outputs: There will be an interim analytic report July 03

Planning next steps

The new NRDC **Strategy 2003 – 2007** published in July 2003 envisages the work so far as only one model – the apprenticeship approach (Model 1). Practitioner engagement follows the rhythms, aims and ethos of funded research. Planning has begun for three further models:

- **Practitioners carrying out small-scale projects** as part of professional development courses (Model 2)
- **Practitioner research group projects and networks with stand-alone funding**, supported by expert research consultants (Model 3)
- **Whole-institution approach**, where a research expert is attached to a provider organisation, working in situ with selected members of staff on a project chosen by the organisation and participating staff because it is relevant to their goals and interests. (Model 4)

9. Management and Organisation

NRDC is a complex consortium. The Director leads a dedicated NRDC core team at the Institute of Education, which is responsible for strategy, management, quality assurance, communication and publications, and for finance. During 02/03 there were research directors and research officer teams based in eight consortium partners and associates.

NRDC also has a Consortium Board made up of all the core partners (see page 4 of this report) and associate organisations, a Management Group and a Research and Development Group. During most of 02/03, there was an Interim Management Team (IMT) of ten. We are most grateful to everyone who contributed to the work of the IMT during the year.

1. Staffing

A major task during 02/03 was to recruit key staff.

NRDC Senior Core Team

Director	Dr Ursula Howard	(from February 2003)
Associate Director: Teacher Training and Professional Development	Helen Casey	(from September 2002)
Associate Director: Communication and Impact	Dr John Kanefsky	(from January 2003)
Associate Director: Research	under recruitment	
Operations Manager	Vanessa Gordon	(from August 2002)

From February 02 to January 03, Professor John Bynner was the acting Director of NRDC and Tom Jupp was the Executive Deputy Director.

Research staff (full-time and part-time during 02/03)

	Research Director	Others
Institute of Education	Professor John Bynner	13
Lancaster University	Professor David Barton	5
Nottingham	Dr Diana Coben	2
Sheffield	Professor Greg Brooks	11
Learning and Skills Development Agency		2
King's College London		5
University of Leeds		2
University of York		2

2. Management and Quality Assurance

Project proposals for commissioning work are subject to a scrutiny process and are then approved by the Management Group. An Annual Operational Plan and a detailed budget is drawn up for each project. Milestones and budgets are monitored quarterly. Reports and outputs are required from each project every six months. Quality, synergy and impact are discussed and planned at regular intervals by the Research and Development Group and the Associate Director for Communication and Impact.

3. Finance and Funding

The Institute of Education is the contractor for NRDC responsible for to the Department for Education and Skills. All work undertaken outside the Institute of Education by partners, associates and other contractors as appropriate is subject to sub-contracts. A large amount of work had to be undertaken during 02/03 to establish budgeting and accounting procedures for NRDC as a whole and for each of the partners.

Total expenditure during 02/03 for all the programmes and work presented in this report was £2.7 million.