

RaPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

Two broad themes have emerged in this bumper "open" issue which criss-cross through the sections; *the effects of government policy on practice, teacher education, assessment and ensuing consequences; and learners as readers, writers, listeners, speakers, reviewers and active citizens living in various social and cultural contexts. It all makes for an exciting "multi-themed" offer to appeal to researchers and practitioners alike.*

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The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

Who we are

RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, practitioners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacies and numeracy. Our support is generated by membership subscription only, and we are therefore completely independent in our views. RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in adult life.

What we do

- **campaign** for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives
- **critique** current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- **emphasise** the importance of social context in literacy
- **encourage** collaborative and reflective research
- **believe** in democratic practices in adult literacy
- **create** networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- **publish** a journal three times a year

RaPAL Officers 2007

Chair	Fiona Macdonald, Communities Scotland, Paisley
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Editorial Information

The Editorial Group for 2007 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner researchers: Yvon Appleby, Sue Bates, Amy Burgess, Maxine Burton, Ellayne Fowler, Tara Furlong, Barbara Hatley-Broad, Mary Hamilton, Kieran Harrington, Gaye Houghton, Fiona Macdonald, Colleen Molloy, Deirdre Parkinson and Sarah Rennie. Overseas members of the Editorial Group include: Jean Searle, Rosie Wickert, Stephen Black, Australia; Mary Norton, Bonnie Soroake, Sheila Stewart, Canada; Janet Isserlis, Elsa Auerbach, Steve Reder, USA; and Cathy Kell, New Zealand

Members are involved in the compilation of the journal as reviewers/referees and editors.

We are a friendly group - open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. This Journal is written by and for all learners, tutors and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacy and numeracy work and to encourage debate. Why not join in?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk

The RaPAL Journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group.

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Editorial



Welcome to this 'open' issue of the RaPAL Journal, Spring 2007. Usually, each RaPAL journal contains articles that relate to a topical 'theme' chosen by the production team. Occasionally, however, we find it very useful to produce an 'open' issue so that people whose interests might lie outside our choice of themes have an opportunity to contribute. We have gathered together a large number of articles about teaching literacy, ESOL, numeracy and teacher education that we think you, our readers, will regard as lively, challenging and thought provoking.

Ralf St. Clair opens Section 1 by providing a glimpse of the next RaPAL journal (which looks at international perspectives about literacy) when he talks about the future of literacy research in Canada where changes are taking place. Ralf was invited to participate in discussions about the changes, one of which was concerned with whether or not there would be value in a unified approach for assessment and accountability across the country. RaPAL readers have already experienced the positive and negative effects of this approach and it is interesting to read about it in a Canadian context. Ralf also joined in discussions with one of the few non-profit making literacy organisations in Canada which is trying to ensure that corporate sponsors keep funding research without adopting 'a deficit driven view of literacy skills as an economic productivity issue'.

Sue Oakey, who is a Skills for Life consultant working with The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in the East of England, tells us about how MLA worked in partnership with The Associated Colleges of the Eastern Region (ACER) to develop a creative approach to the delivery of the Level 4 literacy curriculum. Teacher educators and tutors were introduced to the expertise of archive staff and the original resources held in Record Offices. Sue tells how ACER recommended that these be developed within a literacy as a social practice approach.

Kate Cross describes how her learners on an ESOL and Citizenship course invited their MP to visit and discuss issues that concerned

them, including the proposed cuts in ESOL funding from September 2007. This was an example of 'direct citizenship action' and was a very positive experience for the learners.

Between sections one and two there is a conference report by Amy Burgess who attended the Basic Skills Agency Annual Conference in London in March. It had one principal theme: Basic Skills and Employability. Different representatives from employers gave presentations about Basic Skills developments in their own particular field.

Section two starts with Cathie Lacey having a 'conversation' with Margaret Herrington about some of the pedagogical issues in teacher education brought about by the introduction of the new standards from Lifelong Learning, UK (LLUK), which have to be in place by September 2007. They point out that 'Not only are the standards changing but also all teacher education programmes will have to demonstrate that they are using new units of assessment devised by LLUK. This will involve a sea change in the way awarding bodies operate, including higher education institutions (HEIs)'.

Researcher/practitioner Vicky Duckworth shares the effects of her PhD studies on her role as tutor and teacher educator. The aim of the research project is to investigate the impact of joining a basic skills programme on learners and follows their subsequent progression routes. Her article looks at the impact their very participation in the project has on them. It also looks at the effects of working with a researcher/practitioner on fellow members of staff as well as the impact on Vicky herself.

Embedding literacy and numeracy into vocational courses is a very topical issue at the moment and Catriona Carson and Elaine Traynor describe the piloting of numeracy tuition to support nurses with the calculation of drug dosages in an intravenous drug administration course. It involved one of their team attending the course and identifying the different numeracy applications embedded in

often complex language to plan for the numeracy support course. This is a vocational area where accuracy is vital.

Section three opens with Juliet Merrifield who takes an in-depth look at the different accountability systems in the target-driven Skills for Life strategy and argues that these are carefully set up to control and manage. She makes a compelling case for what she calls 'intelligent accountability' which would be 'part of a system that learns', a system which would require innovation and flexibility.

Lin MacKenzie looks at adult learners in three different types of provision: a community-based adult education centre, a family learning centre and a NACRO centre. She explores concepts such as 'social capital', 'cultural capital' and 'social identity' and shows how these are important contributory factors in deciding whether learning is successful or unsuccessful.

Alex Kendall discusses her presentation to the British Educational Research Conference in 2002. It was concerned with the reading habits of 16 to 19 year old students in colleges across the Black Country which she was researching for her PhD. She explains how the data she presented was 'misread' by journalists of the educational press who instinctively assumed that if students did not read novels then they were deficit readers. Alex's reaction to this changed the whole course of her PhD.

Jay Derrick writes about some initial research findings based on the effects of assessment on

learner motivation. He expresses misgivings about policy documents that emphasise summative rather than formative assessment and mentions research which indicates that formative assessment produces better attainment.

Kieran Harrington, our Reviews Editor, asked learners in Galway to review some new publications from Gatehouse. It has always been RaPAL's policy to communicate and value the views of both practitioners **and** learners and as these resources are publications written with learners in mind it was therefore appropriate to ask learners to review them. Thanks to Paula McDonagh and Marie Summerville for their reviews.

Two broad themes have emerged in this bumper "open" issue which criss-cross through the sections; *the effects of government policy on practice*, teacher education, assessment and ensuing consequences; *and learners as readers, writers, listeners, speakers, reviewers and active citizens living in various social and cultural contexts*. It all makes for an exciting "multi-themed" offer to appeal to researchers and practitioners alike.

We would like to say a special thank you to the authors and also to those who have contributed in other ways to the production of this particular issue. In alphabetical order they are Yvon Appleby, Amy Burgess, Ellayne Fowler, Kieran Harrington, Deirdre Parkinson, Irene Schwab and Karen Tusting.

*Gaye Houghton
Colleen Molloy*

RaPAL Journals 2007 Themes and Deadlines		
Issue	General Theme	Copy deadline
Summer 2007	International Literacies	Fri 29th April 2007
Autumn 2007	Conference 2007 edition: Learning journeys - voices and identities in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Fri 28th Sept 2007