

(1) Which Literacies are to be valued?

'Recent work has further extended the notion of literacy, emphasizing how social, economic and technological factors mean that texts now come in various forms and more commonly mix the written word with the iconic and visual. (Barton et al., 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2003)... We therefore see a far more complex semiotic landscape than that framed in discourses of functional literacy, one which points to multiplicity but is also caught up in enactments of education to exert certain standards, those literacy practices to be valued. Here existing standards built upon assumptions of reading and writing text primarily using paper and pen are put into question.'

From:

Page 486

Richard Edwards, Roz Ivanič & Greg Mannion (2009): The scrumpled geography

of literacies for learning, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30:4, 483-499

Other refs to be included if selected are:

Barton, D., Hamilton, M., & Ivanic~, R., (Eds.) (2000). *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context*. London: Routledge

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M., (Eds.) (2000). *Multiliteracies*. London: Routledge

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. London: Routledge

## (2) 'The pressure towards marginalisation grows

Skills for Life was seen as a relatively temporary measure to restore life chances to adults through skills acquisition, after which, for subsequent generations, the education system would ensure that the problem no longer arose. We now know that quick solutions to such longstanding problems are unlikely to be totally effective. Education through such initiatives as 'Family literacy' and 'Literacy and numeracy hours' can achieve a lot in reducing the skills deficit for school-leavers. However, a proportion of individuals in a mass education system are always going to miss out. Furthermore, as expectations of what is needed rise, the pressure towards marginalisation grows. This means that Skills for Life (should) be seen, not as a stop-gap, but as an essential part of the education system.

From:

Pages 80-81

Illuminating disadvantage: Profiling the experiences of adults with  
Entry level literacy or numeracy over the lifecourse  
Samantha Parsons and John Bynner November 2007  
NRDC, London

### (3) A simplistic view

Levine points out (p. 257), the term functional literacy quickly became aligned with ideas and educational practices that form part of the human resource model which took hold of education and training in the UK and elsewhere in the 1980s. This model links literacy directly with economic development, individual prosperity and vocational achievement. Levine concludes that the term “functional literacy” was initially adopted as a useful concept for the international political and diplomatic context within which UNESCO operates, but subsequently hardened into a simplistic view about the role of literacy in culture, citizenship and the pre-requisites for employment.

From:

Page 6

Amy Burgess and Mary Hamilton, 2011

Discussion Paper: Back to the Future? Functional Literacy and the New Skills Agenda

Other refs to be included if selected are Levine, K (1982).  
Functional literacy: Fond illusions and false economies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 52, 249-66.

#### (4) Functionalism preserves the Status Quo

Functionalism emphasises the value of the equilibrium of society in which all elements have a pre-determined role. Successful normalisation of individual behaviour through socialisation or education will enable an individual to play their part by fitting in to the status quo rather than changing or disrupting it. ....Such a theory cannot explain how or why people might exert positive agency to challenge inequality and change society and it is thus inherently conservative.

From:

Pages 8-9

Amy Burgess and Mary Hamilton, 2011

Discussion Paper: Back to the Future? Functional Literacy and the New Skills Agenda

## (5) OUR VISION

The Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan<sup>1</sup> has established Scotland's overarching vision for all learners – to raise standards of literacy for all from the early years through to adulthood.

Specifically for adults, the Scottish Government's vision is:

By 2020 Scotland's society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively in order to handle information, communicate with others, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.

To achieve this vision we will focus on four overarching outcomes:

- improved access to literacies<sup>2</sup> learning opportunities
- high quality learning and teaching
- improved infrastructure, and
- evidence of impact.

This document aims to promote equal access to and participation in literacies learning for all adults<sup>3</sup>. It is intended to promote equality of opportunity to those who face persistent disadvantage and to increase the numbers of people economically active across all groups within society.

Successful implementation of this strategic guidance will significantly increase the numbers of adults with improved literacies capabilities in Scotland.

*Page 7*

Scottish Government (2011). Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic guidance. Edinburgh: Scottish Government

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I thought the above would be interesting especially with the footnotes from the original document because they refer to the skills, knowledge and understanding and the various context for learning but also show that from the Scottish Government perspective links it back to society and economy.

This is the link to the complete document:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/01/25121451/8>

1 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/10/27084039/0>

2 The term "literacies" used throughout this document refers to the skills, knowledge and understanding required for literacy and numeracy practices, for example to read and understand a bus timetable; to complete a betting slip or to create a CV.

3 The term 'adults' refers to adults aged 16 years and above

## (6) Scottish ALN Curriculum

We are using a **social practices** account of adult literacy and numeracy (Barton, 2002). Rather than seeing literacy and numeracy as the decontextualised, mechanical manipulation of letters, words and figures this view shows that literacy and numeracy are located within social, emotional and linguistic contexts. Many literacy and numeracy events in life are regular, repeated activities, such as paying bills, sending greetings cards or reading bed-time stories and some events are linked into routine sequences that are part of the formal procedures and expectations of social institutions such as workplaces, schools and welfare agencies. The more informal expectations and pressures of the home or peer group structure other events where there are expectations about the right way to do things (Lave and Wenger, 1991). For example, the practices associated with cooking are quite different in the home and in the workplace - supported, learned and carried out in different ways. The division of labour is different in institutional kitchens - the scale of the operations, the clothing people wear when cooking, the health and safety precautions they are required to take, and so on. Literacy and numeracy practices integrate the routines, skills and understandings that are organised within specific contexts and also the feelings and values that people have about these activities. If you are worried that you can't do something then you are going to find it more difficult in a public or workplace context than if you are at home in a relaxed situation.

Reading and writing are complex cognitive activities that also depend on a great deal of contextual (ie social) knowledge and intention. For example, someone reading the main news story in a newspaper is not just decoding words but also using knowledge of the conventions of newspaper writing, of the local/national focus and the political and philosophical orientation of the newspaper. In fact they are 'reading between the lines' (Bransfield et al, 1999). In the same way, adults in a supermarket are not just using number skills when making price comparisons but also taking into account their prior experience with brands, family likes and dislikes and perhaps ethical concerns (eg organic, GM-free, not made with child labour, or Fair Trade).

Literacy and numeracy learning takes place in particular social contexts (Wenger, 1998) and so it is important to understand the nature of people's informal learning strategies. People have insights into how they learn, have theories about literacy, numeracy and education and use particular strategies to learn new literacies. This understanding of literacy and numeracy is a key aspect of people's learning, and their theories, even if they are not very explicit, guide what they do (Gillespie, 2002c).

Barton, D. (2002) A social practice view of language, literacy and numeracy, <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/hce/ABE-seminars/index.html>

Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., Cocking, R. R. (Eds.) (1999) How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

Gillespie, M. K. (2002c) 'EFF Research Principle: A contextualised approach to curriculum and instruction', EFF Research to Practice Note 3. Washington DC: National Institute for Literacy.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

From

*Pages 13-14*

Scottish Executive (2005). *The Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

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Link to full document below:

<http://www.aloscotland.com/alo/38.html>

## **(7) Numeracy across learning**

### **Principles and practice**

“All teachers have responsibility for promoting the development of numeracy. With an increased emphasis upon numeracy for all young people, teachers will need to plan to revisit and consolidate numeracy skills throughout schooling.” Building the Curriculum 1

All schools, working with their partners, need to have strategies to ensure that all children and young people develop high levels of numeracy skills through their learning across the curriculum. These strategies will be built upon a shared understanding amongst staff of how children and young people progress in numeracy and of good learning and teaching in numeracy. Collaborative working with colleagues within their own early years setting, school, youth work setting or college and across sectors will support staff in identifying opportunities to develop and reinforce numeracy skills within their own teaching activities.

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### **Mathematics is not my specialism. How will I contribute to the development of numeracy skills?**

For individual teachers in secondary schools and other practitioners, it means asking the question, ‘How am I meeting the numeracy needs of the learners in front of me?’. This does not mean that you will teach everything that a mathematics teacher develops but that you think of the numeracy experiences you can provide for young people. The greatest impact for learners will come where all practitioners, in all learning environments, include rich numeracy experiences as part of their day-to-day learning and teaching programmes.

You might begin by asking to what extent you already provide numeracy experiences for learners. As a first step, you may want to consider where numeracy plays a part in the aspects you contribute to the curriculum. Does your programme involve estimating, measuring, using and managing time, carrying out money calculations? Does it involve reading information from charts and tables or explaining consequences of actions? If it does, and you highlight this and build upon it in the learning activities, you are making a valuable contribution to developing numeracy in all learners.

*Page 34*

Scottish Government (2009). Curriculum for Excellence Building the Curriculum 4 Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work. Edinburgh: Scottish Government

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Full document listed at:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/howdoyoubuildyourcurriculum/curriculumplanning/whatisbuildingyourcurriculum/btc/btc4.asp>

These few paragraphs show usage of the terminology around Numeracy and Maths. Note this framework is for children and young people aged 3-18 years.