

Workshop Notes - 'Literacy' Phased Out of Adult Education?

These notes consist of summaries of the total discussion and some individual remarks gathered together. Roles and perspectives varied across the group with some healthy discussion!

- Programmes are still called Literacy at the non-accredited level, then we run Functional Skills. We change the terminology at **different levels**;
- We do not use technical names in our course titles, rather **whatever appeals**, eg Flying Start, Keeping Up With the children;
- Stand-alone literacies classes did not attract learners but when we called them Get Ahead With English or even Functional Skills people came;
- Names can vary and it doesn't matter - we name it according to what learners want;
- We don't want to lose the 'Adult' from Adult Education. Provision is becoming 'school-ified'.

- Whatever the name, **it is the practices** that we take part in that count;
- **Initial assessment and appropriate referrals** are more issues than what provision is called;
- Terminology **is about the context** in which it is used, eg what appeals to learners, what practitioners use as short hand with each other;
- If we don't **defend literacies as a field**, new practitioners will see English as a set of skills.
- But it is what happens in teaching sessions, I don't think losing the name will lose the practice
- Terminology can **circle around**;
- Terminology is **tied up with policy messages**, eg are we given and giving messages that English and Math are more valuable? Policy context is driving this.
- There is a **lack of clarity**. Could we **all just be consistent** in the terminology we use and its meaning

- Publishers have a **different perspective**. They are keen to support programmes aimed at improving literacy skills of children;
- It is all about Functional Skills because there is no **funding** for progression. Loss of progression routes for low level learners;
- Literacy reminds me of literature and studying poetry;
- I hate the use of the term literacy with other names such as football

literacy. This confuses the meaning of literacy;

- I worry about the term English. **Who's English** is it anyway? Do we all know what we mean by English? For some this is GCSE only;
- For several groups of learners English was the preferred term because it held **no stigma**, particularly in the workplace when needed for career progression;
- Once the term literacies was understood in a community setting, learners were very protective of their literacies group and its identity;
- This government want English and Maths;
- Should Functional Skills, literacy 7 numeracy be linked to vocational skills?
- Learners and employers value GCSE because **they understand what it is and it is needed for progression** into education and jobs. SMEs are losing confidence in changes.
- Prestige of 'English' – there is a **perception of success** with this;
- Least popular terms with learners were Basic Skills (implies bottom of the heap);
- Literacy was seen as what children did and therefore not popular with adults, especially when Literacy Hour was introduced in schools;
- Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (for aged 3-18) uses English and Maths as specialist subjects whilst Literacy and Maths are the responsibility of all.
- What about **literacies for ESOL** learners? Will they recognise English classes are for them?
- I don't like the boundary between ESOL and literacies – English explains it;

Recommendations

- Have a long term policy regarding terminology and practice;
- Ensure recognition as a subject specialisation;
- Maintain professionalism in the sector;
- Seek curriculum clarity
- Archive the history of terminology for reference and resources