

# **four seasons in one day –**

**literacies in changing climates**

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## **The old, the new and the future: UK strategies for adult literacy, language and numeracy in the context of global change**

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## Notes, keywords and triggers for discussion

### Question 1 - The long journey to low achievement: how did we come to be where we are?

#### The 19th century

1. **The age of motivation:** informal learning, autodidacticism, self-improvement, radicalism, church intervention, autodidacticism and increasing literacy levels (67-75% by 1840) deep poverty and social class divisions.
2. **The age of state formation:** towards universal free elementary education (1890): Acts of Parliament, standards, levels and 'payment by results'.
3. **The age of communication, clerks and colonies.** Literacy linked to upward mobility; mass circulation; daily newspapers.

#### The short 20th century

1. **1918-1970: The age of 'universal literacy'** (and 'remedial education').
2. **1970s: The end of post-war 'golden years'** and the rediscovery of poverty: **A Right to Read:** voluntary sector/BBC literacy campaigns; first government funding for adult literacy (1975); national agency established: (ALRA->ALU->ALBSU->Basic Skills Agency).
  - **Characteristics:** National Campaign plus social (class) movement influenced by Freire; volunteers and 'paid workers'; passion and commitment as much as professionalism; eclectic pedagogies.
  - **Discourse:** adult literacy; disadvantage; social class division; voice; knowledge and power; politics of literacy.
3. **1980s-1990s: The age of the 'Cs':** competency, competitiveness, customisation, cultural diversity.
  - **Characteristics:** step-up in professionalisation (tutor certification); work and employment (unemployment) orientation; National Vocational Qualifications system created; 'student centredness' - the individual as customer; competence-based curriculum and standards; mushrooming LLN qualifications; shift from community to FE college-based and work-based provision
  - **Discourse:** basic skills; unemployment and jobs; empowerment; and the Cs.
4. **2000s**
  1. **Literacy & Numeracy Strategy in Schools** - the Literacy Hour (started late 90s).
  2. **OECD** (IALS survey (1998) shows UK 1/3rd from bottom with 7m at lowest level of literacy; New Labour administration commission working party; Moser's Report *A Fresh Start* (1999); followed by *Skills for Life* (England), announced in 2001 with emerging strategies in all 4 countries.
    - **Discourse:** literacy, numeracy and language (LLN); Skills; 'crusade'; mainstreaming; qualifications.

## Question 2 - Four Countries in a Kingdom: What characteristises the 4 UK strategies for literacy, numeracy and language?

### England - *Skills for Life* (Jan 2001)

Targets, tests, levels and gremlins: '**Get on!**'

<b>Need/problem</b>	5.2m - Literacy 15m - Numeracy (higher priority since 2003)
<b>Who?</b>	Young people and adults "Bad news for adults and bad news for the national economy"
<b>Goals</b>	750,000 achieve national certificates by 2004 1.5million by 2007 2.25million by 2010
<b>Priority Groups</b>	Identifying those in most urgent need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job seekers</li> <li>• Prisoners (80% poor writing and reading skills)</li> <li>• Employees (public sector and low skilled)</li> <li>• Young people</li> </ul> then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other groups at risk of exclusion - homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, drug abusers and travellers</li> <li>• ESOL learners</li> <li>• Disadvantaged communities</li> </ul>
<b>Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boost demand: "Get rid of your gremlins"</li> <li>• Base policy on research</li> <li>• Engage employers</li> <li>• Develop workforce: reform of standards and teacher qualifications</li> <li>• Raise quality</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Raising Standards</li> <li>• Learner Achievement</li> <li>• Innovation and Development</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	£1.5billion + - 2004

### Scotland - Adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland: (2002)

#### The Big Plus

#### 'Communities Scotland'

<b>Need</b>	800,000 low skills 500,000 assess own skills as 'poor or moderate' Employers indifference
<b>Who?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People in disadvantaged areas</li> <li>• Workers in low skilled jobs</li> <li>• People in low incomes</li> <li>• People with health (including mental health) problems and disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Goals</b>	80,000 people 'assisted' by 2004; 50,000 by 2006; World-class enabling framework

<b>Priority Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with limited initial education particularly young adults</li> <li>• Unemployed and people taking redundancy</li> <li>• ESOL</li> </ul>
<b>Approach</b>	Lifelong learning The Big Plus - reading, writing, numbers - motivational campaign Free Target priorities Research & Learner consultation
<b>Critical Success Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Learner centredness</li> <li>• Professionalism</li> <li>• ICT is maximised</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Aim</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency in teaching and learning</li> <li>• Organisation of delivery</li> <li>• Quality improvement</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	Assessment under development
<b>Funding</b>	£51m over 5 years

## Wales

### The National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales - from the cradle to the grave (2001)

<b>Need</b>	780,000 - literacy and numeracy; 6 in 10 prisoners
<b>Who?</b>	Everyone: children, young people and adults. Cradle to old age
<b>Goals</b>	By 2004: 9 in 10 adults functionally literate; 6 in 10 numerate
<b>Priority Groups</b>	As in 'Who' above plus employers; children
<b>Approach</b>	Multi-media promotion campaign; innovation and research; partnership; core curriculum; IT bilingual; "employer pledge"; interactive teacher training; family learning
<b>Measures</b>	Quality Mark for Providers; 'Tripartite Award'
<b>Funding</b>	£27m 2001-04

## Northern Ireland - Essential Skills for Living (2002)

<b>Need</b>	24% of adult workforce 'at lowest level'
<b>Who?</b>	Adult Workforce (see John Field, 1999) because of conflict years
<b>Goals</b>	6,500 adult literary learners by March 03
<b>Priority Groups</b>	People in work; LLDD; ESOL
<b>Approach</b>	Standards and curriculum; IT; professional career structure with volunteers
<b>Measures</b>	Initial assessment tools; link to key skills assessment; general development of assessment methodology
<b>Funding</b>	tbc

### **Question 3 - Taking Skills for Life as the model, what is the impact of the strategy and the lessons to be learned from England's experience?**

#### **Achievements**

- Government targets met - 750,000 will have achieved a national qualification between 2001-2004
- New qualification requirements at Level 4 (degree equivalent) for teachers create far-reaching culture change
- A 'learning infrastructure' developed: standards, core curricula for LLN
- 7-8% of teachers unqualified; more underqualified
- Experienced teachers more likely to seek new qualifications required (i.e. subject specific)
- 91% public recognition for **'Get Rid of your Gremlins'** campaign - TV/bus stops/beer mats
- Treasury backing = high levels of funding to support economy
- Achievement and 'levels' orientation (standards and tests)
- Innovation: on-line programmes, on-line and ICT based assessment; Pathfinders in literacy, numeracy, ESOL, Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Mainstreaming: literacy, numeracy and ESOL and ... Key skills for 16-19 year olds; GCSE English and Maths (Level 2); 'embedding' or 'integrating' LLN in vocational and recreational programmes
- A National Research and Development Centre; national 'support' programmes
- Generous levels of funding for learning provision with incentives for delivering tests and qualifications
- 79% of teachers have qualifications at Level 4 (degree) and above - but not necessarily in LLN
- A "Baseline" 'Survey of Needs and Impact' (DfES, 2003) shows continuing high levels of need
- Co-operation across government departments

#### **Issues**

- The inspectorates find poor quality and uninspiring teaching across the country
- The sheer scale of underachievement and its continued links with social class (see DfES survey)
- Unintended consequences of policy: 'the Ptarmigan's feet' (Testing, Testing 1, 2, 3 - NIACE, 2004)
- Bureaucracy and pressure on practitioners

- Short and medium term challenges: demand outstrips supply (given level of professionalism now required)
- How to inspire and mmotivate people to engage in learning maths?
- Targets lead to moving goalposts - how much has really changed?
- Individual learning plans and individual learning programmes undermine the social aspects of learning - not enough talk in the classroom or canteen
- An inexperienced teaching force implements the core curricula to the letter
- Writing neglected - not in National Test
- 75% ESOL and 90% literacy & numeracy teachers are white
- Mentorship: Very inadequate support of teachers in teaching practice
- Over 50% of teachers are aged over 46
- Two traditions in Teachers Education:
  - I. Subject specific teacher education (e.g. City & Guilds) not recognised by DfES as 'qualified teacher status'
  - II. Generic post-16 Cert. Ed. and BEd (delivered mainly in HE) which were recognised.

The 'cultural divide' still exists.

#### **Question 4 - Which groups of learners have taken priority and what are the issues when other groups are less valued?**

##### **Priorities**

- Those who can take the tests at Levels 1 and 2
- Those already in provision
- 16-19 year olds
- Job seekers and people in employment
- Literacy and numeracy

##### **Issues**

- Pre-entry and entry-level learners, including learners with learning difficulties and disabilities
- People who don't want to take a test or qualifications
- ESOL learners - huge success, but lower priority (London: ESOL = 50% of achievement target)
- The invisibility of older learners.

### Question 5 - How do adults best learn literacy, numeracy and language? Which approaches to teaching and assessment are most effective?

- A lot we don't know: research underway. Early evidence from NRDC's 5 studies of Effective Teaching and Learning Practice shows same good practice but:
  - Plenty of activity, but little systematic teaching of reading?
  - Little writing activity except at word level
  - ICT a bolt on - needs development to integrate
  - ESOL - too little talk in the classroom
  - Many learners prefer maths to 'everyday' numeracy
  - Individualised learning - Where have groups gone?
- Assessment for learning (formative) is needed to complete summative assessment
- Confidence, self-esteem and affective learning can be recognised and recorded - not soft but what employers want
- Key issues: time people need to learn; writing development

### Question 6 - What do levels contribute as metaphor and measure of adults' achievement and standards?

#### Levels

- The skill or the person?
- 15m people with numeracy difficulties: and what else can they do?
- What do tests and research assessment instruments tell us about what people can and can't do?
- 'Spiky profiles'
- Embedded LLN in vocational, community and recreational learning
- Use it or lose it..... (John Bynner's research)

### Question 7 - What should be the qualifications and knowledge of teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL?

#### Achievements

- **Skills for Life** revolutionising teaching and support workforce: from 'Anyone who is literate can teach another ...' and
- generic pedagogy/androgogy to
- Subject knowledge at a high level and/or ...
- Subject-specific pedagogy?

#### Issues

- And at what level, to which standards, defined by whom?

**Question 8 - Is a skills-based, individualised pedagogy and practice, aimed at higher earnings, the economy and the labour market compatible with a socio-cultural, community focused approach?**

- A system-driven by skills and employment can undermine learning and 'functional literacy' as the outcome
- What about 'social and critical consciousness' (India)?
- Teaching to the test is a danger to learning - but tests also offer sense of achievement
- Time to adjust to culture change e.g. attitudes change, from "Tests for Literacy learners? (practitioners' disbelief/rejection)" To "how can we recognise learning in other ways as well as the test?"
- Employers enduringly hard to engage
- When is social practice a skill or vice versa?

**Question 9 - How are literacy, numeracy and language practices changing - and not changing - across a shrinking world? How can we respond to changing climates?**

- Migration, displacement, cultural tension, conditions for citizenship
- Inequality world-wide and within rich countries
- Growth of images and the 'New Media Age' (Gunther Kress, Institute of Education, London)
- Digital Stories (Glynda Hull, University of California)
- Numeracy (with ICT) growing in the workplace
- Social practices: family, community and society - changing context of communication
- Changing approaches to citizenship and language
- Literacy, Numeracy and Language at work (Hermine Scheeres)
- New writing practices (e.g. text-messaging), new practices in the organisation of life
- Inequality persists