Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy Policy and Practice

A Social Practice Model – Rhetoric or Reality?

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Abstract

This thesis is about the story of the development of Adult Literacy and Numeracy policy and practice in Scotland. It includes some of my personal experiences over the past thirty years working in the field of adult education and particularly in literacies. However, the focus is primarily on the years 2000 –2006 when major developments took place in this field of adult learning. One of the tenets of the 'new literacies' policy and practice is that it is predicated on a social practice model. This thesis explores whether this assertion is rhetoric or reality.

In the process the thesis outlines what the term social practice means to theorists, academics and those involved in the direct delivery of literacies. It examines the policy documents and the practices of managers and tutors and learner outcomes. The thesis argues that, while a learner centred approach is integral to any good adult education practice, it does not equate to the use of a social practice model and more requires to be done before it can be claimed that Scotland truly operates a social practice model in the delivery of Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

The first five chapters of the thesis outline the historical context of literacies development in Scotland, locate my methodological approach, explore what is meant by social practices, sketch the development of policy and practice in Scotland and describe the methods used to gather data.

The following three chapters explore the responses of the managers, tutors and learners that informed the outcomes of the research. The final chapters analyse the data and address three pertinent questions. Firstly, is it possible/likely that a full social practice model can become the norm in Scotland, secondly, whether it is possible to develop this model at a national level anywhere considering the current global situation and thirdly, how can the good practice recorded in this research be sustained.

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CHAPTER 1

Background to Literacy and Numeracy Development in Scotland

'Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratisation, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and nutrition. For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.' [Annan 1997]

The above statement was made by Kofi Annan, General Secretary of the United Nations, on International Literacy Day 1997. Part of his speech equated the value of literacy provision with that of roads, dams, clinics and factories. For the adult population of Scotland at least, to date, the money spent on the latter has far outweighed that spent on the former. This chapter will outline the historical development of literacies in Scotland up to, and including, the publication of the *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* (ALNIS) report issued by the Scottish Executive in 2001.

In common with the rest of the United Kingdom, literacy development in Scotland has been an evolution rather than a revolution. However, whether someone is deemed 'literate' or 'illiterate' depends on how literacy is measured. In the 1750s the ability to write one's name was the yardstick and, using this measurement, about 50% of the population of Scotland was considered literate rising to 58% by 1840 (Fieldhouse 1996a).

Before the advent of compulsory schooling, strategies for teaching literacy in the nineteenth century were deeply saturated by the religious ideologies and practices that were dominant at the time (Hamilton 1996).

The Church and State played a significant rôle in the development of literacy in Scotland as early as the 17th. Century.   The insistence of the Calvinist Church that every parishioner should be able to read the bible led to legislation being introduced requiring landowners to fund a post of school master in every parish (Macrae 1999).

The result of this legislation meant that at the time of the Education Acts of the late 19th. Century, only 11% of Scottish men and 21% of Scottish women could not sign their names on public documents, compared with 30% of men and 41% of women in England and Wales. (ibid 1999).   At the time of the Act of Union in 1707 Scotland retained control of three important national institutions, the law, the church and education.   As a result of this, education in Scotland has developed differently from the rest of the United Kingdom.   Until the advent of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 the Scottish Education Department (SED) was responsible for all education matters and separate acts were required to be passed by the United Kingdom Parliament for the Scottish education system.   Post devolution the responsibility lies solely with the Scottish Parliament.

The statutory framework for Adult and Further Education in Scotland is part of the Education (Scotland) Acts of 1962 and 1969 and the Further Education (Scotland) Regulations 1959-1979 (Scottish Institute of Adult Education 1981).   The 1969 Act places a duty on each education authority

to *'make adequate and efficient provision of school and further education'*, the latter to include both vocational and non-vocational provision (ibid 1981). There is a lack of clarity as to what is meant by 'adequate and efficient provision' and, as a result, education authorities and other providers are unsure exactly what is expected of them (ibid 1981).

In 1975 the Community Education Service was created as a result of the Government report, *The Challenge of Change,* or, as it is more commonly known, the Alexander Report. This report recommends the setting up of the service in Scotland by merging the former adult education sector with the Youth and Community Service (Scottish Education Department 1975). One important factor to note is that the remit of the Alexander Committee was very narrow in that it was restricted to local authority provision of non-vocational adult education described in the 1945 Education (Scotland) Act as *'informal further education'* (Martin 1996). The Alexander Report clearly indicates that informal adult education should no longer be the preserve of those who could afford to pay for the services but should address the issue of wider participation (McConnell 1997). Martin (1996) argues that the report, which was intended to strengthen adult education, actually had the effect of weakening the provision by isolating it from the wider field of adult and continuing education. Tett [1995] states that the Alexander Report:

'sought to create conditions through which adult education could move from being a leisure pursuit of a more affluent minority who had the confidence to return to educational institutions, to becoming a more

relevant and locally based enterprise which involved the mass of people

who had traditionally not participated in its provision.' (p 59)

To realise this vision required staff that were trained and experienced in the development and delivery of adult education programmes and they did not exist within the community education service at that time.

Nor, until much later, were there any formal links amongst adult education providers such as the further education colleges or the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) who might have worked in partnership with the local authorities to deliver community based learning. Martin (1996) argues that this isolation impeded the development of any national policy for adult and continuing education.

In Strathclyde Region, at that time the largest education authority in Europe, an attempt was made to encourage co-operation between Community Education and Further Education by the introduction of what was known as the Local Collaborative Programme [LCP]. This scheme entailed Community Education using part of their budgets to pay local colleges to deliver learning in the community. More often than not what was offered depended on the spare capacity in the colleges and did not necessarily address the community needs and was often referred to by community education staff as the colleges 'towing the classroom into the community'. As this was prior to the incorporation of further education colleges a more cynical view might be that this was a device to provide additional finance to ailing institutions rather than a genuine attempt to broaden provision. This perhaps deepened the divisions between

providers resulting in a less than co-ordinated approach to the delivery of community based adult learning.

The Alexander Report recommended that there should be a substantial investment in new appointments, including research and training in adult education, to create parity with youth work. One specific recommendation was that an additional 200 professional staff be recruited to work in the field of informal adult education but this was not addressed by the merger with youth and community work, in that no additional appointments were made (McConnell 1997).

It was further argued that this weakness was compounded by the introduction of a generic approach to the delivery of Community Education, where staff no longer specialised in one aspect of the service delivery, which had a negative effect on adult education in the Community Education Service (Alexander, Leach and Steward 1984).

The lack of any additional investment meant that the vision of the Alexander Committee had to be approached from within the existing resources of local authority Community Education Services (Milburn 1996). Martin (1996) also highlights these issues by pointing out that as the preconditions set out in the Alexander Report were not met the result was an unbalanced and unequal partnership between adult education and youth work. This was also true in relation to the partnership between local authorities, who held the money, and for example, the Workers' Educational Association, who were dependent on them for funding.

Martin also criticises the Carnegy Report *Professional Education and Training for Community Education* published by the SED in 1977 and The Scottish Community Education Council's (SCEC) subsequent report *Training for Change* published in 1984, both of which propose that Community Educators be trained in a generic core of 'process skills' thus reducing adult education and youth work to options within this generic training (Martin 1996).

The publication of the Alexander Report coincided with the 1975 reorganisation of local government in Scotland and most of the Regional and Island Councils established a Community Education Service encompassing youth work, community work and adult education. In all but one of the local authorities the Community Education Service was located within the Department of Education.

One consequence of locating Community Education within this particular department meant that few, if any, of the policy makers had any experience or training in adult education as most of the education hierarchy were from the formal school sector. In addition, the majority of those in senior positions in Community Education had received their pre-service training in Scotland and were trained youth and community workers not adult educators. Given this background how then was the vision of the Alexander Committee to be realised?

For example, in Strathclyde Regional Council, Community Education was seen as an integral part of the Community Development Strategy to combat deprivation. This strategy had five basic elements:

> *to bring pressure on central government and its agencies – the DHSS, the Health Boards, the Gas and Electricity Boards – to deal with the problems of poverty*

> *to pressure the government and, through its own efforts, to tackle the severe unemployment problems of the poorer areas of Strathclyde*

> *to encourage district council housing departments, the Scottish Special Housing Association and the new towns to stop concentrating disadvantaged families in selected areas and to achieve a more balanced mix*

> *to ensure that the Region's services provided in the poorer areas were as good, if not better, than those in the better-off places and that these services would run well, be more accessible and relevant to the people's needs*

> *to support communities which wanted to plan and run their own projects to help their own areas* (Young 1997 p 161).

The authors of the Alexander Report recognised community development as a process enabling those living in a geographical community or a community of interest to act together to deal with the problems affecting their lives, thereby increasing motivation and skill level to deal with other issues (Scottish Education Department 1975). The report went on to state that, while the educational character of community development in this process is recognisable, the discrete rôle of adult education is less obvious (ibid 1975). Barr (1987) contends that this 'educational character' i.e. the use of the hidden curriculum known only to the community educator, was in danger of becoming the new orthodoxy that was no less patronising than

its more formal predecessor and that there were real dangers in an interventionist strategy which pretends not to be one and one, additionally, subordinated to a community development rôle rather than an educational one.

This approach was, however, adopted by Strathclyde Regional Council. In November 1976 the Council established a Policy Review Group on Community Development Services in Strathclyde. The review group, chaired by Tony Worthington, at that time a councillor in Strathclyde Region, produced its report in 1978. The report defines the activities of Community Education as being a planned and integrated provision for learning through life and the activities of the Community Development section of Social Work as helping communities tackle problems from within and providing preventative strategies (Strathclyde Regional Council 1978).

In hindsight it is difficult to determine the subtle distinction Worthington was trying to make. Both services were being asked to act using a community development model, both were being asked to increase the level of skills within a community and both were asked to promote social welfare. Whether implicitly or explicitly both services were involved in adult learning in its broadest sense. In addition, the authors of the report deliberately refrained from defining the relative rôles of community education and community development staff. Two reasons were given for this decision, the first being that, due to the fact that services were so variable across Strathclyde, no definitive job description could be

produced which would not be disruptive in some areas. An example given in the report is that, if a restrictive rôle was given to community education workers, there was a risk that they might withdraw from work currently being undertaken and, due to the limited number of Community Development staff in employment, there would be a resultant reduction in service provision (ibid 1978).

The second reason given for this lack of distinction is that the councillors believed that staff in both departments should have a wide focus on community problems rather than be departmentally circumscribed (ibid 1978).

McConnell (1997 p9) suggests that, while Worthington's report placed Community Education within the social strategy to combat multiple deprivation, '*the politicians leading this drive tended to be almost as critical of the local authority management in community education in blocking more innovative interventions ... as they were of any central government intentions.*'

Martin (1996) points out that, while community educators concentrated on the disadvantaged areas and non participant groups as the Alexander Committee intended, the adult education component seemed to take the form of a standard menu of conventional class programmes or, alternatively, was dissolved into a wide range of generic activities which were not primarily educational.

Ronald Young, a one time Convenor of Social Work within Strathclyde Region, suggests a number of reasons for the lack of innovation:

> *the professionals who inhabit (the departments) are too blinkered in their perceptions of problems*
> *the departments are too hierarchical (and therefore oppressive of initiatives)*
> *it is the better off who make most use of the services and are quickest to articulate demands for more* (Young 1997 p162)

It should be noted that little was done to address these issues and the staff in Community Education and Community Development were in danger of becoming entrenched in their own empires perhaps resulting in a diminished service to those most in need.

Yet another possible reason for the lack of innovation McConnell speaks of may be that the Worthington report quoted the benefits of Community Education as defined in the Carnegy Report published by the SED in 1977, but failed to draw the distinction between the Community Education Service and community education as a process (McConnell 1997). As will be seen in a future chapter this is a problem, which has not yet been fully resolved.

While Strathclyde Region is only one example, in Scotland this picture was fairly typical of the development of Community Education across the country during the late seventies to the early nineties. Despite the lack of a definitive job remit many of the community education staff saw their rôle

as using community based learning to empower individuals and communities to solve problems and to develop social action (McConnell 1997). One example of innovative community based learning grew from the re-emergence of feminism in the 1970s which led to the development of women's studies, delivered in Scotland primarily by the WEA, where the curriculum developed from women's own lives using literature, the law and social and historical studies (Barr 1999). Another example of innovation is the Adult Learning Project (ALP) developed in the late 1970s in the Gorgie/Dalry area of Edinburgh. ALP was a unique attempt to adopt the principles and practices of Freire in an inner city area with a commitment to politicise the curriculum (Galloway 1999). The work done by Charlie McConnell and colleagues in the Strone and Maukinhill area of Inverclyde and by the various dampness campaigns are other examples of innovative work.

However, almost all of the exciting, cutting edge projects were either funded through the Urban Programme or delivered by the voluntary sector; very little innovation was evident in the Community Education provision made by the local authorities.

The Urban Programme was funded by the European Community and local authorities were tasked by the Government with the responsibility for the monitoring of projects and channelling finance from the programme to the projects As Vernon Galloway (1999 p238) points out, some of the work undertaken by ALP took the project *'into what might be considered dangerous areas of activity for a project which receives substantial*

funding from the local authority'. Despite the fact that the local authority employed the staff of ALP their rôle was as adult educators with no management responsibility, thus retaining the autonomy of the project without compromising the staff (ibid 1999).

 As far back as 1982 McConnell suggests that the service provision may well require fundamental reorganisation to include a wide range of other organisations such as social work, libraries, voluntary sector, trade unions, health authorities, housing departments, planning and a plethora of other organisations who all have a key rôle to play in the development of this provision (McConnell 1997).

He suggests that the rigid nature of education authorities with their attitudes and resistance to structural change would impede the transition to a development model of Community Education (ibid 1997).   It was not until the second reorganisation of local government in Scotland in 1996 that a few local authorities decided to locate community education in departments other than education.

In 1984 Alexander, Leach and Steward undertook the first comprehensive research into the policy, organisation and provision in Community Education and Leisure and Recreation in three Scottish local authorities. They conclude that there were continuing tensions for community educators between retaining the legacy of building management systems and the 'old' way of working and the new policies, which focussed on a more community development approach.   They claim that the reason for this was that community educators were hampered by a lack of defined

priorities and an inappropriate allocation of resources and management support (Alexander, Leach and Steward 1984).

As McConnell indicates Kirkwood also highlights the tension between youth and community trained personnel and those trained in adult education.   The former regarded the latter as being middle class, conservative and not living in the real world while the latter regarded youth and community workers as lacking in rigour and that the provision they made was more about containment rather than about education.   One major problem experienced by community educators was, and possibly still is, the inability to measure educational outcomes (McConnell 1997).

As late as 1987 Jean Barr claims however, that community education workers did not have the skills necessary to develop learning programmes from the issues raised by participants (Barr 1987) and, as has already been stated, David Alexander felt that the introduction of a generic approach to the delivery of Community Education had negative effects on the adult education element of the service (Alexander, Leach and Steward 1984). They contend that this approach led to confusion and the lack of systematic learning and cognitive development.

In summary, by the late seventies a Community Education Service did exist in Scotland but not as envisaged by the Alexander Committee where youth workers and adult educators would became a group of 'committed allies' using their distinctive specialisms to develop co-ordinated local strategies, but rather as a group of 'community workers' who, seldom if ever, made reference to their educational rôle (Martin 1996).

In addition, the vast majority of those employed within the service were trained as youth and community workers, managed by youth and community workers who in turn were managed by staff from the formal school sector, with not an adult educator in sight. What, then, of the implications for literacy?

Literacy

Community Education became crucial to the subsequent literacy and numeracy developments in Scotland when the BBC launched a literacy campaign called *'On the Move'* in 1975 offering a helpline for those seeking assistance with literacy and numeracy. The response to this campaign was overwhelming and the BBC infrastructure was unable to cope with the demand. As the newly created Community Education Service was nominally responsible for adult education it was decided that staff from this service should assess potential students and deliver literacy and numeracy programmes. As Mary Hamilton points out adult literacy had remained a hidden issue during the 1950s and 60s (Hamilton 1996) so the staff who were expected to develop the literacy and numeracy programmes were ill prepared to do so and it soon became evident that they did not have the necessary skills or knowledge to carry out this task. I know this from personal experience as I was one of the members of staff, trained in youth and community work, who was expected to deliver the literacy programme.

As a result, a considerable number of volunteers were recruited and trained to deliver programmes, initially on a one to one basis with learners. In the

five year period from 1976 to 1981, £520,000 of government money was channelled into pump priming adult literacies activities by the SED via a succession of central agencies attached to the Scottish Institute of Adult Education, first the Scottish Adult Literacy Agency, then the Scottish Adult Literacy Unit, then the Scottish Adult Basic Education Unit (Scottish Community Education Council 1984a). The Institute had no grant aiding powers but could, and did, advise the Secretary of State on matters relating to adult learning. Additionally, at local level, education authorities supported a network of Adult Literacy and Basic Education schemes (ibid 1984). The Scottish Institute of Adult Education, as the national agency, was responsible for the promotion of education and training opportunities for adults and the administration of the Scottish Adult Basic Education Unit.

Despite the fact that there was a national agency there was no national policy and the subtle change in emphasis from Adult Literacy to Adult Basic Education (ABE) led to a dilution of literacy programmes. The policy document describes ABE as meaning: *'help with literacy, numeracy, communication and learning skills, basic life management skills, preparation for a new start in life, or a serious transition: preparation for a return to community life, or to formal education, or to training and employment opportunities'* (ibid 1984 p 197).

Whilst Adult Basic Education retained a distinctive identity and sustained a clear educational rationale as claimed by the SED (Scottish Office

Education Department 1992) ABE never fully integrated into the Community Education Service until the early nineties.

For example, in Strathclyde Region each of the twelve divisions had a post of Specialist Organiser with the functional responsibility for the development in ABE but no line management responsibility for the staff delivering the service within area teams.   This was the responsibility of the local Community Education Area Officer.

In many instances this led to a rather semi detached development where the ABE staff were not fully integrated into the area teams and operated more under the direction of the Specialist Organiser than the Area Officer. Due to the fact that the major providers of ABE were local authorities and staff were directed to work in disadvantaged areas the provision tended to concentrate, as Jean Barr puts it, *'on life adjustment skills and diminished cognitive content'* (Barr 1997 p261) in other words, education by stealth.

Meanwhile, the literacy and numeracy element of ABE remained, on the whole, the preserve of volunteers who worked on a one to one basis or with small groups, supported by a part time tutor organiser.   While the volunteers received initial training the quality varied across the country and there was little, if any, in-service provision.   In some instances the training was minimal and many authorities appointed primary school teachers with no training in adult learning whatsoever.   Additionally, subsequent policy guidance to local authorities (SOED 1992) concluded that literacy and numeracy were an important but minor concern and that there was therefore no need to employ trained literacy specialists. In

addition, the policy guidance to colleges limited support to adults with learning disabilities who, in the event of colleges not being able to give them sufficient support, might be referred to an adult basic education group (Scottish Executive 2001a p2).

It would appear that adult literacy was still a hidden issue to the education establishment in Scotland as late as 1993.

Governance

The Alexander Report recommends the establishment of a Scottish Council for Community Education and this was set up in 1979 (Wilson 1997). In April 1982 this council merged with the Scottish Community Education Centre to become the Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC) and, in 1983, the Scottish Adult Basic Education Unit was transferred from the Scottish Institute of Adult Education to SCEC.

So, in a few short years between 1975 and 1983 adult literacy and numeracy had moved from having a national agency, the Scottish Adult Literacy Agency, to being a part of the wider Community Education field which included youth work, community work and adult education (ibid 1997). It is little wonder that this 'minor concern' of the Scottish Office became an overlooked part of both national and local strategies. There is evidence that, between 1992 and 1998, there was a significant drop in staffing levels of those involved in the delivery of literacy and numeracy (Black and Russell 1998) and that, by 1996, the number of learning places had fallen by 40% to 6, 500 (Scottish Executive 2001a). While other agencies, notably the WEA, offered literacy and numeracy support the

majority of the 6, 500 learner places were available through the Community Education Services of the local authorities.

Adult education, including literacy and numeracy, did not operate in a vacuum however. External influences affected how policy makers and funders determined what the outcomes of service delivery should be. Global events such the 1970s oil crisis which increased economic competition between firms, regions and nation states (Dicken 1992; Michie and Smith 1995), the increased use of ICT, and the demise of large industries such as car manufacture, ship building and coal mining meant that the workforce required a different skill set from those necessary previously.

From the late nineteenth century to the post-war boom years of the 1950s and 1960s Fordism was the dominant principle of manufacture and distribution (Murray 1989). The classic image of Fordism is where each worker undertook a specific task in the production process that was subject to the scientific management techniques of Taylorism (Edwards 1993). Taylor offers a 'scientific' justification for the separation of conception from execution, where managers monopolised knowledge of the labour process and controlled every step of production (Brown and Lauder 1997). Post-Fordism involves flexible systems of manufacturing, customised design for specific segments of the market and an emphasis on quality control (Edwards 1993). To paraphrase Edwards, the shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism has resulted in the decline of large, bureaucratic organisations and the introduction of a new form of organisation in which

all non essential work is sub-contracted to other organisations. In other words Post-Fordism polarises organisations (ibid 1993). The reason for this digression is to illustrate that the change in working practices combined with the rapid growth of information technology and the previous and current recessions does not only apply to the United Kingdom but is a global phenomenon. Auerbach (2005) states that of the hundred largest economies in the world fifty-one are corporations and Crowther (2006) claims that the influence exerted by international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the G8, and the World Trade Organisation all play a rôle in shaping the politics and economics of nation states.

James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College in 1976 on the relationship between education and work resulted in a number of political and business leaders criticising schools for being anti-industry, with the school to work transition attracting growing attention (Field 1996). In this context liberal adult education was perceived as placing insufficient value on practical education (Elsland 1986) and reaction to this approach led to further emphasis on vocationalism, which was geared to support economic development (Edwards 1993). The dichotomy between liberal, non-vocational education and technical, vocational education was not a new phenomenon. Connected to this Jean Barr (1999 p70) points out there had been an historical tension between *'adult education's mission in servicing social movements committed to social justice goals and its rôle in servicing the economy and the state'*

Successive governments largely ignored adult education until the 1970s and 80s when it became an important policy issue (Fieldhouse 1996a). This was particularly true of the Thatcher Government, which placed particular emphasis on adult education being used to foster a culture of enterprise, competitiveness and individualism (ibid 1996a).

This led adult education down the vocational route, where learners undertook accredited courses, which would better enable them to access the labour market. Thus adult education moved from being concerned with social improvement to being about economic revival and wealth generation (ibid 1996a). In addition, due to financial constraints, the money available for liberal adult education was greatly reduced and those wishing to participate were required to pay increased fees year on year.

In 1998 the Scottish Office issued two publications that impacted on adult education delivered by local authorities. *Opportunity Scotland* (Scottish Office 1998a) placed a significant emphasis on the acquisition of skills to improve economic prosperity, the increased rôle for employers in education and training and the strengthening of Government control over the process. The significance of this to community based adult learning was that community educators, who previously saw themselves as facilitators of learning, responding to the expressed needs of individuals and communities, however ineffectively they managed to do so, were now in danger of being forced to 'control' the curriculum to meet the Government's more functional economic imperatives.

A ministerial working group on Community Education was established, chaired by Douglas Osler, HMSCI, with a remit to examine what contribution Community Education could make to the Government's objectives in relation to lifelong learning and social exclusion (Scottish Office 1998b). This document published in 1998, entitled *Communities: Change through learning,* while mentioning economic issues, focuses more on the individual. The thrust of the document is about promoting personal development, building community capacity and assets and securing investment in community learning. The report advocates the use of the community education approach with its primary focus on the use of educational methods to develop skills, knowledge and capacity in community contexts.

Once again, another report emanating from the Scottish Office fails to explain the difference between the service and the approach.

One interesting factor in relation to these two documents is their authorship. *Opportunity Scotland* was written by a civil servant while *Communities: Change through learning*, though chaired by a senior civil servant, was produced by a group comprising community and adult educators. One conclusion to be drawn from this could be that the former represents the Government's view of the future of adult education while the latter reflects the opinions of those actually working in the field of adult learning.

At the time of the publication of *Opportunity Scotland*, Tom Schuller pointed out that the impressive ten point plan outlined in this document is

strongest on technology and on education and training for younger people, weakest on social issues (Schuller 1998). This feeling was reflected amongst those working in the field of adult education, as this document became know in the profession as *Missed Opportunity Scotland.*

Another interesting factor is that nowhere in *Opportunity Scotland* is the rôle of community work mentioned, whereas *Communities: Change through learning* placed a strong emphasis on the importance and significance of community work.

One result of the publication of *Communities: Change through learning* was the production of Standard Circular 4/99 (Scottish Office 1999) which required every local authority in Scotland to produce a Community Learning Strategy by March 2000 and to develop subsequent Community Learning Plans.

The strategies to be developed by local authorities in partnership with other agencies, including both the statutory and voluntary sectors, were required to address the issues of lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship.

The circular required that particular attention should be paid to the following objectives:

➢ *the development of core skills, including literacy, numeracy, use of ICT, problem solving and working together*

➢ *the engagement with young people, especially those at risk of being excluded, to help them experience positive development*

> *the provision of educational support to improve quality of life*

> *the promotion of lifelong learning and healthier, more positive lifestyles within the context of community and voluntary activities*
> (Scottish Office 1999 p 3)

At long last, a specific mention of literacy and numeracy, albeit in the same sentence as ICT, problem solving and working together.

At this stage no additional finance was made available and partners were expected to pool their resources to fund the various strategies and plans. Money was made available, however, to support skills acquisition for economic development through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and the Scottish Learning Network (SLN). NOF was specifically geared to the development of ICT skills to improve employment prospects and the SLN targeted specific groups in the community such as the young unemployed or those with low skill levels working in Small or Medium Enterprises with a view to increasing their educational achievements.

It appeared that the Government's support to local authorities to develop community based learning was more akin to the spirit of *Opportunity Scotland* rather than *Communities: Change through learning.*

However, light was beginning to shine at the end of the tunnel. At the annual conference of the Community Education Managers Scotland, held on 18th. April 2000, Henry McLeish, the then Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, made the following statement:

"*Local authorities, in particular, must include adult basic education among their very top priorities in their efforts to tackle social inclusion. Anything less will not solve the underlying problem of people remaining ill equipped to contribute to their own and Scotland's future*" (18th. April 2000).

It at last appeared that someone in government was taking cognisance of the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD 1997). The drive of the newly established Parliament to reduce social exclusion and to compete in the global market place coincided with the publication of the IALS figures in relation to Scotland and, despite the flaws in the data which will be explored later, it indicated that approximately 24% of the population of Scotland required to improve their literacy and numeracy skills (ibid 1997). The fact that a quarter of the Scottish population was deemed to have low literacies levels focussed the politicians' attention on this area of adult education. Following his comments at the Principal Community Education Officers' conference, Henry McLeish appointed an Adult Literacy Team.

This team, established in June 2000, comprised a senior officer from Scottish Enterprise, two HMIs from Post-Compulsory Education and an Adult Basic Education Team Leader from one of the large cities in Scotland with a remit *'to provide a focus for the development of national policy and strategy on adult literacy and numeracy'* and the report, *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* [ALNIS], was published in 2001.

By 2000 the scene was set to develop a vibrant and exciting strategy for the delivery of adult literacies in Scotland.   We appeared to have moved from the 17th. Century requirements of being able to write ones name and read the bible, through the teaching of the functional skills of literacy to enabling people to use their knowledge to contribute to their own and Scotland's future.   The aim of this thesis is to determine whether or not the policy and practice was based on what has been defined as a social practice model, which will be discussed in a future chapter.

The following chapter explores the research methodology and the methods used to gather the necessary information to inform the outcomes of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

Locating the Research Methodology Autobiographically and Philosophically

Introduction

As has been stated this research examines whether or not the policy and practice of literacies delivery in Scotland is based on a social practice model which locates literacies in the social realities of people's lives. Burrell and Morgan (1979) identify a set of assumptions that underpin an individual's perception of social reality. These assumptions are based on abstract principles regarding ontology, epistemology, and methodology, and the researcher's personal belief regarding these assumptions shapes the nature of the research. This chapter examines the methodological approach I adopted based on my beliefs.

Methodology

Those who undertake educational research are guided by their personal view of social reality and how it can be known. On the one hand there is the traditional view that social sciences should be regarded in much the same way as natural sciences whereby natural and universal laws governing social behaviour are discovered (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). On the other hand, broadly speaking, there is the interpretative view that recognises that people are different from inanimate objects and from each other and bases its approach on that difference (ibid 2000).

I want to leave such abstract questions to the side for now, so as to locate my own basic ontological, epistemological, methodological beliefs and my understanding of human nature within my own concrete experience and autobiography as an adult educator.

I shall then return to that more abstract debate illuminated by this discussion. My own basic beliefs shaped the research approach taken in this thesis and were, indeed, further bolstered by that empirical research. First, I outline the influence of Paulo Freire on my career as an adult educator. Second, I describe a number of specific projects that had a defining impact on me and my basic beliefs. The latter will be apparent in my text, which does not seek to be neutral but is clearly saturated in the standpoint I adopt.

Influence

I have worked in the field of community education for over thirty-five years and have been involved in literacies since the late 1970's. My work as an adult educator has been greatly influenced by the principles and practice of Paulo Freire who believed that *'education is not about the bland acceptance and reproduction of the status quo but rather that it is a chance to change and transform it'* (Galloway 1999 p227).

Beginnings

Freire was born in Recife, Brazil in 1921 to middle class parents who taught him to treasure dialogue and to respect the choices of others, two elements which greatly influenced his understanding of adult education. He studied law, philosophy and the psychology of language at the

University of Recife but, shortly after passing the bar examinations, he abandoned law and turned his attention to the public services.

His time in the Department of Education and Culture brought him into contact with the urban poor and here he began to formulate his views on adult education. Freire became the first Director of the University of Recife's Cultural Extension Service. This service brought literacy programmes to thousands of peasants in the north east of the country and eventually Freire's teams were delivering programmes across the entire country. The military coup in 1964 brought an end to Freire's programmes and resulted in him being jailed and subsequently exiled. He then moved to Chile where he worked for five years in the field of adult education before accepting an appointment as a visiting professor at Harvard's Centre for Studies in Education and Development. His time in the United States influenced him greatly. It was the time of the Vietnam War protests, the rise of black power and feminism and the accompanying violence both on the streets and in university campuses. Freire's reading of the American scene convinced him that the exclusion of the powerless from economic and political life was not an issue facing third world countries only and this resulted in his altering his definition of the third world from a geographical to a political concept. He recognised that oppression was not a geographical phenomenon but was related to power and people were oppressed irrespective of where in the world they lived.

On leaving Harvard Freire moved to Switzerland to work with the World Council of Churches and, during his time there, travelled widely both

lecturing and supporting educational programmes in newly independent countries in Asia and Africa.   He returned to his native Brazil in 1979 to take up an appointment at the University of Sao Paulo where, in 1988, he was appointed Minister of Education for the city.   Paulo Freire died in 1997 having spent his entire adult life working towards a goal that would ensure the oppressed of the world could start to have a say in the day to day decisions that affected their life.

Freire and Education

Freire believed that the 'banking' approach to education, whereby the teacher regards the learner as an empty vessel waiting to be filled with the knowledge he or she thinks is appropriate, annuls the learner's critical creative power and this, in turn, serves the interest of the oppressor (Freire 1972a).   Indeed, the more the oppressed can be persuaded to adapt to their given situation the more they can be dominated, and the use of 'banking' education alongside a paternalistic approach to social welfare ensures that the oppressors remain in control (ibid 1972a).

A brief illustration of a Freirian perspective follows.   In the 1980's those in power in Britain began to use the phrase 'socially excluded' to denote those in society who did not 'conform' to their idea of how human beings should behave. What they did not consider, however, was how someone born into a society and living in a society can be called 'socially excluded'. It is my belief that they are not, unless that 'exclusion' relates to the normative culture of the dominant classes.   They are always part of the society in which they live.   The solution, in Freirian terms, is not to

integrate them into the structure of oppression but to enable them to transform that structure so that they can become, as Freire states, *'beings for themselves'* (ibid 1972a).

Many of the social strategy policies introduced in Scotland during the '80s and '90s were developed by well meaning officials and politicians who, in the main, genuinely believed they were improving the lot of the poor. When seen from a Freirian perspective, they were, in fact, re-enforcing the oppressor/oppressed relationship because they focused predominantly on the integration of the 'excluded' into the ways of those in power and did not recognise other ways of thinking and being. Strategies were devised in isolation from the communities they were designed to help, presented, often, as a fait accompli to local residents. Consultation was, as best, tokenistic. Alternative strategies that would have enabled these community members to be *'beings for themselves'* would have required action enabling them to develop consciousness of their reality, and to have acquired these levels of consciousness they required to enter into dialogue with others. Freire believed in dialogical theory of action through collaboration, union, organisation and cultural synthesis as opposed to antidialogical theory favoured by the oppressors where conquest, division, manipulation and cultural invasion are the order of the day. He also believed that liberating education requires cognition, not simply the transfer of information from teacher to learner.

In summary, Freire's underlying philosophy, based on Marxist theory but also drawing from thinkers such as Buber and Sartre among others, was

that thinking does not separate itself from action (Freire 1972a),
conscientisation is linked to the relationship between humans and their
world and to praxis as a form of critical reflection and action where human
beings can intervene in their reality (Crotty 2003).

Locating Literacies

With regard to the methods used by Freire when teaching literacy, he
started where the people were, identified language that was used on a daily
basis and used this to provoke discussion within a community. He did not
start teaching the alphabet or the spelling of words that were chosen for the
learners but used their everyday vocabulary which emerged from the
collective problematising of their everyday existence that he then
encouraged them to critically dissect so that they could come to recognise
that they, the learners, had power over the words they used (Crotty 2003).
He drew on the lesson taught to him by his parents, to treasure dialogue,
and saw this as a key element of learning. To develop this dialogue it was
necessary for the traditional teacher/learner relationship to be challenged.
By that I mean where the teacher is perceived to be the fount of all
knowledge and the learner is there merely to absorb this knowledge and
regurgitate it as, and when, required.

True liberating education is not about the transfer of information but is
cognitive. In Freire's model the teacher is not merely the one who teaches
but is also taught by the learners. Both become jointly responsible for the
learning process, people teach each other (Freire 1972a).   In essence
Freire's methods of problem posing pedagogy lead learners to an

understanding of their situation and a realisation that they can challenge those they perceive as oppressors.

Popular Education and Freire

Freire's philosophy and methods have been linked to the popular education movement dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries where it was manifested in largely autonomous, often self-help, public activities located in social movements (Steele 1999).

The word 'popular' in the English thesaurus is described as well liked or common but, as Kane (2010) points out, when used in the Latin American context, i.e. translated from the Spanish or Portuguese, it means 'of the people' and refers to 'poor' or 'ordinary' people rather than the rich. Kane (2010 p 277) describes popular education as follows:

'Popular Education refers to a generic educational practice that sides with these 'people' – from peasants to factory workers, community groups to social movements – in their efforts to bring about progressive change.'

Smith (1996) claims that popular education is usually associated with political movements and is generally aimed at groups excluded from participation in the political process. It has certain key elements including an equal relationship between learner and facilitator, it is utilised in response to needs expressed by an organised group and the group is involved in the planning of the training and subsequent action (ibid 1996). The view held by Cadena (1984) is that popular education is usually initiated by an external facilitator who works with a group to identify

needs and assist the participants to achieve their goals and improve the daily lives of those within their community. Exponents of popular education believe that the process should build on the experiences of those involved in the group, should be self-reflective, reflexive and non-dogmatic (Walters and Manicom 1996). Writers, including Freire, link popular education with resistance theory in that it facilitates those who are oppressed to organise and address the issues affecting their lives.

While the tenets and practices of popular education, especially Freirian inspired, can be seen to apply in Latin American during the 1970s and 1980s, their application in western countries, specifically Scotland, may be less clear. While comparing the differences between social movements in Latin America and Scotland at that time Kane (1999) pointed out, while there were similarities, there were also significant differences. In Western European society *'the state's penetration of civil society has been far greater…the welfare functions of the state have been much more effectively established'* (Slater 1985 in Kane 1999 p58). In Latin America the concerns were more about survival and, as a result, movements were primarily against the state whereas in western societies the political institutions were perceived as the appropriate agents of change (Kane 1999). Kane (1999 pp 58 & 59) contended that, as a result of this, the *'urgency regarding social change is weaker'* than in Latin America and that *'the potential power of mass political activity is undermined.'*

Popular education in Latin America had always been viewed as being against the state and siding with the oppressed but it is evident, with

hindsight, that in the mid 1990s it was undergoing a period of change (Kane 2007). The debate ensued over a period of time and *'popular education was undoubtedly strengthened by a deeper understanding of different oppressions, greater awareness of the processes of learning and an ability to act effectively in spaces hitherto inaccessible'* (ibid 2007 p 59). Despite the restrictions imposed on education by the state it is still possible to create spaces where the principles and practices of popular education can be introduced.

Crowther and Martin (2005) highlight this issue by claiming that the tradition of radical education is stronger in poorer areas of the world that in richer countries. However, they feel that it is important that we in the western world reclaim Freire's ideas about the purpose of education *'at a time when they are often reduced to mere process'* (Crowther and Martin 2005 p7). Freire (1972) claimed that all education should be political and promote liberation, if it does not, then education is essentially about domestication. For example, the recent move from education to lifelong learning and the learning society raises an interesting question in the minds of Crowther and Martin when they ask whether or not learning can be seen as political in the same way as education (Crowther and Martin 2005). They contend that the move towards people taking responsibility for their own learning leads to the individualisation of both the problem and the solution but does nothing to address the cause. Contrary to Freire's belief that the passivity and fatalism should be challenged to enable people to address the issues concerning their lives, lifelong learning is in danger of encouraging this passivity and fatalism. Crowther and Martin claim that

there is a need for educators to reconnect with the notion of a pedagogy of the oppressed to enable them to act against the cause of their oppression (ibid 2005).

However, does the adoption of a Freirian approach necessarily lead to collective action? In the nineties Action Aid International developed a literacy programme entitled REFLECT based on the principles and practices of Freire in an effort to link adult education with empowerment. The REFLECT programme has now grown to encompass a wider range of learning to enable people to communicate through whatever medium is most relevant to them, creating a space where they can speak for themselves at all levels. REFLECT operates in more than seventy countries, mostly in the developing world (Oxenham 2004). A number of studies have been conducted on the REFLECT programmes and certain common issues have arisen during the analysis (St. Clair 2010). One of these common issues is that of collectivisation and transformation. Cottingham, Metcalf and Phnuyal (1998), when studying REFLECT pilot projects, identified a number of attributes acquired by the participants such as increased self-confidence, increased participation in family and community life and basic literacies skills. Similar outcomes were noted by Tagoe (2008) when studying REFLECT projects in Ghana. However, as St. Clair (2010) points out, these outcomes are primarily individual and replicate the findings of many other reports, which brings into question whether or not a Freirian approach to literacies does, in fact, lead to political change. While Freire's approach did achieve community action

in his home country St. Clair echoes Kane's comment cited above regarding the difficulty of transferring this to other countries (ibid 2010).

When Kane quoted Slater's statement that *'the welfare functions of the state have been much more effectively established'* (Kane 1999 p 58) the year was 1999. This was a year when the welfare state seemed invincible, the Scottish Parliament established, a recently elected United Kingdom Labour government, it was a year of hope. How things can change over a decade. The gradual demise of the welfare state and the commensurate increase in privatisation encourages people to look after themselves, i.e. it is individualistic rather than collective. It appears that no consideration is given to the fact that some members of the population are ill equipped to do so. Perhaps this would be an opportune time for community based adult educators to do as Crowther and Martin propose, reconnect with a pedagogy of the oppressed. As Papen (2005) points out the social practice or critical literacies approach may not be as radical as Freire would have wished but it is linked to democracy and supports people's participation in society.

It is inevitable that there has been criticism of Freire's ideas. Taylor (1993) goes as far as to suggest that Freire's thoughts were not totally original and that his Pedagogy of the Oppressed is similar to Kosík's Dialectic of the Concrete (1963) and that his ideas also echo those of Buber. It is also suggested by Taylor that Freire's practice was closer to the banking system, discussed previously in this chapter, than one might wish, due to the influence of the educator introducing ideas and values into

the mix under the guise of problem solving (ibid 1993), though Freire himself warns against educators exerting such influences. Street (1983) claims that Freire's belief that becoming literate will automatically lead to cognitive development and rationality are suspect. Smith (1997) argues the point that the Freirian concept that educators are either with the oppressed or support the status quo, if taken too literally, is a naïve political analysis.

Despite these criticisms Freire developed an innovative approach to literacy learning that impacted greatly on popular education. His ideas on the importance of dialogue, with learner and educator working together, the development of consciousness to reform society and embedding the learning in the real lives of participants have become underlying principles of popular education.

In other words popular education is rooted in the real interests and struggles of the people, is overtly political and critical of the status quo and is committed to progressive social and political change (Martin 1999).

When I began my work as an adult educator in the seventies there were many inequalities in Scottish society, poverty, unemployment, poor housing, the oppression of women, to name but a few, and Freire's philosophy and methods seemed to me to be a natural way forward to empower people to change their society.

Some of the issues mentioned in this section are explored in greater detail in the following segment including some examples of projects based on

Freire's ideas. These examples are perhaps now outdated, however I was unable to identify any contemporary writing showing examples of current day Freirian projects in Scotland, which is perhaps the reason that Jim Crowther and Ian Martin use the word 'reconnect' when speaking of a Freirian pedagogy. Is it possible that the radical, emancipatory ideas are now seen only as relevant to the developing world and have been abandoned by adult and literacies educators in Scotland?

Bringing it Back Home

In 1999 many of us working in adult education within Strathclyde Region hoped that the Labour Government, in power for two years after a twenty-three year Conservative rule, would adopt its former, traditional socialist policies despite the fact that the word 'socialism' had not appeared in the Labour Party manifesto since 1992!

Also in 1999, the first Scottish Parliament since 1707 was established and was labour controlled. The rest, as they say, is history. Both parliaments have systematically shifted the emphasis from the state to the individual in terms of education, health and welfare (Crowther and Martin 2005). Bobbitt (2002) describes this policy shift as a move from the nation state to the market state. Whilst the former guaranteed the welfare of the nation, the latter privatised many state activities thus, the politicians claimed, maximising the opportunities of the people but the rhetoric of opportunity and choice *'disguises the reality of the structural inequalities that are systematically reinforced by the demise of public welfare'* (Crowther and Martin 2005 pg 114)

There was a new welfare order and the deconstruction of the welfare state, as a political and ideological objective, was predicated upon the reconstruction of citizenship (Crowther and Martin 2005). Politicians believed, or at least claimed to believe, that they were creating a society where everyone had an equal opportunity to enhance their lives by making individual choices but, as a number of commentators argue, in reality it mostly created opportunities to be unequal (e.g. Ainley 2004).

Returning to the theme of education *'what is actually required to give most people real choices is precisely the kind of critical and reflexive education Freire insisted on as the right of all citizens, and a pedagogy which liberates them to understand the nature of their oppression and act upon their existential reality in order to reform it'* (Crowther and Martin 2005 p114)

The transition to the market state was obviously not a Scottish or United Kingdom phenomenon but was global. In western society the gulf between the rich and poor had steadily widened. In the United Kingdom the share of wealth owned by the top 1% increased from a quarter to one third and the share of the top 5% increased from 50% to 60% (Crowther and Martin 2005).

All this has happened since the late 1970s and, as Crowther and Martin point out, *'what is most significant is that this growth of inequality reverses the pattern of redistribution that characterised most of the post-war period'* (ibid 2005 p 115).

Further, and as a corollary, the gradual move from state provided education to that provided by the private and voluntary sector and by public-private partnerships meant that (from a Freirian perspective) education was now about training citizens to accept their individual responsibility to look after themselves (Crowther and Martin 2005).

Freire's earlier work in the field of literacies led many to equate literacies with popular education but popular education is not simply about teaching literacies skills. It is also about problematising and interpreting the social forces influencing lives.   The starting point is where the learners are themselves situated in terms of interests and concerns and then moving out to broader political considerations (Kane 1999).

Freire's aims were to promote action and reflection, to encourage people to be the subjects of change and to empower groups as distinct from individuals to take action (ibid 1999).   Despite the fact that Freire's work was mainly focussed on Latin America, popular education can, and does, stimulate creative thinking and provide insights into the adult education practice in Scotland, argues Kane (Kane 1999).

So, having outlined Paulo Freire's standpoint it is perhaps not surprising that having been brought up by parents who believed implicitly in the rights of all individuals to be, as Freire describes *'beings for themselves'*, I attempted to embrace his philosophy in both my work and my life.

I witnessed some examples of the Freirian approach and was involved in others that were, for me, formative

One Scottish example, which inspired me, was the Adult Learning Project in Edinburgh. At that time I was an Area Community Education Officer within Strathclyde Regional Council managing a team responsible for the delivery of adult learning in addition to youth and community work. As I had no training in adult education I was interested in exploring innovative examples of Freirian work in Scotland. It was at this time I first made contact with ALP.

The project sought to overtly politicise the curriculum, construct programmes to address the struggle for cultural equality, use dialogical learning methods and build a relationship between learning and cultural action (Galloway 1999). As Kane (1999) points out, although there was less absolute poverty in Scotland than in Latin America, there was considerable social inequality in this country therefore the basic tenets of popular education were as relevant in Scotland as they were in Latin America. This did not mean, however, that the popular education model deployed in Latin America could be replicated in every detail in western society.

However, the ALP project demonstrated that it was possible to learn lessons from the popular education movement in Latin America and apply them to Scottish society.

The action taken by the ALP groups included history groups who wrote and performed dramatic productions celebrating the lives and struggles of radical movements and individuals from Scotland's past and demonstrated against charges for historic sites.

These groups then went on to form local history action groups and organised a project that brought to life a hundred years of tenement living in the local area (Galloway 1999). A second example was the democracy groups, who helped to raise awareness of, and had campaigned around, issues like VAT on fuel, water privatisation, political autonomy, local school closures and traffic congestion. A third example was where land groups publicised the need for land reform in Scotland, campaigned against the Criminal Justice Bill, supported several community-based ownership campaigns and actively experimented with urban permaculture methods in the city. (Galloway 1999).

Although Freire advocated collectivism as opposed to individualism, Galloway showed that the *'actions of individuals in taking more control of their own lives are of equal importance'* (Galloway 1999 p 237) in other words, individual choice can have a collective impact. One of the research projects organised by ALP *'found individual students acting decisively for change as a direct result of their studies, in their personal relationships and families, work places, political parties, local organisations and educational institutions'* (ibid 1999).

Most of the adult education work I undertook was in Areas of Priority Treatment (APTs), so called, by Strathclyde Regional Council, as they were deemed areas that were socially deprived, where people were disenfranchised, believed that they had no voice and were therefore unable to change or transform the status quo. One such community was located in a large town on the west coast of Scotland. In the early 1970s the area

consisted mainly of tenement dwellings built during the pre-war depression years and had become a ghetto where *'problem families'* and *'delinquent youths'* were concentrated (Gibson 1997).

The stigma attached to the area by local politicians, the police, employers and residents in other areas created a community that was demoralised about its own competence and character (ibid 1997). In other words, people outside the area were determining the character of the area and people inside the area believed the rhetoric and, as Gibson puts it, they lived down to their reputation. From the spring of 1972 to the autumn of 1976 however the area acquired a new reputation due to the actions of residents.

A number of external factors assisted in this transformation but the main drivers were the residents themselves. One factor was the shift from Liberal political control to Labour in the May elections of 1972. The Labour Group was committed to redevelopment throughout the town but some members were not convinced it would be value for money to redevelop this particular APT. A second influencing factor was the creation of a Tenants' Association that persuaded a large number of residents to attend the council meeting where decisions were taken regarding the redevelopment of certain areas in the town.

Contrary to initial plans the decision was ultimately taken to include this APT in the redevelopment programme and despite the fact that *'they had to listen to insults to the people spoken by some of the Councillors but they stuck it out and their silent presence probably tipped the balance'* (Gibson

1997 p 34). The decision to redevelop the area became a priority commitment for the Council. There were many struggles along the road and the residents did not achieve all that they had hoped due to the intransigence of many of the professionals, especially the architects.

However, by adopting a community development approach the local neighbourhood worker, employed by the Social Work Department, encouraged the residents to pursue their aims and provided a great deal of support to the older teenagers of the area to ensure that their voices were heard as well as those of the adults. A new centre was planned for the area and the officials were making decisions as to how this facility would be developed and staffed. The Tenants' Association objected strongly to the proposals and, after nine months, forced the Council to accept the fact that the centre would not only be run **for** the people, but **by** the people. As Gibson observed *'local people discovered that in certain important respects they knew better, and could do better, than the professionals; and that this was because they cared more'* (Gibson 1997 p39).

What these and numerous other examples suggest is that, when people were given the confidence whether through adult education, community development or community education, they could challenge authority and, in many cases, alter the opinions and decisions of politicians, at least at a local level.

Another example occurred in a small APT in Strathclyde Region, where the local authority decided to sell half the public housing stock to a

developer. Local activists were concerned that the type of housing built would affect the status of the APT by reducing its numbers, thus affecting the socio economic indicators that would subsequently impact on the facilities in the area.

If the housing was aimed at second or third time buyers there was a danger that the number of primary school age children would be greatly reduced resulting in the closure of the local primary school, child care facilities would be reduced or closed and, if the overall demography of the area altered significantly, the finance available to APTs would be withdrawn. The local residents initially felt powerless to challenge the developers because of lack of knowledge and confidence.

A one day session was organised by Community Education staff where an architect employed by the local authority met with the activists and a dialogue ensued where the local residents expressed their concerns and the architect shared knowledge with them which would help them prepare a case to put before the local elected members and the developers. The upshot was that the councillors imposed certain restrictions on the developer to guarantee that a good social mix of residents would move into the area and that existing facilities would be protected.

This example also demonstrates that, when the principles and theories of popular education are adopted, it is possible to challenge the status quo. The starting point in this particular example was where the residents were in terms of their interests and concerns. They were concerned as to what

kind of development this would be, how would it affect existing provision and would it impact on the status of the APT?

From a Freirian point of view those who attended the workshop were encouraged to acquire new knowledge that would allow them to reflect on the proposals and take action when meeting with local councillors, officials and the developers. They moved from being the objects of change to being the subjects of change and acted collectively to impact on decisions that affected their community.

However, since the creation of the single tier authorities, the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, the removal of special funding for APTs and the deconstruction of the welfare state, this area lost almost all the facilities the residents fought so hard to gain and to retain and many of the original activists have lost heart.

For me, these examples highlight the need for sustained community based adult education that is overtly political. As Crowther and Martin state (2005 p113), *'we sever our roots with radical critique and utopian thinking at our peril'*.

However, it was not always easy to promote Freirian principles in Scotland. Community based adult learning was, and is, funded mainly by either local or national government.

Prior to devolution most of the large regional authorities were controlled by Labour, many of the elected members being from what came to be

known as 'Old Labour' and populism better describes the strategy adopted by some rather than popular education.

This populist approach to the development of social strategy policies did, in some instances, impede the reality of delivering true justice to those most in need.

Popular/Populist Education

Kane (1999 p62) maintains that 'populism' defines a particular relationship between state and people where, on the one hand *'it appears radical, claims to be on the side of the poor (though it appeals to all classes) and can point to welfare policies to back up its claims. Accordingly, it creates a climate in which the radical discourse of popular education can reverberate'.* On the other hand, *'it is inherently conservative, and uses radical rhetoric to diffuse and co-opt genuinely popular movements and is perfectly capable of authoritarianism in order to keep power'.*

Kane (1999) claims that populism applied to the most notorious Labour councils whose political malpractice contrasts with the radicalism of their stated intentions. One such local authority was Strathclyde Regional Council who produced social strategy policies for the 1980s and 1990s. The Social Strategies for the Nineties document had, as one of the stated goals, that the community should exert influence over the decisions taken by the Council and that local leadership should reflect the views of local people (Strathclyde Regional Council 1993).

I worked for Strathclyde Regional Council from its inception until its demise and witnessed many instances where the reality did not meet the rhetoric. Community Councils, who were perceived by the Council as becoming too vociferous, were subjected by the local authority to the co-option of elected members who vetoed decisions that were contrary to the wishes of the Council. On several occasions I personally witnessed a very powerful elected member bullying community activists and staff into submission and many senior officers of the authority allowed this to happen.

In another Scottish region, also controlled by Labour, at the time of the Anti-Poll Tax campaign, staff involved in an adult learning project felt unable to support the campaigners due to the fact that the local authority, which financially supported the project, applied financial and political pressure and the Unemployed Workers' Centre, an organisation that supported the campaign, was coincidentally closed down (Kane 1999).

Despite this, spaces were created to allow the flourishing of Freirian principles and many pockets of resistance were created. As a result, my personal beliefs that the inequitable status quo could, and should, be challenged to effect change and that education is the key to achieving this transformation were strengthened.

When learners use their knowledge to impact on areas of their personal lives and subsequently on the life of their community then real changes can take place and the balance of power can be shifted from those who oppress, albeit unintentionally, to those who are oppressed.

The language of 'oppression' needs comment, perhaps, because it is so foreign to our ears today. In this instance it is used to mean dominate or control. Elected members and 'professionals' employed by local government believed, and possibly still believe, that they knew best, they knew what people living in deprivation needed and therefore they set out to address the issues with little, or no, reference to those living in these areas. How did they know? Very few councillors or employees of the local authority lived in a deprived area. They travelled into the area in the morning and out again in the evening and had no real conception of what was important to the residents living in these areas. There is little doubt that many were well intentioned and would never consider themselves 'oppressors' but what they did, in fact, was dominate and control the lives of residents by dint of the fact that they held the power and did not think it relevant to share this power with those whose lives were most affected.

Back to Basics

To return to Paulo Freire, he believed that we, as human beings, are not **in** the world but **with** the world (Freire 1972b). Freire believed that human beings can impact on the world in which we live if we are prepared to emerge from the situation in which we are submerged, critically reflect upon it and intervene in it (Freire 1972a). Furthermore, in constantly changing our environment we are shaping the very conditions of our existence and are, therefore, changing ourselves (Crotty 2003).

In the late 1970s when my literacies work began the aim was to simply teach the technical 'skills' of reading, writing and using numbers but this

has evolved over the years to become more meaningful in terms of a learner's life and it is what the learner 'does' with these new found skills, i.e. the wider impact on themselves and their communities, that is the key.

Freire believed that humans are re-creators, not mere spectators of the world (Freire 1972a), that they can critically insert themselves into the reality of their own situation in order to transform it and themselves (Crotty 2003). By inserting themselves into the reality of their situation and transforming it, human beings become more fully human and no one escapes this *'ontological and historical vocation'* (Freire 1972a p 58). Accordingly, my research is not primarily about facts and figures but about how learners in adult literacies 'make sense' of their reality and how they perceive any transformation in their lives as a result of participating in an adult literacies programme.

The purpose of my research is, after all, primarily to discover if learners have been involved in learning based on a social practice model and whether or not they feel equipped to challenge and transform the status quo. Such a research aim resonates with a 'critical – interpretative' approach to the topic.

If one believes, as I do, that education is about changing and transforming the society in which we live, that human beings create meanings to understand the world around them, this points towards adopting a 'critical – interpretative' paradigm.

Having outlined some factors influencing my decision to adopt a 'critical – interpretative' stance in relation to this research I now return to the theoretical issues relating to methodology. Crotty (2003) suggests that there are certain basic elements that should be present in any research process, epistemology and ontology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. The elements are inter-related and inform one and other.

Epistemology and Ontology

Epistemology and ontology are philosophical concepts, the former concerned with the philosophy of knowledge and the latter is a branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of being (Oxford Dictionary 1998). In other words epistemology answers the question *'what it means to know'* and ontology addresses the question *'what is'* (Crotty 2003 p10). There is no one epistemological stance but several, including objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism (ibid 2003). Objectivists accept that the world exists whether we know about it or not and by using scientific methods it is possible to discover the truth and therefore to explain and control events (Usher 1996). In objectivist epistemology researchers believe that objects exist and have meaning regardless of awareness and experience and that by using scientific research the objective truth and meaning can be attained (Crotty 2003). This is the epistemology that underpins the theoretical perspective of positivism. The meaning of positivism has altered and grown over the centuries from the earlier theories of Bacon, Comte and the Vienna Circle but it is still, nevertheless, rooted in the belief that scientific discovery is the driving force behind

progress (ibid 2003). Positivists believe that by using a scientific approach to research the results will be accurate and certain, they will not be clouded by personal feelings, interpretations or opinions. The claim that scientific knowledge is *'utterly objective and that only scientific knowledge is valid, certain and accurate'* (Crotty 2003 p29) has been challenged by eminent scientists such as Heisenberg and Bohr and has led to what is known as post-positivism where scientists refer to probability rather than certainty, objectivity rather than absolute objectivity and approximate truth rather than unconditional truth.

Crotty claims that there are some twelve varieties of positivism and that some authors, when discussing post-positivism, include under this generic term non-positivism, phenomenology, naturalism, feminism and hermeneutics (Crotty 2003). Despite the multiplicity of concepts relating to positivism and post-positivism the contemporary understanding of the positivist approach to research is that what is observed is observed and recorded scientifically thus providing explanations that are unrelated to the world and its social practices. Many people have criticised the objective/positivist approach but it has its place in the field of research in that it can produce empirical data which enables decision makers to base future policy on established facts. However objective epistemology was not a suitable underpinning for this particular small-scale research as the question asked required the respondents to draw from personal experiences, interpret meanings, place value judgements on practice and take cognisance of the social situations in which they operated.

Subjective epistemology, as the name might suggest, is the opposite of objectivism in that the object makes no contribution to the construction of meaning, indeed meaning is imposed upon the object by the subject (Crotty 2003). However, we as humans do ascribe meaning to the objects whether consciously or not but the meaning is not constructed from any interaction between the object and the subject. In this research my particular opinions, beliefs and assumptions based on my experience and knowledge, however limited, were that the policy and practice of adult literacies in Scotland were not wholly predicated on a social practice model. As has been stated, the objectivist/positivist approach was not a suitable epistemology for this research and, in an attempt to limit any pre-conceived ideas held by the researcher, the subjectivist/anti-positivist epistemology was also rejected.

Constructionist epistemology encompasses both objectivity and subjectivity and meaning is constructed as a result of interaction between humans and their world within a social context. However, these constructions are not formed in isolation but are based on historical and social perspectives and are influenced by particular cultures (Crotty 2003). Scholars such as Guba and Lincoln (1994) claim that the construction of a meaningful reality is linked to objectivism but this notion is disputed by a large number of other scholars (e,g, Merleau-Ponty 1962) who believe that the world is 'real' whether or not we are conscious of it. If one accepts the latter premise, as I do, then it is possible for a constructionist epistemology to be compatible with realist ontology. The experiences, and therefore the constructions, related by the interviewees during this

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research were 'real' to them. This reality may differ from person to person or from area to area and may alter over time but it is none the less constructed reality.

Maynard (1994) describes epistemology as providing a philosophical grounding for research in that it enables the researcher to determine what kinds of knowledge are possible and whether or not they are sufficient and reasonable to construct meaning from data gathered.

The research question, as to whether the Scottish ALN policy and practice is based on a social practice model or not, may, at first glance, appear to be straightforward. It either is, or is not. By adopting an objectivist epistemology the answer would have been a definitive yes, as the interviewees all believed that this was the case. However, there is a subjective element to the term social practice. There is no agreed national definition of this phrase and, as result, how this is defined is dependent on individual constructions of meaning that by the very nature of construction is subjective. As a result the epistemology underpinning this research is that of constructionism coupled with an ontology of realism.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective is an explanation of the context in which the research is conducted, in this instance the interpretive-critical paradigm. Firstly, interpretivism is often linked to Weber who posits that, in human and social sciences, the researcher is concerned with understanding meanings rather than explaining in terms of causes, as would be the case in

natural sciences (Crotty 2003). To enable a researcher to understand human beings they need to understand the interpretations and meanings they place on what they are doing (Pring 2000). To understand and interpret meaning it is necessary to understand the society one is researching otherwise there is a danger that the meaning might be misinterpreted. The possibility of misinterpreting the data gathered in this research is reduced by the fact that my experience in the development of literacies in Scotland is shared with those interviewed and I am part of the society being researched. However, this involvement has a downside in that I inevitably have a particular stance in relation to the issues and care must be taken not to steer interviews in certain directions or indicate agreement or disagreement to responses given by interviewees. In addition, the temptation to elaborate responses and select data that accord with my views has to be guarded against.

Secondly, the 'critical' part of my chosen stance. It is generally accepted that interpretivism is an uncritical form of study that seeks to understand, reads the situation in terms of community and accepts the status quo (Crotty 2000). The critical paradigm, on the other hand, is overtly political, critical of the status quo and seeks to *'emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society'* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000 p 28).

Fay identifies the main features of critical social research as follows: *'In the broadest sense, critical social science is an attempt to understand in a rationally responsible manner the oppressive features of society such that*

this understanding stimulates its audience to transform their society and thereby liberate themselves' (Fay 1987 p4). Harvey further defines critical social research in the following terms: *'Critical social research does not take the apparent social structure, social processes or accepted history for granted. It tries to dig beneath the surface of appearances. It asks how social systems really work, how ideology or history conceals the processes which oppress and control people'* (Harvey 1990 p 6).

How therefore does my critical-interpretive theoretical perspective relate to an analysis of literacies and literacies learning in Scotland? Mary Hamilton's (1996) construction of competing ideologies of literacy provides a useful framework for such an analysis. She posits four categories that have defined the purpose of literacy learning over time.

Firstly, there is literacy for emancipation, whereby the issues of power and representation are addressed. As discussed above, attempts to adopt a Freirian approach to adult learning in Scotland were fragmented and, if those trying to pursue this ideal were perceived by those in power to be 'getting out of hand', they were thwarted.

The second ideology is that of social control where those in power see it as a way of maintaining the status quo where literacy is used to produce responsible, moral and economically active citizens (ibid 1996). For example, in the past it was about being able to read the bible in church, run a household budget or read a recipe and now it is focussed on literacies for work. These citizens would then be compliant to the given order.

Elements of the literacy for social control ideology are also evident in the third literacy ideology, that of cultural missionary. This was seen as a welfare activity promoted by the middle class for those they perceived as disadvantaged (ibid 1996). This ideology had its roots in the church's influence in the 17th and 18th centuries prior to the introduction of formal schooling and this has left a powerful legacy (Graff 1987). Hamilton (1996) maintains that this is the most prominent ideological strand in British Adult Basic Education, including literacies, and is still evident today. In my experience many of those who volunteered to act as literacies tutors prior to the development of the Executive's strategy were very definitely middle class and, albeit with the best if intentions, felt that they were 'doing good unto others'.

This does not detract from their dedication but it was unlikely that they saw what they were doing as other than teaching those less fortunate than themselves the technical skills of the language to enable them to 'fit into' the society in which they lived.

The final ideology is the deficit model of literacy carried over to literacies from remedial or special needs education. As Hamilton (1996 p149) states these *'four strands… have been tightly interwoven in the fabric of Adult Basic Education in the UK. Most programmes show evidence of a mixture of them and any analysis must focus on the shifting balance of power between these different ideologies at different points in time, or in different institutional and policy settings'.*

Freire's belief that human beings have an influence over their world and, as a result, its evolution, means that people need not accept their fate as unalterable but can challenge the status quo to create a better environment in which to live (Crotty 2003). This research seeks to explore whether or not the approach used in the delivery of literacies in Scotland is enabling them to do so. In my adoption of a critical-interpretive stance for my research I explicitly adhere most closely to Hamilton's first ideology of literacy. If literacy is for emancipation then it is necessary to understand the oppressive features as outlined by Fay and Harvey that may prevent literacy learners from transforming and liberating themselves and the society in which they live. It is also necessary to interpret the meanings that those involved in the management and tutoring of literacies place on what they are doing and how they are doing it, what they understand social practice to be and how they translate this into their delivery.

Methodology

The researcher's stance in relation to ontology and epistemology determine, to a greater or lesser extent, the methodology used. Crotty (2003 p3) defines methodology as *'the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes'*.

If we accept that literacies should be a social practice not simply a skill, it is necessary to study it as such. This means that the strategic plan of action must select methods that allow participants to explore their perceptions and attitudes with regard to a social practices model of

literacies learning.   It is also important to create spaces where interviewees can reflect upon their practices to prevent their received notions perhaps blinding them to reality (Wolff 1989) and to engage in dialogue with the researcher.

This research is both objective and subjective and the outcomes are likely to be suggestive rather than conclusive.   As a result, the methodology used in this research aims to elicit the meanings and perceptions held by the interviewees and to interpret these in light of the current circumstances.

Methods

Traditionally the use of quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods were regarded as polar opposites, the former being utilised in scientific research and the latter in social research.   However this assumption has now been challenged by a number of researchers including Rist, Smith and Heshusius and Hammersley (Scott 1996).   As Pring (2000) claims the differentiation between qualitative and quantitative research is a 'false dualism'.   These divisions are characterised by some researchers as the positivists versus the anti positivists, with the positivist adopting a quantitative methodology and anti positivist adopting a qualitative methodology.   There is, of course, a valid distinction between quantitative and qualitative research but Dewey (1916) denied any epistemological or ontological segregation that often divides the quantitative and qualitative researchers.   As Crotty (2003 p15) puts it *'our research can be qualitative or quantitative, or both qualitative and quantitative, without this being in any way problematic'.*

In other words, we can utilise data from both but the defining factor is how we approach it and through what stance we interpret the data. My stance should by now be clear in that it seeks to understand what is happening beneath the surface of literacies delivery in Scotland and how this relates to the use of a social practice model. The methods used are explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

In the next chapter I outline the main theories and texts that address literacy as social practice before returning to the Scottish context of literacy policy and practice.

CHAPTER 3

Social Practice in Literacies

Barton (2002) describes the social practice model as being based on literacy practices, in simple terms, what people *do* with literacy.

Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (1999) put forward six propositions about the nature of literacy as social practice as follows:

➢ *literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts*

➢ *there are different literacies associated with different domains of life*

➢ *literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others*

➢ *literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices*

➢ *literacy is historically situated*

➢ *literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making*

Before continuing to discuss social practice and what it means to literacies policy and practice I would like to explore what the purpose and power of literacies actually is to emphasise the significance of the propositions detailed above.

Purpose of Literacies

Why is it so important for the population of Scotland and, indeed, other countries to be literate?   Tett contends that literacies skills are important both as a cause and a solution to social exclusion (Tett 2003) and Archer and Costello (1990) believe that literacies is an indicator of the level of democracy in a society where people can participate fully in the democratic processes.   Tett (2003 p5) also claims that *'if people can be helped to challenge individually based, deficit views of themselves and their communities then a small step has been taken in enabling their voices to be heard'*.

However, Rogers (2001) claims that it is necessary to be clear about the purpose of literacy before developing new strategies for teaching it.   He highlights the proliferation of terms such as environmental literacy, legal literacy, and computer literacy and claims that the use of the word literacy as a metaphor is confusing. Literacy, he asserts, is about working with any texts comprising words and/or numbers which are written on a variety of surfaces such as computer screens, paper, walls, black and white boards, indeed any surface where words and numbers can be written (ibid 2001 p3).   He contends that *'literacy is different from awareness (as in 'environmental literacy' to mean environmental awareness) since one might become environmentally aware without being literate or able to work with texts'* (ibid 2001 p3).   He claims that the term legal literacy means having legal knowledge and computer literacy means having the skills to use a computer, but again these do not necessarily imply an ability

to work with the textual information relating to both   While I accept that legal and computer literacies can be, and usually do involve *working* with texts as, indeed, environmental literacy can be, they are more about learning a language used in specific spheres than about learning to work with and use texts There is, therefore, a danger that, by using the word literacy erroneously, the definition of literacy could be clouded (ibid 2001).

Michael Newman (2006 www.infed.org/) describes the purpose of adult education and, consequently adult literacies, in the following way *"... we should teach and learn how to wrest our lives away from the control of others and take charge of our own moment ...we can teach people to think clearly ...we can teach people to think imaginatively...we can teach people to act, and we can teach people to act wisely"*.

These comments echo Freire's underlying philosophy that thinking does not separate itself from action (Freire 1972a) and that both should be geared to enabling people, individually and collectively, to be subjects/actors in their worlds and not objects acted upon.   Newman and Freire both make it clear that neutrality is not an option when adopting any standpoint.   It is impossible to be neutral.   Everything emanates from a stance, whether consciously or not   The purpose of literacies teaching for them is about enabling people to take control of their own lives, in other words, liberation from those who are preventing them from doing so.   The alternative rationale promoting the economic benefits of learning and the underlying, implicit assumption that 'higher' levels of literacy skills will,

in themselves, automatically contribute to increased economic prosperity and development have already been alluded to in Chapter 1.

Rogers (2001) asserts that literacy is not an essential pre-requisite for human and social development, at least not in the first instance, and this is demonstrated in the Dixon and Tuladhar example below. Many people throughout the world are non-literate and will never become literate but are able to participate in their own development and that of their communities by learning from others. As Rogers (2001 p8) states *'I have learned that I cannot reasonably ask adults to wait to learn literacy skills before engaging in developmental tasks; that I cannot say to all those who will never come to classes that they are permanently excluded from development'*. He cites a number of examples to support this argument such as income generation, improved farming and fishing practices, environmental enhancement like tree planting, urban slum improvements, health improvement schemes, in other words whatever development tasks the participants themselves wish to address. He further contends that the learning of literacy skills can be undertaken through the literacy practices of the development activity in what he terms 'literacies can come second' approach. Another approach suggested by Prinsloo and Breier (1996) is that embedding literacy learning into activities relevant to the participants is a more effective approach than literacy education as a stand alone activity that is unlikely to attract a large number of learners. We all learn for a purpose and starting with a purpose that is important to, and identified by, the learners, leads to more effective and integrated learning.

Dixon and Tuladhar (1994 cited in Rogers 2001 p7) illustrate this point when describing the experiences of a group of women in Nepal. The women wanted to learn to sew and were given a sewing manual and told they were required to read it before they could learn to sew and that they would have to attend a literacies class to enable them to do so. Literacy was seen as a barrier to their goal because they and their teacher assumed that reading was a prerequisite to learning to sew. Dixon and Tuladhar ask a number of interesting questions in relation to this attitude. *'... Why should these women wait to learn sewing after reading? Why can't the sewing manual be adapted for use as a literacy (learning) text? Why can't the sewing class serve as a motivation for the literacy lessons?* In this instance it was not necessary for the women to read before commencing their sewing class, the literacy tuition could arise from the sewing and be a vehicle for supporting their other learning. This example of a literacy generating situation illustrates, in a nutshell, the case at the heart of the social practice model and supports the standpoint taken by Rogers.

It should be noted, however, that in a developing country it may be possible to participate in individual and community development without being literate (as is evidenced late in this chapter) but it is much more difficult to do so in a first world country. Understanding and participating fully in the structure of the western world is dependent on being able to read, understand and use the written word.

In my view this does not, in any way, detract from the use of the social practice model. As I shall argue, the use of this model is equally applicable to both the developing and first world nations, incorporating literacies into everyday activities meaningful to the participants, enabling them to take control of their own destinies.

If one believes, as I do, that literacies *is* about enabling people to take control of their own destinies this is a very powerful tool indeed. The next section will look at the power of literacies and cite some examples.

Power of Literacy

Ramdas (1987), in recounting her work in the field of adult literacy, points out that literacy by itself has no meaning or relevance unless it is aligned to the daily concerns of the learners and it is not an end in itself. A central principle of the social practices model of literacies is that there are many different contexts in which literacy is used on a daily basis and the language used in one context is different from that used in another (Papen 2005). It is essential that literacies learning is located in the real lives of participants whether that be sending text messages or completing complicated forms for Government agencies.

Irrespective of the different language used, all written communication relies on one underlying ability: coding and de-coding as Rogers and others claim (ibid 2005), but texts themselves are not neutral because there are always power relationships associated with the written word. (Archer 2003).

Kell (2003 p70) suggests that literacies has three dimensions, operational, cultural and critical and that these dimensions draw on four rôles. The first rôle is that of code breaker where people need to be able to decipher the print. The second and third rôles, which occur in the cultural dimension, are those of text users and text participants and the fourth rôle is that of text analyst which is a critical dimension.

To highlight these dimensions and rôles she cites the example of Winnie who had been a key community leader in an informal settlement in the Cape Peninsula.

Winnie had no formal schooling and considered herself 'illiterate' but, despite this, her contribution to her community was immense and included being the local organiser of the African National Congress which entailed attending regional and national meetings. Winnie was unable to break the codes without assistance due to the fact that she could not read but *'she was able to deal with coder-breaking by drawing on literacy mediators around her in close social networks'* (Kell 2003 p71).

Kell evidences that Winnie was adept in the rôles of text user and text participant but it was unclear whether or not she could analyse the texts. This situation pertained for a number of years and Winnie played a valuable and critical rôle within her community despite being conventionally 'illiterate'. Then things began to alter in the area where Winnie lived. The settlement was to be incorporated into the local government structures and this meant that the population was required to deal with *'municipal bureaucrats*, *NGO representatives and local do-*

gooders from the surrounding "white" suburbs'. (Kell 2003 p71). These engagements depended mostly on decoding and understanding text, written in English not a native language, and Winnie found it increasingly difficult to continue her key rôle within the community.

This highlights the need for people to be able to operate in the three dimensions described by Kell. In an attempt to address this issue Winnie enrolled in an adult literacy night school but encountered many problems. The provision was made by an agency that was considered *'as one of the most professional, progressive and dedicated literacy agencies in South Africa'* (Kell 2003 p70). However, Winnie gradually withdrew from the classes and Kell, from her observations, suggests three reasons why this was so.

Firstly, the type of literacies being taught were insulated from the practices that had been observed by Kell in the other domains in which Winnie operated. Secondly, the use of these texts *'promoted pedagogical practices which were unfamiliar to learners, like answering questions in full sentences'* and while these practices *'drew on material from everyday life'* they were *'recontextualised ... within the discourse practice of schooling'* (Kell 2003 p71).

The third reason posited by Kell was that *'learners would have to "recapitulate" the sorts of literacy experiences mainstream children acquire in their first few years'* (Kell 2003 p71). This example illustrates how, by divorcing the literacies from their context and using inappropriate

pedagogical approaches, Winnie's weaknesses were highlighted and her strengths were diminished.

Where previously Winnie had been in a powerful position to work actively for her community the advent of governmental change meant that the power shifted to the organisations/structures. Had those delivering the adult literacies tuition adopted a social practice approach and used texts that were relevant to Winnie and the work she was doing she would, almost certainly, have been able to de-code, use and participate in the texts and, in time, learn to analyse them. As it happened a valuable resource was lost to the community.

Two further examples of the power of the written word cited by Archer (Archer 2003 p37) are government and social power.

With regard to government power he states *' the maze of bureaucracy involved in dealing with government offices; the forms and procedures people need to deal with; the need to "have all your papers in order" if you wish to access your entitlements or assert your rights with the authorities. Those without proper documentation are effectively illegalised and excluded, making a profound link between literacy and legalisation.'* With regard to social power he states *' there is almost invariably a strong correlation between level of education/literacy and social status. The way people are perceived and the level to which their word is valued is often linked to literacy.'* (ibid 2003 p37). If people are unable to decode and use the written word they are powerless to alter their situation.

Archer (2003) further suggests that literacy cannot be treated in isolation from the contexts that give it meaning and that real learning only takes place when people become practically engaged in situations where literacy is required or helpful.

One example, which illustrates this point, and supports the premise that a social practice model can apply in first world nations, was the dampness campaigns organised in the large housing estates across Scotland. It points to the effectiveness of adopting a pedagogical approach that, as Archer and others advocate, is rooted in the real lives of people, their struggles and provides resolution through dialogue. He (2003 p37) highlights the fact that *'when the written word appears or is unavoidable it is often associated with situations where power relations are clearly evident.'*: so, if people are to be successful in their dealings with those in power they require to learn the appropriate literacies for the given situation, as the following example illustrates graphically.

Women living in a large peripheral estate in a Scottish city were very aware that the damp conditions in which they and their families were living was the major cause of many of the health problems suffered by the residents, in particular the children. However, trying to persuade the Housing Department officials and the medical 'experts' of this fact was a problem. These families had been moved from the slums of the city into decent housing so how could the properties be to blame for the dampness? The attitude of those in authority was that the residents themselves were to blame; they smoked, they hung washing on pulleys inside the houses, they

did not open windows, they did not heat their houses properly and they boiled too many kettles! (Martin and McCormack 1999).

The Residents' Association established an anti-dampness task force and the first undertaking of this group was to conduct a door-to-door survey, the results of which indicated that some 76% of the housing stock was affected by dampness.   There was then a need to carry out a health study to provide evidence to convince the bureaucrats that the houses and not the residents were to blame.

At this point the residents approached the local adult education centre and requested a seconded member of staff to work with them to develop their skills and understanding that would enable them to effectively continue their struggle.

This was not simply about acquiring skills to conduct a survey or to complete application forms, although, at one point, they were required to complete an application for European funding in French.   It was about much more.

In the words of one resident *'Only through understanding their past and their present, only through understanding and analysing their reality can people choose their future'* and another *states 'I think it is deliberate that everything has been individualised.   What the tenants' organisation tried to do was to blow that open and say "Hold on a wee minute, we're all in this together'* (ibid 1999 p262 and p 261).

These are powerful sentiments. After many years of struggle the residents proved their case; a solar system was installed and the residents of the area became healthier than they were before and the dampness has almost been completely eradicated. What this example illustrates is both the importance of being able to use the written word for people's own ends in a literate society and the power that it holds in so many contexts, because, if this group had not been able to uncover and provide evidence in 'literate' terms acceptable to the authorities, then their knowledge and experience would have had no legitimacy. It was the group, with varied amounts of 'literacy skills' individually, that did it. If only Winnie had been given the opportunity to contexualise her learning who knows what her potential could have been.

Freire also believed that education should not be about accepting the status quo but about changing and transforming it (Galloway 1999). This can best be done when people work collectively as highlighted by the resident's quote above.

In summary, literacy as freedom and power is part of a larger equation so literacy cannot be viewed as an end in itself (Archer 2003). When dealing with those in power, people require a range of complex communication skills, not only literacy, which include how they speak, how they dress, how they retain eye contact, in other words how they portray themselves (ibid 2003). The two examples cited above illustrate the differences in outcomes between using a skills based approach as opposed to a social

practice model. It is, of course, essential to acquire the skills of literacies but that is only part of the equation.

Social Practice Model

To return to Barton's (2002) belief that the key to the social practice approach is what people *do* with their literacy.

As Papen 2005 states there are three influential definitions of literacy, functional literacy, critical literacy and the liberal tradition of literacy. Functional literacy is the acquisition of a skill set that enables people to participate in society but has altered over time to focus primarily on the employment and economic needs of society. Critical literacy is that associated with Freire, who contended that literacy is not simply about being able to *'read the word'* but being able to *'read the world through reading the word'* (Freire and Macendo in Papen 2005 p10) enabling participants to understand and transform their lives. The liberal tradition of literacy emphasises personal development and *'goes beyond the work-related and functional skills in a narrow sense, and includes the more leisure-orientated uses of reading and writing'* (ibid 2005). Papen talks about definitions of literacy whereas Hamilton describes ideologies. Whichever word is chosen they both describe the meaning of literacy and there are certain similarities. Papen's definition of critical literacy is closely related to Hamilton's ideology of emancipation, the definition of functional literacy is similar to the ideology of social control and the liberal tradition could be interpreted as a version of cultural missionary.

While Papen does not include the deficit model in her definitions of literacy she does address this issue in her publication.

Cutting across these dominant traditions, those who champion the 'social practice' approach stress that literacies depend on context and is not a neutral technology (Street 1984).   Papen (2005) contrasts the theory of literacy as a social practice with the skills view of literacy, the latter being the acquisition of skills, which are independent of their context of use whereas the former is not simply a skill that people learn, but it is something they do (Papen 2005).

Therefore to understand what literacy actually is, it is necessary to look at the social context in which each literacy is used (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič 2000).   Street (1984), when exploring a theory of literacies, describes two distinct models, the *'autonomous'* model and the *'ideological'* model.   He describes the autonomous model of literacy as a set of neutral skills divorced from specific social contexts that are fixed over time and place and for which there is a correct form of usage.   The ideological model, on the other hand, recognises that literacy is dependent upon the context of a particular society and embedded in the ideology of that society and, as societies or groups vary across time and space, so too do literacy practices within them. (Street 1984).

Although there are different ways of using written material, they all rely on the ability to code and decode (Rogers 2001 and Papen 2005) but those who support a narrow skills view of literacy would argue that these correct, formal skills can be taught independent of context.   As Papen

(2005 pp 25-26) states *'A social practice perspective would counteract this argument by highlighting not only the variety of skills needed for various literacy practices, but by drawing attention to the different meanings and purposes these literacy activities have, depending on what technologies they involve, who uses them, in what context and for what ends.'* This latter view is echoed by Hamilton and Hillier (2006 p 17) when they state *'A social practice approach emphasises the uses, meanings and values of reading, writing and numeracy in everyday activities, and the social relationships and institutions within which literacy is embedded.'*

Rogers (2001) also draws attention to the contextualisation of literacy and maintains that the introduction of a common literacy programme could impede the learning process, not enhance it.

The three definitions of literacy above, functional literacy, critical literacy and the liberal tradition of literacy, have been the subject of debate for some considerable time. However, the question as to whether literacy is a set of common skills or a set of activities people engage in is *'being asked with a new urgency today'* (Rogers 2001 p 2).

Echoing Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič's (1999) six propositions about the nature of literacy as social practice, Maclachlan (2006 pp34-35) identifies nine elements that constitute a social practice model of teaching literacies. It would:

➢ *recognise, value and validate the wide range of literacies used by learners, as well as their expertise in them*

- *start from people's strengths and aspirations not their weaknesses and perceived needs*

- *understand the significance of different literacies in contexts of practice*

- *recognise and build on the ways that people learn them informally in these contexts*

- *arise from and be imbedded in relevant contexts of use*

- *recognise the different values, emotions and perspectives that are always and inevitably embedded in literacies use and literacies learning*

- *be open about the power dimensions of literacies and enable learners to exercise power through different literacies*

- *develop learners' critical capacities*

- *develop learners' meta-cognitive capabilities so that the learning can be transferred and adapted in different contexts*

Conclusion

As has been stated Freire believed that education should not be about accepting the status quo but about changing and transforming it. I believe that to achieve this end it is necessary to adopt a social practice approach to literacies teaching and learning. Is this the reality in Scotland? There is a saying that one should never answer a question with a question or questions but to determine what is reality and what is rhetoric in the Scottish ALN policy and practice it **is** necessary to address three other fundamental questions. Firstly, is social practice embedded in the policy,

secondly, is it articulated in practice and thirdly, is it demonstrable in the monitoring and evaluation process?   The first question will be addressed in the following chapter and questions two and three will be explored in the chapters relating to the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 4

The Development of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Policy in Scotland

Introduction

The adult literacies strategy for Scotland was not developed in a vacuum; it was contexualised within the policies of the Scottish Executive and international literacy and numeracy developments as they existed in 2000. This chapter will examine the structures and priorities within which the strategy was developed, the impact of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) survey on the strategy and the structure and rôle of the national agency in relation to those of other western, English speaking countries.

This is a rather long chapter but I believe it is necessary to highlight all the influencing factors that impacted on the production of the ALNIS report. As stated in the opening chapter, the policy was not created in a vacuum and the authors were required to take cognisance of external data in addition to the considerable variety of Scottish Executive policies.

The International Adult Literacy Survey [IALS]

One major catalyst for the development of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy [ALN] strategy at the time was the publication of the IALS survey. Between 1994 and 1998 more than twenty countries participated in IALS.

Despite the fact that the tests for assessing skills level have been criticised (Hamilton and Barton 2000 pp. 378-389), the survey did provide data relating to the Scottish population in an area where little or no research had previously been conducted (Scottish Executive 2001a). An important caveat to note is that only some seven hundred interviewees participated in this survey across Scotland, all south of the Caledonian Canal and excluding the islands, and that this small sample could not therefore be seen as truly representative of the population as a whole. Despite this, the data produced by IALS were adopted as the base line for future developments in the country.

The measurement used to assess literacy and numeracy skills had evolved from simply being able to sign one's name in 1870 (Macrae 1999) to a more complex set of standards. The definition of literacy adopted for IALS was:

'Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential' (Scottish Executive 2001a).

Three dimensions of literacy were defined and tested:

➢ *Prose literacy: the knowledge and skills required to understand and use information from texts such as newspaper articles and passages from fiction*

> *Document literacy: the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats such as timetables, graphs, charts and forms*

> *Quantitative literacy: the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as calculating savings on items advertised in a sale or working out the interest required to achieve a desired return on an investment* [ibid 2001a].

Each of the three dimensions was grouped into five performance levels, Level 1 being the lowest and Level 5 the highest with level 3 being designated as the minimum required to function adequately in society. The Scottish reanalysis of the IALS data suggested that 23% of the population performed at Level 1 on the prose scale, 32% at Level 2, 31% at Level 3 and 14% at Level 4/5 with broadly similar scores in the document and quantitative scales (Scottish Executive 2001 b).

Hamilton and Barton (2000) question the validity of the IALS research, asking did it really measure what it set out to measure? They claim that it did not. They posit three major criticisms of the survey. Firstly, it did not, as it claimed, represent all that literacy encompasses but only provided a partial picture of particular technical aspects of literacies. Secondly, culture was treated as bias in that the IALS survey attempted to identify a common core of test items that would apply cross-culturally but, in fact, they appeared to be based on simplistic and unexamined assumptions

(Hamilton and Barton 2000).   For example, in the main, they treated those living within national boundaries as one homogeneous group.

One surprising example, which did not follow the pattern, is the United Kingdom.   England, Wales and Scotland were subjected to the same test but, for some inexplicable reason, Northern Ireland had its own version. It is not obvious what theory of cultural differences would account for this decision (ibid 2000).   Those devising the survey sought to eliminate cultural differences by translating the Americanised language into British English but this was not as simple as it may at first have appeared.   As Hamilton and Barton (2000) illustrate the compilers of the survey altered the word *odor* to *odour*, but odour is not a common word used in Britain to define household smells.   Such simplistic adaptations cannot, and did not, take popularly used local language variations into account.   For example, the Scots word dreich is totally understandably to someone living in the central belt, and possibly other parts of Scotland, but would be unrecognizable by someone living in Kent.   In fact, it is difficult for a Scot to define dreich although it is a word in common usage to define a particular kind of weather.

Hamilton and Barton (2000) further claim that those who devised and carried out the survey ignored the complexities of social practices and underplayed the difficulties inherent in cross-cultural comparisons.   In addition, the IALS authors seem to extrapolate evidence that is not supported by the data [ibid 2000].

Hamilton and Barton (2000 p 384) claim that *'most of the section that deals with the social benefits of literacy is not based on direct information from the survey. Arguments are made, but no direct evidence is presented from the survey, about relationships between literacy and crime, welfare assistance and health.'*

They further claim that *'... the understandings we can derive from the survey are limited in two ways. Firstly, in order to get test items that work across countries the survey designers have had to restrict themselves to a narrow band of transnational texts which only tap into a fraction of real literacy practices and particularly underrepresent writing. These texts are then removed from their context of use, fitted into a traditional psychometric testing model which defines levels of difficulty and is based on a snapshot view of performance. Secondly, the findings are over-interpreted, using existing explanatory frameworks which are based on previously defined policy goals. It is clear from this that the policy is driving the research and not the other way round.'*

Thirdly, the tests do not replicate 'real life' situations as the authors claim (Hamilton and Barton 2000). What can actually be deduced from this survey is therefore limited due to the fact that the tests were narrow as they were used across a number of countries and only address a fraction of everyday literacy use.

One of the stated aims of IALS was to inform and influence policy decisions and, despite the concerns raised by Hamilton and Barton and others concerning the data, the influence of this research was substantial.

The very fact that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in partnership with statistical research agencies in Canada and the USA, organised the IALS study gave kudos to the analysis produced and that this analysis supported the current policy agendas, i.e. it contributed to the development of global capitalism, meant that national governments were unlikely to ignore the evidence (ibid 2000).

Increasing competitiveness amongst governments (Dicken 1992; Michie and Smith 1995) and the reliance on league tables to demonstrate success, make this type of supposedly 'hard' evidence attractive to politicians.

One concern for those working in the field of what has become known as the new literacy studies (premised on a social practice model) is that this research is separated from the day to day literacy use of those tested. Street (1996) believes the IALS definition of literacy only pays lip service to a social practice model and that the methodology used supports this conclusion. He, among others, contend that the definition of literacies used in IALS, while apparently couched in social practice language, does not, in fact, test literacies in use but assumes the meaning was contained in isolated text items and therefore how they are used in every day life is irrelevant (ibid 1996). He further contends that the use of the word *skills* is indicative of the assumptions on which the survey is based, and not *practices*, i.e. literacy activities or tasks in everyday life (ibid 1996).

If one accepts the concerns outlined above, the IALS results should be treated with caution because they take little cognisance of literacy use in everyday life. This is the standpoint adopted in this thesis.

Scottish Political Context:

The context in which the Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) document was produced was complex in that, in 2000-2001, three departments had responsibility, to a greater or lesser extent, for the policy and delivery of community based adult learning, which included literacies.

The departments were the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), the Scottish Executive Communities Department (SECD) and the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD).

The Scottish Executive had three main priorities, social inclusion, lifelong learning and active citizenship, which were set out in the Osler Report *Communities: Change through learning* outlined in Chapter 1, and each department of government had to take cognisance of these priorities when devising policy.   This meant that lifelong learning was included in a large number of documents produced by the various departments.   However, each department had its own particular set of planned outcomes which did not necessarily mesh with those of other departments.   This left those involved in the delivery of adult learning trying to match community based learning with a number of competing agendas, as the following examples illustrate.

The adult and continuing learning document *Life Through Learning Through Life* (2004) sets out five strategic goals aimed at increasing

individuals' confidence, enterprise, knowledge, creativity and skills. However, the indicators of success in this document are focussed on young people, on increasing the number of graduates in the workforce, on increasing the qualifications of those below levels 5 and 6 in the Scottish Qualifications Framework and on increasing the number of people in employment and undertaking training (Scottish Executive 2004).

In 1999 the then Scottish Office published a white paper on health, *Towards a Healthier Scotland,* which strongly recommended a close working relationship between health boards and local authorities, especially in the development of Health Improvement Plans [HIPs] and local Community Plans.   The local Community Plans covered the range of local authority provision and included an adult education element. However, the targets detailed in this paper were about reducing health inequalities with a special focus on improving children and young people's health and reducing the rates of cancer and heart disease (Scottish Office 1999b) and it was not explicit how adult education contributed to these outcomes.

As has been stated in chapter one, two documents produced by the Executive, *Opportunity Scotland* (1998a) and *Communities: Change Through Learning* (1998b) had different targets.   The former was focussed on economic prosperity and the latter was focussed more on promoting personal development through skill acquisition.

The *New Community Schools Prospectus* (Scottish Executive 1998c) focused on the promotion of social inclusion and the raising of educational

standards amongst school pupils and was based on an integrated approach (Scottish Education Department 1998c). This approach included adult educators working with parents to improve their skills levels to enable them to support their child[ren].

A number of other publications such as *Smart, Successful Scotland*, *Digital Inclusion*, *Better Government for Older People*, *The Beattie Commission* and many more indicated a rôle for adult educators, particularly with those who are socially excluded.

These examples illustrate that each department had its own unique set of outcomes. The shift of emphasis from adult learning to lifelong learning paradoxically resulted in a focus on young people to the detriment of the rest of the potential adult learning population. As has already been evidenced above *Opportunity Scotland* focussed on young people as does *Towards a Healthier Scotland* and *New Community Schools Prospectus*. In addition, many of the policies had a strong emphasis on economic concerns as illustrated by Crowther (2006) who claims that the lifelong learning policy is primarily about economic issues.

In addition, while the Executive identified a rôle for adult learning across its policy framework it limited the areas in which this learning could be offered by increasing surveillance practices and controlling resources resulting in *'projects and activities that did not fit with government priorities were being squeezed in the process'* (Crowther 2006 p5).

This is because adult learning, including ALN, was seen, primarily, as a route back into the labour market or formal education and as a catalyst for increased community participation (ibid 2006).

Before moving on it is worth noting the range of the Executive's policies that impacted on the development of the literacies policy. Some of these are listed below to indicate the plethora of government strategies which impinged on community based adult learning.

Social Inclusion:

- *Social Justice – a Scotland where everyone matters* (Scottish Office 1999)
- *Scottish Social Inclusion Network Action Team Reports* (Scottish Executive 2000)
- *Social Inclusion Partnerships (www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk 24/01/06)*
- *Implementing Inclusiveness Realising Potential* (Scottish Executive 1999a)

Lifelong Learning:

- *The People's Network (www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/enterprise/dics-06.asp 24/01/06)*
- *New Community Schools* (Scottish Office 1998)
- *Opportunity Scotland – a paper on lifelong learning* (Scottish Office 1998a)
- *Communities: Change through Learning (Scottish Executive 1998b)*

- *Towards a Healthier Scotland – White Paper on health* (Scottish Office 1999b)

- *Better Government for Older People* (Scottish Executive 2001c)

- *Developing skills and employability – training for the long term unemployed (www.scotland.gov.uk/news/1999/12/se1711.asp 4/02/06)*

- *Working and Learning Together* (Scottish Executive 2004a)

Active Citizenship:

- *McIntosh Commission (www.scotland.gov.uk/library2/doc04/ser-02.htm 4/02/06)*

- *The Scottish Compact with the Voluntary Sector (www.scotland.gov.uk/library2/doc16/cgpg-01.asp 4/02/06)*

- *Active Communities – volunteering and community action (www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/society/sacs-00.asp 4/02/06)*

- *Scottish Executive Working for Communities Pathfinder Initiative*

- *Scottish Executive Listening to Communities Programme*

All of this suggested that there was an urgent need for an overarching policy directive from the Executive solely in relation to adult education which would clearly define the purpose and rôle of this service. This was not a new suggestion. In 1987 Barr claimed that adult education in Scotland was *'hard to see'* and that the lack of a national strategy, or, indeed, the mechanism to produce such a strategy, meant that developments were ad hoc, uncoordinated and fragmented (Barr 1987 pgs 257 and 258). Over a decade later, despite the introduction of Community

Planning, including the development of local Community Learning and Development Plans, there was still no national strategy for adult learning.

These preceding sections have documented the complex and sometimes bewildering scene within which the Scottish adult literacies strategy was developed. Many of the policies of the Scottish Executive have concentrated on increasing human capital where vocationalism is perceived as the key to economic development and in doing so have marginalised the many other social contexts in which people use literacies.

Development of the Scottish Literacies Strategy

Regardless of the contested nature of the IALS results in relation to the population of Scotland, it provided a statistical basis for the development and funding of a literacy strategy.

The Scottish Executive established an Adult Literacy Team to provide a focus for the development of a strategy for literacy in Scotland. It was tasked with establishing an audit of need, preparing a comprehensive audit of provision, identifying the key issues that required to be addressed and identifying and initiating the key actions that required to be taken. The team was also asked to engage with the main providers and customer groups, suggest performance indicators to ensure effective provision, suggest targets to drive improvement forward, detail resources and indicate how resources should best be applied.

The initial reporting time was December 2000 but this was extended due to the enormity of the task and the final report was published in 2001.

The team's definition of what is meant by literacy and numeracy attempted to take into account the fact that standards have not remained static and that a person's proficiency can only be judged in specific contexts. In other words an attempt was made to define and construct a policy for ALN around a social practice model which roots the practice in everyday literacies which are meaningful to the learner, do not necessarily transfer to other contexts and do not necessarily equate with formal, dominant literacy (Hamilton and Barton 2000).

The definition of literacy decided upon by the team, and incorporated into the ALNIS report, was as follows:

'*The ability to read, write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners*' (Scottish Executive 2001a p7).

Prior to the establishment of the Adult Literacies Team the Scottish Executive had commissioned Edinburgh City Council to institute a project entitled the National Development Project – Adult Literacies in Scotland. This project produced two papers, Project Paper 1 *Literacies and Community Education* and Project Paper 2 *Summary of Adult Literacy and Numeracy; A survey of Programmes in Local Authorities and Colleges* (Macrae 1999 a and b)

Paper 1 set out a definition of literacies which, at the time, '*was radically different from earlier ones that defined literacy as a single set of skills,*

which once learned, would sustain a person for the rest of his/her life'. The paper proposed that *'being literate involves a range of capabilities employed in diverse, but equally significant contexts, using a variety of modes and codes, which emphasises the complex and dynamic relationship between the reader or writer, the text, the immediate and the broader social context'* (Edinburgh City Council 2000 p iv). Paper 2, as the title suggests, was an audit of provision in the local authority, further education and voluntary sectors.

One conclusion drawn from the statistics gathered was *'that the quality and level of current provision cannot meet the learning needs of the large and diverse group of people who would be able to benefit'* (ibid 2000 p iv).

This was the first time that any official document relating to literacies in Scotland suggested, albeit indirectly, the use of a social practice model. This theme was echoed in the third, and final document produced by the national project '*Literacies in the Community – resources for practitioners and managers*' (the LIC pack) (City Of Edinburgh Council 2000). This pack was developed around seven key principles.

Three principles were developed in relation to the learning programme and they are; promoting self-determination, developing an understanding of literacies, and recognising and respecting difference and diversity. A full description of the elements of each principle can be found in Appendix A, but those that are of particular relevance to this research are:

- *each individual's literacy and numeracy practices in the different areas of adult life will be appreciated and valued*

- *individuals will be able to make informed choices as learners and their motivations and decisions about learning (e.g. timing, location, confidentiality) will be respected*

- *the learning process and intended outcomes will be relevant to learners' lives and will improve their ability to be self-directing when using literacy and numeracy and in future learning*

- *literacy and numeracy will be recognised as changing social and cultural practices taking place in contexts that are also continuously developing and changing*

- *the curriculum will be designed to develop, along with knowledge and skills, an understanding of how different and complex the many uses of literacy and numeracy are in adult life.*

- *learners will be encouraged to become critical learners and users of literacy and numeracy, aware of how complex it is to transfer existing capabilities to new rôles and contexts* (ibid 2000).

The learning programme covers a number of elements including entry pathways, learning and teaching, the curriculum, guidance, support and exit pathways.   The organisation section covers policy and planning, resources, staffing, management, staff development and monitoring and evaluation.

Each element is subsequently illustrated by four descriptions showing examples of practice in relation to the criteria outlined in the principles,

from level 1, which describes practices in the early stage of development, through to well developed provision at level 4.

These illustrations were developed to enable providers *'to carry out a self-evaluation and to identify gaps in resources and develop an action plan.* (The City of Edinburgh Council 2000 p 9). *Literacies in the Community* further states that *'the differences between each level ... show the next steps that need to be taken to achieve good, and finally, best practice. Through the descriptions The Framework gives a clear indication of the action needed to achieve good practice* (ibid 2000 p 9). Stephanie Young, in the forward to the document, points out that *'It was clear that the Project was timely and would meet the needs expressed by managers and practitioners for guidance on how to improve their service to learners ...'* (ibid 2000 p v).

This was the first attempt to list what quality in ALN should look like in Scotland but, what was originally created to be a resource for managers and practitioners to improve practice and assist in the development of an action plan for deliverers, came to be an inspection tool used by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education. The first indication that the LIC pack would be used to assess the quality of service provided came in Circular No FAED 1/01 issued by the Scottish Executive in July 2001 where partnerships were expected to assess their provision against the indices in the pack. Consequently, all subsequent reports were based on these indices and they were eventually incorporated into the inspection process.

As a member of the advisory group established by the Scottish Executive to support this project, I can verify that the original intention of the project was to support development to improve the quality of literacies provision and not to provide criteria for inspection purposes.

It might be argued that a document produced as a guide to quality assurance differs little from the HMIE inspection process. However, it is important to note that the LIC pack was produced for use by **all** partners, not simply the local authorities. When the HMIE carry out an inspection they only take into consideration the work undertaken by the local authority and, as a result, cannot compile a comprehensive picture of the full range of provision in the partnership area.

It may be that one partner is responsible for a considerable amount of service delivery but was not included in the inspection and this could result in the mistaken impression that the partnership is not achieving its stated goals.

It is also important to note that *Literacies in the Community* explicitly outlines factors which will create the delivery of best practice and it clearly states that many of these factors are outside the control of managers and practitioners; *'some organisations may not be able to develop good practice as quickly as they and their learners would like* (ibid p9).

These factors include:

➤ *the priority being placed on literacy and numeracy by senior staff and managers in the organisation*

> *the staffing and resources that the organisation can draw on to enhance the programme through partnership arrangements*

> *the priority placed on literacy and numeracy among policy makers, employers, unions, representative bodies and other agencies influencing adult learning provision at a local and national level*

Notwithstanding these caveats the ALNIS report and the Literacies in the Community pack formed the basis of the national policy in Scotland and, as can be seen from the extracts from both documents, a social practice model is integral to this policy though, as the discussions above have indicated, its delivery could be problematic, as I indicate below.

National Training Project

Two national initiatives were developed by the Scottish Executive to support the partnerships in the delivery of ALN. The first was the National Training Project for Adult Literacies which, at the title suggests, was remitted to produce a national training programme that would be a basic minimum qualification for those involved in the teaching of literacies. The course, entitled Introductory Training in Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL) was developed and piloted in 2001. In the foreword it is stated that the materials follow *'the recommendations of the report Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland, are based on good practice outlined in the Community Resources for Practitioners and Managers pack and are set within a lifelong learning context'* (National Training Project 2001)

The policy makers continued to stress the importance of social practices in literacies through the national training project, for one of the overall learning outcomes of ITALL was that participants *'have an understanding of the social practices model of literacies'* (Communities Scotland 2001 1.H1).

Despite the fact that ITALL affirmed a social practice approach this was neither defined nor taught directly in the course. As a result of this it is difficult to determine whether or not those actually delivering literacies in Scotland have a common understanding of the meaning of the phrase *'social practices'* and whether or not they have been given training to enable them to deliver literacies using this model. The ITALL course consisted of sixteen two-hour sessions each dealing with a different topic, including the functional skills of literacy (one session each), learning to learn, complex capabilities, introduction to adult learning, confidence building, recording progress and guidance. The methods used were varied and each session included an input on the topic, discussion groups, group and individual tasks

I am aware that some local authorities provided seminars around the meaning and implications of the social practice model but this was neither standardised, nor universally undertaken.

The National Agency

The second national initiative was the formation of Learning Connections as the 'development engine' for literacies in Scotland. This development

engine was located in Communities Scotland, an agency of the Scottish Executive, whose remit was to *'help deliver the policy objectives and Partnership Agreement commitments of Scottish Ministers. We report to the Communities Ministers and work closely with them, along with colleagues in the Scottish Executive Development Department. We use our front line experience to help Ministers develop policies and programmes relating to housing and community regeneration, and then to deliver them.*

Our activities also bring us into contact with other portfolios in the Executive. The Communities portfolio is concerned with both people and places. Its fundamental aim is to make Scotland a country where everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a decent quality of life through affordable housing in strong and confident communities, having access to learning and employment opportunities, and living free from poverty, inequality and discrimination. The objectives of Communities Scotland precisely mirror this' (www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk 31/01/06).

These objectives include an increase in the supply of affordable housing where it is needed most, an improvement in the quality of existing houses, an improvement in the quality of housing and homelessness services, an improvement in the opportunities for people living in disadvantaged communities and support for the social economy to deliver key services and create job opportunities (ibid 31/01/06).

The staff of Learning Connections reported to the Communities Ministers and worked closely with them, along with colleagues in the Scottish Executive Development Department. This was the situation until 2007.

In this year the Scottish National Party (SNP) formed a minority government in Scotland and a number of alterations took place. One was that the SNP renamed the Scottish Executive the Scottish Government and another was that Learning Connections moved from Communities Scotland to the Education Department. As stated earlier three departments shared the responsibility for community based adult learning and one downside of this arrangement was that each department had different accountabilities and therefore no one minister had overall responsibility for the delivery of the service.

One curious point to note is that, while the 'development engine' was located in Communities Scotland, policy, development, monitoring and evaluation was the responsibility of ETLLD.

The reason why the national agency for literacies was located in Communities Scotland, a department mainly concerned with housing issues, puzzled many people at the time. Examples from other English speaking countries indicate a preference for an independent national organisation rather than one embedded in government, especially one that does not have an explicit educational remit.

It is difficult to compare and contrast the development of literacies provision in other countries with that in Scotland as there are few common denominators, because the catalyst for the development of literacies programmes differs from country to country as do the priorities of government. However, one thing that most of the English speaking

countries of the western world have in common is a national agency responsible for literacies that is independent of Government.

A brief outline of arrangements in five countries, Northern Ireland, The Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada and Australia are shown in Appendix B to illustrate this point.

There are a number of commonalities amongst these five national agencies. Firstly, they are all voluntary sector organisations, either non-governmental organisations or charities. Secondly, they all have a management or executive committee comprising representatives of those working in the field of adult literacies. Thirdly, they all advise national government on issues relating to literacies but are independent of government. The differences are that some have direct responsibility for delivery and for training of tutors and, in all but one country, the organisations are part funded directly by national government.

With these examples to draw from it is difficult to understand why the authors of the ALNIS report opted to recommend a national body within the government structure rather than an independent organisation.

Learning Connections was described as a self-contained unit within Communities Scotland (ibid 31/01/06). It may have been self-contained but it remained part of the Scottish Executive and the staff working in Learning Connections were, and still are, civil servants bound by the strictures of government.

It is difficult to predict whether or not the individual adult learner would be better served by a national organisation operating outwith the government structure or by one embedded in this structure.

On the one hand, voluntary organisations are dependent on external funding, often from government sources, and are therefore obliged to meet the outcomes dictated by the funding body. On the other hand, these organisations are in a position to question government policies in a way that is not open to those working as civil servants within the government structure. However, having an organisation that is an agent of the government often means that the funding is more secure, thus enabling the development of literacies to continue.

Mary Hamilton (2004), for example, describes the development of literacies in the Republic of Ireland as follows:

'In its explicit commitments to equality and interculturism, the Irish strategy is most distanced from the market driven rhetoric that is otherwise dominant. It is therefore making an interesting leap from a situation that has stayed close to the adult literacy of the 1970s to a contemporary vision that responds to current national and international agendas but avoids the narrowness that has characterised notions of ABE over the past two decades in the UK.'

Is this in some part due to the fact that there is a vibrant voluntary national organisation for literacies in Eire which has taken the lead and driven the agenda forward? As NALA informs the government's thinking on

literacies it must be assumed that they played a crucial rôle in this development.

If Hamilton's description of the situation is to be accepted it would appear that a voluntary agency can develop and deliver literacies for the 21st century which meets national and international agendas and, more importantly, the needs of the individual learner but is not wedded to government policy agendas.

As has been stated, the Scottish Executive concentrated on increasing human capital and marginalized other contexts in which people use literacies.   Despite this, the involvement of practitioners, academics and civil servants working together in the development of the overall strategy has created a more liberal and facilitative approach to literacies learning than is evident in other parts of the United Kingdom.

For, as Crowther (2006) points out, the perspective adopted in England and Wales is mainly concerned with the acquisition of skills required to access employment and is underpinned by the deficit model of functional illiteracy.   Whilst the economic agenda also finds prominence in the Scottish Strategy, the model of literacies on which it is premised, is a social practices, not a functional, deficit one.

Development of Local Policy

To provide data which would enable partnerships to produce action plans, the Adult Literacy Team, in addition to the tasks already stated, commissioned a number of research projects including a further analysis of

the IALS survey, a workforce survey, an employers' survey, a review of existing provision, a household survey and a literature review (Scottish Executive 2001a pp 5, 8 and 9).

The purpose of these projects was to quantify the need for additional literacies provision. Yet, if one accepts the flaws in the IALS survey, it would appear that the basis of the Scottish analysis was equally flawed. Many of the assumptions contained in the ALNIS report are premised on the findings of the IALS report and the questionnaire used in the household survey was modelled on the IALS survey (Scottish Executive 2001c p 5). Thus, the rationale and scale of need on which the strategy was developed was constructed upon inaccurate base line data.

However, using this data the Adult Literacies Team concluded that, though the majority of the population was satisfied with their skills for the uses they encountered, up to 800, 000 adults appeared to have very low skills and 500, 000 assessed their own skills as poor or moderate. The Team also stated that the importance of literacy and numeracy as underpinning skills is invisible to employers and many unemployed people do not know if they have the literacy and numeracy skills necessary for their choice of job.

The evidence gathered from the research projects suggests that a high proportion of those with low levels of literacy and numeracy are to be found among people who live in disadvantaged areas, workers in low skill jobs, people in low incomes and people with health problems and disabilities (Scottish Executive 2001a p1).

As a result of evidence gathered seven priority target groups were identified:

➢ *people with limited initial education, particularly young adults*

➢ *unemployed people and workers facing redundancy*

➢ *people with English as a second or additional language*

➢ *people who live in disadvantaged areas*

➢ *workers in low skill jobs*

➢ *people on low incomes*

➢ *people with health problems and disabilities* (ibid 2001a pp13 &14).

While these findings did not come as a surprise to people actually working in the field, the research carried out on behalf of the team did provide 'evidence' on which to base the strategy, provide partnerships with baseline figures and target groups and convinced Ministers of the need to invest money in this area of work.

Four key principles were also identified in the strategy:

➢ *a lifelong learning approach*

➢ *free to learners*

➢ *targeting priority groups*

➢ *grounding change in research and learner consultation* (ibid 2001a p2)

The report also proposes strong national leadership and effective local action whereby Ministers would oversee the strategy and a 'development

engine' should be established to guide and support its implementation (ibid 2001a).

The perceived aim of this 'development engine' was to *'drive the creation of quality adult literacy and numeracy provision in partnership with Community Learning Strategy partners and national organisations'* [ibid 2001a p20]. The report recommended that this organisation be established by International Literacy Day, 8th. September 2001. It was not, in fact, established until 2003.

The ALNIS report recommended that £24m be made available in the first three years to create 33, 000 new learning opportunities, more than double annual capacity to reach around 34, 000 each year by 2004, and fund the 'development engine' and eight pathfinder projects (Scottish Executive 2001a).

The money would also be used to fund a national training strategy for specialist adult literacy and numeracy practitioners, provide national training standards for all staff and volunteers whose rôles related to tuition in adult literacy and numeracy and the remainder disbursed to partnerships for the delivery of ALN.

The ALNIS report made twenty-one key recommendations including the development of a new curricular framework to improve the quality of programmes. It specified that the measurement of programmes should be based around learner goals and distance travelled, that a new qualification

for specialist literacy and numeracy practitioners be developed and that the capacity of the programme should be doubled within three years.

The funding was to be channelled through local authorities, thereby ensuring the expansion of capacity across all sectors and targeting priority groups (ibid 2001a pp 3 and 4).

The publication of the ALNIS report led to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department, the predecessor of ETLLD, issuing Circular No. FAED 1/01: *Funding for Adult Literacy and Numeracy* (Scottish Executive 2001d) in July 2001. Before this, on 8th. April 1999, the Scottish Executive had issued Circular 4/99 which provided guidance to local authorities with regard to the delivery of Community Education (to include the establishment of Community Learning and Development Partnerships) and it was recommended that Circular FAED 1/01 was read in conjunction with Circular 4/99.

This, in essence, meant that the future development of literacies strategies was to be the responsibility of the Community Learning Strategy Partnerships.

While the report stated that the Community Learning Partnerships were responsible for the development of local literacy strategies, in essence the responsibility lay primarily with the local authorities' now dispersed community education sections. As highlighted earlier every local authority in Scotland had a Community Learning and Development Partnership (CLD) which produced the annual CLD and literacies plans.

They were comprised of the local authority, other public sector bodies, representatives from the voluntary sector and some partnerships also had representation from the private sector. As will be shown in the chapters dealing with the research results, most partners were broadly supportive of local action plans but the degree to which each partner actually contributed to the delivery of literacies varied considerably.

For example, many of the agencies involved, such as Careers Scotland, the Health Boards and various departments of the local authority such as Economic Development were not direct delivers of literacies but supported local developments in the field. The ALNIS report suggested that there should be 'spotters' and 'referrers' and many of the partners saw themselves in this rôle rather than a provider of services. The 'spotters' and 'referrers' were, as the names suggests, expected to 'spot' people within the workforce or client group who would benefit from literacies provision and refer them to the appropriate provision.

As stated earlier, one significant outcome of devolution was that, at the time of the ALN policy development, the three functions of community education lay within three different departments of the Scottish Executive yet the entire budget for literacies came from one department.

The responsibility for youth work, including the young adults referred to in the literacy and numeracy report, lay with the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), community work was the responsibility of the Scottish Executive Communities Department (SECD) and adult and

continuing education was located in the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD).

Nevertheless, SEED held the purse strings and all monies for community education came to local authorities through the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) to individual Departments of Education. It was irrelevant whether or not education departments had the functional responsibility for community education or not, this was the way the finance was handled. As the GAE was unhypothecated however, it was the decision of each local authority how the money was allocated annually. So, Education Departments may or may not have received their entire GAE allocation and, if Community Education was the responsibility of another department, Education could, in turn, decide to withhold some of the community education allocation.

In order to protect this unhypothecated ALN funding, each year ETLLD sent a letter to the Chief Executives of local authorities urging them to ensure that the money allocated for literacies was treated as hypothecated and most councils complied with this request for the first five years. While the Executive could not dictate to councils how they should allocate their finance this gentle external pressure had, in the main, the desired effect up to 2005.

Circular FAED 1/01 Scottish Executive 2001e) confirmed the allocation of the £24m, £18.5m was allocated to Community Learning Strategy Partnerships through local authorities and the remaining resources were used to fund national initiatives.

The Community Learning Strategy Partnerships were required to produce action plans by 31st. December 2001 which were to include clear evidence of an open and effective partnership approach.

Partnerships were also asked to provide a baseline audit of existing literacies provision amongst all providers within the area, an indication of the steps local providers intended to take to improve the quality of provision within the area, details of the development and community outreach work to be carried out to engage learners, a clear target of the number of learners that the Community Learning Strategy Partnership expected to be able to help annually between 2001/02 and 2003/04 and details of local monitoring arrangements (Scottish Executive 2001e).

While the finance was allocated to local partnerships, many councils felt that, as the money was channelled through local authorities, they required to approve the action plans prior to submission to the Scottish Executive. This, coupled with the fact that the circular was issued during the holiday period when many educational institutions were closed, left most partnerships with only eight to ten weeks to actually produce the data requested. Despite this, most of the thirty-two partnerships were able to forward their plans to the Executive by the due date.

It should be noted, however, that due to the fact that very few partnerships had accurate base line data many were ambitious in predicting the number of learners they would attract during the initial period and these numbers were significantly reduced in subsequent years.

The Scottish Executive, through ETLLD, monitored the action plans on an annual basis and they were also included in any HMIE inspections of authorities. In 2003 the Executive announced additional funding would be available to cover the period 2004/06.

The delay in establishing the 'development engine' meant that there was a vacuum in the national oversight of developments. In the interim this became the responsibility of the Further and Adult Education Division of ETLLD and the National Agency, Learning Connections, was eventually established 2003.

It can be argued that despite the lack of a national body, part of the development and distinctiveness of the Scottish approach to literacies was not in formalised structures, but in the serendipitous confluence of several organisational, political and personal factors.

Firstly, The Community Learning and Development Managers Scotland (CLDMS) had an Adult Basic Education sub group and the managers agreed that this group would focus on offering support to those in local authorities with the responsibility for literacies developments. This group provided a unique opportunity for the Head of the Further and Adult Education Division of ETLLD to consult directly with managers in the field on the development of the partnership strategies, to hear issues of concern and, accordingly, fine tune the national strategic approach.

This informal contact, which was quite unusual, was ongoing over a period of years and provided a developing picture of what was actually happening

within the partnerships unlike the one off responses to consultations for the ALNIS report.

Secondly, prior to the Scottish Parliament being established, civil servants in Scotland were accustomed to having their Ministers five hundred miles away at Westminster and they, in my experience, tended to 'interpret' the wishes of these Ministers as they (the civil servants) saw fit.   With the advent of the Scottish Parliament, Ministers were geographically close and more actively involved in the outcomes of the policies they developed and they engaged on a regular basis with those involved in the delivery which they had not previously done.

Furthermore, many of the Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) had been actively involved in their local communities prior to becoming MSPs, knew personally many of the staff involved in community education and could be more easily accessed than their predecessors. For example, at the time of the initial literacies development, the Communities Minister was Margaret Curran who had been a lecturer in Community Education at the University of Strathclyde and had tutored many of the members of the CLDMS ABE group!

Thirdly, due to the delay in establishing the development engine, the staff of ETLLD was obliged to contract outside agencies to develop certain aspects of the strategy and to monitor the partnership developments. Much of this contract work was awarded to academic institutions thus involving academics who were knowledgeable and interested in literacies developments.

The Head of the Further and Adult Education Division worked closely with these individuals and, on many occasions, brought academics together with practitioners and civil servants to discuss developments. This regular contract amongst interested parties such as politicians, practitioners and academics with their civil service colleagues enabled open discussion which provided the opportunity to alter the direction of policy and helped shape the unique developments in Scotland. In all of this the contribution made by the Head of the Further and Adult Education Division cannot be underestimated.

His active participation in the development of the strategy and his regular contact with the various groups was crucial and ensured that the concept of a social practice model was incorporated into the Scottish model for literacy delivery.

Little, if anything, has been written about this stage of the development of the Scottish literacies strategy and, as a result, is difficult to reference apart from personal testimony.

As has been stated, one of the groups involved in the development was the CLDM Scotland, Adult Literacies Sub group. I was, at that time, chair of this group and witnessed at first hand the effectiveness of the approach adopted by the Head of the Further and Adult Education Division. The impact of this individual's contribution should not be downplayed in the development of the Scottish ALN strategy.

Crowther (2006) points out that the distinctiveness of the Scottish approach, lay in its rooting of adult literacy provision in local needs and interests rather than national standards, and its delivery primarily through community provision rather than, as in England and Wales, through Further Education colleges. He suggests that the lack of policy prior to ALNIS had its advantages in that it started from a relatively low level of interest in terms of national policy and this enabled academics and practitioners to participate strategically in the development of the policy and enabled them to introduce a theoretical critique to the process (ibid 2006).

In addition, the delay in establishing the 'development engine' facilitated direct contact amongst academics, practitioners and those responsible for the development of the strategy which might not have been possible had there been an intermediary organisation acting as a buffer between the field and the policy makers.

A series of coincidental events, the advent of the Scottish Parliament, the establishment of the CLDMS literacies group, the lack of a national agency, the lack of prior policy and having the 'right person in the right place' all combined to produce the distinctiveness referred to by Crowther.

It is against this background that partnerships began compiling their initial action plans. They were required to include elements as detailed above and, in addition, they were asked to define *'outcomes'* and *'outputs'*. In simple terms outcomes are the result of actions taken over a period of time, in this case up to three years, and outputs are the short-term measures

partnerships were required to take to achieve their outcomes.   The outcomes were detailed under the four headings as outlined in ALNIS, personal, family, community and working life.

The list of outcomes is long, but I believe it is important to list them to determine whether or not the social practice embedded in the national policy is replicated in local policy target outcomes

The lists below are summaries of the combined outcomes of the three partnerships involved in this research. Under the four outcome headings the following were proposed by the three partnerships:

Outcomes – Private

➢ *Improve key skills required for day to day life in reading, writing and numeracy*

➢ *Increase in the ability to be involved in a wider range of activities*

➢ *Increased self confidence and esteem leading to personal development*

➢ *Increase in the ability to learn and the desire to learn*

➢ *Increase in personal efficacy in all areas of life*

➢ *Improved ICT and internet skills*

➢ *Improved ability to cope with everyday life challenges by problem solving and working with others*

➢ *Increased engagement with primary health care services*

➢ *Increased capacity to generate income through increased prospects of work*

Outcomes – Family

➢ *Increased communication between parents and children*

➢ *Greater equality between partners in ability to communicate, negotiate and interact with agencies outwith the family*

➢ *Increased understanding of children's learning*

➢ *Increased interest in healthier family lifestyles*

➢ *Increased communication between branches of extended family*

➢ *Increased opportunity for families to learn together*

Outcomes – Community

➢ *Improved participation in community life and community involvement*

➢ *Decreased benefit burden on the community due to increased employability*

➢ *Improved understanding of community safety*

➢ *Empowerment particularly as consumers of services e.g. health and education*

➢ *Improved understanding of issues around social capital*

➢ *Raised sense of community self-regard and well-being as overall skills and social cohesion are improved*

➢ *Healthier communities with positive effects on social inclusion aspirations*

Outcomes- Working Life

➢ *Improved job seeking skills*

➢ *Increased opportunities for promotion such as taking on management rôles*

➢ *Increased opportunities to access work based training*

➢ *Increase in staff performance in workplace*

➢ *Improved awareness of ICT and Internet capability for employment*

➢ *Increase confidence in exercising rights as an employee*

➢ *Increased opportunity for individuals to consider self-employment*

The use of the words *increase* and *improve* are prevalent in the outcomes detailed by the partnerships and only one outcome actually mentions the word empower.   There was no mention of the other criteria relating to social practice as outlined by Maclachlan and others.

This does not mean that some of the outcomes could not lead to critical thinking, empowerment and the transferability to different contexts but this would need to be evidenced in practice and in the monitoring and evaluation process.   In essence, it could be interpreted that the social practice model embedded in the national policy was echoed in the local policy but it was not overtly stated and therefore potentially difficult to evidence.

Summary

To return to the question as to whether or not a social practice is embedded in the policy I believe there is ample evidence in the ALNIS report, the LIC pack and local plans that this is, in fact, the case.   This is summed up in one sentence in the ALNIS report – *'Literacy and numeracy are skills*

whose sufficiency may only be judged within specific social, cultural, economic or political context' (Scottish Executive 2001a p7).

However, it should be noted that there is also, as Ackland describes a *'discourse of managerialism',* exemplified by statements such as *'A rigorous system of quality assurance should be promoted by making available a set of performance indicators applicable to all sectors'* (Ackland 2000 p 34). Ackland feels that the managerialist discourse is dominant and that it recontextualised the discourses of social practice.

Any analysis of the extent to which Scotland has adopted a social practices model of ALN at national, partnership and practitioner levels depends upon how the concept of literacies as social practices is understood by the participants.

This issue will be explored in the chapters relating to the analysis of the empirical research findings. However, prior to this analysis of data Chapter 5 outlines the methods used during the research phase.

CHAPTER 5

Methods

Research Area

Three Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships were selected as the focus of this research. In addition, national data was used to compare the results from the partnerships in relation to other areas in Scotland. The particular partnerships were selected for the following reasons:

Prior to the re-organisation of local government in Scotland, all three areas had been part of one of the larger regional authorities where the economy of scale enabled non-statutory functions such as literacies to be part of the service delivery of Community Education. In the period between re-organisation and the introduction of the ALN strategy all three areas had suffered a diminution of literacies provision due to the lack of staff and finance.

The unitary authorities covered by the partnerships have significant areas of multiple deprivation, high unemployment, high instances of residents claiming benefit, particularly sickness benefit, and low educational achievement amongst a substantial number of residents.

The three areas have suffered from the decline of traditional Scottish industries such as coal mining and ship building.

Recent inward investment has attracted companies such as call centre operations, computer manufacturing and small niche market businesses all requiring staff with different skill sets from those previously employed.

In essence, the areas matched the profile of the priority targets identified in the ALNIS report (Scottish Executive 2001a).

At a practical level the managers and staff were willing to co-operate in the research process and participated enthusiastically. In addition, the areas were within reasonable travelling distance which facilitated regular contact. The selected areas represented one large, one medium and one small authority covering both urban and rural locales.

Approach

As detailed in Chapter 2 the approach adopted in this research is 'critical – interpretive' in an attempt to understand and interpret the meanings the interviewees place on what they are doing and also to look behind the policies and practices to determine if they are designed to address political imperatives or the learners' needs as determined by them. Those who adopt an anti-positivist approach believe, as I do, that '*the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated*' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000 p19). This research was concerned with the perceptions and understandings of those involved in literacies in Scotland. It is not concerned with statistical data nor attempting to test hypotheses, consequently the research methods used were predominately qualitative (Bogdan and Biklen 1992).

The research questions were designed to identify what learners, tutors and managers understood the impact of policies and practices to be and did not

posit a *'conjectural statement of the relations between two or more variables'* (Kerlinger 1970 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000 p14).

The research was concerned with individuals, their personal constructs and definitions of situations, it was small scale, non-statistical, the researcher was personally involved and, whilst there was an element of subjectivity (Cohen and Manion 1989) the same can be said of all research processes. As I had worked in the field of adult literacies for a number of years all of the managers were well known to me, as were many of the tutors. I had had the opportunity over the years to discuss developments with them and there was a danger that I may have developed preconceived ideas of the workings of the particular partnerships. To overcome this I checked with the interviewees that the findings were dependable, i.e. there was *respondent validation* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000 p120). In relation to ensuring validity and reliability Barton and Hamilton recommend that a researcher should engage in constant dialogue with colleagues (Hodge 2003). Due to the confidentiality of the interviews I had no such opportunity but I did discuss the analysis of the data with my two academic supervisors.

Interview Process

The original intention was to interview the managers and tutors once during the research process. The initial contact was made with the member of staff with overall responsibility for the development of the literacies partnership and in all three instances they elected to have a second staff member present who was au fait with the day to day running

of the literacies programme.   However, a number if issues arose during the interviews that required to be revisited.   Some of these issues, mainly relating to factual information, were dealt with through e-mails but a second interview was held with managers to discuss more sensitive topics. Unfortunately, during the course of this research two of the three mangers had left their posts and the second interviews were conducted with their successors.

Principal among these issues were the development and use of the Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), the perceived difference between a social practice model and a learner centred approach, the training of tutors, particularly those employed on a sessional basis, and the provision of on-going and pre-exit guidance.   Another issue raised during the research phase, which required to be explored, was the issue of attracting those in hard to reach groups such as the homeless, travellers, those recovering from addiction and the generally disenfranchised.

It was initially intended to interview ten learners in each partnership area three times over a period of one year resulting in ninety interviews. However, this proved problematical for a number of reasons.   Firstly, it was difficult to access ten learners in each partnership due to the fact that the identification of learners who were prepared to be interviewed was the responsibility of the partnership not the researcher and tutors appeared reluctant to approach their learners.   The reasons for this are not clear but might partially be explained by Tett and Maclachlan who experienced similar difficulties while, with others, they undertook a national evaluation

of literacies on behalf of the Scottish Executive. They contacted over two thousand tutors requesting access to learners and these requests resulted in six hundred and thirteen students agreeing to participate in the evaluation, some 28% of the initial target (Tett and Maclachlan 2006). They suggest that one possible reason for the low response was that those responsible for literacies provision exercise, almost certainly unintentionally, an anti-democratic power over **their** students. They further suggest that the power relationships that pervades all adult education is particularly dominant in literacies *'because the dominant discourses surrounding ALN are constructed on a deficit model of ALN students'* (Tett and Maclachlan 2006 p2). For whatever reason the end result in this research was that, rather than thirty learner interviews, the number actually interviewed was twenty-one. Secondly, due to the structure of provision, i.e. short term courses, it was difficult, if not impossible, to contact the learners after a period of six months or a year. As a result of this most of the learners were only interviewed once. However, it became apparent early in the process that most of the learners were either nearing the end of their course of study or had actually completed, therefore they were able to answer all the questions asked of them in relation to their achievements.

As it is important that the subject is put at ease in an interview situation and a relationship is built up between the interviewer and the interviewee it was agreed to interview respondents 'on their own territory' to enable them to feel comfortable and more in charge of the situation than if they had been interviewed in a place alien to them. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that it is difficult for the person conducting the research to recall in

detail all that is said in an interview and recommend, when interviewing is the major method of data collection, that the conversation be taped, which they were.

Interviews with Managers

The questions (Appendix C) asked at the initial interview were concerned with the action plan developed by the partnership, how quality was measured, what training tutors received and how supportive Learning Connections, the national training agency, and partnership members were in the process of developing and delivering the strategy.

Additional questions were asked in relation to how they saw the future training of adult literacies staff developing and their experiences of using the recently published curriculum framework document. Many of the tutors had heard of the new curriculum framework and some had undertaken training but it had not been universally accepted across the partnerships.

As it was crucial to the focus of this research, managers were asked what the term social practice meant to them and how they incorporated this into their local policy and practice.

Interviews with Tutors

The second group to be interviewed were those delivering the literacy programmes, i.e. the tutors. The majority of questions (Appendix D) asked of these members of staff were based on the elements outlined in the Literacies in the Community (LIC) pack, their initial training, whether or

not this equipped them to carry out the task expected of them, what they understood a social literacies practice to be and how this affected their teaching. It was important to ascertain what impediments, if any, might prevent providers delivering the spirit of the policy and how they handled the various discourses contained in the ALNIS report in relation to the apparent contradiction between the social practice model versus the managerial dialogue.

All of the tutors interviewed were full-time, part-time or sessional members of staff and no voluntary tutors were included in this research. Once again, the selection of interviewees was the responsibility of the local management not the researcher and it was unclear why they did not include voluntary tutors in the research phase.

Interviews with Learners

The third group of interviewees was the learners (Appendix E). The questions used in these interviews related to their previous experiences, particularly in relation to schooling; what had prompted them to attend a class at this point in time, their input to the development of the ILP and what their goals and achievements were. It is important to note at this stage that it was impossible to locate learners who, for whatever reasons, had dropped out of learning. It must be assumed therefore that those who were still involved in the process were reasonably content with their learning experience.

In conclusion, the questions asked were geared to discovering how the national policy was interpreted at local level by partnerships and how, in turn, this was transformed into practice by the tutors and what impact this had on learner achievement.

Piloting

The piloting of the questionnaires involved three literacies managers and two tutors. The aim of the pilot was to ensure that the questions were clear and unambiguous and that they addressed the issues of policy and practice. The term 'situated literacies' was used in the original version but, during the pilot, it became clear that this was not a idiom many people were familiar with and the term social practices was substituted in the final version. Other than this no major changes were required. The learner questionnaire was not piloted, the reason being that the main aim of these interviews was simply to elicit personal information regarding schooling, work experience and whether or not learners had achieved their goals

Interview Schedules

As Menneer (1979) suggests, the use of loose, informal terminology in the interview process was designed to encourage the respondents to explore their own feelings and attitudes and to reflect on their experiences in relation to their management or delivery of the adult literacies action plans, or their experiences as learners.

Every attempt was made to ensure that the questionnaires were reasonably short while still allowing respondents the opportunity to express opinions

as well as answer factual questions (Parlett and Hamilton 1972, Verma and Beard 1981).

The method used in this research was that of a semi- structured interview based on general questions, some of them closed some open.   The closed questions were used simply to determine some base line facts e.g. how the initial strategy was developed, how does the delivery measure up to the indices in the LIC pack?   The open questions related to their perceptions of the situation and how they understood the world around them in relation to literacies policy and practice.

The semi-structured interviews ensure that the *'respondent can answer the questions in their own way and in their own words, i.e. the research is responsive to participants' own frame of reference'.* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000 p 270).   Despite the fact that the interviews were based on predetermined questions, which could represent a normative approach to the research (Cohen and Manion 1989) they allowed for a flexibility in pursuing emergent ideas that the participants deemed to be important.

Ethics

The main ethical issue I had, in respect of this research, was in relation to objectivity.   Having played a rôle in the development of the literacies strategy and the subsequent delivery of literacies provision I had formed views and opinions relating to the research question.   It was important for me to put my opinions to one side and respect those offered by the interviewees and to pursue objectively the truth of the situation.

The first stage in the process was to seek permission from senior managers in each of the three local authorities for consent to conduct interviews with managers, tutors and learners.   In addition, each individual involved in the research was subsequently sent a letter outlining the purpose of the research and giving him or her details of a nominated member of staff at the university who could be contacted if they had any concerns relating to the process of the research.

It was made clear to the managers and tutors interviewed that, due to the size of the sample, no absolute guarantee of anonymity could be given, but every effort would be made to reduce the possibility of identification.   In an effort to respect the anonymity of interviewees I did not discuss individual contributions with any other interviewee and the circulation of comments from each group was restricted to that particular cadre. Assurances were also given that no material would be published without prior permission of the interviewees and, if anyone withdrew from the research, they could request all material relating to them to be returned or destroyed.   The issue of anonymity was less problematical for the learners as it was highly unlikely that any individual could be identified through the analysis of the data.

Data Analysis

When Barton and Hamilton (1998) became involved in a local literacies project in Lancaster they adopted an ethnographic approach to their research. In *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in one Community* they describe the methodology in detail and state that, because they were

involved with the lives of the participants over a considerable period of time, the methodology and analysis were developed throughout the study (Barton and Hamilton 1998). Given the time scale of this research it would have been impossible for the researcher to become involved in the lives of twenty-one learners spread across three authority areas. Therefore, the engagement took place in the learning situation but focussed on what the learners *did* with literacies in the real life context of their pre-determined goals. Despite the methodological differences, however, the data analysis outlined by Barton and Hamilton is relevant to this research. It should be noted that these suggestions are not particular to Barton and Hamilton's methods of analysis (see Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, Denscome 2003).

Firstly, Barton and Hamilton advocate reading and re-reading the transcripts and any other artefacts available and making notes, this they refer to as memoing. Secondly, they suggest that there is a continual selecting of significant information from the data which involves interpretation and to assist in this process they suggest that each person's data is summarised and significant themes identified. Thirdly, to reduce the data, they suggest the use of coding and categorising and this can take the form of systematically coding all the answers to a questionnaire or coding for particular themes.

Fourthly, to help evaluate themes, they suggest '*cycling back and forth between theory and data in order to identify patterns and regularities*' (p 69).

Fifthly, they recommend developing a matrix with people in columns and themes in rows. By using this method information can be extrapolated relating to an individual's practice or details of particular themes. Sixthly, they identify three forms of analysis which will enable the researcher to identify patterns in the data: the analysis of the words and phrases used by interviewees, the analysis of the emerging themes and the analysis of the broader aspects of the interview (Barton and Hamilton 1998).

By reading and re-reading the transcripts it became obvious that there were certain commonalities amongst the three partnerships and, as was to be expected, certain differences. As the methodology in this research was not ethnographic and the researcher was not directly involved in the lives of the participants it was deemed unnecessary to summarise each person's response but what was necessary was to cluster the themes emerging from the interviews. As a result of this activity several issues emerged which had not been explored during the initial interviews. These included the issue of the social practice model. All the managers and most of the tutors could articulate the perceived notion of social practice but it was not apparent exactly how this translated into practice.

Second was the issue of the use of ILPs. It was unclear whether these were used in the learning/teaching process or for purposes of assessment/inspection, or both. There was also a need to identify how partnerships contact and involve the 'hard to reach' groups. To explore these issues more thoroughly and to clarify some additional points

resulting from the interviews, focus groups were convened in each partnership area.

As with the individual interviews these sessions were taped and transcribed.

The initial action plans, produced in 2001, and the subsequent annual reports, up to and including 2005, were analysed to determine whether or not targets had been achieved and, if not, why not. Where applicable, the results of this small-scale research were compared to national data produced or commissioned by Learning Connections to establish the veracity of the facts collated in this research.

Conclusion

The methods used in this research were devised to elicit perceptions from the participants and then to compare these with the data collated at a national and local level to determine whether or not the reality matched the rhetoric. Furthermore, there is a perception in, and firth of Scotland (see Merrifield 2005 pp 21 & 22), that the social practice model is the norm across the Scottish partnerships but, as Maclachlan (2006) points out in her article *'Don't Look North Through Rose Tinted Spectacles'*, recent unpublished research questions this premise. If the Scottish policy and resulting practices were based on a social practice model it is necessary to uncover the veracity of this belief.

My first five chapters have outlined the historical context of literacies development in Scotland, have sketched in my beliefs leading to my

methodological approach, have explored what is meant by social practices and described the methods used to gather data. The following three chapters present the data gathered from the interviews conducted with managers, tutors and learners and provide some preliminary analysis of these. In my final chapters I interpret these findings in relation to my overarching themes and issues arising from the research. These include social practice vis a vis learner centredness; tutor training; attracting those in hard to reach groups. Finally I shall return to the autobiographical location of my research and summarise my thesis and its limitations in juxtaposition with this.

CHAPTER 6

Research Findings – Managers

Introduction

As the previous chapters have shown, elements of a social practices model are embedded in the national strategy. With regard to the initial local partnerships ALN plans, the embedding of a social practices model is difficult to evidence. It should be noted, however, that the initial three-year period was regarded as a 'setting up' phase where the emphasis was on building the infra-structure, recruiting and training staff and developing publicity materials to attract learners. As a result, it is perhaps not surprising that the development of social practices was underplayed in the initial local plans. The extent to which partnerships adopted a social practice model depended upon how the concept of literacies as a social practice was understood by those who managed and those who delivered ALN services, so in each of the three partnerships involved in the research, two members of the management team were interviewed as well as tutors who delivered the provision. The following section describes the context in which ALN partnership were developed and provides a pen picture of each of the three partnerships involved in this research.

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships

The thirty-two ALN partnerships across Scotland were based on local authority boundaries and were part of the local planning process. In 2003 the Local Government in Scotland Act was published and part of this act

dealt with community planning. The Act defines Community Planning as follows: *'Community planning is defined as a process by which the public services provided in the area of the local authority are provided and the planning of that provision takes places'* (Local Government in Scotland Act 2003). Local authorities were instructed to initiate, maintain and facilitate this process by developing a Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and were required to involve statutory partners including the health board, fire, police, enterprise agency and transport partnership. Partnerships were also encouraged to involve other public and voluntary bodies as they saw fit (ibid 2003).

As Community Planning was high on the Scottish Executive's agenda these groups mainly comprised staff at head of service level and their equivalents from partner organisations. It is natural in a hierarchical structure that the more senior members of staff will participate in what they see as the most important grouping and delegate their subordinates to attend, what they perceive, as the less prestigious groups. As community learning was seen to be an integral part of the Community Planning process each partnership established a Community Learning and Development Partnership (CLDP), which became a sub group of the CPP. These groups comprised middle management representatives from the various partners. In turn, ALN became a sub group of the CLDP and, in the main, comprised representatives from partner organisations who were not in a position to make strategic decisions. This relegated the development of the ALN plans to a third tier group, where, in at least one instance, some members were not in a position to make a significant

impact on either the policy development or the development of practice. The importance of this will be illustrated in the section relating to Partnership B.

Partnership A

Partnership A is one of the largest partnerships in Scotland with a population of over 325,520.   During the period of this research Partnership A was undergoing a major social and economic change. Many of the older industries traditional to this area were declining and closing, making way for newer industries.   Poverty and low incomes were evident as 28% of the population were living in social inclusion partnership areas and the authority had the second highest concentration of multiple deprivation in Scotland.   The unemployment rate of 8.9% was above the Scottish average and 23% of the households were receiving income support with a further 25% receiving housing benefit.   The Health Improvement Plan (HIP) indicated that poor health was an issue in this partnership area and that this was largely due to deprivation.   In addition, this authority has the third highest percentage of the population claiming Incapacity Benefit in Scotland.   It is clear from these statistics that this area has significant issues relating to deprivation.

The original ALN partnership comprised representatives from various local authority departments, Scottish Enterprise, the local health board, F.E. and H.E., Careers Scotland, Scottish Trade Union Congress, and a number of voluntary organisations involved in adult learning.

Before completing the initial action plan for ALN, the partnership commissioned a consultancy firm to determine the literacies needs, as perceived by the partners, of the population within its boundaries. The outcomes of this report are based on the scoring of reflective statements presented to some twenty key partners and focus groups comprising adult learners and volunteer tutors. The consultants also examined the available evidence from both local and national sources although it was noted in the subsequent action plan that these sources of information were not readily available, current or statistically robust (Partnership A 2002)

As a result of the consultant's, report Partnership A determined that some 47, 162 residents of working age required support with literacy and some 46, 433 residents required support with numeracy. No evidence is provided to indicate how many residents straddle both elements. In addition, the partnership estimated the scale of dyslexia amongst the population by combining the data provided by the consultants with research conducted by the University of Edinburgh and concluded that some 10% (19, 700) of the working population were likely to suffer from dyslexia to some degree and that 7, 800 would suffer from severe dyslexia (ibid 2002).

Based on the data gathered the partnership set out the targets for 2001-2004 where it was proposed to increase the number of learners from 600 (2001) to 3000 (2004) and this provision would be based on the learners attending thirty week courses with three hours tuition per week delivered in local communities by tutors employed by Community Education and the

F.E. Colleges in the area (ibid 2002). The majority of the provision was through groups but the partnership did recognise that, in exceptional circumstances, there might be a need to deliver on a one to one basis. The partnership agreed that a large portion of the new financial allocation should be used to employ staff. However, for a variety of reasons the target number was not achieved. This was due, in part, to the time taken in the initial set phase to recruit and train tutors, the *'staff changes across the team during the year, seventeen in all, some from internal progression, some external, and also maternity leave'* which impacted on the service delivery (Partnership A 2004 p5) and perhaps an unrealistic initial estimate. Also, during the research phase, the financial situation altered resulting in a diminution of provision. Due to the unhypothicated nature of the funding the local authority could, and in this instance did, 'top slice' the money allocated for literacies. As one tutor explained *'It would appear that a substantial amount of money has been removed from the literacies budget by the council resulting in a cancellation of contracts with sessional staff. This means that the development workers will take on more tutoring and ten/twelve week courses will be offered on specifics such as spelling, numeracy, writing etc.'* (Tutor 3 Partnership A). This action reduced the total number of hours per learner from ninety to twenty or twenty-four per course. In addition, the provision ceased altogether over holiday periods. For example, the Christmas break extended from 7th. December until 18th. January and one tutor described the situation in her group as follows: *'It was very long and, no, they didn't all come back. Only three people came back out of eight'* (Tutor 4 Partnership A). She

also expressed her concern regarding the forthcoming summer break by stating *'It's a big issue, a big, big issue and I know come the summer break, I'm not sure when we stop. It's sometime in early June and we don't come back until September it's too long, three months, it's far too long'.*

The partnership had forecast that they would attract 2, 250 new learners to ALN provision between 2001 and 2004 but in fact only attracted 743 (Partnership A End Year Report 2005). Whether this was solely due to the reduction in provision is not clear but it may be assumed that it was a contributing factor. The issue of separating literacies teaching and learning into the various skill sets will be explored later in this chapter. It is against this background that Partnership A developed and delivered literacies.

Partnership B

Partnership B is based in one of the smallest unitary authorities in Scotland with a population of approximately 84, 000. At the time of this research Partnership B faced a number of challenges suffering more economic and social problems than most of Scotland (Partnership B 2003). As with Partnership A this area had been subjected to a steady decline in its major industrial base and the new businesses attracted to the area were predominately electronics or call centres, requiring a different skill set than those utilised in heavy industry. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004) showed that 33% of the population of this area lived within the most deprived 15% of data zones in Scotland. The area is cut

off from the surrounding countryside, bounded by hills on one side and water on another and this isolation appears to act as both a physical and psychological barrier which inhibits movement to other areas to secure employment. In addition, this area has some of the worst health indicators in Scotland (ibid 2003).

Prior to developing an ALN action plan Partnership B did attempt to gather data on which it could be based. A tutor working for Community Education was commissioned to gather data from the various partners with a view to providing base line figures. For a variety of reasons, including the difficulty of obtaining figures from the education department and the local F.E. college, this commission did not provide the hoped for data (Manager 2 Partnership B). The local Enterprise Company agreed to commission a second data gathering exercise but this was restricted to one geographical area (ALN Action Plan 2002). The information gleaned from this report in conjunction with the indicators included in Project Paper 2 (1999) provided the base line data for the development of the ALN action plan.

The composition of this partnership was similar to that of Partnership A in that various departments of the local authority, Scottish Enterprise, the F.E. sector, the health authority, Careers Scotland and a variety of voluntary organisations were involved. In addition, it also included representation from the primary school sector and employment services. When this partnership was established, the post of literacies co-ordinator had not been filled and as a result of this, the person with overall

responsibility for the production of the plan was far removed from the direct delivery of literacies and did not participate directly in the process. While those in post did their utmost to develop a partnership approach they were not in a senior enough position to drive the process. As one manager explained *'There was representation from one crucial partner, the local college, who came along but she wasn't at the decision making level...when we were looking for information on which to base the plan, the college and the education department and the council were no help and they sent representatives along who were totally inappropriate, who didn't want to be there so a true partnership approach didn't happen'* (Second Manager Partnership B).

When the co-ordinator was appointed the plan was in draft form but was eventually completed and submitted to the Scottish Executive for approval. Partnership working improved and, with the notable exception of the college, a more co-ordinated approach to the delivery of literacies was developed (First Manager Partnership B). It relation to funding it was agreed that the partnership would operate a challenge fund to disperse a portion of the money allocated by the Scottish Executive and criteria were established and all partners were invited to tender on an annual basis.

Partnership C

Partnership C is a medium size authority with a population of approximately 139, 000. This authority, in common with authorities A and B, suffered a decline in traditional industries and had the second highest rate of unemployment in Scotland at around 10% as opposed to the

national average of 5% and in some areas this figure rose to 20% in relation to male unemployment (ALN Action Plan 2001). The average earnings in this area were 11% below the national average and 3% below the Scottish average with 40% of households netting an annual income of £10, 000 or less and 25% of young people (16-24) were claiming key social security benefits as opposed to the average of 16% across Scotland. In addition, this area ranked joint sixth in Scotland with regard to the number of young people claiming job seekers allowance. The authority had ten social inclusion partnerships spread across the area. It was stated in the ALN action plan that some 20,000 people were in receipt of invalidity benefit, had taken early retirement due to ill health, suffered from chronic health problems or were disabled and this was partly due to the high rates of unemployment and poverty (ibid 2001).

In common with authorities A and B this partnership consisted of representatives from various local authority departments, further education, health board, Careers Scotland and the voluntary sector and, similar to Partnership B a challenge fund was established and partners were encouraged to bid for monies to delivery literacies provision.

The partnership agreed that the indicators relating to the area were typical of many other areas in Scotland with similar statistical data relating to social deprivation and rural isolation and agreed to accept the IALS data as quantitative information on which to base the action plan. However, there was a general feeling that there was a need to gather qualitative information and to this end the partnership commissioned staff from one of

Scotland's universities to undertake this study. The result of this study alongside the quantitative data provided the foundation for the development of the ALN action plan (ibid 2001).

Unlike partnerships A and B, partnership C experienced no dramatic events during the period covered in this research and proceeded to strengthen partnership working with a view to delivering a comprehensive service to the residents of the area. The provision at the time of the first action plan consisted of Community Education providing mainly one to one and small cluster groups, a Young People's Development project consisting of a sixteen-week programme delivered three times per year offering a Life Skills course and the F.E Colleges delivering tuition through their Learning/Student support units. Over the period of the research Community Education moved to provide more group tuition, reducing the number of one to one places and continuing their work with young people while the colleges continued to make provision through their support units. Unlike partnerships A and B the key personnel were in place prior to the implementation of the action plan and the local authority did not deduct any monies from the allocation provided by the Executive.

The pen pictures of the partnerships outlined above provide the context in which the plans were generated and subsequently developed. During the interviews with managers a number of issues emerged that could potentially have impacted directly on the development of a social practice model and this point will be explored at a later stage. The following section identifies the issues raised.

Partnerships

In all three instances the local authority was the driving force behind the delivery of literacies and, as a result, those managers responsible for adult literacies took the initiative and drove the plans forward.

With regard to partnership working this appeared to be satisfactory in two of the three authorities. This may be partly due to the fact that in these authorities (A and C) senior managers in Community Education were part of both the CLDP group and the literacies sub group and were therefore able to exercise influence over the development of the local plan and the subsequent delivery, whereas in Partnership C this crucial link was missing.

The general consensus amongst the managers was that partners had been supportive with regard to the development of the local action plans. Obviously, some partners have more to offer in terms of delivery than others in that they were already involved in the provision of adult learning. The managers in two of the three partnerships were positive about the partnership approach as exemplified in the following statements:

'There is commitment from partners to the CLD partnership. The CLD partnership is a sub group of the Community Planning Group and the literacies group is responsible for the literacies thematic plan. The literacies partnership is building on the ethos of community learning and is not dependant on one organisation or one person' (Manager Partnership A).

'The support received from partners has been good and they have been involved at all stages in the development' (Manager Partnership C).

The issues relating to partnership working in authority B have been partially explored above and are summarised in the following statement made by the member of staff who bore the brunt of the responsibility in the initial stages for the development of the ALN local plan. *'Having been involved at the very beginning it didn't work out. The senior member of the literacies team had not been appointed, don't ask me why, the co-ordinator's post was last to be filled. A senior member of the Education Department took the lead but was not directly involved and it was up to me to try to develop the plan. Eventually the decision was made to commission somebody to go out to partners and get the information and put it together. A tutor working for Community Education took on the rôle. At the same time this tutor was also writing a bid for the lottery monies on behalf of a number of local voluntary learning centres and when the draft literacies action plan was produced s/he was not available to make the necessary alterations. When it came back we couldn't get figures from the college and the education department and the council were no help and they sent someone along who was totally inappropriate who didn't want to be there so that kind of partnership approach didn't happen'* (Second Manager Partnership B).

This situation pertained in the early stages of the development of the local ALN plan and the designated member of staff worked very hard to ensure that the best possible proposals were produced. Unfortunately, s/he was

not senior enough within the council structure to exert gentle pressure on colleagues or partners to provide the necessary information required to produce a comprehensive plan nor was s/he senior enough to attract those from other council departments and partner agencies to attend meetings where decisions could be taken. Since the appointment of a literacies co-ordinator, the situation appears to have improved as the manager explained thus:

'The situation has improved. Libraries have always been a really strong partner, there are capacity issues with the libraries here so they couldn't always deliver, but to the extent in which they could, they have always been involved and more recently they have become more deliverers. One of the voluntary sector halls has been involved in ESOL, numeracy and youth work. Initially the work with youth was limited but it has expanded and expanded. We customised ITALL for youth workers with specific case studies and everything. They were trained and they are going back to their own agencies, statutory and voluntary, and we pull them together periodically to look at how they have developed resources in a youth setting' (Manager Partnership B).

There was, however, still a problem with one of the partners.

'The college is disastrous, absolutely disastrous, with massive input to them they have never ever engaged in any meaningful way. There have been attempts by some members of staff, but with little success, they are not in influential positions to make any impact. Some work has happened such as a joint guidance conference with them specifically for literacies

and some good stuff came out of that and then they went through restructuring and they have slashed the amount of staff they had. We developed service level agreements with them, we looked at sharing premises with them, in fact we looked for suitable premises around here, it would have been good for learners, they could move on to other things, we could have done joint training, but at the moment little is moving forward' (Manager Partnership B).

If Scotland is to claim that literacies learning is universally delivered through a social practice model the rôle of the partnership is crucial, particularly those involved in the delivery, such as colleges.   It is important that learning pathways are created for learners to enable them to progress and to encourage them to participate in the life long learning process.   A social practice approach embeds literacies into practice and the situations the learners find themselves in.   From this research it is not possible to determine how this particular college delivers literacies tuition to students but what is evident is that there is no continuity between the college and other providers thus reducing the opportunities available to learners.

The manager's comments quoted above have shown the importance of partnership working where those involved need to be empowered to make decisions on behalf of their organisations, require to have knowledge and expertise in the area under discussion and need to be willing and enthusiastic participants.   To ensure that all partners are, as the saying goes, 'singing from the same hymn sheet', senior staff within the various

organisations must be committed to the process and have the authority to implement it.

To continue the singing analogy, members of a choir can sing in one of four main sections, bass, tenor, alto or soprano and there are various sub sections of the four main parts, but when blended together they produce a tuneful whole. This is the essence of partnership working. It is not necessary for each partner to sing the same tune, they have their own, unique, contribution to make and this must be recognised if any partnership is to be successful. Some partners will have a great deal to offer to the overall tune others will only play a small, but crucial, part.

For example, the local authorities, colleges, training providers and voluntary organisations involved in adult learning will have a principal rôle to play in the actual delivery of literacies learning. Other partners will have a rôle as spotters and referrers (such as employers, employment agencies, health agencies), providers of demographic information (such as local authority planning departments), careers guidance (such as Careers Scotland) and providers of resources and accommodation (such as libraries, local voluntary organisations and local authority). The rôle of spotters and referrers is an important one and enables those working with the public in a variety of settings to recognise when someone might benefit from literacies support and refer them to an appropriate provider. It is therefore important that each agency recognises their contribution to the overall plan and acts in accordance with that recognition.

Another issue emerging from the interviews was that of monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The ALNIS report recommends *'that local authorities, colleges, voluntary organisations and workplace providers should integrate the quality framework in Literacies in the Community: Resources for Practitioners and Managers* (LIC) *within their existing arrangements for reviewing progress and quality* (Scottish Executive 2001a p 33).

The monitoring and evaluation tool subsequently developed was framed around the existing Learning, Evaluation and Action Planning (LEAP) model and incorporated the quality elements contained in the LIC pack. The issue of using the elements contained in the LIC pack was raised in all three partnership areas. While the managers welcomed the publication of the LIC pack and viewed it as an excellent guide to improving services, they had however, some criticisms regarding the introduction of yet another system of measurement. One manager explained this as follows:

'We use a combination of LIC, How Good is Our Community Learning and Development (HGIOCLD) and Learning, Evaluation and Action Planning (LEAP). I feel that more work should have been done to establish a national framework that matched across the principal partners and that this framework should have been produced at the beginning of the development. This framework should have been based on existing evaluation processes rather than imposing yet another evaluation on

partners.   The partnership used LIC as the foundation and then tried to match this to existing systems' (Manager Partnership C).

Another manager highlighted the difficulty in persuading other partners to adopt LIC as follows:

'Partners accept the LIC pack as a means of assessment and the literacies team have offered training to staff involved in the delivery of literacies in the area.   One initial problem was with the FE colleges who felt they already had quality standards so staff from the literacies team have selected different aspects of LIC and worked this through with staff from FE to enable them to see the relevance of LIC and how it relates to their existing processes' (Manager Partnership A).

A third manager outlined how they used the LIC pack

'We don't ask tutors to scale against the LIC pack in terms of "what do you think your practice is?".   In our tutor handbook we have the LIC pack summary statements so they will get reviews against the LIC pack and we do the learner survey and they are all one to one and we can sample a percentage of all our learners and learner support worker would go and sit with them and ask them things like "do you have an ILP in place...' (Manager Partnership B).

It is not clear whether partners were consulted by the Executive with regard to the inclusion of the elements of the LIC pack into their own quality frameworks but, if this did happen at a national level, it does not appear to have percolated down to those working at local level.   In

addition, each partnership comprised a substantial number of organisations from the voluntary sector and it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the Executive to impose a monitoring and evaluation system on these organisations. As a result the partnerships experienced difficulties in determining a method whereby all partners could monitor progress and quality consistently and equitably. As indicated in Chapter 4 each of the partners had their own targets and evaluation imperatives and it seems clear that, in line with the comments of the manager cited above, it would have led to a more coherent evaluation of delivery if a national framework had been established, in conjunction with partners, at the beginning of the process.

However, as a result of the adoption of the LIC pack as the definitive evaluation tool, there was additional pressure placed on local authorities when compiling the annual report or when they were subjected to an HMIE inspection. This was because they were thereafter required to produce the evidence based on the indices of this system of monitoring progress and quality covering the entire partnership not simply the provision made by the local authority.

The self evaluation evidence provided in all three initial action plans show that, before the introduction of the ALN strategy, the various elements (See Appendix A) of provision highlighted in the LIC pack were rated at either 1 or 2, i.e. at the early stages of development. The reasons for this relates to the decline in adult basic education highlighted earlier. However, after the implementation of the action plans these scores began

to rise to 3/4 but were no longer based solely on self-evaluation but required to be verified by the HMIE during the inspection process.

The use of a variety of quality frameworks made it difficult for the partnerships to produce a cohesive and comprehensive evaluation of literacies delivery and provide evidence of a social practice approach. Partners were required to provide evidence relating to their organisation's particular outcomes rather than provide evidence of a collective approach to the delivery of literacies. Even within Community Education, staff were required to address a number of quality frameworks, firstly addressing the issues of community planning and the rôle that community based adult education played in this development, secondly the HMIE structure for inspection purposes and thirdly the Government's evaluation of literacies. This led to staff having to attempt to match the evidence collected to a variety of systems resulting in a danger of evaluation driving the process rather than the other way round.

It may have been ideal to have a monitoring framework agreeable to all organisations involved in the partnerships at the outset but this did not happen. The LIC pack is the only framework that has social practices at its core and the elements in this pack form a large part of the annual reports on adult literacies delivery so it fell to local government staff to gather this data from across the partnerships by devising local systems based on the LIC pack.

The subject of both the current and future training of staff was another issue raised in the interviews.

Training of Staff

All three partnerships used the Introductory Training in Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL) and all tutors were expected to complete this course prior to working, either as a paid member of staff or a volunteer, in the field of ALN.   The ITALL course covers subjects such as an introduction to adult learning, learning to learn, complex capabilities, reading, writing, numeracy, confidence building and ICT among other topics.   The sessions mostly address the theoretical issues surrounding the topics but do not appear to teach participants to actually deliver literacies programmes as the follow comments suggest.

'ITAL does not actually teach people to teach literacies and supplementary training has been introduced in this authority but this, as yet, has not been accredited' (Manager Partnership C).

'However, the ITAL course does not teach people to teach.   When someone completes the ITAL course they are supervised and act as tutor assistants where they acquire the teaching skills' (Manager Partnership A)

I think nationally at the time, as you know, we really didn't need an introductory course or it could have been done quicker, we needed more intermediate training and this course does not actually teach people to teach ...' (Manager Partnership B).

Managers in all three partnerships recognised that the ITALL course does not train people to teach literacies and, despite the fact that it is stated in

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the outcomes for the course, there is no training or definition given as to the meaning of social practices. In addition, this training was, in the initial stages, primarily delivered by Community Educators, few of whom had an extensive training in adult literacies. Despite the fact that the three partnerships recognised the need to develop additional in-service training and, indeed, did so, many of those who willingly devoted their time to participate in ALN tutor training were ill equipped to do so, through no fault of their own or the partnerships who employed them. In the early stages of the development of the national strategy the infrastructure was not developed enough to deal with the myriad of issues facing those who managed and delivered the local plans. Many of those employed prior to the production of the ALNIS report were community educators who managed the part time and voluntary staff who actually delivered literacies but were not themselves trained in this specialism. Despite this, they were expected to produce ALN plans, train staff, produce resources, develop in-service training, evaluate and monitor current provision and, most important of all, undertake tutoring.

This does not mean that learners did not acquire additional literacies skills. The evidence shows that those who remained in the programmes did indeed increase their skill levels as will be demonstrated in the chapter analysing the findings in relation to the learners, but it did affect the adoption of a social practice model of literacies tuition.

It is important to note that the ITALL training programme was developed primarily to train staff to work as tutor assistants not as tutors in their own

right. However, in all but one of the partnerships those who completed the ITALL course were recruited as tutors rather than as tutor assistants. This resulted in literacies learners being tutored by staff who were not fully qualified in the teaching of ALN. In addition, the ITALL course was intended to be the first level training in a national framework of qualifications which did not materialise. It was however eventually accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and gained credence as a recognised qualification for tutors in the field of ALN.

Recognising the limitations of ITALL the managers proposed the following training structures for literacies tutors.

'There should be equity of qualifications with those in the teaching profession as the teaching of adults is as important as the teaching of children. That is to say there should be a degree course available. Literacy teaching should also be included as an option in a variety of relevant courses such as adult education, community education, FE qualifications etc. The proposed HND appears only suitable for those who have been involved in the teaching of literacies. There should also be post-graduate qualifications available. Despite the introduction of the PDA it is not seen as a 'profession' and steps should be taken to develop literacies teaching into a profession' (Manager Partnership A).

'What we were saying is that we need a landscape where the volunteers who often become sessional and then more substantial sessional and they go for half post jobs, so it has to be something that has multiple entry points and is flexible and I think if you take something like TQAL as an

example of something that is piloted we've got three staff on it, one who is a full time worker and two who are sessional tutors. It's a big ask in a small team, the capacity is an issue' (Manger Partnership B).

'A national training pathway has not yet been established and there is an urgent need for this. A PG certificate, diploma and Masters courses should be available for those who already hold a first degree and a route requires to be established for those who see literacies as a career option. Specialisms also need to be included in related degrees' (Manager Partnership C).

The general consensus was that a training continuum should be developed to allow existing practitioners to improve their skills and qualifications and to enable those interested in becoming involved in literacies tutoring to acquire the necessary initial qualifications to enter the labour market.

At the time this research was undertaken the training of tutors appeared to be ad hoc with no definite strategy to develop a continuum of training. Adult literacy tutors work with some of the most vulnerable people in our community yet they are the least equipped to do so. As one of the managers stated *'the teaching of adults is as important as the teaching of children'* and, if we accept this statement, there is an urgent need to equip tutors with the necessary skills to do so.

No one would accept that an enthusiastic and dedicated tutor with no formal qualifications should be allowed to teach children at either primary or secondary level. A subject specialist with a PhD, and extensive

knowledge and experience, would not be allowed to teach children unless they had completed a teacher training qualification, and yet it is deemed acceptable to allow those with inadequate qualifications to teach vulnerable adults. Until the development of the ITALL course it was not possible for tutors in Scotland to access any accredited training in adult literacies tuition and most developed their skills by practice, in-service training and peer support. There was an expectation that they could deliver a service using a social practices approach without any training whatsoever, and, even after the introduction of ITALL, there was no recognised course that addressed the model or its implications for provision.

The support given by the national agency was another topic explored in the interviews.

Support from National Agency

The national agency, Learning Connections, was established after the development of the partnerships and, as a result came, in the words of one manager, *'late to the party'*. The staff of the agency came from a variety of backgrounds, some with little or no knowledge of literacies and each with a geographical responsibility in addition to a functional remit. All managers were critical of certain aspects of the support given by Learning Connections and supportive of others as the following comments demonstrate:

'Learning Connections provide support through national conferences/meetings affording staff, including tutors, the opportunity to meet with others in the same field.   The support worker attached to the partnership is not "hands on" and has not had a measurable impact on the workings of the partnership.   He/she does not attend meetings on a regular basis and only comes by invitation.   Learning Connections staff appear to be centralised and a more focussed rôle with regular contact in the area would be ideal.   The resource element of Learning Connections is very good.   Staff are happy to finance and support local events but there is no real active involvement.   It was recognised that the staff of Learning Connections have wide remits, having both an area and a specialist remit. There is a feeling that when LC staff do attend meetings they come to defend the actions of the national agency and are sometimes defensive and/or aggressive.   The strategic partnership rôle between Learning Connections and local literacies partnerships has not yet been clearly identified' (Manager Partnership C).

'I feel that, initially, Learning Connections was all take, take, take and not give, tapping into the knowledge and resources of those in the field.   Now they offer financial support to develop some projects, the opportunity to meet in working groups to share practice, the development of national campaigns such as the Big +, Big + for business, Big + for young people etc. and conferences.   However, the member of staff who attends the literacy partnership meetings contributes little and does not disseminate the good practice in other areas resulting in an impression that their development workers don't communicate and share information with each

other let alone pass this on. In addition, the staff demand a great deal of time' (Manager Partnership A).

'In terms of the designated support person's role, you know we are allocated a support person … I think Learning Connections suffered from the fact that they came along too late and I think they came more for information and it was more about them catching up on the work of the partnership rather than the other way about. We encouraged (the support worker*) to come to the partnership and get involved in training but apart from a couple of visits the support has been absolutely zero. I don't think their knowledge base, their experience of literacies, was sufficient, s/he was absolutely ineffectual. I think, as Learning Connections has developed training, got involved in research etc., they have built up relationships and are making more of an impact'* (Manager Partnership B).

All three managers had a similar view of the contribution made by Learning Connections and it would appear that the facilitation rôle vis-à-vis the organisation of conferences, undertaking research, the financing of local projects were all deemed helpful.

On the available evidence, as I have shown, in the early years of the implementation of ALNIS, prior to the existence of Learning Connections, support for training, the dissemination of good practice and the practicalities of developing and delivering a social practice model of literacies learning did not materialise. So the fundamental principle of embedding a social practice approach in planning and practice from the outset was neither understood nor acted upon because those planning and

delivering literacies had not then been afforded an opportunity to learn and understand what the concept meant.

As can be seen from the outcomes of the ALN plans detailed in a previous chapter, attempts were made to include certain aspects of a social practices approach in the initial planning process but these plans did not embrace it in its entirety. One possible reason for this is that the concept was not fully understood by those with managerial responsibilities, so managers were asked what their *understanding* of social practices was. The following are their responses.

Social Practices

One manager described social practices as follows:

'People have the ability and understanding in literacy and numeracy to be able to operate in their lives in various ways in family, community and work. It is not about grammatical structures and techniques and skills it is rather about how they would use literacy in their lives' (Manager Partnership A).

However, another manager stated that *' I do not necessarily think that people should be following the social practice model slavishly. Learners still need to be assessed and accredited courses are valid if relevant to the learner'* (Second Manager Partnership A).

Both these managers were working in the same partnership area.

Another manager described social practice in the following terms: *'...*
social practice is about delivering literacies that is situated in everyday
life, the four areas of life as described in ALNIS' (Manager Partnership
B).

A manager in the third authority described social practice as *'Being able to*
use literacies in a variety of situations to enable them to operate in the
four areas of life outlined in the ALNIS report.   It is not about the
functional ability to read and write but how this skill is used in everyday
life' (Manager Partnership C).

While the managers could provide a definition of social practices in that
literacies learning should not simply be about acquiring functional skills, it
is also about how learners use these skills in everyday life and these
definitions echo Barton's (2002) description of a social practice model in
that it is what people *do* with literacy that is the key not the acquisition of
skills.   Barton's view of social practice, however, goes further than this
and there was no stated evidence that managers perceived the difference
between the outcomes of literacies learning and the learning itself.   There
was no evidence that managers recognised the need to embed literacies
learning in the practices and situations in which the learners operate on a
daily basis nor was there any evidence of the importance of critical or
collective literacies which form part of the social practice approach.   One
component of this approach is that of critical literacies whereby it *'aims to*
allow participants to understand their world in terms of justice and
injustice, power and oppression, and so ultimately, to transform it' (Papen

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2005) and moves literacies from the banking form of literacies learning as discredited by Freire (Feeley 2005).   In relation to collective literacies Rogers (2001) points out adults can and do learn effectively without being literate and one of the ways they learn is from each other.   This is echoed by Papen when she states *'we not only use literacy together but we also learn new literacies collaboratively'* (Papen 2005 p140).

While the managers described certain outcomes of a social practice model they did not evidence a wider understanding of the learning process which is attributed to this model.

However, the definitions are what they are, definitions, they do not explain in depth the philosophy underpinning a social practice model and one manager appeared to believe that assessment and participation in accredited courses, if relevant to the learner, could not be part of a social practice approach.   There is no evidence to suggest that assessment and accreditation cannot be part of a social practice model.   As Derrick points out the LIC pack *'allows maximum scope for teachers and learners to set their own goals, processes and pathways'* and this model does not define the 'how', 'where' and 'what' of learning but encourages learners to take ownership of their learning (Derrick (2002 p2).   This does not preclude assessment and accreditation.   If the learners are to be truly free to choose their own pathways all options must be available to them, including accreditation.

The following chapter turns from the managers to the tutors.   It explores

how they define social practice and if/how they introduce this into their

learning and teaching.

CHAPTER 7

Research Findings – Tutors – Local Issues

Introduction

In order to determine the quality of delivery in relation to social practices in the partnership areas, the majority of questions asked of the tutors were based on the elements outlined in the LIC pack, the framework used by the Scottish Executive to assess quality. As social practices theoretically underpins the national policy, additional questions were asked to elicit their understanding/conception of this model of working and how they actually deliver using social practices.

A total of twenty-eight tutors were interviewed, eleven of whom were full time, nine part time and eight sessional members of staff. All of the full time tutors were qualified Community Education workers and the part time and sessional staff came from a variety of backgrounds but all had previous experience in the delivery of adult literacies.

Before looking at the issues discussed with tutors and how they defined their understanding of social practice the next section will provide background information relating to the training of tutors involved in this research.

Training

The Tutors – Full Time

Almost all of the full time members of staff interviewed were trained in community education prior to 2000 as were all the managers involved in this research. However, their initial training did not necessarily equip them to deliver community based learning as this was dependant on the option they selected during their pre-service training   Following the Alexander Report, Elizabeth Carnegy was asked by the Scottish Education Department to chair a committee to examine professional training of community educators (Scottish Education Department 1977). This report focussed on the notion of a generic approach to training, offering process skills at its core with youth work and adult education becoming an option. Martin argues that this *'downgraded the constituent specialisms in adult education and youth work to the status of mere options appropriate to particular settings'* (Martin 1996a p134). One recommendation of the Alexander report was that a national council for community education should be established to advise the Secretary of State for Scotland on matters relating to this sector. The Scottish Council for Community Education (SCCE) was established in 1979, merged with the Scottish Community Education Centre in 1982 to become the Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC) and was renamed in 1999 as Community Learning Scotland. One of the few papers produced by SCCE looked at the nature, purpose and methods of community education (SCCE 1979). In relation to adult education, the Council argued that, to be effective, community education required to take an individual approach as learning was a function of the individual human mind and that the community force of the educational input would only be felt when individuals collaborated

in a common cause thus enabling the educational influence on individuals to become an educational influence on the community (ibid 1979). Martin strongly criticised this point of view as being *'a singularly unoriginal concept of passive, consumer-oriented provision'* and that collective forms of learning are both feasible and necessary (Martin 1996b). He continued to argue that what was on offer was *'prepared, packaged and peddled by professionals trained to perceive and interpret "educational need" in the community'* (ibid 1996b). Martin claims that this paper proposed a market led provision of community education whereby staff wait for people to come to them and express their educational needs which would then be met. This is, perhaps, a rather harsh criticism of community education at that time but, regrettably, there is more than a ring of truth in Martin's comments. In defence of community education it is worth remembering that the additional two hundred adult educators recommended by Alexander had not materialised, resulting in those trained in youth and community work being expected to undertake the rôle of adult educators with no training or expertise. Whatever the reason, much of the adult education provision at this time was, indeed, a menu of learning opportunities offered in the market place for consumer consumption.

In 1984 the SCEC published a report on the training of community educators which concluded that community education had expanded since the Alexander and Carnegy reports from the three traditional roots of youth work, adult education and community work and that a wide variety of new areas, specialist settings and client groups were emerging (McConnell 1997). This changing pattern of employment had implications for

training.   The *Training for Change* report endorsed the recommendations of the Carnegy Report by concluding that a core and options model was the preferred method of training for all community education workers (SCEC 1984).   One recommendation cited in *Training for Change* was that a training group be established to oversee all training of community education workers and, as a result, a training council, Community Education Validation and Endorsement (Ce Ve) was established in 1990. Ce Ve recognised that all community educators should be able to work in a variety of settings, with different groups and in more than one specialist field and that initial training should ensure that those qualifying were able to demonstrate a competence within the three primary contexts of adult education, community work and youth work (Ce Ve 1990 revised 1995). Pre-service training providers were required to submit their course outlines to Ce Ve for approval but Ce Ve was not prescriptive as to the content and form of this training as the committee felt that the key elements of community education were unlikely to differ greatly between training providers.

The core and options model was accepted by the training providers, the core being divided into two categories, knowledge and skills (see Appendix F), the options were youth work, adult education and community work and students were required to spend 40% of their training undertaking practical placements.

Despite the fact that the recommendation was that community educators should be able to demonstrate a competence in all three components, in

reality students were required to undertake one option, adult education, youth work or community work, with the core skills embedded throughout the course. Those undertaking the adult education option did not necessarily receive training in literacies and, unless they were involved in this during their practical placement, they had no knowledge or experience of the subject. Social practice would come to be included in future degrees but was not part of the curriculum when the tutors involved in this research undertook their training so, once again it is not clear whether or not the pre-service training equipped all community educators to deliver community based adult learning, including literacies.

In 1992 Parker and Davis conducted a survey of all British universities offering professional qualifications in adult and/or continuing education and fifteen of the seventeen universities contacted responded. The three Scottish Colleges of Education offering community education training had not, at that time, been incorporated into the university system and therefore were not included in this research. The courses researched by Parker and Davies covered Certificate, Diploma and Masters courses which were aimed at those holding a degree or equivalent, experienced unqualified teachers or novice teachers. The research noted that there was a significant difference between the curriculum followed at Certificate level and that followed at Diploma/Masters level (Parker and Davies 1994). The certificate course was aimed at developing the teaching practice of participants whereas the diploma and master courses concentrated on the more theoretical issues of continuing education. The certificate courses were aimed at developing the basic level of competence required by a

practitioner, practical teaching skills and theory about general issues.   The students were also required to demonstrate a competence in both practice and theory.   The course content included psychology and learning, teaching and learning methods, policies and principles, access guidance and work based learning.   While the professional training of adult educators at certificate level and community educators at pre-service level share many commonalities there were some significant differences, particularly in relation to entry qualifications.   Those involved in the certificate courses were required to have some initial practice before undertaking theoretical study whereas this was not a requirement for those participating in community education training.   Jarvis differentiates between the two by contending that those participating in continuing professional development learn andragogically and those participating in initial education learn pedagogically (Jarvis 1994).   One conclusion that might be drawn from this is that those completing the community education training cannot be expected to have the same level and depth of skills as those participating in continuing professional development despite the fact that many of the elements taught and assessment methods are similar.

Despite the fact that the training of adult educators was about building on existing competencies, the certificate courses researched by Parker and Davies were seen as initial training as was the training of community educators (Parker and Davies 1994).

The Scottish Ce Ve guidelines, supported by the training providers and the profession, resulted in a competence based approach to the training of community educators (McConnell 1997) enabling them to 'do' and were expressed in behavioural terms (Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck 1994). Bourdieu and Passeron criticise this method of education as being a company or state system of reproduction where those in authority determine the 'correct' behaviour (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Jarvis, Holford and Griffin, on the other hand, commend many aspects of the behaviourist approach, including skills learning, which they contend is very important in the world of work (Jarvis, Holford and Griffin 1998). While the training institutions accepted the Ce Ve guidelines in terms of what competencies were to be taught, they were at liberty to determine how they should be taught and assessed. In addition, while Ce Ve endorsed the courses it did not validate them, that was the responsibility of the academic institutions. Is it possible that there was a mismatch between the Ce Ve guidelines, which were criticised by Jeffs and Smith writing in *Concept* in 1993 as being functional i.e. the training of practical skills (McConnell 1997 p23), and the courses where the focus was on underpinning theory with a view to producing educationalists rather than facilitators? It also raised issues around how the universities *know* that their students can actually *do* the job. As Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (1998) maintain, a learner may claim to know how to carry out a task but that they only know cognitively and indirectly until they have actually carried out the task

A previous study (Campbell 2000) covering six local authorities and two of the three universities involved in the training of community educators concluded that, while community education graduates may have a sound theoretical knowledge, they did not necessarily possess all the skills to deliver effective community based adult learning. While this study did not represent the entire field of community education it might be considered indicative of the fact that community education training in Scotland does not necessarily equip students to deliver community based learning.

The move to a generic approach to the training of community educators has diluted each specialism where students become 'jack of all trades and master of none'. Kirkwood (1990) criticises the generic, inter-disciplinary nature of community education as being an outmoded hangover of corporate welfarism and Martin (1996a) argues that the development of the service has varied from that envisaged in the Alexander Report where 'committed allies' would use their distinctive specialisms to develop co-ordinated strategies. The dilution of each specialism meant that graduates, even if they opted for the adult education module, were not trained specifically to deliver community based adult learning and the notion of a social practices approach was not included in the curriculum. Despite this, there was an assumption that those who were trained community educators had the necessary skills to deliver literacies and train tutors to do so using this method of delivery.

Training of Tutors – Part time and Sessional

In this research many of the tutors involved in literacies tuition were employed on either a part-time or sessional basis, had previous experience in literacies work as volunteers or sessional staff and were subsequently integrated into the newly created literacies teams. All the part-time and sessional staff had participated in the ITALL course, but this provision has been criticised by the managers for not actually teaching people to teach. Perhaps this emulates the certificate courses researched by Parker and Davies where tutors have practical experience before undertaking a course focussing on the theoretical knowledge. However, this course was also utilised as pre-service training for literacies tutors with no previous experience putting them in a similar position to their full-time community education trained colleagues in that they had a theoretical knowledge of some aspects of literacies tuition but no practical experience and no training in how to develop a social practices approach. Had ITALL been used as it was originally intended, i.e. the training of tutor assistants, they would have been able to gain this experience under supervision rather than being treated as qualified tutors on completion of their training.

Houle provided a method of looking at adult education practitioners in the field by proposing a Pyramid of leadership which describes three types of staff involved (Liveright 1964). Firstly, there are those who work as volunteers, secondly those who have responsibility for adult education, although not primarily adult educators and, thirdly those whose primary responsibility is for the delivery of adult education. In Scotland

volunteers as well as part-time and sessional staff constitute a significant proportion of those delivering literacies provision, therefore the first and third types described by Houle could be considered as one group. In essence what Houle is saying is that the pyramid should be inverted and that those who are directly involved in the delivery should be at the apex and those who have responsibility for adult learning should be at the base. He concludes from this that those at the apex should receive the best training available. Whether this is the case or not will become evident later in this chapter in the section dealing with the responses from tutors.

The LIC pack highlights the following in relation to staff development (City of Edinburgh Council 2000 p17). *'Specialised expertise and experience are developed. Continuous access is offered to up-date information, advice, support and training. Critical reflection on practice is fostered.'* In this research, information, advice and support given to the volunteer, part-time and sessional staff was mainly provided by the development workers. Two development workers described the in-service in their partnership provision as follows:

'They have the ITALL first of all and then they have the tutors' meetings and there is opportunity there to bring things up. But they also have the curriculum training. There are mandatory sections that form part two of the ITALL and part three would be the non-mandatory sections of the curriculum training. We maybe look at group work in more depth and they can voluntarily attend them, but they might not be relevant, for example group work would not be relevant in the one to one, so they have

options. We haven't run the second part of the curriculum yet but that will happen. There are also options to get other training such as Learning Connections, we've had tutors on residential training, at dyslexia training' (Tutor 8 Partnership C).

'We have staff development reviews six monthly and then we introduced six weekly support meetings where I have a meeting with those I support, it gives people more support when they need it. It's at these meetings that training needs are identified and, if possible, people will be supported to attend appropriate training' (Tutor 7 Partnership B).

Another development worker stated:

'Because I'm a development worker it doesn't apply to me really. In terms of other tutors I would provide support for them' (Tutor 1 Partnership C).

In terms of staff development the development workers described their support for the staff they had responsibility for but did not, in their statements, appear to recognise their own possible in-service training needs. The development workers all trained at the same university and, at the time of their training, literacies was not taught in the adult education option and is only now being introduced into the curriculum as an option within the adult education option. So, unless they had undertaken additional training, they had not received grounding in the teaching and learning practices of adult literacies nor in the social practice approach.

The identification of training needs through staff development and support meetings is positive but the fact that these needs were addressed 'if possible' begs the question as to what action would have been taken if this was not possible. To address expressed training needs does not always require attendance at a training course, people can learn from each other, from texts, from the internet and from practice, but if those responsible for staff development are unclear as to the underlying principles of an approach it is unlikely that this approach will permeate through the system

The part-time and sessional staff viewed staff development from a slightly different perspective, as they were required to attend at least one course, ITALL, but, for a variety of reasons, were less willing to attend training that was not compulsory. One tutor stated *'The only course I have done is the ITALL and that was required'* (Tutor 5 Partnership A) and another tutor stated *'There is a very good programme for staff development and we are all encouraged to participate'* (Tutor 2 Partnership B) but had not taken advantage of the opportunities on offer. Others explained reasons why it was difficult for them to participate in staff development training.

'I have spoken to the development worker about the PDA stuff and getting registered for that and there is someone coming from the college next week to observe my teaching practice. There are opportunities but I attend college two nights a week as it is so I don't have much time' (Tutor 2 Partnership C).

'I did the initial, the pilot ITALL and I started the PDA, last year, but between one thing and another I had to drop out before I finished the

course work. There's been mention of a couple of courses I would be interested in going to and some that I am not really interested in going to because I don't see I would benefit. There haven't been a great deal but there have been a few. I have to go on a child protection course but I think that is mandatory for everyone' (Tutor 3 Partnership A).

Some of those employed as development officers had undertaken, or were undertaking, additional qualifications such as a Masters or the recently introduced TQAL course, more of which later. However, those in full time or part time employment were more likely to access in-service training than their sessional or voluntary colleagues. This does not mean that in-service training was unavailable to part-time, sessional and voluntary staff but they were less likely to avail themselves of the opportunities. However, as this training was not mandatory but optional the take up was variable resulting in some tutors being comprehensively trained and others not.

There are a number of reasons for this discrepancy. Firstly, in my experience, full time and part time staff usually undertakes in-service training during working hours whereas sessional and voluntary staff are expected to participate in their own time and are understandably reluctant to do so. Secondly, many of the sessional and voluntary staff have other commitments such as part time employment or family obligations. As highlighted in the national evaluation *'this raises important questions for the provision of quality opportunities for learners.'* (Scottish Executive 2005 p86). As partnerships relied heavily on sessional and voluntary staff

to deliver front line literacies these tutors, according to Houle's analysis, should have possessed the highest level of skills and expertise and been au fait with all the latest techniques and research regarding literacies teaching and learning, in other words at the apex of the pyramid, yet they were precisely those with the least access to the means of developing them.

Whilst this was a small scale study, all community educators in Scotland received a similar initial training as did their part-time, sessional and voluntary colleagues. From the evidence provided in this research there is a general agreement that the ITALL course did not actually teach people to teach and the full time staff involved did not receive literacies training at pre-service level. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the tutors were not fully equipped to deliver community based adult learning nor did it give them the specialist skills in relation to adult literacies in general, or a social practices model in particular.

A number of other elements from the quality framework were explored with the tutors to determine how the interpretation of these elements impacted on the teaching and learning and the utilisation of a social practice model.

Management of Partnerships

One important feature in any developing situation is the style of management adopted and how staff perceives this. When addressing this issue tutors were asked how they thought the literacies partnership was managed. It was stressed that this question did not relate to personalities

but to the management of the literacies partnership and delivery.   As can be seen from the responses, tutors' perceptions of their managers were mixed though most felt that they were supported.   It is interesting to note that, as in their training, those who felt supported were full-time staff and those who were less positive were part-time or sessional members of staff. The national evaluation claimed that nearly 70% of tutors felt that they were supported by their managers (Scottish Executive 2005 p87). Indicative samples of responses are as follows:

'I think we have quite a strong support mechanism up to Principal Officer level.   It's in place, we know who are there to support us' (Tutor 6 Partnership B).

'I think the management of the tutors and the programme is good.   We are well supported and in constant contact with development workers so if anything goes wrong we can have help immediately' (Tutor 1 Partnership B).

'Anytime I have any queries I get on the phone and there is always someone there to give me an answer.   I think we are well supported' (Tutor 2 Partnership C).

'The research officer, he e-mails you if there are any problems and you e-mail him back and he always come back straight away.   I had an instance last week where I e-mailed him and then I opened another e-mail and by the time I read that he had come back just like that, and it was a weekend

and I was just like that 'my God he's working 24/7' (Tutor 3 Partnership C).

However, some tutors did express reservations about the effectiveness of the management as the following quotes indicate:

'I think it could be more effective being completely honest.   I think on the whole it's very good but I still think there is always going to be a certain amount of crossover, for example, between the college and ourselves, the voluntary sector, so there is always a crossover and I mean technically they are all partners but sometimes competitors.   I don't think there is a simple answer to that so I suppose I would qualify that, yes, it is managed as well as it could be under the current circumstances' (Tutor 5 Partnership B).

'I feel far removed from management.   The only time I every see the management is when I'm at literacy events as a representative of another organisation.   I never see them as a tutor.   No one has explained to the tutors what the current situation is and why it is happening.   My situation is probably different, in a way, as I worked full time with the authority so I already have a relationship with both the development workers and all the management so it is sometimes difficult to take that away but just as a tutor I have a very good relationship with the development worker and we talk about issues' (Tutor 2 Partnership A).

'I think the management team are very passionate about providing a good service but I still feel that when I first came through the ITALL I wouldn't

have known anybody, I couldn't put a face to the names, they are not very visible to tutors and I think I am the only tutor that has probably got some kind of relationship built up just now because I was involved in other experiences. It is very much apparent that tutors are treated very differently from the permanent staff you really do feel second-class. The development workers, they were great, and helped me a lot' (Tutor 4 Partnership A).

'It's difficult because at the moment it is fragmented because there is no co-ordinator. But before that I didn't see any major problems in the management at all. They were approachable, there were no real barriers put up, you were able to develop and I didn't have any real concerns' (Tutor 8 Partnership C).

It is interesting to note that two of the tutors who responded negatively to this question both attested to the fact that they received support from the development workers but, obviously, did not see them as part of the management, which indeed they are. Also those who offered criticism came from across the partnership areas and are mostly part-time or sessional staff. As these members of staff play a crucial rôle in the delivery of literacies it is essential that they do not feel like the 'second class' citizens as described by one of the tutors.

Under the management element in the LIC pack emphasis is placed on the fact that decision making within the partnership should be based on consultation with learners, the community and partner agencies (City of Edinburgh Council 2000) but the tutors interviewed felt that they did not

have sufficient information as to the workings of the partnership and were, therefore, unable to fully address this issue. Their responses therefore were restricted to their limited knowledge and experience. With regard to the question relating to the local policy and planning, those working full-time as development workers/tutors were aware of the overall planning process but some of the part-time tutors did not have this overall picture. The part-time staff did, however, have individual plans which were based on the partnership policy so, while they might not have been aware of the overall picture, they were clear about their own rôles.

'We are well aware of the policy and planning. Every year at a conference we get a feedback as to what is happening across the partnership on a big scale but we also get updates on a regular basis through the tutor support meetings. We also have individual support sessions where they hear what is happening' (Tutor 7 Partnership B).

'We've got individual action plans, so I follow my own individual action plan. The individual plans come from the team plan which, in turn, comes from the overall literacies plan' (Tutor 1 Partnership C).

'I liaise with my development worker quite a lot and she will say what the priorities are but it can be an issue not knowing the overall plan especially with the changes that have been going on in here recently I feel that in the last few months it has been more of an issue than previously but, hopefully, once everything is organised it will become clear.' (Tutor 4 Partnership B).

'I know I probably should know about policy and planning, I probably know some things but I'm not sure of the detail' (Tutor 6 Partnership A).

It is not surprising that the part-time and sessional staff are less aware of the overall planning picture as the reams of paper produced during the partnership planning process would be overwhelming for a tutor working two or four hours per week. The important point is that almost all of the tutors had an awareness of the policy and planning at a level appropriate to them resulting in a coherent approach to service delivery.

Resources

To deliver effective learning tutors require adequate and suitable resources. All the tutors were satisfied with the resources provided as the following comments indicate.

'Very good. Over the last two and half years we have had a lot of free resources and there have been grants given by Learning Connections. We've got lots of resources and, of course, there's the internet' (Tutor 1 Partnership C).

'The resources are fine, they're good and there is good access. We are working with libraries just now to get the resources not so centrally based here and spread them out across the area' (Tutor 8 Partnership C).

'There is a good library but, as the learning is learner centred, it is better to find web sites relating to the learner's goals' (Tutor 1 Partnership A).

'I would say we have really good resources. We're happy we have access to lots and lots of resources, we've got loads of ICT resources. We've resources for dyslexia, we've got excellent resources' (Tutor 6 Partnership B).

'The resources are first class. I tend to make up a lot of my own resources but I use the resources that are there as well' (Tutor 3 Partnership A).

During the 'set up' phase money was available to partnerships to invest in high quality resources and for a short period of time the Scottish Executive allowed authorities to 'roll over' monies under spent in one financial year into the next. As this money would not be available on a permanent basis for the employment of staff, managers used it to build the infrastructure, including the purchase of 'one off' items. This resulted in tutors having access to high quality resources which might not otherwise have been available to them and enabled managers to invest in management information systems and ICT hardware and software.

Staffing

Another issue affecting delivery was the numbers of staff available to tutor. Many of the tutors, especially those employed on a part time basis, were unable to comment on this issue as they did not have an overview of staffing needs. The following comments are drawn mainly from the responses given by full time staff. However, some part time members of

staff were concerned about their futures, as they did not have security of tenure.

'I don't think there is sufficient staffing. I think it is due to the budget. The way the budget is going now I've gone from working every week to working in blocks and it is not going to suit me. We will stop in June and not start again until September. Now I cut my hours at my own job to do this and it is going to be that I will increase my hours at my own work and I won't be doing this' (Tutor 3 Partnership A). This tutor had two part-time jobs, one with the literacies partnership and one with another employer. She wanted to develop her literacies work and, when offered additional hours, reduced her working time with her second employer. However, the budget constraints that had recently been imposed meant that her hours with the partnership were reduced and the introduction of term time work meant that she had considerable periods of time when her income was greatly reduced. As a result of this she felt that she needed to increase her working hours with her second employer resulting in her not being able to continue her literacies work.

'We are at a lower level of development workers than we have been in the past. Since I was promoted it takes me away from the development work, it increasingly takes me away from development work and we are effectively down in staff plus the short term funding through the old CRF (Community Resource Fund operated by the local authority) *make the posts funded this way vulnerable'* (Tutor 7 Partnership B).

'I don't think we have enough staff. The demand is high and we need to prioritise so more staff would be helpful, but the more you have the more you want. We seem to be keeping pace with demand but there is a lot more we could do if we had more staff, especially tutors' (Tutor 2 Partnership B).

'No, we definitely don't have enough staff. The temporary nature of some of the contracts is also a problem. I am lucky I am in the group of people who finally got main streamed but others are still on temporary contracts or are reliant on external funding. It is difficult to attract the best staff if the posts are temporary. There are great demands for our service and we have to decide do we do a lot of things of bad quality or fewer things of good quality' (Tutor 2 Partnership B).

'No, we need more staff but I don't think that sessional tutors is the way to run any literacies provision at all, it's totally wrong. You should have full time or part time tutors, for example, if they paid a tutor to work thirty-five hours a week you could have sixteen hour of tutoring with the other fifteen, sixteen hours for preparation. I have seen very few tutor jobs advertised, there're all sessional. If you had full time or part time staff that spent half their time tutoring and the other half developing their work you could have a better team and a better service' (Tutor 1 Partnership C).

'In terms of availability of volunteer and sessional tutors then probably we could do with more, that seems to be the general consensus' (Tutor 7 Partnership C).

There appears to be a consensus that there is a need to increase the staffing levels across the three partnership areas. This finding does not correspond with the findings of the Scottish Executive's evaluation of the policy (Scottish Executive 2005). This document reports that *'…the majority of tutors considered that there were adequate numbers of staff to respond to demand…'* (ibid 2005 p84).

The Scottish Executive's data were gathered from a much larger sample than was involved in this research. However, sixty of the seventy-eight tutors interviewed in the national evaluation made additional comments regarding their staffing situation. These comments included concerns about the need to recruit more experienced tutors, the difficulties associated with retention and recruitment of tutors, the high work rate, stress levels and too much paper work. The reasons suggested for the difficulties associated with retention and recruitment were poor pay and unfavourable working terms and conditions, particularly in relation to part-time sessional and volunteer tutors (ibid 2005). A number of these concerns were replicated in this small scale research. Many of the experienced tutors were employed in organising rôles rather than in direct delivery and, as the ITALL course was designed to train tutors assistants, those actually delivering literacies were, in the main, the least experienced of the team members. Over time these tutors would gain experience but there is a danger that when this happens they would be promoted or they would move to more secure employment. This was perfectly understandable as people obviously wished to improve their employment

status but it was not a particularly secure foundation on which to build. In addition, the less experienced tutors had not received training in social practices or how to deliver using this approach so it was unlikely that their teaching methods would be based on this model.

In the initial stages of the literacies development the Scottish Executive allocated finance over a three-year period (this time scale was subsequently extended although it was not obvious that this would happen at the outset) leaving managers to decide whether or not to employ additional staff on a permanent or part-time/sessional basis. The danger was that, if they employed tutors on permanent appointments and the central funding was no longer available, they would be required to either main-line these posts or make staff redundant. As Community Education budgets were finite there was no spare capacity to ensure continuity of employment so managers opted to employ the majority of tutoring staff on a part-time or sessional basis, resulting in the issues raised with regard to recruitment and retention. With the subsequent reduction in funding this legacy has been perpetuated and, in many instances, it is still the least experienced who are delivering the front line service, with little or no security of tenure which impacts on the long term planning and training.

Guidance

A crucial constituent of adult learning is the guidance and support offered to learners over the period of learning. This includes pre-entry, ongoing and pre-exit guidance. The LIC pack level 4 suggests that *'Guidance processes are integrated within the programme at all stages'* and that

'staff network with, and feed back to, colleagues and staff in other agencies and advocate on behalf of learners.' (City of Edinburgh Council 2000 p 15). The pack also advocates pre-exit guidance where learners are confident, critical users of literacies and able to transfer their learning to new rôles and contexts (ibid 2000). What might constitute good guidance practice will be explored later in this chapter. The national evaluation concluded that guidance was a weak area of provision and the tutors in this research appeared to support this finding as the following indicates (Scottish Executive 2005).

'I don't suppose it's in any set, formal way we produce guidance, we talk about issues that are coming up, we say 'well once we've done that are you quite happy with that, where's next, what are you planning to do, what's next in your life, what skills do you need to look at other bits, do you need to look at accreditation 'cause we can do that through the learning groups as well. It's a discussion we have that is ongoing, it doesn't happen just at certain points' (Tutor 7 Partnership A).

'I try my best to find destinations for them but we are not social workers. If someone asks for more information I would definitely help them. I am not aware of exit strategies being negotiated at the initial interview. I know that was one of the things they were speaking about that was going to be coming in because there are some learners that have been there for years' (Tutor 3 Partnership A).

'The development workers come in to do their reviews. Certainly they would look at my groups every quarter. I would also talk to them on an

ongoing basis, that happens just as a process but then there are formal reviews by a development worker who would then say, more formally, what pathways there are or where they are going next. I think in some ways there's an element of comfort zone as well and there are some learners who maybe don't want to move on but I still think they need to move on and that's quite a hard thing to do. I have never really seen it done well in my experience' (Tutor 4 Partnership A).

'It's (exit guidance) *not planned at all. It would be ideal if we could have an exit interview with learners but often learners actually drop out and me, as a development worker, if somebody has not been to a class for a couple of weeks the tutor phones and says somebody has not been then I would contact them and ask if there was any problem and occasionally things have come up either when I have been contacting a learner through a tutor and they ask information about things like college or something then I have spent the time getting information and arranging a meeting with somebody but it is more as and when it comes up we don't set aside a time in a class'* (Tutor 1 Partnership C).

'Support is built in with the midway evaluation and the end evaluation, these are two set points, the tutors and the learners are, I suppose, obliged to put in comments about where they think they are going and if they need someone to talk to and they are then checked by us and if any action is needed we take that. I think we would all love to go out and speak to the learners individually at the end but it doesn't happen like that, it is only when they highlight something in the evaluations' (Tutor 8 Partnership C).

'I don't build guidance in but it always seems to come up, it just seems to happen naturally. If someone asks a question and I know the answer I will answer it, if I can find it. If it is a college course I will encourage them to use the internet and I'll explain it to them there. If I don't know the answer I will approach the literacies development worker and get the information from them' (Tutor 6 Partnership C).

'We have an exit interview, a sort of celebration of learning as well, it's quite a light interview, we ask them what they are doing, where they are moving on to and we get quite good feedback, some of them have got jobs, some of them have decided to go to college some decide that's enough, they've reached their goal but it is pretty good' (Tutor 7 Partnership B).

'I would encourage them to become involved in learning outside the group and help them to identify where they could get additional information about what they want to do' (Tutor 2 Partnership B).

'It really is a needs based thing, sometimes it is quite important. We do a regular review with the learners and if there was a need for guidance or additional support of any kind it would come up there. I'm not sure if there is exit guidance. Some come for quite long periods of time, there may be exit guidance' (Tutor 4 Partnership B).

'If they are leaving in a planned way and don't just disappear we try to give them some exit information for example, have they achieved their goals or are there other things they want to do and we will say 'how about this', sometimes people take a break for whatever reason and will come

back later. Yes, so if someone is planning to go we will discuss with them what they might want to do next. Sometimes we may be the link person say to the college (Tutor 3 Partnership B).

The comments show that guidance was offered to learners during their review process where learners discuss their ILP with their tutor but this tended to focus on immediate learning needs relating to the existing courses and all of the tutors interviewed were willing to respond to requests from learners regarding future learning. However, literacies should not be seen as an end in itself but as a stage in a lifelong learning process, learners need support and guidance to navigate the maze of opportunities available to them to ensure the correct choices are made, but the responses indicate that this level of guidance was not systematically or universally available.

The authors of the national evaluation suggest that guidance was a weak area of provision due to fact that there was ineffective use of the Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) as they should form a key part of the guidance process. Learners can also be part of a group learning plan. This method was more often than not used when learners came together for a specific, common purpose such as ESOL and, as the main planning tool was the ILP, the following section will focus on this element. The national evaluation results showed that *'well over a third of learners stated that they did not have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) at the beginning of their programme and only just under a third had received a review of their ILP during the programme'* (Scottish Executive 2005 p38). As this

question was not asked of learners in this research it is impossible to determine what the position was within the three partnership areas from their veiwpoint. However, the issue of ILPs was discussed with the tutors. As there was no national template for ILPs the practice of conducting initial interviews and the development of ILPs varied across the partnerships, as one tutor said *'it is very varied the way things actually work, nothing is set in stone'* (Tutor 1 Partnership C).

In some instances only an outline plan is produced and this is passed to the tutor to build into a learning plan. In other instances more detailed information is produced and this is then passed to the tutors indicating what the learner wants to improve on. In other situations a learner self evaluation form is used.

However, one common factor was that, in the main, the development workers, who were either full time or part time permanent members of staff, conducted the initial interview with learners and drafted an ILP from these discussions. It should be noted that all the development workers interviewed were also tutors so it was theoretically possible for them to be producing ILPs for their own learners but a considerable number of tutors, mainly part time or sessional, (45%) were not involved in the original preparation of these plans. Where a tutor was not involved in the production of the ILP they discussed the goals and methods when the learner started in the group and, in the words of one tutor, *'I don't think you get enough information. Sometimes people can tell you one thing when they start out but things evolve and there is evaluation built into it,*

then new goals are added to their learning plan and this has to be done by the tutor on an ongoing basis' (Tutor 4 Partnership A). Another tutor felt that *'if the learner is unsure or really lacking in self confidence we will wait a while before setting the goals so as not to put them under pressure'* (Tutor 3 Partnership A).

As the LIC pack states (Entry Pathways level 4) *'initial assessment is a process, building on the initial meeting…initial assessment leads to the development of a detailed individual learning plan.'* (City of Edinburgh Council 2000 p12).

While tutors discussed the goals with learners and added to them throughout the learning process, this appeared to depend on the needs expressed by the learner which is good adult education practice and could be described as learner centred, but the tutors appeared to be re-active rather than pro-active in that they tended to respond only when the learners raised the issue.

After the initial contact all three partnerships attempt to see the learner as soon as possible and this may be one reason why the development workers almost always conduct the initial interview, they are available unlike their part time and sessional colleagues.

The initial interview was a crucial stage in the development of the ILP and, as Mace (1992) suggests, the answers given by prospective learners enable the tutors to select the most appropriate course of learning but she also believes that the questions asked by the learner are equally important in

that they give the tutor a deeper understanding of the context in which the learner is situated and why they have decided at this point in time to participate in adult education. A tutor who has not been responsible for the initial interview requires to somehow gain a deeper insight into the learners' needs and aspirations. However, in a two hour teaching session, which was the norm across the partnership areas, it was not possible to spend a great deal of time with a new learner while dealing with the expectations of the other members of the group. The ILP, therefore, was crucial to the development of a social practices approach as it provided the basis for selecting the most appropriate course of learning as outlined by Mace. Another point made by Mace is that the tutors should not only explain what the course is about but they should also describe the principles underpinning the teaching methods (ibid 1992). There is no evidence from this research that tutors explained the principles of a social practice model to the learners.

In relation to guidance the ALNIS report recommends that *'Specialist guidance and assessment should be available free of charge to any adult whether referred or asking for help themselves'* and states that *'specialist guidance should provide potential learners…'* *'Specialised initial guidance…'*, there is a constant reference to specialism when referring to guidance and assessment. The report further claims that, at the time of the publication of ALNIS, the strategies in use to provide specialist guidance, screening and assessment were inappropriate. It has been established previously that, in the partnership areas covered in this research, the development workers, mostly trained community educators, conduct the

majority of initial interviews with learners. However they do not possess the specialist guidance skills referred to in ALNIS nor do their part-time colleagues who have undertaken the ITALL course, because the component dealing with initial interviews and the use of ILPs does not deal with guidance in depth. There may be exceptions to this, in that some members of staff could have completed specialist training in guidance although this was not evident during the interview process.

As can be seen from the responses of tutors, the guidance offered to learners is done on an ad hoc basis rather than as a planned and integrated part of the process. The evidence in the national evaluation indicates that *'the majority of tutors were able to provide opportunities for guidance and reflection and were also able to review Individual Learning Plans regularly'* (Scottish Executive 2005 p77).

This appears to be contradictory but I believe it depends on one's definition of guidance. Brown (2003) suggests that adult guidance has seven component parts, informing, advising, counselling, assessing, enabling, advocating, and feedback. There is no doubt that tutors involved in this research informed their learners but this information was based on the expressed needs of the learner. A learner presents with a need to improve their spelling, reading, writing, number work or a combination of these needs and a tutor will give the information relating to this expressed need and advise them as to the best opportunity to address these needs. They will also enable them to access the relevant course of study to address these needs and will provide feedback through the ILP

review. From the evidence provided it would appear that the majority of components posited by Brown were addressed but within the restricted confines of the learning opportunities offered by community education. There is no evidence of the *specialist guidance* as recommended in the ALNIS report. Brown suggests that guidance is '*an umbrella term covering a mixture of all seven activities*' (Brown 2002 p5) and when all seven activities are utilised adult guidance is a dynamic, helping, empowering process of choice (ibid 2002). According to Brown (2002) the advisory rôle in adult guidance focuses on helping learners to interpret information and the assessment element is about making realistic judgements about the appropriateness of learning opportunities, two elements which require expert knowledge not possessed by all community educators. As McNair (1996) states the aim of guidance should be autonomy for the user and to be autonomous, learners need in depth information and assistance.

The LIC pack claims that '*getting the best fit between learners and opportunities is crucial in literacy and numeracy programmes*' (City of Edinburgh Council 2000 p33). It is obvious that '*getting the best fit*' is important but this does not constitute all that guidance is, or should be. It would appear that the majority of tutors focus on this dimension of guidance but, in a social practice model of delivery, there is more to guidance than simply matching learners to suitable groups or classes. Watts states that '*Guidance is a profoundly political process. It operates at the interface between the individual and society, between self and opportunity, between aspiration and realism. It facilitates the allocation*

of life chances. Within a society in which life chances are unequally distributed, it faces the issue of whether it serves to reinforce such inequalities or reduces them (Watts 1996 p315). Brown claims that *'Guidance is a process by which individuals are helped to clarify options about their future in terms of training, education and work. Through this helping process people learn to be autonomous, taking control of their own decisions'* (Brown 2002 p5).

In a social practice model it is not sufficient for tutors to provide information and direct people to the appropriate courses, although this is part of the guidance process, for, as Brown claims, *'Information is a mere commodity and is, by itself, static'* (Brown 2002 p6). Those providing guidance to ALN learners need to look beyond the giving of information and question what the learner intends to use his/her literacies for, encourage them to make informed decisions and to become autonomous in order that they may take charge of their own lives and challenge aspects of the society in which they live. In this respect adult guidance, in common with other aspects of the practice of literacies in Scotland, is not currently rooted in the social practice model. To enable this to be so, those working in the field of adult literacies and, indeed, in the careers service would need training to ensure that the specialisms mentioned in ALNIS were available to learners. Brown expresses his concern in relation to the development of adult guidance by stating *'We are not talking about a generic trade which will be solved by the mere addition of an **all-age** banner, as I fear may be happening in Scotland and in Wales* (Brown 2002 p14).

Good guidance practice needs to take cognisance of Watts's assertion that it is a political process and that those conducting guidance interviews should focus on attempting to reduce the inequalities facing their learners rather than reinforcing them.

The issues of management, including local policy and planning, resources, guidance and staffing were key to how the three partnerships developed their literacies practice but cannot be seen as indicative of practices across Scotland. How literacies is managed, planed, resourced and staffed is the responsibility of individual partnerships. Nevertheless, they do show how uneven practices are and whilst this might, on the one hand, demonstrate the localised adaptability of the ALN strategy, it also shows an inconsistent implementation of some of its key ideological underpinnings.

There were some issues that were controlled centrally, thus outwith the control of the partnerships and these will be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8

Research Findings – Tutors – National Issues

Curriculum

One element of literacies practice that was influenced by developments outwith the partnerships was the curriculum. In 2005, Learning Connections published the curriculum framework for adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland (Scottish Executive 2005). This document did not specify what should be taught but was strongly oriented towards a process-based view of the curriculum with the emphasis on the way that this curriculum was negotiated with learners and built on their existing knowledge. A wheel, consisting of concentric circles, represented the curriculum with the learner at the centre working towards the outer circle where the principles underpinning the framework were shown (Scottish Executive 2005). This tool clearly shows that no one element is studied in isolation and the authors of the framework suggested that it might be helpful to think of the wheel as a combination lock, each circle lining up to provide a rich and appropriate learning experience (Scottish Executive 2005).

The section relating to the curriculum in the LIC pack suggests that the *'Learning options are flexible and responsive to diverse needs and aspirations. Knowledge, skills and understanding are developed in context. Learning is presented as a positive and enjoyable experience. Life long learning is promoted.'* (City of Edinburgh Council 2000 p14).

As has already been established some tutors were aware of, and had received training in, the newly developed curriculum framework but this framework had not been, at the time of this research, universally adopted across the partnerships. As a result of this some tutors were developing their own curriculum, some were using parts of the framework produced by the Scottish Executive, others felt that the framework simply re-enforced what they were doing and at least one tutor felt there was no need for a curriculum. Some of the tutors were aware of the curriculum document and were complimentary about it despite the fact that they did not always use it.

The following is a representative selection of comments made by the tutors in relation to the curriculum.

'I have the best intentions in the world to use the wheel. I have used it in the last two classes I have worked with. I have put it up on a big poster on the flip chart and have given each learner a small hand out and we have used it as a discussion point and we have really only got to the point of it being learner centred and the four main areas of life. We haven't actually taken it any further than that but that in itself was actually quite useful as a discussion point but I've actually not used it for review or for other things and the class that I'm working with now is only in its fourth week' (Tutor 8 Partnership C).

'We use the curriculum framework for building up the individual's curriculum. Again that comes down to the tutor training, they are very aware that they are building an individual learning curriculum for each

one. They (the tutors) *very much see a group not as a group but as a collection of individuals even when they are all working towards some sort of common goal there are differences there going on'* (Tutor 6 Partnership B).

'I think the document is brilliant but I don't use it. When I first read it I thought this is really good and I sat down at the computer and mind mapped the whole thing and that was helpful as well, it just re-enforced what I already do, that's quite comforting because you can relate to it' (Tutor 4 Partnership B).

Other tutors found that it was either unsuitable for the groups they were working with or they did not know of its existence and were developing their own curricula.

'The class that I was working with before, the attendance was very sporadic and very all over the place and it wasn't an ideal setting where you all started at the beginning and you're all there at the end point, it just didn't seem to fit in. So I've actually not used it (the wheel*) effectively but it is quite a good discussion tool'* (Tutor 8 Partnership B).

'You don't have a curriculum, as such, like you don't have a curriculum like you would have at school or whatever else. You wouldn't have an educational curriculum. Your curriculum, its all the social practices model which is the Scottish model' (Tutor 1 Partnership A).

'Current practice is that it evolves, certainly that has been my experience in the past. One of the groups I've got is ESOL literacies for the care

environment so there are elements that are prescribed but there are also elements that each individuals own learning plan are going to develop as well' (Tutor 5 Partnership A).

The responses from tutors indicated that certain aspects of a social practice model were utilised in practice through the curriculum. They were flexible and responsive to the needs of their learners and they attempted to develop the learning within the contexts familiar to learners, which is part of the social practice approach. There was evidence of tutors being aware, and in some instances, using the wheel which was based on a social practice model. There were, however, some elements of the social practice model that were not evident in the responses from the tutors. As was the case with the managers, tutors did not articulate the need to incorporate the critical or collective nature of literacies, two key strands of the social practice model. Also, the exponents of a social practice approach emphasise the importance of starting with learners' strengths and the one tutor who did link curriculum development with social practices concluded her answer to this question by stating *'You have to decide the basic things they can't do and concentrate on that'* (Tutor 1 Partnership A).

The evidence provided by tutors clearly demonstrates a learner centred approach but this is not new in ABE provision in Scotland. The SABEU policy document states that *'the student is paramount ... a person's own views, needs, expectations and abilities should determine the kind of support for learning he or she gets'* (SABEU 1984). There is however a

partial understanding of the social practices model and perhaps as the curriculum framework, and especially the wheel, are integrated into practice tutors will be enabled to think laterally and develop programmes that reach to the outer circle of the wheel where the principles of lifelong learning, self-determination and critical awareness are located. A diagram of the wheel and an example of how it could be used can be seen in Appendix G.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Another element that was influenced by factors outwith the control of the partnerships was that of monitoring and evaluation. Each partnership was required to produce a report for the Scottish Executive detailing their progress against targets set out in the action plans. This was initially on a bi-annual basis but was subsequently altered to an annual report. The evidence was gathered by the tutors and development workers and was based mainly on the reviews of the ILPs or learning plans.

In all three partnerships the information gleaned from the ILPs and the learning plans relating to learners' progression were collated along with statistical data describing the number and categories of learners, how the finance was allocated and details of the partners' literacies programmes. The original reporting procedures laid down by the Scottish Executive included a section on outputs and outcomes.

In the original action plans these two headings tended to concentrate on the achievements of learners under the four headings outlined in the ALNIS

report, private, work, family and community. As shown in a previous chapter the social practice approach was not overtly stated in the initial local plans and therefore difficult to evidence. These initial plans covered a three-year period from 2001 to 2004 and the reporting procedures were based on these plans resulting in no clear evidence of the development of a social practices approach.

Unfortunately in 2004, for reasons not communicated to the ALN managers, the reporting process altered and partnerships were no longer required to monitor learner outcomes or, indeed, include them in the new action plans which were due to be produced in this year. The emphasis in the 'new' action plans concentrated on the level of demand and need, promotion and awareness raising, staffing capacity, monitoring and evaluation of the partnership, funding, methods of evaluation of the progress of individual learners and the quality of learning measured against the indices in the LIC pack. In relation to the progress of learners the evaluation was previously based on distance travelled as detailed in ALNIS. It states that *'definitions of success should therefore recognise progress at all levels, should be personal to the individual and should measure the learning distance travelled, which implies a recognition of very different starting points and rates of progress* (Scottish Executive 2001a p30). However, partnerships were now required to report under the heading of outcomes *'the range and level of services that the partnership has provided to date. NB This is intended as a brief summary statement only. It should provide a strategic overview of the partnership's services and provision. A detailed planning template is*

provided in Appendix 1 and full details of plans and progress should be provided there (Scottish Executive 2004a).

The heading in Appendix 1 of the annual report form states *'This needs to be completed for what the partnership sees as its key objectives/activities'* (ibid 2004b) and, taking the first statement into consideration, applies to the partnership's services and provision not the progress of learners.   So, the previous interpretation of outcomes, i.e. the impact on learners' lives, was no longer deemed to be a criterion for the success of ALN nationally.

In response to the question relating to outcomes one partnership included a pertinent comment in their return to the Executive.   They stated *'At the ILP review meeting, progress is discussed and recorded, both on the ILP and on the Learning into Practice chart to show impact on the four areas of life.   To date this has not been translated into quantifiable data; learners' goals differ in complexity and difficulty; timeframes set vary similarly; some learners achieve one goal then reset goals without leaving the service.   It is felt that the use of numerical data obtained from a tick list of achievements would therefore be questionable but, in order to satisfy the Scottish Executives requirements, a database will be set up inline with the Learner Outcome tracking form'.*

Notwithstanding these changes to the national monitoring and evaluation formats, most tutors appeared to keep detailed records of learners' progress (outputs) and the impact of learning in their lives (outcomes).   The following quotes are examples of how tutors gather the information.

'The learning plans I use as a tool, I have put it in such a way that they have basically got to tell me how they use what they have learned, they need to give me an example of that.   Also in the diaries they have to say what they have learned today, how do you think you might use this in the next week and then they have to look back on that.   Everyone has created their own diary to suit the target group and the one I use is electronic, it's about reflection, they have to reflect on what they have done that day and decide what they need to do next, and how they will use that in their life and then put all that together for evaluation' (Tutor 8 Partnership C).

'We have a form of tutors' notes, a very simple form really, and I write in every week what we have done but what I do is, at the back of the ILP I keep a section that I fill in myself and at the end of every session I'll mark down, in my own words, just the date and what was done, where we have come from, where we are going next so I can incorporate that into the end assessment and I give them a copy and keep one myself' (Tutor 5 Partnership C)

'I don't know that we do anything formally round monitoring and evaluation except reflection.   I reflect and I also encourage my group, again that is that thing that at the end of each session, you know, by asking 'how has it been relevant to you, what have we achieved, where we are taking it what's next?' (Tutor 2 Partnership A).

'We have regular reviews with learners and we use the wheel or scaling to see how much they have improved.   We then have a review with our development worker and they check certain aspects of the LIC pack each

time and this all builds up for monitoring purposes' (Tutor 2 Partnership B).

'This is done through work plans which the development officers complete. There is a system of speech bubbles where learners are encouraged to write remarks into a bubble and put on a notice board. Tutors sometimes write about a particular success. For example, there was one learner who worked in the care field. Her immediate line manager would complete all the necessary reports because no one could read the learner's writing. Since attending the class she has improved her writing and spelling skills to such an extent that she is now allowed to produce her own reports. This has been documented' (Tutor 1 Partnership A).

The data gathered by the tutors focussed on the distance travelled by learners as recommended in ALNIS and provided both the learners and the tutors with information on which to build future learning. There was also evidence that tutors explored how the learners used their literacies in everyday life and that they, the tutors, recognised that literacies learning was not simply the acquisition of skills but that what they do with literacies in the activities they engage in (Papen 2005). Once again the responses from tutors indicated a partial understanding of a social practices approach. Regrettably, the wealth of data gathered by the tutors in relation to the progress of learners is not recorded in the national monitoring and evaluation process.

It would appear that the initial intention of ALNIS, i.e. the measurement of success being distance travelled by the learner and the impact on aspects of

their lives was replaced by the 'managerialist discourse' as described by Ackland (2006). She contends that *'There is a strong tendency for policy makers, researchers and practitioners to admit readily the importance of informal learning and then proceed to develop policy, theory and practice without further reference to it'* (Coffield 2000 p2 cited in Ackland 2006).

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) report of 2005 re-enforced this managerialist perspective in claiming that *'More focussed monitoring of learners' progress and achievement is now needed to enable quantification of the specific literacy gains across a large group of learners and to provide assurance that the national initiative is having the effect that Ministers intended'* and *'This deficiency in assessment practice made it difficult to measure the levels of achievement of individuals, and to quantify improved possibilities for progression provided by literacies learning. Consequently, the overall extent of the gains in specific literacies competence of the Scottish population as an outcome of the Ministerial initiative cannot be established with confidence'* (HMIE 2005 iii). This quote suggests that the Inspectorate is seeking to quantify learners' progress in skills acquisition in a systematic way rather than the distance travelled by the learner or the difference that literacies had made in their lives as recommended in the ALNIS report. Ackland (2006 pp 42-43) raises the following questions in relation to the HMIe statement. *'"This deficiency" the use of the definite article assumes that the deficiency is proven and agreed; "assessment practice" – what is the nature of the assessment practice? " made it difficult" – for whom? "measures the levels of achievement of individuals" – the shadow of the*

autonomous model of literacies looms.   She also questions the purpose of such measurement – *'to establish with confidence the outcomes of the Ministerial initiative'*   - *whose project is this?* and asks if these measurements are imposed to suit ministerial objectives unrelated to the objectives of the learners?   Ackland's responses and the statement made by the partnership suggest that there has been a shift in reporting from the radical social practices model advocated in the ALNIS report to managerialism referred to by Ackland.   As Ackland points out *'Partnerships are compelled to struggle with accountability measures and targets that they do not believe capture the quality of the work they are doing'* (Ackland 2006 p 43)

It is my contention that this tension is at the heart of much of the discrepancy between the ideals and reality of ALN in Scotland.   As has already been stated, *Opportunity Scotland* (1998a) and *Life through Learning through Life* (2004), two key documents relating to the development of adult learning in Scotland, focus on the acquisition of skills to address the issues in the labour market.   Crowther (2006) points out, those involved in the delivery of community based adult learning are swamped by the powerful interests in the policy process and the work they do is perceived by those in power as a stage towards institutional provision in order that the Parliament's targets for widening participation are met. The government's view of lifelong learning appears to be important in terms of economic development and the acquisition of skills to address labour market issues and includes further and higher education, vocational training and work-based learning.   Crowther (2006) claims that lifelong

learning constructed in these terms may focus on adults but is not necessarily adult education.

In his paper Crowther cites the adult literacies policy in Scotland as being *'an interesting example of subverting a globalising human resource development discourse into one that is more open and relevant to people's lives'* (Crowther 2006 p6). However, he also claims that the rôle of the civil service in the policy process is very powerful and, as civil servants control the monitoring and evaluation process of literacies centrally, there is a danger that literacies will be subsumed into the institutional provision as described by Crowther. Whether it is possible for those delivering adult literacies to continue to build on the social practice model whilst meeting the imperatives imposed on them from central government will be further explored in the concluding chapters.

The three partnerships involved in this research selected to deliver literacies almost exclusively as a discrete service rather than a combination of discrete and embedded as they struggled with the burden of accountability, torn between two competing objectives. One of the reasons for this may have been due to the fact that it was easier to measure progress when delivering a discrete service but this issue was not raised during the interview process so it is not possible to be clear as to why this was the case. To remain true to the spirit of the ALNIS report, levels of achievement should have been measured on an individual basis, i.e. distance travelled and impact on learners' lives, standards which appeared not to meet the criteria of the HMIE.

To return to the question as to whether social practice is demonstrable in the monitoring and evaluation process the answer has to be no. By altering the reporting procedure and deleting the questions relating to learner outcomes there is now no opportunity for partnerships to report on learner progress other than gathering evidence at a local level which could be used during inspections. One way of providing the data apparently required by the HMIE would have been for the tutors to adopt a positivist approach whereby learners are assessed on two occasions sometime apart and their performances compared to determine how much they have learned. Fowler and Mace (2005) suggest that, while this method provides statistical data for the government to 'prove' whether or not the provision is value for money, it ignores the learner's performance in any other context than that of a formal assessment. They suggest it is possible to adopt an anti-positivist stance and still provide the numerical results needed for organisational assessment by viewing progress in a wider context, not simply the acquisition of skills (Fowler and Mace 2005). An example they quote relating to progress is adopting the concept of 'literacy confidence' where learners are asked to provide a self-assessment as to how far they have travelled. They provide a fictitious example as follows:

At the beginning of the process a learner wished to improve her literacy confidence in dealing with the completion of Inland Revenue forms and was panicked by the size of the forms and kept putting off the task. Some months later she admitted that her confidence had not improved but she, along with her sister, had managed to deal with the forms and she felt

wonderful.   In positivist terms the outcome provided by this example would have been that no progress had taken place but, in terms of a qualitative understanding where literacy is recognised as a social activity, the statistic would be regarded as progress thus providing a positive measurement for organisational purposes.   The fact that the learner's confidence, by her own admission, did not improve, she was empowered by the very fact that she did complete the form and was elated by the experience.   This is an example of social practice in action.

The distance travelled by each individual learner is just that, it is individual, but can be collectively collated to provide quantifiable data to meet short-term Ministerial agendas.   From the evidence cited above tutors were collating a wealth of data which measured much more than skills acquisition, albeit an important constituent of literacies learning, and this data came from real contexts rather than tests of achievement (Fowler and Mace 2005).   Fowler and Mace (2005) also claim that by adopting an ethnographic approach, which gathers data from a range of sources including observation, conversations and learners' own testimony, this process can be adapted to provide evidence of progress.   In the Scottish model, tutors were not required to formally test learners against a pre-fixed standard therefore they did not have to 'teach to a test' giving them the freedom to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals and groups, which is part of the social practice approach.   However, the annual monitoring procedure introduced by the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department in 2004 did not allow for the evidence gathered by tutors to be reported.   The focus of the annual reports was on

strategic and process issues affecting the partnerships and, other than recoding the number of learners involved, there was no opportunity for partnerships to record learner progress. Each partnership was, however, subjected to regular inspection by HMIE and this process involves inspectors actually visiting the area and talking to personnel at all levels. Staff were required to produce evidence of the work that they were involved in and this could have provided opportunities for the evidence gathered by literacies tutors to be included in the inspection process. If literacies is about emancipation (Hamilton 1996) there is a need to create structures, including monitoring and accountability, to enable the individuals' qualitative as well as quantitative achievements to be recognised and valued otherwise the provision in Scotland may well revert to the autonomous model as described by Street (1984).

Social Practice

The issue of social practices was discussed with the tutors in a similar manner to that of the managers in that they were asked what their *understanding* was of this model of literacies delivery. As there was evidence that a social practice model was embedded in the Scottish literacies strategy through the ALNIS report and the LIC pack and that partnerships attempted to include elements of it in the local action plans it was important to establish how this translated into practice.

The following comments are representative of the data collected as a whole.

'...the theory is, that you learn through life, whatever you are involved in, if you are involved in something you'll learn from people that have been there before and that theory is what is meant to carry you through to your literacies. Just as an example I have been working with a young gentleman who has recently managed to get himself a job with a builder's firm. The issue he's faced with is reading the job sheets. He's not planning the job, it is one of the supervisors who goes out and plans the job and writes the diagrams and then just gives him the handwritten notes and saying go and do that. He (the learner) *is struggling when given all this handwritten and technical information and then to translate that into the things that he is actually going to do. So that's what we are working on, we are working on the words that he is coming across most regularly because he knows, generally, he'll be coming out to your house and working in the bathroom or working in the kitchen, it's tiling he does. He needs to know the different names of the tiles and equipment he uses and make sure he can recognise them and write them and then taking all that information together so that he can fill out his own job sheets. So starting off from looking at all this information he has moved from not understanding to getting understanding, putting it into practice then relaying it back (to the tutor) "yes, I have accomplished this" in terms of the time sheet'* (Tutor 2 Partnership A).

'For me it's not about reading, writing and numbers it's what you do with them and it's putting it into context, as I say it's ensuring that, eh, finding out what the learners wants to do with the literacy skills and numeracy skills that they are wanting to improve' (Tutor 4 Partnership A).

'First of all there are a lot of buzz phrases but, to me, social practice is about facilitating learners to achieve their goals which are relevant to their everyday lives, the learning is not in isolation from their reality' (Tutor 6 Partnership A).

'I always thought that it was the opposite of the deficit model where… I think it is the fact that literacies only exists for adults in the context of their life, so somebody is not literate or illiterate it depends on what they use their literacy for and their numeracy.   In the way that you actually go about it depends on the social context where people are going to use it' (Tutor 3 Partnership B).

'It basically means helping learners to learn using topics that are relevant to them, to help them to apply their learning to their lives in their world and that can really be in any area at all' (Tutor 4 Partnership B).

'The literacies that learners want to learn about is their everyday literacies, it's relevant to the work they are doing, the family stuff that they are doing like helping children with their homework, filling in bank forms, applying for jobs, just everyday literacy issues' (Tutor 2 Partnership C).

'Well, it's integrated literacies I would call it.   If we want people to come to us we need to go out and find out what people are doing in their life and try to integrate the literacies into that' (Tutor 8 Partnership C).

While all of the above statements include elements of a social practice approach there is perhaps something missing.   To return to Barton's

definition of social practice the tutors do not demonstrate their understanding that literacies are patterned by social institutions and power relationships but they did recognise that literacies are embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices. Some tutors, almost certainly unintentionally, define a deficit approach to their teaching by claiming to start with what the learner cannot do rather than building on their strengths.

If the tutors understanding of a social practices model omitted certain of the key elements it might be assumed that their teaching and learning would also evidence similar omissions. The examples below are typical of the reflections on their teaching practice in all three partnerships.

'It's how it impacts on family life, education, personal life and community life and then we help the learner identify their goals, what level they want to move forward to, to identify small goals and their long term goals as well, the big picture, and then we discuss what kind of resources, what type of learner they are and which way they learn, whether they are listeners or have to see pictures or whatever, then we work towards their goals using a number of resources we have got available to us' (Tutor 7 Partnership B).

'The main objective is that everything is centred round the learner and it's not what I want the learner to do, it's about what the learner wants to do and I think it is great' (Tutor 5 Partnership C).

'I try to get them relaxed because I think you find out more about what is happening in their lives and then I can take things from that to work with them on.   It is about doing what they want and addressing their goals' (Tutor 8 Partnership B).

'What you are trying to do is to help these people with what it is they specifically want to learn.   So it's as you go along you introduce things or take things out as long as it is addressing their goals.   You sometimes have to say you can't do that yet you have to go through these stages so you'll do it and you will just give them work which is relevant to what there are aiming for to achieve their goals.   I've got a girl who is wanting to do child care in education so a lot of her work, a lot of the resources, I get from the Skills Wise Child Care in Education pack.   It gives you the words she will need for her certificate. You help her with spelling and understanding, with words and sentence structure all the sort of literacy things she will need to meet the individual learner's needs.   You build that round each learner because it is needs, its, its like reactive.   If they are wanting to know something you find all the things that they need for that. You have to decide the basic things they can't do and concentrate on that. Em, but it is needs based' (Tutor 1 Partnership A).

'Negotiation with the learner is, as far as I'm concerned, learner centred and good practice.   Learner centred and social practice are exactly the same thing' (Tutor 6 Partnership A).

Maclachlan (2008 pgs 28 & 29) contends that the key tenets underpinning literacies teaching as a social practice emphasise:

- *Different literacies in different social situations as well as people's different expertise in them*

- *The power relations embedded in them which value expertise in formal literacies, but rarely so in local vernacular literacies*

- *The need to understand how and why literacies are acquired and used in every day situations*

She also highlights that tutors often claim they are using a social practices approach because the methods used are learner centred, they start from where the learner is and use materials relevant to the learner, but whilst this exemplifies good teaching and learning practices, it does not, on its own constitute a social practices approach (ibid 2008).

The tutors involved in this research appeared to operate a learner centred approach involving real texts, starting from where the learner is, although not always with the learners' strengths and, as will be evidenced in the following chapter, learners appear satisfied with their experiences. I have no wish to downplay the work undertaken by the tutors as they attempt to address the needs of their learners, but I do question whether their descriptions of practice embraced all that is embedded in a social practice model.

To return to Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (1999) and the propositions that they suggest define the nature of literacies as a social practice the tutors, in the main, did not mention the importance of the critical aspect of literacies which would enable learners to transform their lives nor the power that can

be derived from being literate in a variety of situations or the validity of different literacies.

The teaching of literacy should not just be about accepting the status quo but about changing and transforming it according to Freire (Galloway 1999). Literacy as freedom and power is part of a larger equation and so being literate cannot be viewed as an end in itself (Archer 2003). When dealing with those in power, people require a range of complex skills, not only literacy, which include how they speak, how they dress, how they retain eye contact, in other words how they portray themselves (ibid 2003). If people are going to engage with different situations where literacy forms a part of a wider power equation they need to have the confidence to alter some aspects of their lives to enable them to assert their voices. As Archer states *'learning needs to be seen as an integral part of a wider process of analysis and action* (Archer 2003 p4).

Maclachlan's research (2006) suggests that social practice has not been universally adopted and this finding would appear to be true with regard to the partnership areas involved in this research. One example, however, which was potentially a social practice model of literacies learning was work undertaken with travellers.

The travellers' site was a small one and, at the time of the research phase, was in the process of being re-furbished. This re-furbishment included the provision of a learning centre, with internet facilities and a small library. The local populace viewed the families using this site with suspicion. Two families on the site had been allocated local authority housing but

were forced to return to living in caravans because they had been racially abused and could not tolerate the treatment they received. This brief introduction to those living on the travellers' site demonstrates that they live in a complex world and had many issues to deal with. The literacies tutor was based on the site and had spent a great deal of time simply building relationships with the residents. She explained in her own words her initial introduction to the site.

When I came at first they all thought I was a social worker so I had to reassure them that I was a literacy worker and nothing to do with Social Work. So I went and introduced myself, this was in the summer time so people were out more, and there were children out so by making friends with the children I was able to go back, they would say oh come back and meet my Mum. So they would take me back to the caravan and some times I would be invited in for a cup of tea and through three families in particular I was able to get an introduction that way' (Tutor 7 Partnership C).

The tutor accepted that she could not simply introduce a literacies agenda but had to start with the concerns of the residents. As she states,

'Now, because they know me, if it is a nice day I'll walk around and if they come to the door we will have a chat and if they are concerned about anything they might talk about it. It might not be a literacy matter but I have to be open to any engagement.'

She became involved with one family who were concerned about travellers' rights and interested in the history, poetry and the music of travellers. One of their daughters was twelve years old and did not attend school because her mother was insisting on home schooling. The mother had lived in sites all over Scotland and was well versed in travellers' rights and knew that in many areas authorities provided home schooling for travellers. Unfortunately, this local authority was reluctant to make provision for home schooling because there was no guarantee that the travellers would stay long enough to justify the cost. This little girl was very bright and her parents were eager for her to learn to use a computer. There were computer classes offered on site and she attended along with her mother but this was frowned upon by the Department of Education as the tutor was perceived to be colluding with the family to keep her out of school.

The story of the twelve year old exemplifies the difficulties of delivering a social practices model without a strong and committed partnership approach. The mother was adamant that her daughter should have home schooling as she had been able to access this provision in other parts of the United Kingdom. A learning opportunity for both parent and child was lost in that the Education authority could have used this event to encourage not deter the child from learning. After all, the Education Department was part of the ALN partnership and, indeed, responsible for the delivery of literacies. To enable a truly collective social practices model to develop across Scotland senior managers would have to understand the underlying principles of this approach and facilitate a strong partnership approach,

both inter-departmentally and across the CLD partnership, otherwise conflicts such as the one illustrated above could become commonplace and seriously impede the development of this model.

The tutor became involved with another family comprising mother, father, two sons and the mother's disabled brother. Another son and his wife also lived on the site. The family had been given a house in the local area but were also subjected to racial discrimination and were forced to return to the travellers' site. The mother also felt that they had been discriminated against by the local authority and had decided to legally pursue this issue. She ultimately won her case and had been supported throughout by the literacies tutor and a member of staff from the Council for Racial Equality.

The important issue facing this family, and the mother in particular, was that of discrimination and her desire to address this. At that point she was not interested in improving her literacies skills, she simply wanted, as she saw it, justice. However, as a result of her experiences she decided to gather stories from other travellers and write about them. She made tentative approaches to the literacies tutor but, at the time of this research, had not fully committed to undertaking the task of committing the stories she had gathered to paper As the tutor explained *'I can't be too pushy it's got to be in her time and when she is ready to do it'.* The fact she addressed the discrimination issue gave her the confidence and she has now moved on to what Rogers would describe as the development activity, i.e. the gathering and recording the experiences of others, and the learning of literacy skills can be acquired through the literacies practices associated

with this activity, in other words this is an example of the 'literacies can come second' approach as described by Rogers (Rogers 2001). Literacies skills were not sufficient to allow her to commit to writing the material she had gathered, but she had, however, gained knowledge and understanding through her own experiences and her recording of the experiences of others, thus enabling her to address the issues affecting travelling people. There was no need for her to be able to read or write to successfully challenge the issues of discrimination and take action against those she perceived as oppressors, the local authority. If, and when, she is ready to document her experiences and those of others in the travelling community she will be able to acquire the necessary skills.

At the time of the research there were no formal literacy learners on site. The tutor was focussing on building relationships, concentrating on learners' strengths and attempting to ensure that the travellers were able to address the issues directly affecting them. One example of informal support given by the tutor was to two girls who wished to sit the driving theory test. There was no formal literacies tuition but, by helping them with the questions relating to the test, the girls developed their literacies skills and eventually successfully passed the driving examination.

One of the routes into the community could have been through the young people but the tutor had been expressly forbidden to work with anyone under sixteen. She had attempted to overcome this by building relationships with the young people without actually involving them in literacies tuition. At the time of the interview this project was in its early

stages but, as the tutor said, *'We must reach those who are at the edges of society, who are marginalized. Doing literacy work with travellers could take years of being there or visiting regularly.'*

Is this an example of social practices? I think it is the beginning, the tutor was replicating the methods advocated by Freire when teaching literacy, that is to start where people are, identify the issues and the language that is used on a daily basis and use this to provoke discussion amongst the travellers.

There is a potential, however, for conflict. As the travellers were challenging the power of the local authority amongst others and the authority employed the member of staff, this could put them (the tutor and the authority) on a collision course and it is a challenge that partnerships must address to ensure a truly social practices approach is adopted by all and that literacies learners feel empowered to address issues affecting them irregardless of whom they are challenging.

Summary

There is ample evidence that a social practice model was embedded in the Scottish literacies strategy through the ALNIS report and the LIC pack and that partnerships attempted to include this in the local action plans. However, the managerialist discourse emanating from the Scottish Executive has somewhat distorted the original intentions of the policy and impacted on delivery. Also social practice did not translate fully into delivery, as many tutors believed that learner centred equated to social

practice and the elements of critical thinking and empowerment were, in many cases, omitted from the teaching and learning practice.

This did not mean that some learners did not become empowered to deal with issues affecting their lives as is evidenced by some of the examples illustrated by the tutors but it is unclear as to whether or not the social practice model is the norm across Scotland as suggested by Merrifield (2005). Learning Connections and others have stated that Scotland has adopted a social practice model but, as Maclachlan points out, 'adopted' can have two meanings in this context.

'Adopted, in the sense that I believe Learning Connections intends it, refers to the fact that the social practices model is an ideal that we have embraced, that we aspire to and that we are working towards attaining. The alternative meaning suggests we <u>have</u> taken it on board and it is reflected in practice throughout the country. The former is aspirational, the latter describes what is' (Maclachlan 2006 p 34). Maclachlan believes that '*it is the aspirational rather than descriptive form of adopted that conveys where we stand and that this needs to be clearly articulated and understood in all levels and types of communication'* (ibid 2006). If the commitment to a social practice approach is still intended to shape literacies teaching in Scotland then it is essential that politicians, civil servants, managers and tutors understand that the social practices model is aspirational and that there is a long road to travel before it becomes a reality and the evidence from the managers and tutors in this research

supports the aspirational rather than the descriptive interpretation of adopted.

I will attempt to address this issue in a later chapter where I will explore possible actions which might assist this process.   Before that, however, the following chapter recounts the responses given by learners.

CHAPTER 9

Research Findings - Learners

Introduction

The original purpose of this research was to determine whether or not learners achieved their goals. I had assumed that those delivering literacies had adopted a social practice model of teaching and learning, however during the interview phase with managers and tutors it became apparent that this was not necessarily so. As a result, the focus of the research altered to an exploration of whether or not the assertion that policy and practice in Scotland was predicated on a social practice model was correct and, if this was not the case, why was it not so.

A consequence of this shift of focus was that the questions already asked of the learners did not relate directly to the social practices approach but concentrated on the achievements of learners, what had prompted them to participate in literacies tuition at this particular time and what their previous experiences of learning had been. The learners were interviewed first and, because the thesis was, at that time, based on goal achievement, those selected for interview were either at the end or approaching the end of their initial course of learning. It was only when the interviews with the managers and learners started that I realised there was an issue surrounding the social practice approach and decided to alter the focus of this thesis. By that time the learners had dispersed and it was impossible to conduct additional interviews which might have elicited information relating to social practices. However, their responses did support the

notion that a learner centred approach was utilised by tutors and the methods contained some of the elements of a social practice approach as claimed by the tutors.

It was still important to discover whether or not learners achieved their pre-determined goals and to attempt to unpack from their responses any evidence of social practices.

As the methods chapter has indicated, it was difficult to access learners as this contact was dependent on the managers and tutors. Tett and Maclachlan (2006) also discovered in their research it was problematical to access students as this access required to be mediated through stakeholders and gatekeepers. The debate about power and learning is not a new phenomenon as illustrated by a number of critiques offered by Brookfield (2001), Campbell (1996) and others. Tett and Maclachlan highlight this issue by pointing out that *'The power relationships that pervade all adult education are especially pervasive in ALN contexts because the dominant discourses surrounding ALN are constructed on a deficit model of ALN students'* (Tett and Maclachlan 2006 p2). They also suggest that the lack of participants might be due to the fact that tutors were unwilling to allow *their* learners to participate as they (the tutors) perceived them to be vulnerable (ibid 2006).

It has been suggested that some tutors adopt a maternal approach to their students (Tett and Maclachlan 2006) 'protecting' them for any outside influence thus preventing any researcher from accessing the learners. It may also be the case that tutors wish to project a positive image of the

work they are doing and only approach those learners they feel will substantiate this view.

Given these caveats, the outcomes of this chapter should be treated exactly as they are, the comments made by a selection of learners which may or may not be representative of the whole. However, it is possible from their responses to address the issue of whether or not a social practice model was used in the learning and teaching process and whether or not learners achieved their goals.

In common with the national evaluation (Scottish Executive 2005a) a substantial number of the twenty-one interviewees involved in this research were unemployed. The national survey indicated that some 40% of their interviewees were unemployed compared to 35% indicated in this research. These figures perhaps point to a similarity between national and local figures indicating that it might be possible that approximately a third of those involved in literacy programmes are, indeed, unemployed.

As with the national evaluation the local sample was predominately female (66%), white British (94%) and in dedicated community provision (96%). A number of those not in employment (22%) were women with young families who were all intending to return to the labour market when their children started nursery or school. In addition, all of the respondents outlined some issues regarding their schooling which had affected their ability to learn effectively.

When analysing the interviews from the learners in this study it became obvious that many of their answers were almost identical. To avoid repetition and to locate the issues raised in the lives of 'real people' I decided to use case studies to illustrate the perspectives of those involved in literacies learning in the four partnerships. The following four case studies tell the story of the literacies journey of three individuals and one group of learners.

Case Study 1 - Mary

Mary was a twenty-nine year old with mild learning difficulties who lived with her parents. It transpired during the interview that they were rather over protective but still wanted her to learn the basic skills of literacies. Mary attended a local primary school where she failed to keep up with her peer group and teachers experienced difficulty in trying to help her. As a result of this the school staff instigated a meeting with her parents to discuss what options there were available to assist Mary to learn the rudiments of a basic education. The outcome of this discussion was that it might be better for Mary if she was transferred to a school for pupils with special needs. Her parents were unsure if this was the most appropriate move but, after discussion, decided to follow the advice of the teachers and Mary moved to a special needs primary school. Her experience in this establishment was not as she and her parents had hoped. Mary felt that she was not being taught anything, she was never expected to do work at home which would be the norm for children of her age and her parents became increasingly worried about how she would cope in the adult world

if she could not read, write or use numbers.   Once again, her parents spoke to the teachers but were assured that she was doing well despite the fact that they could see no evidence of this.   As a result of a poor primary education when Mary moved to a special needs secondary school, the situation remained the same, she still felt that she was not being taught the basic skills and was well below the level for her age group.   Her parents were again told by teaching staff that she was doing well and that she would cope in later life but they were not convinced and decided to supplement the schooling by teaching her at home.   Mary's writing was, in her own words, atrocious and she had difficulty with numbers.   One example she gave of this difficulty was when shopping.   If the amount due was, for example, £5.50 she did not have the confidence to take her time and work out the exact amount but would proffer a ten pound note instead.

Mary continued her schooling and was supported by her parents and her basic skills did improve but she still lacked confidence.   When she reached the age of sixteen she had a decision to make, whether to remain at school or try to secure employment.   The school she attended dealt with mixed ability pupils many of whom had behavioural problems and Mary felt that as the teachers had to devote a great deal of time to the disruptive pupils they did not have any time left to teach those who needed and wanted help.   However, she did not want to leave school and become unemployed so she successfully applied for a job in the factory where her mother worked and remained there for about three years before she was made redundant.   She spent the following year trying to find employment and was eventually successful but, unfortunately, this only lasted six

months.   There followed two periods of factory work lasting approximately eight years until she was diagnosed with carpel tunnel syndrome and, as her doctor believed that the syndrome was caused by the type of work she was doing, he advised her to seek alternative employment.

While she was working in her first job she decided to attend a first aid course but found that she had difficulty in reading and understanding the texts and this upset her.   On the advice of her mother she decided to leave the course and did not participate in any form of learning for a number of years.   After her diagnosis and leaving her employment she attended the Job Centre and it was there that she saw an advert for the Big Plus and decided to explore this opportunity.   After her initial meeting with the development worker she enrolled in two classes, one to improve her writing and one to improve her mathematics.   Each course lasted twelve weeks and during that time her confidence improved and she was then encouraged to participate in a certificated ICT and English course.   She found this very hard but, with the support of the tutor and the development worker, she gained her qualification.   Mary has now secured employment in a large supermarket and operates a till, a task that she would not have been capable of prior to attending literacies classes.   Mary was aware that she had a learning plan and her initial goals were to build her confidence, improve her writing and her counting and she felt that these goals had been achieved.   Her long-term goals are to have a flat or house of her own and to perhaps go to college but she was unsure what she ultimately wanted to do.   She had thought of special needs childcare or beauty therapy but felt

that this might be beyond her. Her parents are very supportive but tended to protect her in that when she wanted to apply for local authority housing her mother suggested she was not ready to take this responsibility, when she was finding the first aid course difficult she was encouraged to give up, when she suggested, after she was made redundant for the first time, that she might attend a college course she was once again discouraged. Mary is a capable young woman who recognises that her parents, unintentionally, are impeding her development in that they do not want to upset her by saying that maybe she is not capable of doing a college course. She was the one who was pro-active in approaching the literacies team and her parents were unsure if this was a wise move but, since they have seen Mary's improved skills and confidence, they are supporting her in a more positive way by encouraging her to aspire to having her own home. Mary proposed approaching the development worker with a view to discussing what courses she should enrol for in the future.

If her family and her tutors support Mary throughout the learning process there is no reason why she should not achieve her long-term goals.

Case Study 2 - Diane

Diane was a very attractive, bright, bubbly lady who exuded confidence but was not really as confident as she appeared.   In her own words she said 'I *can do the talk but not the walk'*.   Diane grew up in a happy, affluent but strict family home and, when at school, she tended to express herself in rather an exuberant manner by being the 'class clown'.   She felt that she performed well in primary school but was not so successful in the

senior school environment.   Her family owned a business and it was assumed that Diane would leave school join the company, get married, have children and more or less live happily ever after.   As a result Diane was left to her own devices during her secondary education and, by her own admission, spent a great deal of time 'looking out of the window' and paying little attention to the teachers.   She did enjoy some subjects such as art and economics but did not enjoy English and her like or dislike of a subject seemed to depend on the teacher.   When she left school she followed in the footsteps of her mother and entered the business.   Her mother was an immigrant to this country and had received little education so there was not a tradition of learning in the family.

Diane married, against her parents' wishes, when she was seventeen and continued to work in the business until she was twenty-one.   She and her husband then moved to another part of the country but, when she was twenty-six, they divorced and Diane and her daughter moved again. When her daughter was five she returned to work and has been in employment ever since.   The year prior to the interview Diane worked for a publicity company and one of her clients was a large national organisation.   She ran this campaign very successfully for about six months and then her mother became terminally ill.   Diane would complete her days work and then have to drive some sixty miles round trip to attend to her mother.   This was despite the fact that she had brothers and sisters but they were less attentive than she was.   She continued this daily routine until her mother died.   Her mother's death affected her deeply.   She felt guilty that she had not given up work and looked after her full time, and

she eventually became depressed. Her partner suggested she should seek counselling but she decided against this. At this point she felt she could no longer continue with her current job as the pressure was such that she was unable to cope. She successfully applied for a position in a small PR company where she would be in charge of a small team and she felt that she could cope with this. However, she continued to feel pressure because she was not confident using a computer and realised that she could not rely on her personality alone but needed to improve her literacies and ICT skills.

One of her friends suggested she should approach the local literacies team which, eventually, she did. At her initial interview she was very emotional but the development worker was supportive and encouraged her to attend an English and ICT course which she duly did. This was a twelve week course and concentrated on basic ICT and improving the learners' writing and spelling ability. Diane found that she could understand what was being asked of her and her confidence grew as her literacies improved. At work she was required to write reports which she found very difficult and previously she spent many hours both at work and at home trying to do this task. Diane believed that her success in gaining employment was the enthusiasm and motivation she displayed at interviews but she also felt that she always let herself and the companies down because of her inability to carry out reasonably simple tasks involving writing and ICT. After the completion of her course she felt more confident about carrying out everyday tasks and was complimented by her manager on her improvement.

Previously in her private life Diane tended to ignore domestic correspondence and, as a result, bills would remain unpaid and any official document was ignored. Her increased confidence and ability enabled her to deal with these aspects of her life.

Attending literacies tuition improved both Diane's ability at work and in her family life and she was resolved to continue on the learning path but was unsure what route to take. She had been encouraged by her manager to think about becoming a trainer within the company but she was reticent to take this step as she preferred to continue working with her team and building on the progress she had made.

Case study 3 - Martin

Martin was a young father of two daughters. He and his wife worked very hard to provide a comfortable environment for their children. By his on admission Martin was a 'bit of a tearaway' when young. He missed much of his schooling as he and his friends preferred to engage in other activities during the day and when he did attend school he was amongst a group who caused trouble and spent a great deal of time in detention. No one in school appeared to pay any attention to this group, the teachers were probably relieved they did not attend too often because of the trouble they caused, and when in detention they were not given any work to do, they were simply left to their own devices.

There was no tradition in his family of academic achievement so he received no encouragement or chastisement from his parents. His father and other male members of his family were all ex-army and on leaving the army had been able to obtain employment in the building trade as labourers so he saw no point in learning English or mathematics. Martin could not wait to leave school and home so he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and joined the army as an infantry soldier. The infantry regiments are often referred to as 'cannon fodder' as they are the soldiers in the front line whose main task is to be able to use a rifle, they are not required to use extensive literacies skills such as their colleagues in other regiments. Martin learned the basics of reading and writing but was not proficient and the use of figures always confused him.

Sue Thain in Fowler and Mace (2005) gives an interesting insight into the army educational system. As she explains all the issues of daily living such as salary, housing, medical, clothing, food (in the case of a single soldier) are taken care of by the army who see their rôle as paternal and supportive but this system also prevents soldiers from becoming self-reliant. Thain also claims that the army adopt what Freire called a *'digestive concept of knowledge'* in their teaching and learning (ibid 2005). Almost every aspect of a soldier's life is dominated by paper work but a private soldier, especially in the infantry, is rarely expected to write anything other than to sign their name and, as far as reading is concerned, the only regular reading expected is that of the daily orders (ibid 2005). Martin had sufficient skill to read orders, or at least to identify when his name was mentioned, and, if he was unsure, he would ask a friend. He

also learned to recognise certain numbers when operating on the rifle range but he never learned to *understand* numbers simply to recognise the ones he needed to know.

After he completed his initial period in the service and there appeared to be no prospect of promotion he decided to leave. The 'civvy street' he returned to was different to the one experienced by his father in that unskilled employment was not easy to obtain. The recession in the building trade meant that there were fewer opportunities for skilled tradesmen let alone unskilled ones. For a number of years he drifted from temporary job to temporary job but, once married, he realised he needed to find secure permanent employment. He eventually found employment with a local company in a junior clerical post. This involved answering the telephone, speaking to clients, photocopying, dealing with the post, all tasks he was capable of doing as they did not require a high level of literacies skills. However, his employer was impressed with his dedication, his pleasant personality and his eagerness to undertake any task asked of him and suggested he might like to apply for a more senior clerical post which had become vacant. Martin successfully applied for the promoted post but soon realised that he did not have the necessary skills to carry out his duties and asked his employer if he could return to his original position. Fortunately, his immediate line manager was sympathetic and suggested, rather than giving up, he could perhaps try to improve his literacies. As a result, Martin contacted the Big Plus and enrolled in a twelve week reading and writing course offered in the local community education centre. During the teaching and learning process

the tutor used materials from Martin's work place which helped him to locate his learning in a familiar context. With the support of his tutor and his line manager Martin's skills improved and he was able to make sense of the work he was being asked to do but, most importantly, his confidence levels rose and he decided to continue attending classes in reading and writing and also to tackle a basic mathematics course.

Martin had a strong local accent and naturally spoke in what would be termed as 'broad Scots' but due to his promotion at work and contact with clients he came to realise that he required to modify his accent in certain situations. He was aware that using the dominant language was necessary in certain domains but happily used the vernacular when speaking to his friends. Interestingly, by his own admission, he began to correct his two pre-school age children when they used the vernacular as he perceived that they would have a better start in life if they could 'speak properly' rather than using the local dialect. As with Diane the improvement in literacies skills enabled Martin to improve his employment prospects and impacted on his family life. He was able, for the first time, to read stories to his children, deal with household correspondence and, in general, felt more confident about his abilities.

Case Study 4 – Group Learning

In order to identify good practice and the challenges facing employers in relation to the development of work place literacies, Partnership C undertook a limited research project amongst small, medium-sized and large companies within the geographical area. The scope of the research

was based on the three areas outlined in the briefing provided by the Scottish Executive, awareness, identification of need and solutions.

One outcome of this research was the development of a pilot work place literacies project in a medium sized company. The Partnership, in collaboration with a call centre company, offered a workplace literacies course to eleven members of staff. The call centre employed over five hundred members of staff and is based in a large town within the partnership area. The members of the group were identified by the management as requiring assistance with written language, in particular spelling, grammar and punctuation. Most of the participants had recently been promoted from Agent level, working on the call centre 'shop floor', to Team Leader level and their new responsibilities, which involved substantially more written communication, highlighted their need for improved literacies. When working as an agent they were given a script which was simple, comprising short, easily read sentences and did not require a high level of skill whereas a team leader was expected to communicate with others in the company using e-mail, take notes at meetings, write scripts for new products and read materials circulated by the company.   The course was tailored to the needs of the company and the employees and was entitled 'Communication in the Workplace'. The tutors followed the usual procedure of developing an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with each learner and these plans included the specific needs of the learner and their immediate goals. The learning was situated in the learners' lives, especially in the workplace, and included the use of documents typical to this particular workplace such as e-mails, appraisals

and minutes of meetings. These were used for diagnostic purposes in relation to course content and as learning tools during class sessions. The course ran for eleven weeks and culminated in an evaluation session attended by the learners, one of the tutors, the CEO of the company, a representative from the HR department and the senior member of staff from the Council who had overall responsibility for the delivery of the literacies strategy. The tutors delivering this course were part of the cadre of tutors interviewed during this research and I was asked by the manager to informally evaluate the pilot. The evaluation took the form of a discussion group and the following points were highlighted.

The participants gained confidence and, as a result, were more efficient in the workplace. The time previously spent producing written reports and e-mails was dramatically reduced thus improving time management and allowing team leaders to spend more time with their members of staff.

They also felt that the increase in confidence impacted on their family lives as they were more equipped to assist with children's homework, understand bank statements, use recipes and read newspapers.

The learners also became more self-aware. All had experienced some difficulty in their initial education but after participating in this course were aware of the issues they needed to address whether it was grammar, spelling or punctuation. One of the issues identified by the learners in their ILPs was oral communication. This was not originally part of the course and was not covered formally but was the subject of debate. Learners were aware that their written communication with their staff and

members of senior management required to be improved as they felt that they took a long time to compose e-mails, minutes and other forms of written communication. This was a key issue for management as, in many instances, the first contact a potential client may have with the call centre is through these members of staff and first impressions are critical.

The group began working more as a team rather than individuals, which was also beneficial for the company.

The overall assessment of the course by both managers and participants was that it had been a worthwhile and successful pilot. There were, however, certain factors which contributed to the success of this pilot project. Firstly, the CEO was enthusiastic and supportive of the project and encouraged the staff to participate. Secondly, as the participants did not normally start work until 12.30pm it was relatively easy to identify a suitable time to deliver the course which ran from 1000am until 12 noon. It did mean, however, that the participants were required to attend the course in their free time.

At no time were the participants told they were participating in literacies learning, rather that they were undertaking an in-service course to improve communications. At the evaluation, those involved in the pilot project admitted that if they had realised it was about literacies they would not have participated because, until they started, they did not realise they could improve their usage. Using this approach it may be possible to reach people who have latent need but have not recognised this need. Alternatively, it may be regarded as learning 'by stealth' (Barr 1997)

referred to in an earlier chapter. Barr contends that there are dangers in utilising an interventionist strategy that pretends not to be one. Whether this applies to the pilot project is not clear-cut. The fact that those responsible for the delivery of the pilot course felt that the literacies element was covert perhaps says more about their stereotypical perceptions, as literacies is communication through written signs and symbols.

Case Studies Summary

The first three case studies are descriptive, they tell the story of three learners and their journeys towards achieving their goals. They had a number of things in common, firstly they all, for a variety or reasons, had problems learning basic literacies skills while at school, secondly, they initially evidenced a lack of confidence in their abilities to use literacies effectively and, thirdly, as a result of their participation in literacies learning, they all achieved their initial goals and had a feeling of increased confidence.

The question of initial education was not addressed in the 2005 evaluation of the ALN strategy therefore no comparisons can be made between the partnerships and the national picture but it was a factor concerning those participating in this research. Those who leave school with low levels of literacies are less likely to be able to compete effectively in the labour market, earn less than their more literate counterparts and are unable to deal with the dominant literacies in common use today as referred to earlier. A research paper produced by the National Research and

Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, University of London, on the impact of training and education in basic skills states *'comparing those who have basic skills as an adult with those who do not, there is conclusive evidence of the positive effect…that influence earnings and employment'* and *'De Coulon et al found that as literacy and numeracy increased, so did earnings:'* (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009 p2).   This indicates that there is a correlation between literacies levels and employment and earnings.   If a person is unable to decode and understand texts they are less likely to *'understand their world in terms of justice and injustice, power and oppression, and so ultimately, to transform it'* (Papen 2005 p11).   People who are unable to compete with the pressures placed on them because of poor literacies are likely to remain subjects rather than objects as defined by Freire and to perpetuate this situation into the next generation.   Those who are perceived, or perceive themselves, to have 'failed' at school are unlikely to want to repeat this experience and return to the scene of their 'failure' i.e. a location akin to a classroom, but a social practices approach, situated in real situations, not emphasising their failures but their successes, would enable them to acquire literacy skills and learn how to use them to their advantage to address critically the power of dominant literacies.

The information provided by the learners in the case studies, in common with all interviewees, indicated that all believed they had, or were on the way, to achieving their goals and there was no doubt that their confidence and competence had increased in their work, family and personal lives. There was no evidence to suggest that, at this stage, their newfound

knowledge impacted on community life or that they felt empowered to alter the world around them but they have taken the first steps towards this in that their learning has impacted on their personal, family and work life. This fact detracts in no way from the learners progress and the impact it has had on their lives but without a sophisticated tracking system it is impossible to determine the long term outcomes and overall success of the strategy in relation to all the elements of a social practices approach. However, *'knowledge grows exponentially, the more we know, the greater our ability to learn, and the faster we expand our knowledge base'* (Brown 2009 p420). Although this is a quote from a work of fiction it is none the less true and it has to be hoped that, if the learners continue to participate in learning, they may be encouraged to address other issues which affect their lives. However, if the critical and power aspects of literacies is not raised by the tutors it is more likely that the change effected will be more conformist and remain at the individual and family level. They have undoubtedly been influenced by their learning experience but, as Tett and Maclachlan also noted in their research, *'the change process was essentially individualised'* (Tett and Maclachlan 2006).

Some of the comments made by learners re-enforced the deficit model of teaching and learning in that they (the tutors and learners) focussed on what required to be 'improved', i.e. their weaknesses, rather that what the learner could actually do. It is, of course, important to address what learners cannot do, but it is how this is accomplished that is critical. It is necessary to embed literacies in a broader social practice (Papen 2005) and

to recognise that learners are members of different communities of practice, as we all are, and acknowledge that it is what they bring to the learning that differentiates social practice from a deficit model (Fowler and Mace 2005). If literacies need to be embedded in the daily lives of learners this raises the question as to whether or not discrete literacies courses can adopt a social practices approach as they are situationally separated. Papen illustrates her point by providing an exemplar of embedding literacies in a wider social context by exploring the literacies required to travel by train from Leeds to London. She rightly highlights the complex nature of this task which involves both literacy and numeracy and it is social in that one has to interact with other people and it certainly empowers the individual by enabling them to use a train time table and take a train journey (Papen 2005) but, as Tett and Maclachlan (2006) suggest the change process relates to the individual. If one accepts Papen's example of a social practice approach then it is possible to deliver this model in discrete literacies provision but it does not necessarily embrace all the elements suggested by Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (1999) and Maclachlan (2006). Papen's illustration is in accord with the methods used by the tutors involved in this research in that they focussed on the social practices of the individual but, even in the workplace example, there was no attempt to deal with either the power of literacies or the critical and collective nature of literacies.

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The learners' experience of learning and whether or not a social practice model was used is a crucial aspect of this research. All the learners

interviewed in this research evidenced a positive learning experience as the following quotes illustrate:

'Basically it was to do with my confidence, I could do it and I think coming to these classes, that's just brought me up and it has given me the confidence (Mary Learner Partnership A).

'I can see me getting better all the time because I want to put more in and that's what I was telling the girls (the tutors), *you do and you remember … so that's helped me immensely'* (Diane Learner Partnership C).

'Another thing, I'm more confident with, usually if I was sending e-mails to my boss it would be short and sweet, I know you can be short and sweet but at least it is now straight to the point, I'm more confident to do things like paragraphs for instance and put things in more detail, more grammatically correct I am definitely more confident' (Martin Learner Partnership C).

'I was very nervous at first but the tutor was supportive and I have learned so much it's unbelievable. I am no longer afraid to open letters or anything that comes through the door, I feel I am able to tackle most things but I am not afraid now to ask for help' (Learner 4 Partnership B).

These responses chime with those contained in the national evaluation where learners were overwhelmingly positive about their learning experiences (Scottish Executive 2005) but neither this research nor the national evaluation had access to learners who, for whatever reason, had left the programmes before achieving their goals. There appears to be

little or no research relating to learners who drop out of programmes but one statistic which is shown in Partnership A's 2004 annual report is that some four hundred and sixty one learners out of a total of one thousand two hundred and seven left their programmes. Without empirical data it is impossible to say why this is the case but the fact that approximately one third of learners leave a programme of learning is worthy of further investigation.

To return to the question of the use of a social practice model in the learning and teaching experience it would appear from comments made by learners that tutors used some elements of this approach.

One learner was required to take minutes of meetings and the tutor used this material, integrating the real life situation into the teaching and learning process. *'Because I take a lot of notes at meetings and I've got to go back and type it up and since I've done this course it's been totally different, you can see it a lot better, you can read it better, it's just improved a lot. The tutor told me how to lay it out and helped with spelling and punctuation'* (Learner 1 Partnership C).

Another learner had difficulty with numeracy, especially when dealing with money so her tutor used labels from items she (the tutor) had purchased. *'It was good because the tutor used labels, especially from sale items, which helped me calculate how much was being saved and she used real money to help me work out what change there should be'* (Learner 4 Partnership A).

A third learner was an ESOL student who worked in the care sector and was required to undertake tests to improve her qualifications. Her spoken English was good but her written English was poor. She was in a group with others in the same situation so the tutor could tailor the course to their needs. *'By doing the things we needed for the tests helped but we learned more. The tutor helped us with the writing for our tests but I had other goals as well. I would like to get proper qualifications so I needed to be able to read better and understand things and the course helped* (Learner 6 Partnership B).

General Issues Raised in Interviews

A number of general issues were raised during the interviews which were relevant to the study. Most of the learners had multiple reasons for wishing to improve their literacies and only 10% cited a single reason.

The single reasons were to improve spelling, reading or writing. Interestingly, only one learner expressed a need to improve number work. However, despite only citing one reason the learners realised throughout the course of learning that they required help with a number of issues. Phrases such as *'you didn't understand how much you had done wrong in the day to day work until you came here for a few classes, I think you are more aware now of when you have to be … your slang and when you have to speak properly, I take a lot of notes and then I have to write it into the proper grammar so it has helped me'* (Learner 1 Partnership C). were common amongst the respondents. Of those who cited multiple reasons, 28% mentioned employment or the advancement in their current

employment which was slightly higher than the 24% recorded in the national evaluation. This differential may be partly explained by the fact that the three partnership areas had lost their traditional industries and people were required to retrain and that one case study was a work based learning course.

One learner highlighted this issue during an interview as follows:

'My skills were no longer required. I was a dyer with Coats Paton and this was a skilled occupation, requiring accuracy and technical expertise. The work is now done by computers and there is no need for my expertise any more, but I have not learned to use computers and my spelling and writing is not very good'.

Of the learners interviewed 28% were encouraged to do so by their employers. However, the employers, while encouraging them to attend classes, made no allowances for their learning, so they were expected to attend courses in their free time. Others in employment were also encouraged by their employers and were given access to ICT provision in the work place but they also had to study in their free time unless the course was certificated and relevant to their employment. 32% wanted to improve their skills to enable them to access other courses, in particular ICT, as they saw this as a way into employment or to improve their opportunities in their existing employment. A smaller percentage (12%) wanted to help their children with homework and 16% wanted to improve their self-confidence.

Learners were not asked a direct question relating to ILPs, although some volunteered this information, therefore it is impossible to assess whether or not they were aware of this documentation or not and how it was used during the learning process.

They were asked, however, if they had set goals and 79% said that they had and that this had been done either at the initial interview with a full time member of staff or by the tutor.   One possible explanation as to why some learners were not aware that they had an ILP or learning plan could be that those conducting the initial interviews did not formalise the question relating to goals and/or ILPs but gleaned the information through conversation, although this cannot be verified.   However, this chimes with Tett's views on power relationships in ALN between tutor and learner, placing the learner in a subordinate position and the tutor in the dominant rôle (Tett 2006) and this is contrary to a social practices approach.   To enable a learner to achieve their goals and gain confidence in their ability to 'use' the skills they must have ownership of their ILP, understand what their goals are and be able to measure progress towards them.

Summary

Whilst the interviews with the learners indicated that some elements of a social practice model were integrated into their learning experiences, there was no evidence that the model had been adopted in its entirety.   The elements of a social practices model which were included in the teaching and learning were the learner centred approach, the use of materials which were situated in the learners' lives, the recognition of the different ways

adults learn and, in some cases, reflection on the impact of literacies in their lives which can be empowering and tutors are to be commended for bringing this flexibility into the learning contexts. The elements that appeared to be missing were that tutors built their teaching on what learners could not do rather than recognising the wide range of literacies used by them and their experience in them (Maclachlan 2006). There was no evidence from either the tutors or the learners that the issue of the power of formal literacies was ever addressed, the teaching was about addressing the functional elements of literacies, and it was not obvious learners were taught to adapt and transfer these skills to different contexts. However, learners could, and did, transfer literacies skills into their personal and family lives When visiting literacy classes Rogers (2001) seeks to determine how the group can bring daily literacies into the classroom and how the group can take the classroom literacy out into the daily lives of the participants. He admits this is a difficult task but, unless it happens, he maintains that what is learnt in the classroom appears separate from real life. He emphasises the importance of using texts from the world outside the classroom and maintains that adults learning from the texts they use regularly is *'helping both the learning of literacy skills and the transfer of literacy from the classroom into daily lives'* (Rogers 2001 p19). The tutor's use of materials relevant to learners helped them relate their learning to their daily lives.

However, tutors were caught in the dilemma of attempting to deliver using a social practice model and, at the same time, meeting the requirements laid down by the Scottish Executive, who provided the funding. This was

because alongside the promotion of a social practice approach the rhetoric of sections of the ALNIS report and subsequent publications produced by the national agency, Learning Connections, reinforced literacies as an end in itself. There was a strong emphasis on employability in the reports which promoted *'a narrow type of skills-based learning for earning, that is antithetical to the critical and the creative that are integral to the ideological construction of literacies'* (Maclachlan 2006). In addition, the national publicity campaign entitled 'The Big Plus' focused primarily on improving the reading, writing and numeracy skills of learners, i.e. 'catching up'. The simple artifice of cloaking these within the learners' goals does not make it a social practice model.

The learners cited in the case studies had all completed their course of learning and believed that they had achieved the goals they expressed at the beginning of the process. Their confidence levels had risen and they were able to transfer their learning into their private and family lives. In the chapter relating to the tutors involved in this research there is evidence that they used a learner centred approach and the learners verified this. Auerbach (1999) suggests that, in a learner centred approach, learners are involved in all stages of the learning and, in particular, the curriculum and outcomes of the learning process. Through the ILPs learners were determining their own outcomes, stating their preferred methods of learning and shaping the curriculum, mainly by identifying their deficits. There is little doubt that the practice studied in this research was learner centred, what is not clear is whether it was social practice. Rogers (2001) suggests that when tutors focus on the current literacy tasks of learners and

their existing use of literacy, there is a danger that the inequalities in society are re-enforced rather than transformed. He further suggests, in common with other writers on adult literacy, that there is a need to *'help those who engage with us in developing their literacy skills to become more critically reflective of their experiences of literacy'* (Rogers 2001 p22). This would entail tutors being open about the power dimension of literacies and developing learners' critical capacities and meta-cognitive capabilities (Maclachlan 2006) and perhaps this is the final step that those involved in literacies in Scotland require to take to make the delivery truly a social practice approach. Whether it is possible for tutors employed by local government and subject to the constraints imposed by the national Government to take this step will be explored later.

The following chapter will further analyse the data gathered and will identify the impediments mitigating against the development of a social practice model of literacies and where there may be 'spaces' to allow this approach to flourish.

CHAPTER 10

All change, please!

Introduction

The preceding three chapters outlined data gathered from the three partnership areas and addressed the question raised earlier as to whether or not a social practice model is embedded in the policy, is articulated in practice and is demonstrable in the monitoring and evaluation process. The evidence gathered would indicate that a social practice model is indeed embedded in the national policy but is only partially implemented in practice and that there is no place in the monitoring and evaluation process to document whether this model has been universally adopted across the country. Whether or not the remaining twenty-nine partnerships have fully adopted this model is beyond the scope of this research but the fact that this is not the case in three partnership areas denotes that it is not universal. This chapter will identify some of the possible inhibitors preventing a truly social practice model of literacies delivery in Scotland and where there might be opportunities to develop this approach. This analysis falls into three categories, national, local partnerships and practice.

National

The initial drive for the improvement of literacies in Scotland came primarily from the evidence provided by IALS and was championed by one Minister, Henry McLeish, who became actively involved in promoting

the development of the strategy as indicated in a previous chapter. The fact that a Minister was promoting the development focussed the minds of the civil servants and ensured that action was taken. The sudden death in 2000 of Donald Dewar, the first First Minister of Scotland resulted in the Labour party electing a new leader, the said Henry McLeish, thus removing him from direct involvement in the literacies developments. McLeish's original remit to the adult literacies team was to provide *'a focus for the development of national policy and strategy on adult literacy and numeracy'* (McLeish 2000). The ALNIS document provided such a focus but was never intended to **be** the policy, only a guide to the development of the strategy.

However, the ALNIS report was adopted as the definitive policy document in relation to adult literacies in Scotland and this may have been partly due to the fact that McLeish's successor did not become actively involved in the literacies development but concentrated on other issues thus deflecting the energies of the civil servants to other projects and leaving the literacies development on 'the back burner'. At about the same time, the Head of the Further and Adult Education Division who had been so supportive of the literacies development was transferred to another post and his successor was given an extended remit which included the unenviable task of merging the Higher and Further Education Funding Councils resulting in the literacies development being relegated to a junior civil servant.

Despite the advent of the Scottish Parliament there was still no specific adult education legislation and informal adult education was

'characterised by official indifference and a preference for institutional forms of learning (Paterson 2003). The Scottish Executive did, however, turn its attention to community education and in 2003 produced their plans for community education, now renamed Community Learning and Development (CLD). The Strategic Review of Learning Connections (Scottish Government 2009) identified other stakeholders outwith the Scottish Government who had a rôle to play in supporting the development of CLD. In relation to adult education these organisations included Learning Link Scotland, an umbrella body for voluntary sector adult learning organisations, Scotland's Learning Partnership, a national partnership of learners and providers who run Adult Learner's Week and the Workers Educational Association (WEA), all of who receive government funding towards their headquarters costs and were subject to review by HMIE. Similarly, non-government organisations were identified in relation to youth work and capacity building. The report also highlighted the involvement in CLD of practice development bodies such as Learning and Teaching Scotland and Scotland's Colleges as having a rôle in areas such as youth work and schools, ALN and ESOL. The premise was that widening the scope of CLD should make it easier for learners to access learning that is suitable to them, where and when they want it, however the report also stated that the infrastructure support to adult learning was disjointed and that there was a lack of coherence between the support organisations, intermediaries, membership organisations and delivery organisations in CLD (ibid 2009).

The government's plans for CLD re-enforced the notion mooted in the Osler Report (1998) that community education was an approach rather than a sector and replaced the former integrated approach to community education by disaggregating the component elements into community based adult learning, youth work and community development (Galloway 2004 in Crowther 2006). The Strategic Review of Learning Connections would appear to support this desegregation. Crowther (2006) suggests that the movement from sector to approach complemented the changing nature of government from provider to enabler and regulator of service provision. He further suggests that this move *'meant a greater rôle for management information systems with the community educator expected to be more of an auditor rather than a specialist in educational activity'* (Crowther 2006 p5).

Because the Scottish Executive controlled both the resources and the monitoring systems, the civil servants and the inspectorate were better able to control the initiatives taken by CLD partnerships to ensure that the social and economic objectives of the Executive were met (ibid 2006). The removal of direct Ministerial involvement in literacies, the change of personnel and remit in the Further and Adult Education Division and the introduction of the community learning and development policy tied to the community planning process all contributed to literacies moving from a central concern of the Scottish Executive to a contributor to the community planning process. In addition, the Scottish Community Education Council, established as a result of a recommendation in the Alexander Report, was dissolved in the cull of quangos, resulting in no one

independent organisation overseeing all the elements of community education and no one to champion the cause at government level.

This situation pertained until, in the spring of 2010, the responsibility for CLD, including Learning Connections, was transferred to Learning Teaching Scotland. (LTS). LTS is a non-departmental public body funded by the Scottish Government whose central purpose is to *'ensure that everything it does contributes to the Scottish Government's National Purpose of creating a more successful country with opportunities for all to flourish through sustainable economic growth'* (LTS 2010). Time will tell whether or not the locating of CLD and Learning Connections in LTS will lead to a re-emphasis on vocationalism geared to supporting economic development rather than encouraging broader issues of individual/community empowerment and social justice thus creating a re-occurrence of the tension referred to by Barr (1999).

It is ten years since Henry McLeish made his announcement at the Community Learning and Development Managers' conference stating that local authorities must include ABE in their very top priorities. Due to a variety of factors, adult literacies is not among the top priorities let alone the very top priorities of local or national government. It now seems that the initial success of the development of the 'new literacies' initiative in Scotland has been overtaken by the events outlined above and there is therefore a danger that the current adult literacies provision will suffer the same fate as its predecessor, ABE, and become almost invisible amongst the competing agendas of educational provision unless a pro-active stance

is taken at government level. There may however be a rôle for the voluntary sector organisations involved in adult learning to open a dialogue with elected members with a view to ensuring that literacies is treated as a top priority. Anything less will not solve the underlying problem of people remaining ill equipped to contribute to their own and Scotland's future (McLeish 2000).

However, any action taken by the voluntary sector organisations would not necessarily guarantee that a social practice model would be promoted. Unless there is an understanding amongst the organisations involved in community based adult learning as to what is meant by social practice and the implications of this approach for their organisations there is a danger that the autonomous approach to literacies may dominate, as is the case in England and Wales (Crowther 2006). The Moser Report (1999) promoted a more inflexible core curriculum than that promoted in Scotland and included testing to prescribed standards and the attainment of performance targets, in other words a functional approach to literacies learning.

It is possible that a strong independent national organisation for adult literacies such as those outlined in Chapter 4 and Appendix B could challenge any move towards the autonomous model and protect the social practice approach but, as no such organisation currently exists, the burden lies with Learning Connections and it is as yet unclear how much autonomy this organisation will have located as it is within LTS. To promote this unique aspect of the Scottish model of literacies and ensure the universal adoption of a social practices method, a multi- disciplinary

approach and a recognition by all involved that, at the moment, this is not a universal truism is required and more work needs to be carried out to ensure that it becomes so.   This is not an easy task as it has been argued that the national developments mitigate against the continuance of this approach and appear likely to focus on the economic perspectives of the national government rather than the development of individuals and groups.   Moreover, in 2008 the Government entered into single outcome agreements with each of the thirty-two Scottish authorities.   The agreements contain fifteen outcomes including a focus on employment, business, children and young people, and a number of targets, including literacies, against which the outcomes will be measured.   It has to be assumed that Community Planning Partnerships will expect those delivering literacies to contribute to the achievement of these outcomes. The effect of this could be a move to the autonomous approach of literacies learning, where the acquisition of skills divorced from social context can be measured, to meet short-term objectives rather than taking the longer-term view of developing individuals and groups to address the issues which affect them.   Literacies learning is not just about acquiring the functional skills, although this is an important element, it is about what people do with these skills to become subjects and not objects in this world.

One positive note is struck on the LTS web-site where it is stated that *‘literacy and numeracy are complex capabilities rather than a simple set of basic skills, learners are more likely to develop and retain knowledge, skills and understanding if they see them as relevant to their own context*

and everyday literacies practices and learning should be negotiated with the learner through an individual learning plan, selecting the knowledge and skills most relevant to the individual learner's goals (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2010). So the rhetoric affirms many elements of social practice but without the structures and processes in place to mandate the implementation of this broad vision of literacies learning, then it is unlikely to permeate down to all levels of practice.

Before exploring the situation at partnership level there are two other national issues that impact on the promotion of a social practice model of literacies, training and monitoring and evaluation.

Training

The national survey undertaken by the Scottish Executive shows that the majority of tutors involved in ALN teaching were employed on a part time or voluntary basis. Of the seventy-five tutors responding to the national questionnaire, thirty-nine were part time and fourteen were volunteers (Scottish Executive 2005). This was partially replicated in this research. Of the twenty-eight tutors interviewed, eleven were full time and seventeen were part time or sessional staff. The managers nominated the interviewees none of whom were volunteers. The national evaluation also shows that access to staff development was not evenly spread and one of the overall recommendations of the evaluation was that *'Greater access to good quality and appropriate staff development and support for part-time staff and volunteer tutors'* (ibid 2005 p97) should be provided.

It is not possible to directly compare the results of the national evaluation and this research in relation to access to staff development as all the part-time tutors interviewed had completed the ITALL course as opposed to approximately one third of those involved in the national evaluation, because these interviews took place during the implementation phase of ITALL. One interesting finding from this research was that the full-time members of staff who were community education trained were not required to undertake the ITALL course but were, in most instances, expected to deliver the training. In Chapter 7 the evidence indicates that the training of community educators is uneven and, while some may have the skills to train literacies tutors, others do not. During the period of this research I was the external examiner for one of the universities offering the BA in Community Education and it was evident that not all students were trained either to deliver literacies or train tutors to do so. Community Educators are trained generically and adult education is an option which an individual student may or may not choose and does not necessarily include adult literacies. It should not be assumed that community educators can, by osmosis, assimilate the skills and knowledge required to tutor learners or train tutors. However, it should be noted that some of the tutors interviewed had undertaken additional training in adult literacies, mostly in their own time and self financed.

The ITALL course was originally devised mainly to train tutor assistants and it was expected that they would then partner an experienced tutor to hone their skills. All the partnerships involved in this research expected their part time and sessional tutors to complete the course prior to

employment and only one followed the guidelines and paired the newly qualified tutors with experienced literacies workers. It would appear that there was a general acceptance that tutors required this qualification but, as Ackland (2006 p 40) points out, *'it is unclear just where the directive emanates from and with what authority it is actually invested'*. She also states that *'the requirement for all literacies workers to undertake this qualification does not, however, appear in any of the policy documents or official correspondence to partnerships'* (ibid p 41)

The original recommendation in the ALNIS report was that *'a national training strategy should provide national training standards for all staff and volunteers whose rôles relate to literacy and numeracy tuition and a new qualification for specialist literacy and numeracy practitioners'* (Scottish Executive 2001a p 4). At the time of this research no national strategy had been developed. ITALL has been converted into a PDA course and accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and Strathclyde University, in collaboration with partners from the higher and further education sectors, has developed, and is now offering, a Teaching Qualification at diploma level in Adult Literacies (TQAL) but there is nothing in between.

The information contained in Chapter 6 shows that the managers felt that there should be a national pathway established for the training of literacies tutors with multiple entry points and that literacies should be offered as a specialism in the training of allied professionals.

Regrettably, I did not include the question of future training of tutors when formally interviewing the tutors but, anecdotally through discussion, many of them felt that they wanted accredited training to be provided to enable them, and the teaching of literacies, to be 'recognised' in the wider world of education.

In Ackland's research she states that *'The necessity of qualifications is a constant theme. The words 'had to', 'have to', or, with respect to TQAL, 'will have to' recur throughout the dialogues. These verb phrases express not just necessity, but obligation. They suggest an internalisation of the imperative.'* (Ackland 2006 p 41). She further states that when the imperative is questioned the subsequent responses *'draw on the concept of professional with the underlying assumption that the term brings with it an obligation of formal accreditation, and that to deny such a requirement would be unprofessional'* (ibid 2006 p 41). She quotes Goodson (2003 p125-126) who distinguishes between the terms 'professionalisation' and 'professionalism'. Professionalisation is *'the pursuit of status and resources for an occupational group'* whereas professionalism involves *'teachers definitions of their peer group practices, their best way of pursuing the art and craft of teaching'* (Ackland 2006 p41).

What is it that those working in adult literacies actually want, do they want to improve the status and resources for ALN or do they want to improve their practices? Professionalisation and professionalism are not mutually exclusive but, as Ackland discovered in her research, some practitioners experience *'tension here between their values with respect to their best*

ways of pursing professional development and the purposes of accreditation as part of a professionalisation agenda' (Ackland 2006 p 41). This tension is partly caused by the fact that some partnerships in Scotland insist that all involved in literacies should undertake the ITALL training, even if they are experienced managers or tutors. This suggests that those insisting on this condition are seeking to professionalise literacies in terms of its status with other professionals otherwise they would not expect experienced staff to undertake what is basically an introductory course for tutor assistants rather than providing training to enable them to build on their existing skills.

From the evidence in this research it would appear that the majority of those working in the field of adult literacies are not merely seeking status and recognition for there was a genuine desire to improve the delivery of the service. Tutors were focussed on the learner and what was best for them in terms of teaching and learning, they were prepared, when possible, to attend in-service training to improve their skills and knowledge and they discussed with their supervisors how best to improve their practice. It was, however, understandable that those working part-time, with fixed term contracts desired to have their positions recognised and regularised and that they also see the acquisition of qualifications as a route to more permanent employment.

However, it is not sufficient to simply train a cadre of literacies specialists. If Scotland is to claim that a social practice model of literacies learning is being delivered then staff in other disciplines need to be able to recognise

when literacies support is necessary and know where to access this provision.   Those working with, for example, young people, community groups, in FE colleges, all play a rôle in the delivery of literacies, albeit in some cases unknowingly, and there needs to be a greater recognition of the part they play to ensure that these members of staff receive appropriate awareness training.   They do not need to be experts in literacies delivery, this can be carried out in conjunction with an experienced tutor, all they require to do is to spot the need and be able to refer to the appropriate agency or bring a tutor into their workplace to develop embedded literacies learning.

It has been recognised that there is a need to up-skill CLD staff in general and the Standards Council for CLD, which replaced Ce Ve, was tasked to establish a National CLD Workforce Development Strategy. The Government allocated £1 million for the financial year 2009-2010, of which a large proportion was available to partnerships to develop local strategies for workforce development and improve access to continuing professional development.

The definition of CLD given by LTS is that *'Community Learning and Development (CLD) is learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods.   A common defining feature is that the programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with the communities and participants'* (LTS 2010).   This statement defines an approach and supports Crowther's suggestion regarding the movement of CLD from a

sector to an approach complementing the Government's shift from provider to enabler and regulator of provision.

The programme for the development of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for those working in CLD is based on the Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy, produced by the Government in 2007. This document states that learning is *'about understanding how the demand and utilisation of skills can contribute to the development of the economy and support individuals to access the labour market to improve their own lives. This is particularly important for those individuals and young people who have moved away from work and learning and now need appropriate skills to re-enter'* (Scottish Executive 2007). The subsequent document giving details of the programme to up-skill CLD staff states that staff should be enabled to *'facilitate learner journeys through use of the SCQF and out-come focussed recognition of learning'* as one of the priority areas for attention (Scottish Government 2009). The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) assists employers, learners and the general public to understand the Scottish qualifications system and how the various qualifications relate to each other. It takes the form of a simple matrix grouping equivalent qualifications together and matching them on a scale from one to five.

Another development in the up-skilling of CLD staff resulted from the fact that Learning Connections commissioned Blake Stevenson Ltd. to conduct a scoping exercise in relation to the up-skilling of CLD staff and one recommendation contained in this report stated that there should be a

partnership relationship between Learning Connections and Lifelong Learning United Kingdom (LLUK) to oversee the day to day management of the training programme (Blake Stevenson Ltd. 2009). The Scottish Government accepted this recommendation and LLUK was contracted to deliver training across the partnership areas (LLUK 2010). So the money that was apparently allocated to partnerships was, in reality, given to LLUK and partnerships could buy into the training offered by this organisation. LLUK is an independent employer-led sector skills council responsible for the training of staff in a variety of sectors, including community learning and development (LLUK 2010).

Many of the reports issued by the Government refer to citizenship and social inclusion but are underpinned by a human resource developments discourse (Crowther 2006) and there is a danger that those working in CLD will be driven to achieving the economic imperatives rather than the citizenship and social inclusion agendas. The developing picture as a whole indicates a subtle, or maybe not so subtle, change in focus. Basing the professional development on the Skills for Life document which is focussed on developing the economy and supporting individual's access to the labour market, and commissioning an employer-led skills council to deliver this training indicates a return to vocationalism as previously highlighted by Elsland (1986), Edwards (1993) and Barr (1999) and resurrects the tension between the commitment to social justice and servicing the economic imperatives of the state (Barr 1999).

Another point that has yet to be clarified is whether or not the courses on offer thought the CPD training will be accredited or whether there will be a pathway created leading to a professional qualification. If this transpires it is likely that those literacies tutors employed on a part-time or sessional basis may see this as a route to acquiring the qualifications they feel they require to be recognised as professionals as, at present, their choices are limited to ITALL and TQAL. If LLUK does not include training in the social practices approach, and the evidence to date suggests that it will not, there is a danger that the training of literacies tutors will support professionalisation rather than professionalism. which would impact on the service delivery.

Whether or not the future developments at national level will inhibit the use and development of a social practice model remains to be seen but, as the situation pertains at present, this approach is still theoretically embedded in the national policy. Vocational courses have a place in lifelong learning if learners are to have access to the entire gambit of educational opportunities but the illustrations of success used in the Skills for Life document, for example, tend to underline individual advancement and support their progress in mainstream society (Papen 2005), conforming to, rather than challenging society.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This issue has been explored in Chapter 7 and the indications were that the original aim of the ALNIS report, to measure progress by the distance

travelled by the learner, was no longer the yardstick of success as there was no opportunity in the national monitoring process to record this data.

As literacies was, and still is, part of Community Learning and Development the service is subject to the inspection process of the HMIe. Ackland contends that *'the current trend towards managing performance in education by means of measurements against targets is likely to inhibit risk taking, honest self-evaluation and therefore genuine breakthrough learning'* (Ackland 2006 p39). She also suggests that the use of a social practice model challenges the foundations of educational institutions and that practitioners require to respond with *'innovation, improvisation and creativity, to experiment with approaches with uncertain outputs'* (Ackland 2006 p 39). This does not fit with the target driven measurements used by the HMIe. It is not easy to measure progress which is based on distance travelled by a learner for, as Handy says, *'The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be easily measured or to give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide'* (quoted in Lavender 2003 p 10).

As Tett (2006) points out, the results of the international literacies survey led to governments providing funding to remedy the *'deficiencies'* highlighted in this survey and prescribed pre-set targets for minimum

levels of literacies competence. She further contends that *'behind these initiatives lie a set of ideological assumptions'* (ibid p2) which include the belief that the statistics provide an accurate account of people's literacies use and that formally assessed levels of literacy will enhance national economic prosperity (ibid 2006). Lavender suggests that this is a false premise in that formal assessments are a substitute for the measurement of achievement and that *'their construction will not in themselves measure progress, only individual achievement, and even then only achievement of a certain kind, since the national tests are free of context'*. To illustrate this point Lavender compares the introduction of targets, and in the case of England and Wales, national testing, with the ptarmigan's feet which are feathered and designed to keep their feet warm and facilitate easy movement across the snow. The simplicity of the design of the ptarmigan's feet is also their downfall in that, as they drag their feet across the snow, hunters can easily snare them. National targets, like the ptarmigan's feet *'are perfectly constructed for what they need to do'* but the focus on testing might distract attention from the real issues of participation, distance travelled by the learner and the development of a learner centred curriculum (Lavender 2003 p 10 - 11). So that which was designed for one purpose (national targets) may bring about the downfall of the thing in which it is located (i.e. literacies).

As shown in a previous chapter the annual reporting procedure was altered to exclude learner outcomes which indicates that the mangerialist discourse referred to by Ackland (2006) is becoming dominant and the adopting of measurable indicators based on soft targets *'places them in*

danger of becoming the definitive target outcomes to which learning is artificially oriented' (Maclachlan 2006 p 33). It might be possible for partnerships to include additional information gathered by tutors to add to the more functional information required by the Government but this is unlikely to be widespread or sustained if it is not required at partnership or national levels. If this is not possible then there are opportunities during inspections to include data relating to the distance travelled by learners, which would enable the Inspectorate to collate a clearer picture of literacies practices, which could add a wider dimension to the inspection report.

Fowler and Mace (2005) posit one method whereby the distance travelled by learners could possibly be measured to provide statistical data. They suggest that the tutor takes, for example, the concept of the learners' confidence in their literacies and, at the beginning of a learning experience, asks them to score on a scale of 1-4 how they would like to increase their confidence. After a period of time they repeat this exercise asking the learner to score their confidence levels again and the increased confidence can be used to provide statistical data. At both points the learners can explore their literacy levels in the domains outlined in the ALNIS report (ibid 2005). This is a similar method partnerships use to score their improvement against the various elements of the LIC pack. The Richter scale, which was developed a number of years ago to measure learners' progress, is also in use across Scotland and could be utilised for this purpose.

Local Partnerships

The Community Education element in authority A was originally located within the Department of Education but, prior to the beginning of this research, was transferred to the Department of Leisure.   However, shortly after the completion of the interview phase, the authority underwent another review which resulted in Community Education becoming, once again, the responsibility of the Department of Education.   This means that all three authorities involved in this research, in common with many across the country, currently locate Community Education within their departments of education.

This fact is significant for the future development of adult literacies in Scotland.   It has already been acknowledged that the local authority Community Education element of the literacies partnerships plays a major rôle in not only the delivery, but in the development of action plans for literacies and it is the local authority that is held accountable by the Scottish Government for the achievement of targets.   The term CLD covers a number of providers, including what was previously known as Community Education, but the responsibility for providing the empirical data to 'prove' that the monies allocated for adult literacies is addressing the issues of concern to the Government is not shared equitably, it is still the responsibility of the local authorities.

However, the local authority CLD sections are not only responsible for reporting on literacies development they are also subject to inspection under the heading of CLD and, as part of the Department of Education, are

also inspected during the area inspections of education departments. The criteria used to measure success in the reporting procedure for adult literacies, the HMIe inspection of CLD and that of education departments are different, resulting in CLD staff having to constantly gather evidence to meet the differing objectives of the reporting and inspection procedures. This exemplifies Crowther's (2006) point that a community educator has become more of an auditor than a specialist in educational activity. Indeed, Authority C employed a member of staff whose sole purpose was to collate data and produce reports and Authority A has recently diverted a qualified community educator to take responsibility for the provision of evidence to meet the varied needs of the reporting and inspections process.

One reason for the profusion of accounting procedures may be due to the fact that the remit for the various elements of CLD lie with different departments of the Scottish Government as explained earlier and no single department has the responsibility for the literacies strategy resulting in staff being *'pulled in confusingly different directions by the imperatives of their different masters'* (Maclachlan 2006). Eraut (1994) suggests that *'there will usually be some conflict between accountability measures which reflect the interests of different stakeholders'* and in the assessment of adult literacies there are at least three departments of the Scottish Government with a vested interest in CLD and, now that the definition of CLD has been extended to include additional sectors such as FE colleges and voluntary organisations, the accounting measurements are in danger of proliferating.

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This, once again, demonstrates the confusing picture in which managers in local authorities are expected to delivery literacies using a social practice model while providing evidence that will satisfy those who have responsibility for the outcomes of their various departments and organisations.

The planning process now requires partnerships to provide a strategic plan covering issues such as the values and ethos of the partnership, strategic aims and objectives in relation to financial allocation, overview of demand and need, awareness raising, staffing, monitoring and evaluation and quality measured against the elements of the LIC pack. Only one question relates directly to learners and their progress and this is couched in terms of how the partnership intends to measure progress and it refers to both quantitative and qualitative data. The problem facing partnerships is how to record the progress of learners based on distance travelled and translate this into data acceptable to the Scottish Government as highlighted in the 2006-2008 action plan submitted by Partnership A where it is stated *'To date this* (the data recorded on the ILPs) *has not been translated into quantifiable data: learners' goals differ in complexity and difficulty; timeframes set vary similarly; some learners achieve one goal then reset goals without leaving the service. It is felt that the use of numerical data obtained from a tick list of achievements would therefore be questionable, but in order to satisfy SE's requirements, a database will be set up in line with the Learner Outcome tracking form'* (Partnership A 2006 p11). Perhaps an adoption of the ethnographic approach suggested by Fowler

and Mace (2005) might address this issue and provide data which satisfies both the partnership and the Government.

Due to the fact that, as yet, there have been no generic summative assessments to measure 'success' in adult literacies as is the case in England and Wales, partnerships are able to continue to measure success by the distance travelled by learners. This may, however, cause difficulties for some of the partners involved in the delivery as they have their own monitoring and evaluation systems which may differ from those utilised in the field of literacies and do not necessarily use this yardstick as a measurement of success. If CLD is to encompass a wider grouping this issue requires to be addressed.

Perhaps a greater problem in securing universal delivery using this approach is how the wider world of CLD regards social practices. Those trained in community education, while perhaps not trained to actually tutor literacies, have been trained in community development and understand the processes required enabling individuals and groups to exercise their power as demonstrated in the examples previously illustrated in the ALP project, the dampness campaign and the housing development. This was before the notion of social practices was coined but staff working in these projects used a 'social practice' approach to their work with groups. Others now under the umbrella of CDL have received different types of training and are not necessarily cognisant with the notion of a social practice approach in practice or in action. Perhaps the CPD training being offered by LLUK could offer partnerships training in social practices but

this is unlikely given the basis on which they operate. To return to the analogy of partnerships and choirs perhaps each partner should continue to do what they are doing, and have been trained to do, and work together to provide a continuum of learning which would benefit learners thus offering a wide range of opportunities ranging from literacies based on a social practice model through to accredited programmes in further and higher education.

There are undoubtedly difficulties in incorporating an overt social practices approach to literacies at partnership level due to a variety of factors which include a) the format of the planning document which addresses strategic partnership issues and has little focus on the learner, b) the possible lack of understanding amongst partners as to what this approach entails and c) the need to match this action plan to the multiplicity of plans at local level. It is not, however, an impossible task providing local authority CLD managers take a lead rôle in promoting this approach. However, as can been seen in Chapter 6, CLD managers did not appear to recognise the full extent of what a social practice approach to literacies entails and cannot therefore lead upon what is only partially understood. Proposals suggesting how this might be rectified will be addressed in Chapter 11.

Practice

Despite the range of factors mitigating against the incorporation of a social practice model at partnership level tutors, as has been demonstrated, used a number of elements included in a social practice approach in their teaching

and learning and did focus on learners' existing use of literacy. Rogers (2001) cautions that by only dealing with the learners' current use of literacies there is a possibility that this will re-enforce the inequalities in society rather than transforming them. He suggests that the key is for tutors to enable learners to become *'critically reflective'* of their use of literacies (Rogers 2001 p 22). Many of the tutors also believed that they were utilising a social practices model equating it to learner centeredness. The key document used by tutors when developing a curriculum was the Individual Learning Plan and the following section will examine how this was developed.

Individual Learning Plans

Derrick (2002) suggests that there are two distinct metaphors dominating the way in which we think about learning, one is product-based where learners achieve qualification/skills, the other service-based in which professionals identify and respond to needs. He suggests that there are problems created with the use of either or both, of these approaches and that an alternative view might be to *'develop a model in which the state focussed on creating firstly, sustainable spaces for learning (cultural and physical); secondly, motivation for learning; and thirdly, a culture of encouragement for learning'* (Derrick 2002 p 2). He further suggests that any framework produced would be *'very similar'* (ibid 2002) to that suggested in the LIC pack. He claims that, if the suggestions in the LIC pack are followed, this provides opportunities for teachers and learners to set goals, processes and pathways, in other words, it is *'an enabling*

framework' (ibid 2002 p 2). The first step in identifying goals, processes and pathways is the development of the ILP. The LIC pack describes the initial assessment process as *'building on the initial meeting. It focuses on the specific gaps between the learner's literacy and numeracy capabilities and his/her current or anticipated needs'* (City of Edinburgh Council 2000 p 12). The ALNIS report states, under recommendation 7, that initial assessment should *'reliably identify individual learners' abilities and particular strengths and weaknesses in relation to relevant contexts'* (Scottish Executive 2001a p 25). Both of these quotes tend to highlight the deficit approach by referring to 'gaps' and 'weaknesses' but they also speak of the anticipated needs of learners and their strengths. All of the tutors interviewed adopted the LIC pack suggestion whereby they identified the learners' knowledge gaps in relation to where they were at the time and what their goals were. By identifying these gaps they believed they were then in a position to develop learning plans, and did so. These learning plans, however, did not necessarily include the learners' strengths and, although they aimed to help learners achieve their goals, these learning needs tended to be based solely on the gaps as evidenced by some of the tutors. It is, of course, necessary for tutors to address learning gaps but to focus on this aspect alone tends towards the deficit model of literacies rather than the social practices approach. When a learner first approaches a literacies provider they are usually doing so because they have identified their weakness and exposed their vulnerability. It takes a great deal of courage to take this step and if the interviewer focuses simply on the learner's deficits it simply re-enforces their low feeling of self

worth.   As Tett and Maclachlan conclude *'literacies students enter the learning situation not as equal adults, but as marked unequals that are positioned in the power hierarchies even lower than the 'normal' learner'* (Tett and Maclachlan 2006 p3).

Rather than taking the learners' everyday activities and looking at what the rôle of reading, writing and text was in these activities (Barton 2002) tutors focussed on what the learners perceived as their needs in terms of skills acquisition and, by doing so, possibly reinforced the inequalities in learners' lives by not encouraging them to **use** these skills to challenge the status quo.   Tett suggests that both the personal and social damage resulting from inequality are vast and that a component element of social inclusion is to assist learners to identify the inequalities affecting them enabling them to challenge the status quo *'in order to achieve and stimulate change'* (Tett 2003 p 5).   There is, of course, a need to improve skills, but tutors should start from the things people do in their lives (Barton 2002) and determine what the literacies rôle and their current practices are in these contexts.   The learners involved in this research were not illiterate, they were all able to read, write and use numbers to a greater or lesser extent but had realised that they could improve their skills and, at the time of their enrolment, wished to do so for a variety of reasons.

It could be argued that the ILP is **the** most important document used in the ALN practice in Scotland.   As such it could be used by learners to *'help them identify inequalities, probe their origins and begin to challenge them, using skills, information and knowledge to achieve and stimulate change'*

(Tett 2003 p 5). It should be noted that there was no nationally accepted format for the ILP and each partnership had developed their own model and those used by the partnerships in this research were constructed and implemented in such a way that they were unlikely to lead to the outcome suggested by Tett, so tutors should consider adapting the format and focus on the strengths of the learner, building on their prior knowledge and experience to construct new knowledge *'but also challenge them to take risks'* (ibid 2003 p 5) thus developing the learners' critical capacities in relation to their literacies use and enable them to recognise the power of literacies. By adopting this approach those involved in literacies teaching and learning in Scotland can begin to claim they are implementing a social practice model.

The above comments relate to those learners who take the initiative and access literacies learning of their own volition but a substantial number of people who are socially excluded are unlikely to do so but should not be ignored by providers.

Hard to Reach Groups

Where better to develop a social practice model than with people who are considered to be 'outside' society, the homeless, those who abuse drugs, the incarcerated, the travellers, anyone who does not 'fit' into the dominant definition of 'included'. As Freire, quoted in Crowther and Martin (2005 p114), claimed *'...the oppressed are not marginals...living 'outside' society. They have always been inside – inside the structure which made them 'beings for others'. The solution is not to 'integrate' them into the*

structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves' and this is what a true social practice model should be all about.   There is no doubt that reaching these groups and individuals is expensive and time consuming as is evidenced in the work that was undertaking with the travellers and the results, if any, will be long term and may not satisfy the short term Ministerial imperatives as outlined by the HMIe.   At a conference held a number of years ago I heard Professor Lindsay Patterson state that the Scottish ALN policy would attract the top 10% to 15% of the supposed 23% of Scots requiring literacies support and the remainder would be untouched by the process. Unless positive steps are taken to work with the hard to reach groups this prophecy is likely, if it is not already the case, to come to fruition. Practitioners require to be pro-active and engage with hard to reach groups and individuals and ensure that, as Archer claims, *'Real learning will take place through people's practical engagement with different situations where literacy forms part of a wider power equation in their own environment'* (Archer 2003 p 4).   Unless the practitioners are working in the people's own environments this will not happen.   Politicians and policy makers must understand that this is a long-term process and *'education for liberation means making choices, and choosing to take the side of subordinated and marginalized groups'* (Crowther and Martin 2005 p 115).

Rogers (2001) suggests three ways of engaging non-participants, firstly by identifying with them what literacies they use on a daily basis and helping them develop their skills, secondly by recruiting those with more literacy

skills to help those with less skills and thirdly by adapting texts to suit the learner rather than expecting them to adapt to the texts provided.   These suggestions are not mutually exclusive and could be part of a programme that uses a wide diversity of approaches, different materials and methods that meet the needs of prospective learners.

This is an important issue that requires to be addressed by managers and practitioners and should not be ignored if the development of ALN practice in Scotland is to become a truly social practice model available to the population as a whole and not merely to those who have the confidence and the knowledge to seek out provision, i.e. the 10-12% mentioned by Paterson.

There are, however, impediments to attracting non-participants to literacies provision.   This is a time consuming and costly development which needs long-term commitment that may not match with the short-term targets of the Government.   Also, over a period of time, there has been a decline in the numbers of local authority outreach workers employed in CLD who would be the natural choice of staff to contact and work with those who are disengaged from learning such as travellers, the homeless, drug and alcohol abusers and young people.   The third sector does, however, have a good track record of work in this area and perhaps closer collaboration between the local authorities and the voluntary sector could create spaces for the delivery of a social practices model of literacies.

Social Practice

Many tutors involved in this research believed that they were utilising a social practices approach in their teaching and learning but, as the evidence shows, certain elements were missing. As Maclachlan highlights, the key word in this debate is "adopted". It may be that Learning Connections accepted that this is an ideal to which we aspire but this research indicates that many of the tutors interviewed thought that "adopted" described what was actually happening as they believed that learner centred and the use of materials relevant to the learner equated to social practice.

However, almost all the ILPs started with what the learner could not do and focused the teaching and learning on the deficits rather than on the strengths. There is also little evidence from this research that learners were encouraged to work together to address common issues and the tutors concentrated on the immediate issues expressed by the learners, such as improvement of spelling, reading, writing or using numbers. In other words, the acquisition of skills became the focal point rather than what the learners intended to use the functional skills for.

All of the learners in this research were taught in groups but were treated as individuals working towards their own goals contained in the ILP, including those involved in the work place pilot. One reason for this may have been that the learners did not comprise homogeneous groups but were a collection of individuals with their own reasons for wishing to improve their literacies and their individual goals and had little or nothing in

common which could enable the tutor to explore the collective nature of literacies. However, Mace (1992) suggests some strategies that could be used by tutors to, as Freire said, 'generate a theme' of common interest to group members despite the fact that they come with differing abilities and have individual goals. She suggests that a tutor can either work from the individual's interests and expressed needs or on themes elicited from the group as a whole or use a combination of both methods. By introducing a common theme, learners can support and encourage each other but it does require confidence and experience on the part of the tutor to deal with the unpredictability of this method (ibid 1992).

One common theme shared by the learners involved in this research was their poor initial education and this information may have helped tutors to develop learning around this issue and may also have developed their critical and cognitive capabilities to question why this was the case. Mace (1992) cites the instance of one learner who had been offered promotion at work but felt apprehensive about her literacies abilities and enrolled in a class. She attended the course three times a week for three months and at the end of this time felt she was satisfied with her progress in that she was now able to complete the literacies tasks required of her new post. However, the point that Mace emphasises is that the learner had also acquired a new defiance, she recognised that her writing was not perfect but this *'no longer mattered to her'* (Mace 1992 p 62). The changes from apprehension to assertion were personal to her but her change in attitude was a political change (ibid 1992). The learner chose, initially, to work on

her own but, as her confidence grew, she was encouraged by the tutor to participate in group activities.

This supports the propositions suggested by Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (1999) and Maclachlan (2006) where they identify the elements that constitute a social practice model of teaching literacies as detailed in Chapter 3. The propositions that define a social practice model and the elements that constitute the teaching methods are, as one might expect, complementary.

There was little evidence from this research that tutors incorporated all the elements of a social practices model in their teaching and learning, as they appeared to concentrate on weaknesses rather than strengths and they did not recognise the power dimensions of literacies or attempt to develop critical capacities or meta-cognitive capabilities which would enable learners to adapt literacies to different contexts. The evidence provided by learners indicates that they had improved their current literacies skills and usage but had not moved beyond this thus re-enforcing societal inequalities by their inability to challenge and transform the world in which they lived. Tutors did, however, recognise and build on the ways people learn and attempted to use materials which were relevant to the learners, i.e. a learner centred approach which is part of the social practices model.

In summary, the practice of adult literacies in Scotland is not, as yet, universally based on a social practice approach but it is definitely part way there. It appears that literacies learning is on a continuum, at one end is

the functional teaching of the literacy skills of spelling, reading, writing and using numbers and at the other end is a social practice model of literacies. Some of the elements outlined by Maclachlan (2006) are included in current practice but there is some way to travel before those involved in ALN in Scotland can truly claim they have fully adopted a social practice model.

There are, however, spaces in practice to develop a social practice approach. Unlike practitioners in England and Wales the national curriculum in Scotland adopts a process approach and the associated wheel outlines pathways from the learner at the centre to the underlying principles of a social practices model. The wheel clearly indicates that no one element is studied in isolation and, if each element is correctly aligned, a rich and appropriate learning experience can be developed. If tutors accept that the adoption of the social practice model is aspirational as suggested by Maclachlan (2006), are trained in the underlying principles and practices of social practice and use the national curriculum to its maximum potential there is no reason why a social practices model should not become standard practice across Scotland but this needs an enabling structure that supports and trains tutors at partnership and national levels. Evidence shows that support for this development at partnership level is uneven and at the national level recent developments in monitoring and evaluation and training possibly mitigate against the development of a social practices approach.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the data gathered in the research phase to identify some of the possible inhibitors preventing a truly social practice model of literacies delivery in Scotland and suggest where there might be opportunities to develop this approach.

The national picture has altered considerably since the start of this research and there would appear to be a gradual shift towards the managerialism suggested by Ackland (2006) whereby there is a thrust from HMIe to 'measure' the progress of learners by quantifying the specific gains they have made to determine whether or not they have met Ministerial objectives. The proposed CPD of those working in CLD, which include literacies, appears to be based on encouraging staff to move to a more vocational approach to community based learning and the organisation commissioned to deliver this training, which is employer led, seems to support this shift. The move of Learning Connections from a government department to a non government organisation whose purpose is to ensure that everything it does contributes to sustainable economic growth is another indication that those orchestrating the future development of CLD are embracing a vocationalist approach which could, if fully developed, endanger the growth of the 'new literacies' movement. There is now significant research into what is known as 'new literacy studies' and the proponents define two characteristics of this development: *'firstly, their understanding of literacy as a culturally embedded social practice rather than an individual skill, and, secondly, the move away from educational*

settings and teaching issues towards as interest in the uses and meanings of literacy and numeracy in people's lives.' (Papen 2005 p 32)

The problem is that it is unclear who is orchestrating the development of CLD as the responsibility for the various elements of this provision lies with different government departments and there is no overall national policy. There is, however, a policy for adult literacies contained in the ALNIS report and the social practice model is embedded in this document and it is crucial that academics, practitioners, managers and voluntary sector providers continue to lobby politicians as to the importance of having a strong adult literacies delivery across the country based on this model to avoid literacies being seen solely as a stage towards institutional provision in order to meet the Government's economic imperatives.

Partnerships and practitioners can continue to develop a social practices approach despite the constraints put on them to monitor and evaluate everything they do, but there is a need to widen the provision into the everyday lives of learners to ensure that real learning takes place through their practical engagement with different situations *'where literacy forms part of a wider power equation in their own environment'* (Archer 2003 p 4). To develop this type of provision requires a longer term strategic plan and the involvement of outreach staff to engage with those in hard to reach groups and those who are currently disengaged from learning. There is obviously a cost implication to this sort of development and the recent and impending cuts in local government expenditure will inevitably mitigate against the expansion of this area of work.

Whether Learning Connections will be able to continue to develop a national training strategy addressing the issues pertinent to literacies staff or whether literacies training will be subsumed into the CPD training is, as yet, uncertain but, if the knowledge underpinning a social practice approach is not universally understood there is a high probability that Scotland's ALN practitioners will be unable to fulfil the dream, and the *'grand experiment'* described by Merrifield (2005 p 22) will fade into the distant past and the deficit model will become dominant.

The preceding chapters have looked at the theory and reality of literacies as a social practice and have identified many elements that exemplify good adult education practice in the work of practitioners. The tutors adopted a learner centred approach whereby the learners decided what they wanted to learn and how they wished to learn it, they were usually actively involved in the development of the ILP and the materials used were adult in nature and relevant to the learner. By using this approach the majority of the learners interviewed were able to achieve their goals as the case studies have illustrated. This was done within the context of a relatively enabling national strategy that contrasts with the more restrictive model in England and Wales. The tutors and managers understood the learner centred approach and, on the whole, believed this to represent all that social practice means and endeavoured at all times to incorporate this into their planning and practice. However, some key aspects of a social practice approach were missing. The partnerships, on the whole, were not reaching those most in need because most of the provision was dedicated,

not integrated in the contexts of meaning, the learning did not address the critical and power aspects of literacies nor did tutors attempt to any great extent to develop a collective and emancipatory approach to literacies learning.

There are three main questions which require to be addressed to determine whether or not it is possible to achieve a social practice model of literacies in Scotland.   Firstly, is it possible/likely that a full social practice model will become the norm in Scotland?   Secondly, **can** a full social practices model **ever** be fully adopted in policy at a national level anywhere? Thirdly, can the current good practice recorded in this research, which embodies much of a social practices model, be sustained in the current political and educational context?

The following, and final chapter, will explore these questions and summarise my thesis under its principal underpinning themes and issues. First I begin the chapter by returning to the semi-autobiographical theme with which this thesis began.

CHAPTER 11

Keeping a Wider Focus

Introduction

As I have already outlined, the work of Freire greatly influenced my working life as a community educator. However, with progression through the management system it is too easy to become embroiled in the day-to-day minutiae of paper work, planning, evidencing and generally fire -fighting and lose sight of the philosophy which underpinned earlier working practice. This, to a certain extent, happened to me. A number of coincidental events re-focussed my attention in relation to the work of Freire and his social practice approach to the teaching of literacies. The following section explains these events and how they influenced me.

Returning to the principles of Freire

At the re-organisation of local government in Scotland in 1996 I moved from working in a large regional authority to one of the smallest unitary authorities in the country. The elected members and directors decided that community education should be moved from the Department of Education to the Department of Community and Leisure resulting in youth workers, community workers and adult educators co-locating with staff responsible for sports facilities, cemeteries, parks, registration and libraries. Whether this move was predicated on the assumption that community education was concerned with leisure activities is not known but it was, initially, a culture shock to community education staff. All of the functions of this

department, with the exception of community education, had previously been the responsibility of the district council and most of the senior staff came from that background. The community educators had been used to the rigours imposed by a large bureaucratic structure and the relaxed nature of Community and Leisure was a revelation. The relevance of this will become apparent later.

Shortly after the re-organisation of local government the City of Edinburgh Council was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to establish the National Development Project – Adult Literacies in Scotland. This project produced two papers, hosted seminars and conducted a survey of literacy provision across Scotland. As a result of the consultations, the LIC pack was produced. To support the development of the project a National Advisory Group was established comprising representatives from academia, national organisations involved in adult education, both statutory and voluntary, trade unions, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Scottish Prison Service, the Scottish Executive and local authority literacies managers and practitioners.

As chair of the Community Learning and Development Managers ABE sub group I was invited to join this group. One of the Scottish Executive representatives had been involved in the development of the ALP project referred to in a previous chapter, the two academics came from a 'new literacies' background and the project manager was, at that time, a post graduate student at Lancaster University where the staff responsible for the delivery of this course (Barton, Hamilton, Ivanic, Papen et al) embraced a

social practice model of literacies.   Being part of this group re-affirmed

my belief that Freire's methodology should be the underpinning

philosophy of literacies development in Scotland and, as shown in

previous chapters, the LIC pack and the subsequent ALNIS report both

advocated this approach.   The ALNIS report contained twenty-one

recommendations but the words 'social practice' did not figure in any of

these statements.   Rather, the principles of a social practice approach were

embedded in the text and emphasis was placed on the adoption of a

lifelong learning approach to enable learners *'to apply their learning to*

real contexts' (Scottish Executive 2001a p14)

The Community Learning and Development Managers Scotland's ABE

group, subsequently renamed the Adult Literacies Sub Group, supported

managers and practitioners in the development of the literacies action

plans.   The lack of a national agency created a space that enabled this

group to play a strategic rôle in the development of the national policy but

the social practice approach did not translate fully into the action plans and

subsequent practice because some of the elements such as the power

dimension of literacies and the development of the learners' meta-

cognitive skills and critical capacities were missing.   This may have been

partly due to the fact that the initial template for the action plans and the

accompanying guidelines did not focus on the learners but on the

development of the infra-structure to support the 'new literacies' approach

and the subsequent altered format concentrated on the strategic aspects of

the partnership development.   It may also have been due to the fact that

those responsible for the development of literacies in Scotland were

predominantly from a community education background and were well versed in the learner centred approach but were perhaps not fully cognisant with the underpinning precepts of a social practices approach. The term social practice was banded about and there was a general assumption that everyone understood what it meant but, as my research indicates, this assumption was unfounded.

McConnell (1981) claims that Freire had a significant influence on the practice and theory of community education during the 1960s and 70s but this assertion is challenged by Kirkwood (1990) who claims that, having tried to interest community educators in the work of Freire, his (Freire) influence was marginal. In my own experience the influence of Freire was indeed marginal. However, Freire's principles were similar to those underpinning the community development approach that was adopted by many community educators in the seventies and early eighties such as in the dampness campaign evidenced in Chapter 3.

I first became aware of the work of Freire in the mid seventies through the Strone and Maukinhill Informal Education Project The Rowntree Trust had financed the development of the Strone/Maukinhill Community Action Project and the community worker attached to this project worked with community groups to address various social and environmental issues which were important to residents. This was a very different time when community activists were to be found in almost every deprived area in Strathclyde Region and communities did come together to take social action supported by adult and community education staff who allied

themselves with these groups. Over the years the changes shaped by the move of community education from a sector to an approach, the tighter control exercised by Government over funding and the introduction of the bureaucratic community planning process have resulted in the diminution of projects and activities that do not fit with the Government's priorities (Crowther 2006). These changes have made it more and more difficult for community educators to forge alliances with communities to address the real issues affecting the residents' daily lives.

However, the informal adult education project in the Strone/Maukinhill area was developed at a time when it was possible for community workers to support activists in their quest to address inequality. This was possible at that time for a number of reasons. Firstly, this particular project was supported by Ronald Young, an influential politician in Strathclyde Regional Council, who was a driving force in the development of the social strategy policy within this authority. Secondly, Strathclyde Region covered a vast geographical area in the west of Scotland and, due to the economy of scale, there was room for experimentation. Thirdly, the project was initially funded by a voluntary organisation, therefore the hierarchical structure of local authority could not impose control on how the project developed. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, there was no outcome driven monitoring and evaluation process imposed by either national or local government and an external researcher evaluated the project.

After some two years it became evident that there was a need for residents to acquire particular knowledge and skills if they were to act collectively to address the issues of deprivation affecting their daily lives. The community worker alongside colleagues from the local FE college persuaded the college principal and the education department to support the development of outreach provision in the area which would be controlled and managed by the Stone Maukinhill Informal Education Project and offered free of charge to residents (McConnell 1996).

By 1975 the residents involved in this project had gained knowledge and expertise and began questioning whether the traditional provision originally requested by participants could be catalysts for social action. As McConnell (1996) claims the influence of the experiments carried out by Ashcroft, Jackson and Lovett in Liverpool and Freire in Latin America resulted in the learners' committee and community educators working together to provide learning opportunities that would develop knowledge, confidence, political consciousness and experience.

Professor Kenneth Alexander, the chairman of the Alexander Committee, wrote the following statement about the project which summed up its essence, *'I see the project as a small part of a group movement for and by people who, through lack of an effective power base, were by-passed and neglected by those operating the machinery of local and national government'* (Alexander 1979). Alexander advocated a move from the didactic and formalised methods of adult learning towards an increased community action approach (McConnell 1996) and he acknowledged that

the Strone/Maukinhill project was contributing to this shift of emphasis in community based adult learning.

It was my own experience of managing staff in the Stone Maukinhill Informal Education Project combined with a close association with the staff involved in the development of the ALP project in Edinburgh that ignited my interest in the work of Freire and my belief that community based learning, whether it be formal or informal, should enable people to act against the injustices they face. By the time I was aware of Freire and his work I had moved into a management rôle and, as I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, it was sometimes difficult to ignore the mass of paper work and meetings which tend to pre-occupy those in local government. However, I did attempt to create spaces where I could work directly with people and one such group was that referred to in Chapter 2 where residents were challenging the re-development of their area. In that chapter I gave a brief outline of a one day event which focussed the residents attention on the issue and gave them the impetus to become involved but, as is true of all community based work, this was merely the start and I remained involved with the group for a number of years. I also worked with a number of women's groups, one example being a group of women who wanted a purpose built women's centre and after two years of struggle eventually achieved their dream. This was a long, slow process where it was necessary for me to build relationships and trust, in particular with the community activists, before any progress could be made. One activist who had done a great deal for her community was the chair of the group and the other members followed her lead at all times. She viewed

me, and indeed any other member of staff from the local authority, with suspicion and it took almost eighteen months to build a working relationship with her and the other members of the committee. Working with community groups to address the real issues in their lives is not a short term venture but requires the community worker to expend a great deal of time and energy over a protracted period of time before the results are evident.

In almost all of the groups that I worked with there was a need for participants to improve their literacies skills to enable them to deal with dominant literacies. To achieve this I worked with literacies tutors and the group members, embedding the learning into the issues affecting them. This experience has had a long lasting impact on my work and continuing commitments.

More recently two seminal experiences increased my own understanding of a social practices approach. The first was a series of seminars organised by staff from the Universities of Edinburgh, Lancaster and the City of London and the second was a summer school delivered by the staff at Lancaster University.

The seminars were supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and organised by staff from the three universities. There were six seminars held over a period of two years and participants were required to enrol for all six and were not allowed to dip in and out as they chose. This stricture provided continuity and enabled those attending to build relationships with one and other. The aim of the series was to *'shift*

the focus from a narrow functional and externally imposed definition of literacy, numeracy, communication and language learning on to multiple, open definitions that focus on what people do with their skills, with whom, when and how' (ESRC 2002).

The seminars took place in London, Lancaster and Edinburgh and the cost of attendance was not inconsiderable. To return to the relaxed nature of Community and Leisure, when I approached my Director to seek permission to attend she immediately agreed. I encouraged my colleagues in other local authorities to participate but those who sought permission were refused. It is interesting to note that they were all employed by Education. As a result I was the only literacies manager from Scotland to attend these seminars. There were other Scottish attendees but they were from academia, the civil service or the voluntary sector and not directly responsible for the development of action plans.

The six issues addressed in these seminars were Adult Basic Education as a Social Practice, Literacy, Language and Bilingualism, Basic Education and Social Inclusion, The Politics of Numbers, International Influences and National Diversity and Crossing Boundaries: Facilitating Interactions. As pointed out in the briefing paper for the seminars, ABE does not have a good record of integrating theory with policy and practice and it was hoped that these seminars would lead to a more co-ordinated and effective approach to teaching and learning in adult literacies. The underpinning theory running through the series was that literacies is more than a set of skills or techniques but is about what people do with their skills, i.e. a

social practice model. The attendees came from a variety of academic disciplines and practice contexts.

The majority of speakers came from an academic background and their inputs provided the theoretical foundation on which managers and practitioners could build their policy and practice. There was ample time allocated for discussion and these sessions were both informative and exciting. One aim of the series was to close the gap between practice, research and policy and this approach typified what had happened in the early stages of the development of policy and practice in Scotland when the Head of the Further and Adult Education Division of ETLLD had facilitated the coming together of academics, civil servants and practitioners. Now, such innovative practice no longer exists. There is no forum which allows academics, civil servants and practitioners to discuss on equal terms, issues which affect policy and practice which might assist those who are attempting to juggle the juxtaposition of the competing agendas of social practices and managerialism. Perhaps an independent national agency similar to those referred to in Chapter 4 would have fulfilled this rôle and cut across the boundaries of practice, policy and research.

The second event, which influenced my belief that a social practices model of literacies was the correct approach, was the summer school organised by staff at Lancaster University in 2004. By this time the Scottish initiative was three years old and there was little evidence that a social practice approach had been incorporated into local plans and practices.

The summer school was entitled Ethnographic Methodology in Literacy Research and was targeted at researchers and graduate students. While ethnographic methodology is a mediated practice in that the researcher is engaged in the lives of the learners in order to hear individuals' voices it is based on a social practices approach. For example, to conduct their research Barton and Hamilton (1998) had to spend a great deal of time finding out about people's lives, what concerned them and what activities they engaged in (Papen 2005). Ethnography is of interest to me in terms of research but I do not believe it is possible for literacies practitioners to become deeply involved in the day to day lives of their learners due to fiscal and time constraints. However, whilst this summer school was principally about research, the case studies cited focussed on how learners used their literacies and how they reacted to the social structures within which they lived. The discussions were lively and interesting and provided people with the 'space' to discuss how best to develop literacies learning and teaching.

It is important for managers and practitioners in Scotland to participate in events such as the two described above. Senior management, particularly in education, all too often regard events such as these as 'junkets' and I was fortunate that this was not the attitude adopted by Community and Leisure. One of the ways in which we can broaden our understanding and improve our practice is by listening to others and sharing our experiences. This sometimes takes us out of our comfort zone but it does enable us to challenge our pre-conceived notions about policy and practice.

Rhetoric or Reality

I have included the above so as to locate my PhD autobiographically and to sketch in some local conditions in the 1970s and more recently that may be conducive to 'social practices' ways of working.   I now return to my present day thesis.

This thesis is a small-scale research project covering only three of the thirty-two literacies partnerships is Scotland and, as a result, the findings cannot be assumed to be representative of the country as a whole.   It has established that a social practice approach is embedded in the national policy but it is less visible in local plans and practices of the partnerships involved in this research.   Whether or not this model underpins the planning and delivery in the remaining twenty-nine partnerships is not a question that I can address, but as the discrepancies between policy and practice were evident in each of the three partnerships covered in this research, it is reasonable to assume that some of them might also be present in other partnerships across Scotland.   There are some elements, however, that affect all partnerships as they are controlled centrally.

The questions asked of practitioners were based on the LIC pack that is founded on a social practice approach but only some issues were fully explored in the data analysis.   This is because some of the issues such as staffing, resources, effectiveness of partners and management are local issues and it could be expected that these would differ across the partnership areas.   To enable conclusions to be drawn from these elements would have required a comparative study involving a much larger control

group. However, the elements of ILPs, training and monitoring and evaluation are controlled centrally and, therefore, it might be assumed that they affect all literacies partnerships equally so I have chosen to focus on these. Also, although guidance is a matter for the local partnerships, how tutors are trained to offer effective guidance is a national issue.

There were two routes to gaining a qualification in tutoring in adult literacies, ITALL and TQAL. At the time of this research the TQAL course was in its infancy and the majority of tutors had only one option, ITALL. Earlier chapters have shown that this course does not address the philosophy of social practice nor does it teach tutors to deliver using this method. As a result it must be assumed that this is a factor affecting all literacies partnerships across Scotland so, once again, this raises the question as to how tutors can acquire the knowledge and skills to enable them to deliver using a social practice model when it is not an integral part of their training.

The same is true in relation to guidance. The ITALL course does include a session on guidance but the emphasis is on the importance of guidance and does not **teach** tutors to provide effective guidance. It would be impossible to acquire the seven activities as outlined by Brown (2003) in one two hour session. A much broader question however, is whether it is necessary for all tutors to be fully trained in guidance. The integration of guidance into the literacies learning process could provide an opportunity for partner agencies such as Careers Scotland to provide this level of expertise by offering guidance interviews as the beginning and end of the

learning process. Guidance is an essential element in the social practices approach as it not only clarifies options in terms of education, training and work but the process helps people to become autonomous and take control of their own decisions (Brown 2002). This research shows that guidance was delivered in an ad hoc fashion and the evidence gathered in the national survey supports this finding.   Simply providing a menu of courses on offer is not sufficient if learners are to truly take control of their own decisions. They have to be in possession of all the facts and this can only be provided by a trained guidance advisor.   Tutors cannot be expected to be expert guidance advisors, they do however have to recognise that guidance is an integral part of the process and know whom to contact if, or when, this assistance is required.

The third element that affects all partnerships is the use of ILPs.   Once again the ITALL course fails to fully explain the purpose of the learning plans. One of the learning points highlighted in this session is *'The initial interview and learning plan represent a snapshot of learning needs…'*, once again an emphasis on a deficit approach.   Tutors do need to know what skills learners require but they also need to know what the learners intend to use their literacies for, what strengths they have and how they currently use literacies.   They and their learners also have to attempt to determine the future needs of the learners to avoid reinforcing the inequalities in society as suggested by Rogers (2001).   The practice evidenced in the three partnerships shows that in many instances someone other than the tutor who eventually works with the learner compiles the ILP.

While it is perfectly understandable that providers wish to react swiftly to any request made by a potential learner the outcome is that tutors are presented with information gathered by a third party which is basic and from which they are then expected to develop a learning plan. From the evidence provided by tutors the ILP tends to focus on the skills learners wish to address such as spelling, reading, writing or working with numbers, in other words tutors are addressing the learners' existing use of literacies rather than attempting to transform them.

One finding that can be drawn is that all tutors undertaking the ITALL course during the period covered in this research did not receive training in social practices, guidance or the completion if ILPs, which build on what learners can do rather than what they cannot do. It may be a step too far to conclude from this research that the majority of ALN staff across Scotland did not fully understand the philosophy underlying social practice but, as Maclachlan points out, this was echoed in other research projects covering the period of this research (Burns 2003, Hunter 2005 and McGee 2005 in Maclachlan 2006).

To return to the original thesis, is the claim that the Scottish adult literacy and numeracy policy and practice based on a social practice model rhetoric or reality? The evidence from my research indicates that there is a genuine misunderstanding amongst many practitioners that learner centred equates with social practice and, as a result, only certain elements of a social practice model are incorporated into practice. A number of crucial elements suggested by Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (1999), Maclachlan

(2006) and others highlighted in previous chapters are missing.   The power dimension of literacies, the development of meta-cognitive capabilities, the expansion of learners' critical capacities and the building upon learners' strengths rather than weaknesses are missing from the equation.   There is still a way to travel before those involved in ALN can claim that we have adopted a social practice model in the sense that it is reflected in practice across the country, the 'what is' as described by Maclachlan (2006).   However, if the word 'adopted' is to be used in its aspirational sense then all involved in literacies in Scotland need to accept the fact that ALN practices are not universally based on social practices.

The Road Ahead

Is it possible/likely that a full social practice model will become the norm in Scotland?

Literacies as a social practice needs to be embedded in the daily lives of people in community groups, with the homeless, the travellers, those addicted to drugs or alcohol, young people, the work place, family, wherever people experience difficulties in decoding and understanding text to address the issues affecting them.

This view is supported by a number of researchers.   Ramdas (1987) claims that literacy is not an end itself, it requires those working with groups and individuals to work with people to try to understand the concerns and difficulties that face them in their daily lives and determine together how best to address these issues.   Rogers states that literacies

learning is dependent on the activities that people are engaged in and no one group is similar to another and needs to be treated as such (Rogers 2001). Papen (2005) claims literacies should be embedded in other community based and development orientated activities, which support people in their existing uses of literacy and numeracy.

If a full social practice model is to become the norm in Scotland a number of issues require to be addressed at national level. First of all there is a need to re-engage with politicians and civil servants to gain their support to ensure that social practices remains at the heart of national policy. There is an initial need for them to understand the concept of social practices and this could be done through a number of organisations. The rôle of Learning Connections is to support and promote literacies (Learning Connections 2005) and it has to be assumed that this organisation will continue to promote the social practices model at Government level. There are, however, other national bodies that could play a part in mediating between Government and practitioners.

There are three main voluntary organisations involved in community-based adult learning at national level, Scotland's Learning Partnership, Learning Link and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). The history of co-operation amongst the three groups has not always been harmonious but they all strive to achieve a similar outcome, what is best for the learners. When the Scottish Adult Learning Partnership (SALP), which later became Scotland's Learning Partnership, was inaugurated I was invited to become a director and, at the initial meeting of the

organisation, was elected to chair this organisation. I witnessed at first hand the slight tension between the three organisations and soon realised that the underlying cause was that of funding. Each organisation received core funding from the Scottish Executive and each was fearful that one organisation would receive a larger slice of the cake than the others thus reducing their core grants. This did not happen and the three organisations have a different contribution to make to adult learning in Scotland.

In brief, Scotland's Learning Partnership is a representative organisation whose membership comprises providers of adult learning, including Learning Link and the WEA, and learners and is responsible for organising national campaigns and Adult Learners' Week. Learning Link brings together voluntary sector organisations involved in the delivery of adult learning and the WEA is a provider organisation working with those in the field to deliver learning in local areas. The three organisations operate across Scotland and have regular contact with Ministers, civil servants and the providers of community based adult learning.

It is unlikely that the various departments of the Government will, in the near future, deviate from their socio-economic policies as there is now a global drive towards free trade, privatisation and deregulation of labour markets (Crowther 2006). As a result there is a danger that they will view community based adult learning, including literacies, as underpinning a human resource development discourse to address the skills, productivity and opportunity gaps as described by Crowther (Crowther 2006). With

this comes the spectre of national testing and the danger of tutors being expected to teach to a test as is the case in England and Wales. The 2005 report produced by the HMIe emphasised the need for more focussed monitoring of learners' progress to meet the Government's objectives and, in the view of some people, the introduction of testing could appear an ideal solution. Any move towards testing should be resisted, as this would be completely against a social practices approach.

The Moser Committee (1999) suggested that learners should reach the levels of functional literacy but, as Lavender (2003) points out, the focus has now altered and learners are expected to become qualified up to and including Level 2. Perhaps the most telling quote from Lavender's paper is *'It is not clear where this shift has taken place'* (Lavender 2003 p 3). This comment echoes Ackland's point regarding the shift in Scottish policy from the original radical social practices model contained in ALNIS to a managerialist approach. These 'shifts' usually take place gradually over a period of time and are not orchestrated by some Machiavellian civil servant or Government minister, they may be simply the cumulative result of the various Government departments attempting to achieve their outcomes driven by the wider social, economic and political conditions and with no overall policy or national agency to guide and advise them.

Nevertheless, if the three national agencies, Scotland's Learning Partnership, Learning Link and the WEA working with Learning Connections combined their expertise and knowledge they could use this

to influence Government ministers and civil servants in an effort to ensure that the ideal of a social practices model is retained in Government policy.

Those with knowledge and expertise can influence governments as Kell (2003) illustrates in her paper on literacy in South Africa.   She and her co-researchers produced papers and spoke at seminars highlighting the danger of standardising outcome based approaches to enable literacies to be incorporated into the National Qualifications Framework.   Kell does not claim that the change in Government policy was a direct result of their research but almost all of the problems highlighted by them have been recognised and addressed in the national policy statement.

There are, however, sometimes difficulties in translating policy into practice.   Archer (2003), when writing about the power of literacies, points out that when using text the written word is very often closely tied to the practice of power and Kell's research highlights that texts *'carry meaning from context to context ...and how issues of power and identity gained salience in these crossings and recontextualisations'* (Kell 2003 p 83).   This was true in the case of Winnie (p61) where she was expected to function in the changing contexts within her community when those in power decided that the area in which she lived should become part of the local government structure and that the language to be used would be English.   There was in South Africa and is in Scotland today, a fundamental tension between the emancipatory aims of a social practice model and government agendas.   A social practice model advocates the challenging of power that determines people's 'place' in the world and,

whilst government rhetoric promotes local and individual 'empowerment', it is unlikely to support forms of empowerment that challenge and potentially weaken its own authority.

A second national issue that needs to be addressed is that of training. As has been established earlier there are only two courses available to the prospective or existing literacies tutors. One, ITALL, does not qualify participants to teach and the second, TQAL, is only open to students who have previous teaching experience. As a result of this those wishing to enter the field of literacies tuition have no opportunity to gain pre-service qualifications which would give them the necessary skills to teach let alone to become acquainted with the social practice model. There is a need now to develop a training pathway to enable prospective tutors to gain the necessary knowledge to enable them to deliver literacies based on the social practice approach. There also needs to be in-service provision for existing tutors to locate their working practice within a social practice model and provide them with the skills to teach using this approach. It is important to remember that a considerable number of tutors delivering literacies across Scotland are either volunteers or part-time sessional members of staff and, as Sellers (1998) points out, adult literacies has benefited greatly from their efforts in the past. The LIC pack emphasises the need for a range of appropriate types and levels of professional development and the training should not only be about the professionalisation as defined by Ackland (2006) but also be about the professional development of all involved not just those who are employed

on a permanent basis as this could lead to *'killing the innovative goose that lays educational golden eggs'* (Groves in Ackland 2006).

Research carried out by Ackland (2006) and Hamilton and Hillier (2006) highlight certain issues pertaining to those employed in a voluntary or sessional capacity. Ackland suggests that the development of a 'profession' may create a conflict *'in which part-time workers and volunteers may struggle to protect the things which attracted them to the work in the first place* (Ackland 2006 p 40) and Hamilton and Hillier raise the issue that practitioners *'have to manage tensions including whether they should strive for a coherent, professional system which is achieved through adherence to strict government set targets and standards, or for a diverse but quality service which draws together volunteers and learners to define their goals'* (Hamilton and Hillier 2006 p 73). However, as Hamilton and Hillier say, even those who were against the compulsory introduction of accreditation for tutors agreed that they should have access to qualifications if they so desired but should not be coerced to do so (ibid 2006).

Due to the impending Government budget constraints it is unlikely that finance will be made available to regularise the employment of part-time and sessional staff and that the existing situation will pertain, so it is necessary to be sensitive about how these valuable members of staff are encouraged to improve their knowledge and understanding of literacies practice based on a social practice model. I shall return to this theme when dealing with the partnerships contribution to the road ahead but there

is one other national issue which requires to be addressed if social practices is to be the norm across Scotland, that of monitoring and evaluation.

The current monitoring and evaluation procedure does not provide evidence of the progress made by learners when participating in the existing literacies provision. The HMIe report of 2005 emphasises the need for more focussed monitoring of learners' progress to meet Government objectives but fails to identify how this might be achieved. This is yet another manifestation of the problems raised earlier, that of the numerous departments involved in community learning and development with no apparent co-ordination at national level. This report also states that there is a deficiency in assessment practice. The evidence gathered in this research disputes this assertion as the tutors have ample evidence of learners' progress through the ILPs, the individual diaries kept by learners and the regular review meetings between tutor and supervisor. What is not available is the opportunity to provide this evidence in the annual review procedures. It has already been suggested how this might be overcome, the inclusion of a statistical monitoring of progress in the annual report and the inclusion of data in relation to learners' progress in the HMIE inspections. This is, however, dependant on the Government's acceptance that distance travelled and the impact of learning in learners' lives are valid indicators of progress as detailed in the ALNIS report.

As Eraut points out *'there will usually be some conflict between accountability measures which reflect the interests of different*

stakeholders' and that these measures *'rarely reflects the original intentions'* (Eraut 1994 p 240). If partnerships are unable or not required to evidence the progress of learners there is a danger that assumptions will be made at national level, based on incomplete data, that the money spent on literacies is not addressing the concerns of the Government, thus encouraging those in power to introduce some form of 'testing' to validate their definition of progress made by learners. Derrick (2002) suggests that quantifiable achievement is unreliable in a social practices approach and that a simple participation target could suffice not because those involved in literacies do not want to be accountable but because they believe it will work better for individuals, communities and society as a whole.

However, simple attendance and qualifications data do not provide sufficient evidence to support a social practices approach. Learners' achievement requires to be recorded in different contexts, as being able to deal with one form of literacy does not automatically transfer to other contexts (Archer 2003). To return to Fowler and Mace (2005) where they cite the example of using confidence as a yard-stick to measure progress, perhaps this suggested method could be extended to measure progress in the four areas of life outlined in the ALNIS report. Learners could provide testimony of their ability to use, for example, text within the four domains and measure their ability against a scale of one to five at the beginning of a process then measure again after a period of learning. As Archer (2003) claims literacies must not be de-contextualised but measured in each context to determine progress. As Rogers (2001) says it is more important to measure how people use their literacies skills than the

fact that they can read and write which can easily be measured by testing but proves nothing in respect of the use of literacies.

Partnerships

Partnerships also have a rôle to play in the development of a social practices approach and the following section will explore how they might contribute to this development.

In implementing a social practice model, there is no need for all members of a partnership to be experts in the delivery, they simply have to understand the concept.   Those who are directly delivering literacies to learners do, of course, require expertise in the delivery of this model but, by the same token, there is no need for them to become experts in the domains of other partnership members.

As was suggested in the previous chapter each partner should focus on their areas of expertise and contribute this to the overall delivery. Partnerships should value and encourage the contributions from all organisations involved, however small or large these may be in relation to literacies development.   However, to secure the future of a social practices approach someone has to take a lead in spreading this understanding at a local level otherwise it is unlikely that many in the partnerships who have their own pre-determined goals which do not include the critical and power aspects of learning, would be interested in adopting such an approach.

In the three partnerships involved in this research the key rôle in relation to literacies development belonged to the community education managers

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and they were the people held responsible by the Government for the production of the annual plans and the reporting procedures. The future of a social practices approach to literacies learning therefore, lies primarily in their hands. It is unlikely that individual managers would have sufficient influence to alter the national picture but, through the Community Learning and Development Managers Scotland group, they could make their voices heard by both politicians and civil servants to ensure that the autonomous model and testing is not introduced into the Scottish model.

To return to the issue raised in the previous chapter regarding the CLD managers' understanding of a social practices approach, it should be emphasised that, through their initial training, they have a theoretical knowledge of community development methods (see appendix F). A paper produced by the Principal Community Education Officers' Group (1992) defines community development as an approach, which assists individuals and groups to identify the issues affecting them, and to take action to address these issues (Scottish Community Education Council 1992). The basic tenets of a community development approach echo many of the underlying principles of a social practice model as outlined by Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič's (1999) and Maclachlan (2006). However, the increasing emphasis on performance and the requirement to produce statistical data in relation to achievement exerts pressure on the managers to adopt the managerialist approach alluded to by Ackland (2006). The current managers may have the theoretical knowledge but, unlike their predecessors working in the 1970s and early 1080s, they have had little, or

no practice in delivering adult learning using community development/social practices approach.

Through the partnerships they could utilise the various areas of expertise to support the work done by literacies practitioners such as guidance, vocational provision and the voluntary sector and encourage other partners such as the local health board, fire service and employment agencies to become effective spotters and referrers.   In the current and impending economic constraints it is doubtful that additional resources will be made available to develop literacies provision, indeed the existing finances may be reduced, therefore managers will have to do their best with what they have.

At the time of this research the local authorities, through their community education sections, provided the bulk of the provision and each authority had established a separate literacies team organised centrally.   My personal experience of this was that other members of the community education team regarded literacies as a 'specialism' and do not see that they had a rôle in the delivery.   Circular 4/99 (2002) highlights the skills of community education workers in community based activity and suggests that these skills *will be of increasing importance and should be focussed on the 4 key areas set out in paragraph 4.4* (Scottish Office 2002 p 8).   This paragraph defines the four key areas which should be at the heart of community learning, the first of which states *'development of core skills, including adult literacies, numeracy, use of ICT ...* (ibid 2002 p 3). There is no suggestion that literacies should be the specific province of the

adult literacies teams because it refers to all community educators. As has been demonstrated earlier these members of staff have in the past successfully worked with community groups such as the Adult Learning Project and Strone Maukinhill Informal Education Project, and to address issues of dampness, housing, lack of community facilities and to challenge local authority decisions. When, and if, literacies tuition was necessary tutors worked alongside their colleagues to provide this support and in a number of cases literacies came second. Perhaps by integrating literacies staff into the mainstream of community education the 'committed allies' as described by Alexander (1975) could work together to provide a more coherent service which would move literacies from a dedicated to an integrated provision based on social practices.

Since the completion of the research phase the manager in Partnership A has disbanded the central literacies team and integrated these members of staff into the various community education area teams in an effort to develop a social practices approach to the literacies delivery. In addition, all members of the community education staff will undertake the ITALL course, not necessarily to train them to deliver literacies but to increase their awareness and understanding of the rôle of literacies in their work.

As Crowther (2006) points out there is a historical link between adult literacies and community education in the Scottish approach and this training could help to re-enforce it.

McConnell claims that community education *is the developmental process of lifelong learning and social action relevant to the problems and*

needs of individual and groups' (McConnell 1996 p178). It could be claimed that this statement is consistent with a social practices approach. However Kirkwood challenges other assumptions made by McConnell regarding community education. They are, in his view excessive (Kirkwood 1990). He also claims that McConnell's blending of elements from the adult education and community work processes together and treating them as the same is inaccurate. In his opinion they are different.

Despite the criticisms made by Kirkwood and others regarding the rôle and ethos of community education, the pre-service training of these members of staff was built on the belief that learning is lifelong, participants should be actively involved in the learning process and the needs of the participants should be paramount in determining the nature and the timing of the provision (Scottish Office 1977). Thus the training embodies some of the elements of a social practice approach but not all.

Some practitioners interviewed in this research had also undertaken one off training and others had undertaken post-graduate qualifications, which would have introduced them to the concept of a social practices approach to literacies teaching and learning. Locating adult literacies within community education provides opportunities to embed literacies into the wider community activities and to focus on local needs and aspirations rather than national standards. It creates the conditions for a social practices model to emerge from a bottom up approach rather than top down, providing the core elements of the ALNIS report remain as they are.

There are, however, dangers in integrating literacies into community education teams. As has been stated in Chapter 1 the literacies staff was never fully included in the area teams and did not, in general, become part of a joint approach to addressing the issues of inequality facing the local communities. The volunteer tutors rarely, if ever, met with their community education colleagues and there was no sense of common purpose. As a result of this, and of other influences already discussed, literacies provision declined and over a period of ten years or so the numbers dwindled from some 18, 000 learners in the 1980s to around 6, 000 in the mid nineties (Crowther 2006). To avoid history repeating itself all the members of a community education area team need to work together to address a common set of outcomes and each has to value the contribution of others. This does not mean that literacies tutors should not strive to be recognised as specialists in their own right but that they should see their rôle as one of the 'committed allies' addressing the issues affecting people in their daily lives and providing the expertise in a wide range of situations and not simply delivering what is almost a discrete and separate service.

To return to the question of whether it is possible/likely that a full social practice model will become the norm in Scotland, yes it is possible but, given the issues highlighted previously, it seems unlikely. Perhaps 'spaces' can be created through the work of community educators and those in the voluntary sector, in particular the WEA, to operate a full social practices model. Fieldhouse, when writing about the WEA, quotes Orwell who said *'the bigger the machine of government becomes, the more loose*

ends and forgotten corners there are in it' and Fieldhouse suggests that the WEA found a number of these forgotten corners where they could develop the social and critical consciousness of their learners (Fieldhouse 1996b p179).

It is to be hoped that those seeking to develop a truly social practices approach to adult literacies in particular and community based learning in general are able to find some of these forgotten corners to develop this model.

Can a full social practices model ever be fully adopted at a national level anywhere?

The second question posed at the conclusion of Chapter 9 is can a full social practice model ever be fully adopted at a national level anywhere?

Due to the global and national shifts which have taken place as outlined in Chapter 1 it is likely that, even if a country wished to adopt a full social practices model of literacies provision, the external influences would almost certainly mitigate against this, as the drive is primarily to develop human capital to increase economic prosperity. As Crowther (2006) points out the dominance of neo-liberal globalisation reinforces the power of the powerful and undermines those of the citizen and democracy.

This drive to meet the economic imperatives of the global market is reflected in the statements made by a number of organisations and countries in relation to the development of adult literacies. The European Education Council (2007) concluded that the *'Council underlined the need*

to pursue the development of indicators on adult skills, together with other indicators, in order to achieve a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks to monitor progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training'. The Lisbon treaty has, after a number of years of discussion, now been accepted by all member states and, therefore, the recommendations contained therein are now enshrined in European law. The key principles with regard to education and training are the development of local learning centres, the promotion of new basic skills, in particular in the information technologies and increased transparency of qualifications. Ertl claims that *'the notion of economic competitiveness is the driving force behind the Lisbon Conclusions'* (Ertl 2006). Now that the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified it would seem unlikely that any member state would introduce a social practices model of literacies learning any time soon as they will be expected to address the imperatives of the Treaty. This means that it has to be developed outside the frameworks and policies, at least in part. The Directorate-General for Education and Culture produced a report in 2008 on Peer Learning and Activity on Adult Literacy and this included a report from the United Kingdom, i.e. England. The English submission re-enforced the *Skills for Life* agenda and the continuation of national testing. In this instance it may be fortunate that Scotland is not, in itself, a member of the European Community and practitioners north of the border might be able to identify the 'forgotten corners' mentioned above.

Mikulecky's (2005) research in the United States in relation to adult literacy highlights a similar approach in that he claims certain forces are

driving the use of an evidence and scientifically based approach to literacies as a tool for programme funding. He cites among these forces a society-wide desire for quality control, the expectation of national tools to be developed in order to determine funding and cuts and *'the growing scepticism among taxpayers and the public about the value of what their taxes fund'* (ibid 2005 p 17). This climate is hardly conducive to the development of a social practices approach.

A similar picture is developing in Australia where the summary results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2006) states *'Technological innovation and labour force changes, as well as the application of new work practices, have led to major changes in the occupational composition of the Australian labour force and in the tasks and skills required of workers. These skills are important not only from the point of view of the labour market, they are increasingly seen as important for an individual's ability to participate fully in modern society'*. While this statement mentions the individual's ability to participate fully in the society in which they live there is a danger that, in the tension referred to by Barr (1999), the rôle of servicing the economy and state will dominate.

To return to the second question posed, can a full social practices model ever be fully adopted at a national level anywhere? As Tett (2003) points out, one effect of globalisation has been the diminishing power of nation states thus forcing them to view the promotion of education and training as a source of sustainable competition. Bobbitt (2002) describes this as a transition from nation state to market state. This global shift makes it

unlikely that a truly social practices model can be fully adopted at national level anywhere as governments strive to meet the economic imperatives of the global market place.   Thus, from a Freirean perspective, *'the politics of education is reduced to training citizens to look after themselves'* and the *'mantra of opportunity and choices disguises the reality of structural inequalities that are systematically reinforced by the demise of public welfare'* (Crowther and Martin 2005 p114).

Can the good practice recorded in this research, which embodies much of a social practices model, be sustained in the current political and educational context?

The third question asked was can the current good practice recorded in this research, which embodies much of a social practices model, be sustained in the current political and educational context?   Crowther (2006) claims that the Scottish adult literacies policy is an example of subverting the globalisation discourse in that it is more relevant to people's lives and one of the reasons for this is that it is rooted in community provision rather than in Further Education, as is the case in England and Wales.   He further suggests that the development of the literacies policy in Scotland started from a relatively low level of interest and the distinctive policy that emerged was a result of collaboration between practitioners and academics (ibid 2006).   It has to be regretted that this collaboration has dissipated and, as has been pointed out, the forum that brought academics, practitioners and civil servants together no longer exists.

There is a wealth of information produced by academics and a large body of dedicated, enthusiastic literacies tutors that could help those involved in the delivery of literacies to improve their individual and collective practice in terms of a social practices approach.   One of the main issues raised in this thesis is the training of adult literacies practitioners and the fact that they are not trained to deliver using a social practices approach.   However, it is not always necessary to undertake formal training to improve practice, peer learning can be equally effective, but I know from personal experience that when you are embroiled in the day to day operational matters there is little time or inclination to read academic papers or journals.   Therefore there is a need to re-establish the connection between practitioners and academics where open and free discussion can take place to improve practice.

There is good practice in literacies teaching and learning in Scotland at present, although it may not be a fully developed social practices approach, and this must be sustained at all costs in order that it may be possible to develop this approach.   As long as the Government retains the principles embedded in ALNIS there is no reason why these practices should not be sustained but the upshot of my research is that there is a need to embed social practices in the wider domain of community work and to train practitioners, whether they be literacies specialists or generic community workers, in this area of work.   The introduction of the TQAL course, which underlines the social practices approach to learning, will influence those who undertake this training and community education workers will also be trained in social practices as, according to one course director,

future graduates will also be trained in this discipline so, gradually, more and more practitioners will be appraised of social practices and will introduce this model into their working practice.

Derrick (2002) suggests that the state should focus on creating spaces, motivation and encouragement for learning and believes that the principles and framework for such an approach would be similar to those outlined in the LIC pack. Scotland has the LIC pack so it should be used, along with ALNIS, to enable managers and practitioners to justify their approach to literacies learning and, hopefully, safeguard the current good practice. The development of a truly social practice model may take a little longer but it is possible to create spaces for this to happen despite the current political and educational context.

However, one of the greatest threats facing literacies practitioners in Scotland is the ever present prospect of the introduction of national testing such as is the case in England and Wales. This would, at first glance, appear to meet the imperatives identified by HMIe and satisfy the short-term objectives of Government but it would place literacies on the continuum of institutional provision in order to meet targets for widening participation (Crowther 2006). To avoid this retrograde step partnerships need to find ways of gathering data that will provide evidence for civil servants and Government ministers that the outcomes contained in the ALNIS report are being met.

Another threat is the prospect of a decline in provision as happened in the 1980s. At present almost all the managers and tutors felt that there was

insufficient staffing in the literacies teams to deal with any increased demand. This could lead to the tutors being re-active rather than pro-active, restricting the provision to classes dealing with specific skills needs rather than integrating literacies into other activities. There is little likelihood that those in hard to reach groups will come forward and participate voluntarily and working with those who are excluded is a time consuming process. The building of relationships within these groups, the identification of need and the addressing of issues affecting them can be undertaken by community workers and literacies tutors can support these developments if, and when, necessary. The integration of literacies tutors into the mainstream community education provision, while still recognising their unique contribution, could create greater opportunities to develop a social practice approach.

There are many issues facing the people of Scotland to-day and it is important that those most in need are enabled to address the inequalities they face on a daily basis and community based learning has a key rôle to play. However, this can only happen if all those involved work together to maximise their efforts and value each other's contribution.

Conclusion

To return to the original thesis as to whether or not a social practice model has been universally adopted within the Scottish model of literacies teaching and learning, the answer has to be no. As Archer (2003) points out the pursuit for international comparability in literacy levels reduces it to the neutral skills of reading, writing and calculating and perpetuates the

myth that literacies can be addressed in isolation but, as Crowther (2006) states, interventions in the policy process can make a difference as exemplified by the development of a social practices model of literacies learning in Scotland which was driven by academics, practitioners and civil servants working together. Whilst the social and political conditions that prevailed in the 1970s and which enabled the development of much innovative adult education for social change cannot be repeated, my research and my own experience of that period indicates that whereas the <u>concept</u> of a social practice model of literacy did not then exist, a great deal of the adult education in practice actually embodied the process and activities delineated by the idea. It may well be that the removal of adult literacies from centre stage as far as the Government is concerned may, in fact, assist the development of a social practices approach by enabling practitioners and managers to discover the forgotten corners and create spaces to continue the good work already being carried out and to develop the social practices model not just in literacies but in all community based learning.

The findings of this research confirm the suggestions regarding social practice in Scotland made by Maclachlan (2006) and raise the question as to what do managers and practitioners mean by social practice. There is perhaps an assumption that we all mean the same thing when we use this phrase but I believe this research highlights the fact that this is not the case and there is now an urgent need to develop a common understanding of what is meant by social practice to avoid the danger *'that the adage is internalised; the assumption is made that the ideal has been attained and*

that therefore re-thinking practice is no longer necessary' Maclachlan

2006 p 34).

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Literacies in the Community

Elements

➢ **Promoting Self-determination**

- *Each individual's literacy and numeracy practices in the different areas of adult life will be appreciated and valued*

- *Individuals will be able to make informed choices as learners and their motivations and decisions about learning (e.g. timing, location, confidentiality) will be respected*

- *The learning process and intended outcomes will be relevant to learners' lives and will improve their ability to be self-directing when using literacy and numeracy and in future learning.*

➢ **Developing and Understanding of Literacies**

- *Literacy and numeracy will be recognised as changing social and cultural practices taking place in contexts that are also continuously developing and changing.*

- *The curriculum will be designed to develop, along with knowledge and skills, an understanding of how different and complex the many uses of literacy and numeracy are in adult life.*

- *Learners will be encouraged to become critical learners and users of literacy and numeracy, aware of how complex it is to transfer existing capabilities to new rôles and contexts*

➢ **Recognising and Respecting Difference and Diversity**

• *The programme will be made accessible and responsive to learners from minority groups.*

• *Particular attention will be paid to minority group learners' preferred uses of literacy and numeracy, and their values and contents.*

• *Alternative, unconventional literacy and numeracy practices will be valued within the curriculum and the programme.*

A further four principles were developed for the organisation and they were:

➢ **Promoting Participation**

• *The contribution that learners' views can make to designing and delivering programmes will be recognised and valued*

• *Learners will be included n debate about how efficient and effective the programme is and they will be consulted in ways that are sustained an inclusive*

➢ **Developing Equitable, Inclusive and Anti-discriminatory Practice**

• *There will be pro-active enquiry and research into literacy and numeracy needs*

• *The profile of learners will be monitored to make sure it is representative of the area served, taking account of the local social, cultural and economic factors influencing learning needs and aspirations*

• *Particular attention will be paid to the needs and aspirations of minority and disadvantaged groups*

➢ **Developing Informed Practice**

- *The distinctiveness and significance of each rôle required in the programme will be recognised (development work, guidance work, programmed management, tutoring, assisting learners, etc.)*

- *Opportunities will be made available to staff and volunteers to develop their experience according to their rôle*

- *A positive profile for the programme will be promoted within the organisation*

➢ **Drawing on Partnerships**

- *A range of agencies will be invited to work jointly with the programmes to improve resources and the pathways into and beyond learning*

- *The programme will be linked to agencies providing support in its many forms or providing opportunities for using literacy and numeracy for learners who are ready to leave the programme*

- *A positive profile for literacy and numeracy will be promoted among the community or communities served*

National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Agencies in Other English Speaking Countries

Northern Ireland:

In Northern Ireland the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA), an independent voluntary organisation, is the main advocacy body for essential skills. This organisation was established in 1967 as the Adult Vocational Guidance Service and has been grant aided by the Government since 1970 when the name changed to EGSA (Osborne and Speers 2004). At the time of the BBC *'On the Move'* programme in 1975 EGSA established a local help line for those seeking adult literacies support. The help line was re-launched in 1998 as the Adult Basic Education Support Service and was funded by a grant from the National Lottery.

The IALS survey together with the Moser Report (1999) covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland informed the lifelong learning agenda in Northern Ireland. The Department of Education and the Training and Employment Agency responded by deciding:

'To set up within EGSA a Basic Skills Unit which would be under an advisory body representative of a wide range of interests." (www.egsa.org.uk 15/01/06)

.
The main purposes of this organisation is to act as an advocacy and advisory body to promote and develop quality provision in basic skills

education among adults and to raise awareness and ownership for basic skills among as wide a range of groups as possible. It also acts as a to support community based organisations providing adult basic education (ibid 15/01/06).

EGSA is governed by a board of directors who are invited to serve on the Board on the basis of their area of interest and expertise and their willingness to support the ethos, mission and values of EGSA [ibid 15/01/06].

In summary, the national agency is located in the voluntary sector, governed by an invited board and has an advisory and advocacy remit and is grant aided by government.

Republic of Ireland:

In the Republic of Ireland literacies is the responsibility of the National Adult

Literacy Agency (NALA), a voluntary organisation established in 1980 and, since

1985, funded to operate at a national level. The NALA mission statement is:

'To ensure all adults with literacy difficulties have access to a range of high quality

learning opportunities' (Bailey 2004).

It is a membership organisation with voluntary status and is responsible for the national co-ordination of policy, research, quality assurance, training, development, mainstreaming and promotion and awareness NALA has an Executive Committee that ensures that the aims and objectives of the organisation are put into practice. The Executive Committee is elected

annually at the AGM by democratic vote and any member of NALA is eligible to stand for nomination (www.nala.ie 15/01/06).

Here again, the national agency is located in the voluntary sector, governed by an Executive Committee elected from the membership and is responsible for all aspects of policy.   Like its counterpart in the north, NALA is also funded by national government.

New Zealand:

In New Zealand Literacy Aotearoa is contracted by the Ministry of Education to provide co-ordination of literacy services nationally and to develop literacy initiatives, in particular Family Literacy and Training (www.literacy.org.nz 15/01/06).

Literacy Aotearoa is a not for profit organisation with a mission statement *'to develop accessible quality literacy services that ensure the people of Aotearoa* [New Zealand] *are critically literate'* (ibid 15/01/06).   An Executive Committee is responsible for establishing policy and monitoring the effectiveness of the organisation.   The name of the organisation may suggest that it is specifically geared to the Maori population but, in fact, it provides services to all adults needing literacy assistance while actively recognising and implementing Maori practices (ibid 15/01/06).

As a membership organisation it is the largest and most complete nationwide network of adult literacy providers in New Zealand and gives a range of policy advice to Government and other stakeholders (ibid 15/01/06).

Literacy Aotearoa is a voluntary sector organisation contracted to co-ordinate and develop literacy initiatives across New Zealand and to provide policy advice to Government. It currently receives funding from the Government and is managed by an executive committee.

Canada:

ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation is a national charity committed to promoting literacy to the general public and to the private sector with a mission *'to support the development of a fully literate Canadian population'* [www.abc-canada.org 16/01/06].

A Board of Directors, comprising leaders from business, education, government and labour, governs the organisation.

To achieve the mission ABC CANADA raises awareness of literacy and numeracy issues in the general public and in the private sector, researches literacy issues to provide information to the literacy field and gives direction to ABC CANADA'S public awareness campaigns, encourages the development of workplace literacy programmes by being a resource to the private sector, provides support to literacy organisation and interprets the concerns of, and represents the private sector, particularly in the area of public policy.

ABC CANADA is essentially a voluntary sector organisation with a responsibility to promote and support the development of literacies programmes. It has a national Board of Directors and is funded largely through sponsorship, both corporate and individual.

Australia:

The Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) was established in 1977 to promote adult literacy and numeracy policy and practice. The Executive is elected annually and the membership includes a representative of each state and territory of Australia. The remit is to provide leadership in the Australian debate on adult literacy and numeracy practices and policy, to build understanding of adult literacy and numeracy issues, to advocate on behalf of equitable adult literacy and numeracy provision
for all Australians, to build links between people, organisations and systems and to work with organisations on issues of mutual concern [www.acal.edu.au 16/01/06).

Like its counterparts illustrated in the four previous examples, ACAL is a voluntary sector organisation. It is governed by an Executive Committee and has a remit to provide leadership on literacies policy and practice.

Questions –Managers

How was the local plan developed?

How does the delivery measure up to the indices in the LIC pack and how do you monitor and evaluate?

What training did tutors receive and, if you used the ITAL pack, did you modify it in any way and, if so, what did you include/exclude?

What support have you received from Learning Connections?

What support have you received from partners?

What do you understand social practices to mean?

How do you see the future training of literacies practitioners developing?

Have you used the new curriculum document and, if so, how useful do you find it?

Questions – Tutors

What does social practice in literacies mean to you?

Who does the goal setting with learners?

How do you build entry pathways for learners?

Does this differ from one place to another?

Learning and teaching, what kind of methods do you use and how do you

incorporate a social practices approach?

Do you use the new curriculum framework and, if not, how do you build the

curriculum?

How do you offer guidance and support?

How do you monitor and evaluate learners' progress?

In there sufficient in-service training for tutors?

Do you feel the partnership is well managed, not in terms of

individuals, but the overall management of the partnership?

Do you feel there is adequate staffing in the literacies team?

Are the resources adequate and of sufficient quality?

Questions – Learners

Can you tell me what your experiences were like at school?

Why did you want to improve your literacies?

Have you achieved your goals?

What effect has this learning had outside the classroom?

What would you like to do now?

N.B.   In all the interview sessions the discussion ranged over a variety of issues and supplementary questions were asked depending on the response of the interviewee.

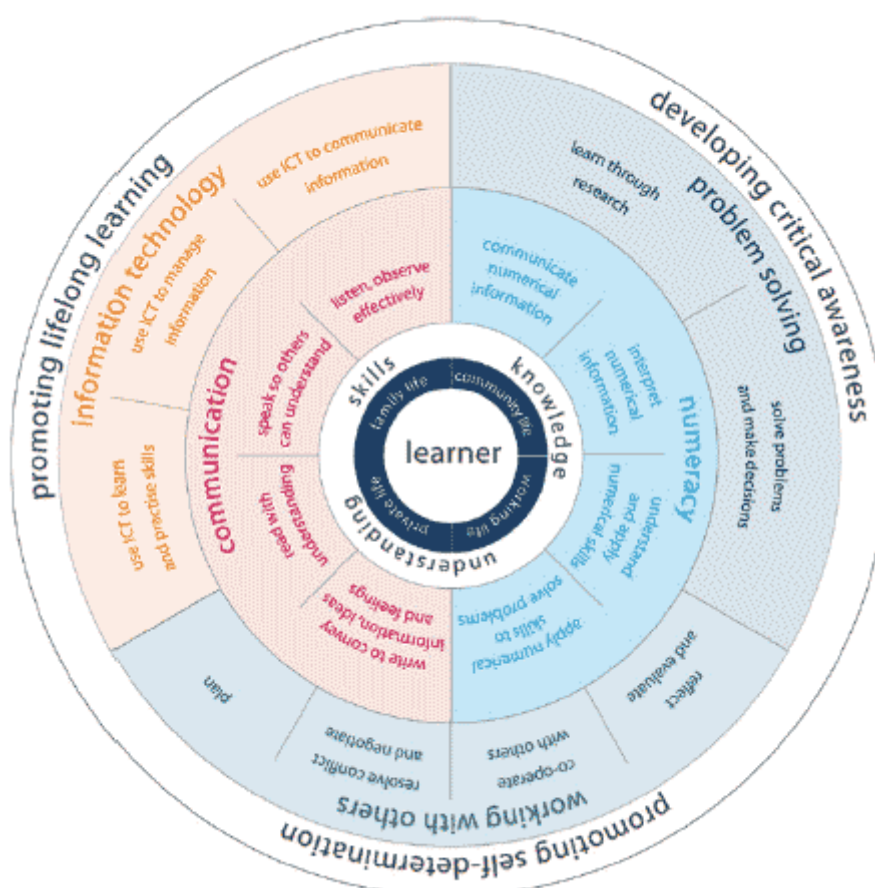## Core Competencies as Defined in the Carnegy Report

Knowledge:

➢ with particular emphasis on community education

➢ psychology of human growth and development in a social context

➢ sociological theories and concepts, particularly those relating to the nature of communities, organisations and groups

➢ social policy and administration, including relevant laws, safety and insurance requirements and principles of corporate management

➢ community work

➢ political science, especially in respect of the inter-relationship of social policies and community action

➢ growth and significance of leisure

Skills:

➢ promotion of inter personal relationships

➢ stimulation and support to groups

➢ use of survey methods

➢ identifying and analysing needs

➢ securing and programming the use of resources

➢ financial management

➢ planning and organisation of action

- counselling

- tutoring

- supervising

- supporting and training of staff

- part time and/or full time recording and reporting

- use of publicity methods

Curriculum Wheel

The diagram on the following page illustrates how the wheel might be used in a hypothetical example of a literacies learner who has recently become a member of a local management committee. The diagram shows some of the knowledge, skills and understanding which are potentially required for this rôle

use ICT to
communicate
information

reflect and
evaluate

learn through
research

read with
understanding

speak so others
can   understand

Working on a Management
Committee

write to convey
information, ideas
and feelings

listen/observe
effectively

resolve conflict
and negotiate

solve problems
and make
decisions

apply numerical
skills to solve
problems

communicate
numerical information

understand and apply
numerical skills

interpret numerical
information