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Title	Effective learning and teaching of reading
Authors	Brooks, Greg;Burton, Maxine;Cole, Pam;Szczerbinski, Marcin
Publication date	2007
Original Citation	Brooks, G., Burton, M., Cole, P., Szczerbinski, M.; (2007) 'Effective learning and teaching of reading'. London: The National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC).
Type of publication	Report
Link to publisher's version	http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=90
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Download date	2026-11-06 09:56:39
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/743

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for adult literacy and numeracy

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Reading

Greg Brooks, Maxine Burton, Pam Cole and Marcin Szczerbiński



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Published by the National Research and Development Centre
for Adult Literacy and Numeracy

This document is also available in pdf and text-only format from
the NRDC's website, **www.nrdc.org.uk**

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London WC1H 0AL

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ISBN 1-905188-30-7

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NRDC is a consortium of partners led by the Institute of Education,
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Design: info@chapmandesign.net
Photography: iStock.com
Print: Redlin

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Preface

The *Skills for Life* Strategy in England has led to unprecedented investment in adult literacy, language and numeracy (LLN), major reforms of teacher education and training, and the introduction of national standards, core curricula and assessment to inform teaching and learning. We have a unique opportunity to make a step change in improving levels of adult skills. But until recently too little was known about effective teaching and learning practices, and reports from Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate repeatedly drew attention to the quality of teaching, and the need for standards to improve.

It has been a strategic priority at the National Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) to investigate teaching and learning practices in all the subject areas and settings in *Skills for Life*, to report on the most promising and effective practices, and to provide teachers and trainers, along with policy-makers and researchers, with an unparalleled evidence base on which to build on the progress already made.

Our findings and recommendations are reported here, and in the four companion reports covering writing, numeracy, ESOL and ICT. The five studies, which have been co-ordinated by NRDC Associate Director John Vorhaus, provide material for improving the quality of teaching and learning, and for informing developments in initial teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD). We are also preparing a range of practitioner guides and development materials, as a major new resource for teachers and teacher educators. They will explore and develop the examples of good and promising practice documented in these pages.

The study of effective practice in the teaching of reading to adult learners reported here was the largest such study to date in Britain, involving 454 learners in 59 classes across England and over 470 hours of observation. The findings have important implications for policy, practice and professional development, and above all on the need to provide learners with more active learning time devoted to reading.

Ursula Howard, Director, NRDC

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 The Effective Practice Studies

The five NRDC Effective Practice Studies explore teaching and learning in reading, writing, numeracy, ESOL and ICT, and they set out to answer two questions:

1. How can teaching and learning literacy, numeracy, ESOL and ICT be improved?
2. Which factors contribute to successful learning?

Even before NRDC was set up it was apparent from reviews of the field (Brooks et al., 2001a; Kruidenier, 2002) that there was little reliable research-based evidence to answer these questions. Various NRDC reviews showed that progress in amassing such evidence, though welcome where it was occurring, was slow (Coben et al., 2003; Barton and Pitt, 2003; Torgerson et al., 2003, 2004, 2005). Four preliminary studies on reading, writing, ESOL and ICT, were undertaken between 2002 and 2004 (Besser et al., 2004; Kelly et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2004; Mellar et al., 2004). However, we recognised the urgent need to build on these in order greatly to increase the research base for the practice of teaching these subjects.

The inspiration for the design of the five projects was a study in the USA of the effectiveness of teaching of literacy and English language to adult learners for whom English is an additional language (Condelli et al., 2003). This study was the first of its kind, and the lead author, Larry Condelli of the American Institutes for Research, has acted as an expert adviser on all five NRDC projects.

The research began in July 2003 and was completed in March 2006. It set out to recruit and gather information on 500 learners in each study, assess their attainment and attitudes at two points during the year in which they were participating in the study, interview both learners and teachers, observe the strategies their teachers used, and correlate those strategies with changes in the learners' attainment and attitudes.

The ICT study differed from the others in that its first phase was developmental, its sample size was smaller, and it had a shorter timescale, completing in March 2005.

1.2 The reading study

This was the largest study in Britain to date of the strategies used to teach reading in adult literacy classes (some classes were integrated – with ICT and financial literacy for example), and the first attempt to correlate that evidence with measures of change in learners' reading attainment and attitudes to literacy. We observed and recorded (in writing) over 472 hours of teaching and learning. Our sample of learners is broadly representative of the national distribution, and the data gathered on 454 learners in 59 classes represents a wealth of information: about teaching and learning, effective and promising practices, and also areas where it is a priority for teachers and teacher trainers to engage in further training and development.

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1.3 Main Findings

Progress

Learners are progressing and achieving: many learners achieved an externally accredited qualification at the end of their course (163 out of 265), and many went on to further study (171 out of 265). Progress was supported by regular attendance.

Pair and group work encourages progress:

- Learners who spent more time working in pairs made better progress; and learners who spent less time working alone in class made better progress. Learners need time to work in pairs and small groups, and teachers need to know how to facilitate that.
- However, the most frequent patterns of classroom activity observed were either a whole-class opening section followed by individual practice or entirely based on individual work. In both cases learners worked alone for substantial amounts of time – this was the most frequent grouping strategy, corresponding with silent reading as the most frequent specific teaching strategy.
- The influence of the core curriculum was mentioned by many teachers as the reason for making greater use of group teaching.

We found that:

- Women made slightly better progress than men
- Employed people made better progress than the unemployed
- People with an FE/NVQ qualification made better progress than those with no qualifications.

Learners' progress was *not* affected or inhibited by many factors which might otherwise be thought of as having an impact on their achievement:

- age
- ethnicity
- English as first or additional language
- age of leaving full-time education
- time since last course
- having dyslexia
- pre-test scores in reading.

The importance of improving learners' self-esteem and confidence is well known; we found evidence of a significant increase in confidence amongst learners.

Time to learn

There is more to literacy provision than taught hours and contact time: self-study is also essential if learners are to persist and progress. We found that learners who reported more self-study between classes made better progress, and this is re-enforced by similar findings from the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning in Oregon (Reder, 2005).

Learners need enough time to learn:

- The average amount of attendance by learners between the pre- and post-assessments was only 30 hours. By contrast, in the *Progress in Adult Literacy* study in 1998–99 (Brooks et al.,

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2001b), many learners had attended for 50 or more hours between the two assessments, and those learners made the greatest average progress. Evidence from the National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) suggests that learners require in the region of 150–200 hours if they are to progress by one level within the *Skills for Life* qualifications framework.

- We found no significant differences between the mid- and post-assessments in either year (although in 2004/05 there was a gain between pre- and mid-assessment). The evidence suggests that learners in this study would have gone on to make more progress if the gap between assessments had been longer.

Teaching strategies

Although a wide range of teaching quality was observed, most teaching was of high or fairly high quality. Few classes were judged to be middling or poor. The instrument used was adapted from the authoritative Condelli study (Condelli et al., 2003) and covered teaching strategies and apparatus for learner engagement.

Very frequent teaching strategies were:

- giving appraisal/feedback immediately
- discussion of vocabulary during a reading
- other word study (e.g., word lists, puzzles, word searches)
- and using a dictionary to find word meanings.

Several approaches which the literature suggests are effective were rarely seen:

- encouragement of fluent oral reading. Early findings from the development project on encouraging fluent oral reading suggest that it can re-engage reluctant readers, produce some excellent progress, and provide more active reading in class than is currently the case
- reciprocal teaching (where pairs of learners take turns to be 'tutor' and 'student')
- explicit comprehension strategies
- accurate phonics teaching
- language experience approaches.

These approaches are priorities for further development, and their rarity helps explain why progress was in some cases limited.

Teachers should allow more time for learners to engage in 'active reading' – or reading aloud – as opposed to reading silently or non-reading activities. On average, active reading tuition occupied less than half the class time.

The adult literacy core curriculum

Most teachers were positive, speaking of the curriculum as being more 'structured', 'focused', generating 'good ideas', raising the profile of adult literacy, increasing teachers' confidence and clarifying issues of differentiation. Highest praise came from those who had been teaching adult literacy a relatively short time.

Criticism of the curriculum revolved around: teachers feeling under 'pressure' to work through it; the paperwork/bureaucracy involved; having to 'teach to the curriculum rather than what learners want'; the perception of it as 'restrictive', 'inflexible' or 'inappropriate'.

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Teachers' qualifications

Current standards now expect adult literacy teachers to have both a full teaching certificate and a Level 4 subject-specialist qualification. Two of the teachers were fully qualified in this way as literacy teachers, but the data were gathered at a time when few teachers had yet had the opportunity to acquire the new Level 4 qualifications. One other teacher was fully qualified, but as a numeracy teacher.

Twelve of the 47 teachers had both a generic teaching qualification (Cert Ed, PGCE or equivalent) and a subject-specific literacy teaching qualification in the form of the 'old' City & Guilds 9285. A further 11 teachers had qualifications of both types, but one or other, or both, of the qualifications was of an introductory nature only.

Thirteen teachers had a full generic teaching certificate, but no qualifications in teaching adult literacy. A further two teachers had less than full versions of generic teaching qualifications, also with no literacy teaching qualifications.

Three teachers had qualifications in teaching adult literacy, but no generic teaching qualifications.

Three teachers were not interviewed about their qualifications.

Of the 31 teachers with full generic teaching qualifications, 20 were in the context of training to teach in schools.

We make no assumptions here about how the status of teaching qualifications has affected teaching skills.

1.4 Recommendations

Development work and quality improvement

It is a priority for initial teacher training and for continuing professional development to provide teachers with specific and general strategies for teaching reading, and in particular:

1. oral fluency
2. explicit comprehension strategies
3. reciprocal teaching
4. phonics
5. language experience approaches.

Initial teacher training and continuing professional development should provide support for teachers in making more creative use of curriculum materials.

Teachers in training need to be shown in more detail how to teach reading in ways adapted to their learners' needs, and therefore how to assess those needs, especially where learners have 'spiky profiles' of achievement.

Teachers, curriculum managers and providers should be supported in enabling learners to spend more time on learning tasks; this will include, in addition to more contact time and taught hours:

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1. self-study, which will both increase time on task and encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning
2. distance learning
3. ICT-supported study
4. intensive provision.

Learners would benefit from spending more time working in small groups during course time, rather than most of their time working alone.

There is a need to support teachers in developing strategies for balancing pair and group work with time given over to learners working alone. These strategies should be developed and introduced into initial teacher education and continuing professional development programmes.

At the level of classroom practice, the most practicable ways to reduce the amount of time learners spend working alone are to increase whole-class work and opportunities for learners to work in pairs – for example, in a buddy system.

Teachers already in the field appear to have little opportunity for reflection on their practice. Our practitioner-researchers' accounts suggest that more opportunities need to be provided for teachers to observe in other practitioners' classrooms.

Policy

There is every reason to continue to make provision for learners of a range of ages and ethnicities, with English as their first or an additional language, who left school at different ages and/or have spent varying lengths of time away from education, and who may or may not have dyslexia.

As the field expands, the availability of more classes should be built on to differentiate learner groups by initial attainment in reading and writing – currently, most classes have to cater for a range of levels.

Research

Approaches which have been found to be effective elsewhere (mainly in North America) should be tried out and their effectiveness investigated. Examples include teaching reading fluency and accurate phonics teaching. NRDC is undertaking field trials of incorporating practice in oral reading fluency into classroom activities.

A detailed development and research project should be carried out on phonics teaching in adult literacy. Further professional development activity is needed to train adult literacy teachers to use phonics, and to assess the effectiveness of phonics teaching in the adult literacy classroom.

We should explore comparisons between:

- intensive courses and the typical pattern of extended provision
- large and small amounts of whole-class teaching
- more and less time spent working alone.

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1.5 Limitations to this research

We acknowledge the following limitations to our research:

- The amount of time between assessments is likely to have been too short for evidence of substantial progress to emerge.
- The assessment instrument assessed only comprehension at text level; no data were gathered on progress in other aspects of reading, such as word recognition.
- Active reading tuition was found to occupy less than half the average class time, and not all classes were only focused on reading.
- Some basic aspects of reading were not assessed; word recognition, for example.
- Several effective teaching strategies were rarely seen.
- The assessment tool used was a pilot tool.
- Significant numbers of learners had a learning disability.

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2 Context

2.1 The policy background

In most English-speaking countries rather high proportions of adults are thought to have less than functional literacy. In England, the British Government's response was to establish the *Skills for Life* initiative (GB D*f*EE, 2001), with targets for increasing adult literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) enrolments and qualifications by 2004, 2007 and 2010. Within *Skills for Life*, the Government also established the NRDC. Part of NRDC's remit was a focus on effective practice.

2.2 The Effective Practice Studies

The five NRDC Effective Practice Studies explore teaching and learning in reading, writing, numeracy, ESOL and ICT, and they set out to answer two questions:

1. How can teaching and learning literacy, numeracy, ESOL and ICT be improved?
2. Which factors contribute to successful learning?

Even before NRDC was set up it was apparent from reviews of the field (Brooks et al., 2001a; Kruidenier, 2002) that there was little reliable research-based evidence to answer these questions. Various NRDC reviews showed that progress in amassing such evidence, though welcome where it was occurring, was slow (Coben et al., 2003; Barton and Pitt, 2003; Torgerson et al., 2003, 2004, 2005). Four preliminary studies on reading, writing, ESOL and ICT were undertaken between 2002 and 2004 (Besser et al., 2004; Kelly et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2004; Mellar et al., 2004). However, we recognised the urgent need to build on these in order greatly to increase the research base for the practice of teaching these subjects.

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The research began in July 2003 and was completed in March 2006. It set out to recruit and gather information on 500 learners in each study, assess their attainment and attitudes at two points during the year in which they were participating in the study, interview both learners and teachers, observe the strategies their teachers used, and correlate those strategies with changes in the learners' attainment and attitudes.

The ICT study differed from the others in that its first phase was developmental, its sample size was smaller, and it had a shorter timescale, completing in March 2005.

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2.3 Features of this study

The reading study largely conformed to the description just given, except that:

- The learners were assessed at three points instead of two. The reason for having three assessments was to strengthen the statistical analyses by allowing not just pre/post comparisons but also trend analyses.
- No interviews with learners were conducted. At an early stage, because of resource limitations, a choice had to be made between having three assessment points and interviewing learners. In order to match the design of the Condelli study and strengthen the statistical analyses, we chose the former.

2.4 Aims

The overall aim of the reading study was to gain some purchase on what enables learners to make progress and/or develop more positive attitudes. The principal specific aims were to investigate in depth:

- the range of pedagogical practices which occur 'naturally', that is in the normal course of events and not as part of intervention studies, in the teaching of reading to adult learners in England;
- changes in adult learners' attainment in and attitudes to reading over the course of a year; and
- the correlation between the different pedagogical practices and any such changes;

and make recommendations to the profession about effective practices.

2.5 Scope

The statistical design required an achieved sample of learners of about 250, and a target for initial recruitment was set at 500.

Five practitioner-researchers (fieldworkers) and one of the research fellows gathered data in 2003/04, and they were joined by six more fieldworkers in 2004/05. They recruited 454 learners in 59 classes. All 454 learners completed a consent form, a learner profile and a pre-questionnaire on attitudes to literacy, and 440 completed a reading pre-assessment. Across the two years, 338 learners (74 per cent) returned for the mid-assessment and 322 (71 per cent) for the post-assessment, and full data were obtained on 298 (66 per cent). This is the largest sample ever achieved in a study of this sort in this country, and sufficient to support robust statistical analyses.

2.6 Literature review

This review of the literature on teaching reading to adult learners is brief, because the literature is fairly scant and because two comprehensive reviews were carried out a few years ago.

The literature on adult literacy generally was reviewed by Brooks et al. (2001a). The only area

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which had been thoroughly covered in England was surveys of the scale of need; the general conclusions were that very few adults could be considered illiterate, but many had less than functional literacy (defined as below Level 1) – possibly as many as 7 million, the figure the Moser committee had settled on (GB D*f*EE, 1999).

Brooks et al. (2001a) also found that there had been only two national surveys of adult learners' progress in literacy in England; neither had attempted to correlate progress in attainment with strategies for teaching. There was almost no information on what adult literacy teaching was actually like on the ground.

Besser et al. (2004) studied 53 adult literacy learners' difficulties in reading. They found that a range of strategies was being used to address the issue, but there appeared to be a less than perfect match between learners' difficulties and pedagogy. Intensive, focused reading instruction did not comprise a significant amount of teaching. In particular, little work at sentence level or on comprehension beyond the literal was seen. The assessment data showed that most of these learners had poor phonological awareness. Much of the phonics teaching observed was done on the spur of the moment, and there were instances of inaccurate phonics teaching.

Kruidenier (2002) in the USA produced a large review focusing on adults' reading skills. He also used findings from school-level research but, in the summary of his conclusions given below, only the more reliable findings from adult-level research are listed.

What works?

That is, what does the available evidence say about effective pedagogy? What counts as evidence depends on what the research question is. If the research question is, 'What factors in teaching *cause* learners to make progress in learning?' only randomised controlled trials (RCTs) have the potential to provide robust evidence, because only RCTs purport to control all possible extraneous causes of measured progress.

It is still legitimate, however, to ask what findings can be derived from other forms of evidence addressing different research questions. For example:

- What factors in teaching adult literacy and numeracy are *known to correlate* with better progress in learning?
- What evidence is there that ICT enables adults to make better progress?
- How much instructional time do learners need to make educationally significant progress?

Findings from randomised and other controlled trials

This section is based entirely on NRDC systematic reviews carried out by Torgerson et al. (2004). They found just enough evidence to demonstrate that receiving adult literacy tuition produces more progress than not receiving it. Though this is intuitively obvious, this was the first time it had been rigorously demonstrated.

Among the studies covered in the systematic reviews were several that had individual positive findings, for example on the benefits of reciprocal teaching (Rich and Shepherd, 1993; for reciprocal teaching see Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar and Brown, 1984) and of a 'diagnostic prescriptive' approach involving formal and informal diagnostic procedures to identify adults' strengths and weaknesses, and use of the diagnoses to develop individual educational prescriptions (Cheek and Lindsey, 1994).

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Factors that are known to correlate with better progress

Sticht et al. (1987) reported on the US Army's Functional Literacy (FLIT) programme, which focused on training job-related reading quickly. This produced not only greater gains for job-related reading than either no literacy training or general literacy programmes, but also gains in general reading that were greater than from no literacy training and, more significantly, on average better than those delivered by general literacy programmes.

An early piece of research commissioned by the Basic Skills Agency (BSA, 1997) found that, in further education, the provision of adult literacy support reduced drop-out rates and increased completion rates.

The Basic Skills Agency (BSA, 2000) summarised quantitative evidence showing that effective programmes have high expectations of learners' achievements, as well as enabling learners to gain credit and accreditation for their learning and to move into further study if they wish.

Brooks et al. (2001b) carried out a large-scale study for the BSA of the progress in literacy made by adult learners in England and Wales. Average progress in reading was slow and modest, and in writing almost non-existent. Factors associated with better progress in reading (none were found for writing) were:

- all the tutors in an area having qualified teacher status
- tutors having assistance in the classroom
- regular attendance by learners.

Kruidenier's (2002) review of research on reading in adult literacy suggested that adult learners may benefit from being taught word attack skills, fluency in reading aloud, repeated reading and explicit comprehension strategies.

What evidence is there that ICT enables adults to make better progress?

There is no convincing evidence of benefits from ICT over conventional instruction (Kruidenier, 2002; Torgerson et al., 2004). However, the NRDC *Effective Teaching and Learning: Using ICT* study did find that ICT teaching strategies improved literacy skills, although our ICT study did not focus on reading alone.

Instructional time needed to make significant progress

Comings (2003) summarised the US evidence on this – learners need to attend at least 100 hours to make progress equivalent to one US grade level. For England and Wales, the Basic Skills Agency (2000) provided estimates of the amounts of tuition time learners take to move up one level of the (pre-2001) BSA Standards; these varied from about 100 hours to over 250. However, in both countries learners are on average in provision for fewer than 70 hours in a year.

2.7 Brief account of method

(A fuller account of the methods used is given in Appendix A of the full report of the study, which will be available on the NRDC website.)

This was a correlational study. The aim was to correlate learners' progress in reading and changes in their attitudes with their teachers' strategies, and thus get some purchase on

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what enables learners to make progress and/or develop more positive attitudes. Adult learners' attainment in reading and attitudes to literacy were assessed three times and, between the first two assessments, the strategies their teachers used were observed.

Two of the observed classes were intensive, that is they provided several hours of class a week for just a few weeks. The rest followed the usual pattern – about two hours a week for most of the teaching year. In general, the initial ('pre-') assessments of the learners, including gathering information on their background characteristics, took place in the autumn terms of 2003 and 2004. The second and third ('mid-' and 'post-') assessments were carried out in the spring and summer terms of 2004 and 2005. (The timetable for the two intensive classes was, of course, much shorter.)

The observations were conducted between the pre- and mid-assessments, that is mainly between November 2003 and March 2004 and between October 2004 and February 2005; the exact dates were determined according to local circumstances. Four observations were conducted in each of the 59 classes, making 236 observations in all. Since the average duration of the classes was two hours, the total amount of observation time was about 472 hours. In addition, a series of double observations was carried out in order to ensure consistency between the fieldworkers.

The reading assessment instrument used was specifically designed for NRDC by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 2003. It was aligned in detail with the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum and National Standards and, therefore, also with the national tests for which many learners were being prepared. It tested reading comprehension, in line with the project's definition of reading as 'creating or deriving meaning from text'. Other aspects of reading, e.g., word identification, were not assessed. The instrument was designed to be appropriate for learners from Entry level 1 to Level 2. There were 30 items, which were a mixture of multiple-choice and open-ended ('supply') types, and referenced to the National Standards and Core Curriculum. An example of a test passage that was developed for a pilot version but not retained in the final version used in this project is shown in Figure 2.1. The text is followed by two questions based on it.

Figure 2.1 **Example of a reading passage and question types**

Animal facts

A missing parrot told RSPCA officers his name! Now he is safely back home. His relieved owner said, 'Joey always copies what he hears.'

Kelly is the smallest police dog in the world. He is only 22 centimetres tall! He works in Holland, finding robbers and missing persons. A police spokesman said, 'A small dog is useful. Kelly can search easily under cars. He eats much less than a big dog.'

Police rescued a man in Canada after his cat went mad and trapped him in a bathroom. Fluff the cat was snarling and hissing at the bathroom door when the police arrived. The trapped man suffered scratches in the incident.

A man in Poland tried to smuggle a snake out of the country – by wrapping it round his middle! Customs officers noticed that his middle seemed much fatter than the rest of his body. When they asked him to remove his coat, they found the one-metre-long python.

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A pensioner in Brazil got the shock of his life when an alligator suddenly landed in his backyard. The five-foot-long reptile had fallen from a balcony where it was being kept as a pet by his neighbours. The startled pensioner said, 'When I phoned the police asking for help, no one believed me. They asked if I was dreaming!'

Entry Level 3 item focusing on finding information:

Find the names of these animals:

- the smallest police dog
- the mad cat
- the missing parrot.

Entry level 1 item focusing on following narrative/understanding main events:
Why did a man wrap a snake round his middle?

At the mid- and post-assessments in 2003/04, and all three occasions in 2004/05, the final version of the reading comprehension instrument was used. However, at the pre-assessment in 2003/04, a pilot version was used. It is theoretically possible that the difference in instruments may have contributed to the fall in average reading scores in the first year.

Each of the three assessment occasions also included an attitudes questionnaire. This contained questions on:

- learners' self-confidence in various language-, literacy- and learning-related situations (10 items)
- the frequency with which learners engaged in a few literacy activities (4 items)
- the learners' enjoyment of some literacy activities (6 items).

In addition, a learner profile (age, gender, etc.) and a learner consent form were completed by learners at the start.

Information was also gathered from the teachers on their teaching background, aims for the session and, where this was known, data on learners' achievement of an accredited qualification and progression to further study.

Four observations were carried out in each class. The observations involved:

- Background information on the session and on the learners:
  - the physical circumstances, who was present (including any volunteers or assistants)
  - the layout of the room
  - information gathered from the teacher beforehand about the aims of the session, etc.
  - information gathered from the teacher afterwards about how the session went.

- A timed log. This sought to capture as many as possible of the teacher's teaching strategies and of the learners' activities as they occurred. It covered, among other things:
  - whole class, small group and individual groupings, and changes between these
  - the content and style of the teaching
  - whether individual learners or small groups received help from the teacher or others present

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- the materials used (copies of which were acquired whenever possible)
- the time spent on each activity, logged to the minute as far as possible.

■ An analysis of the session against a classification of teaching strategies and activities. The observations were coded into general and specific strategies. There were 19 codes for general strategies (those that could apply to any teaching, e.g., teacher explaining the purpose of the lesson, opportunities for learner involvement) and 54 for specific strategies (those directed at the teaching and learning of reading).

The methods used to analyse the data are described at appropriate points in the report.

2.8 Structure of this report

The characteristics of the providers and settings are described in Chapter 3, and those of the sample of learners in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 first gives figures on learners' achievement of accreditation and progression to further study, then presents the findings on their attainment and attitudes at each assessment point, the correlation between attainment and attitudes, trends across assessment points, and supplementary detail on learners' attendance, other provision they were attending, etc. In Chapter 6, details are given of the teachers' practices, both as described by them and as observed. Chapter 7 contains the nub of the quantitative data – an analysis of the correlations between the observational data, etc., and changes in attainment and attitudes. Chapter 8 contains the practitioner-researchers' qualitative analyses of the observational findings. Conclusions and implications are stated in Chapter 9.

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3 Local characteristics – the providers and the settings

3.1 The providers

The providers of the 59 courses in this study were as follows:

34 by further education (FE) colleges (of which 1 was **Learndirect**)
19 by local education authorities (LEAs) (including one delivered by FE)
3 by a charity
2 by training providers
1 by a prison (delivered by FE)

Overall, the classes were fairly representative of mainstream adult literacy provision, but not of the full range. For instance, there were no classes in workplaces (even though we contacted several in an attempt to recruit them) or young offender institutions, and only one in a prison.

3.2 The settings

All 59 classes were held in England, mainly in an area bounded by Liverpool, Chorley, Leeds, Louth and Swadlincote. There were also three outlying classes, in Norfolk and West Sussex. Most of the classes were in urban or suburban settings, but some were in small towns or rural areas.

Of the 59 courses, 39 were held in the daytime and 20 in the evening.

The classes were held in a wide variety of venues, with FE main college sites and FE 'other sites' providing the majority, followed by LEA adult education centres.

3.3 Single-purpose and integrated classes

Most of the courses were 'single purpose' adult literacy classes. However, eight were 'integrated' courses, i.e., they included another subject as well as literacy. Four involved numeracy, one was labelled 'financial literacy', two focused on ICT as well as literacy, and another was an art class with 'literacy support'. No attempt was made to analyse single purpose versus integrated courses, because the latter were too few and too disparate.

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4 The learners and their experience

4.1 The learners

This chapter looks first at the characteristics of the learners and then at the representativeness of the sample.

Characteristics of the 454 learners who formed the initial sample are shown in Table 4.1. For some categories, comparative national Learning and Skills Council (LSC) data for 2003/04 (the year when the first phase of this study was carried out) are shown. These figures cover most learners enrolled in LSC-funded adult literacy that year, except that those studying for GCSE English or key skills qualifications have been excluded. LSC data for 2004/05 were not yet available at the time of writing, but would probably show similar percentages to those for 2003/04.

Not all the cells in Table 4.1 are filled, because the present study collected more detailed data than LSC. The gender balance in this study was quite similar to the national picture. In broad terms, so was the age distribution, except that nationally there were more young people in adult literacy provision. The higher percentage of people of white ethnicity in this study than nationally arose because this study sampled only a few areas with high ethnic minority populations, and in particular none in the London area.

The predominance of 15 and 16 as ages of leaving full-time education was as would be expected. Much less expected was the proportion who left full-time education before age 15 – some may have had their school education abroad. Some of those who stayed on in full-time education after 16 may have been people with learning difficulties or disabilities. For more on this topic, see Section 4.5.

4.2 Note on ethnicity, nationality and language

Learners come from many different ethnic, national and linguistic backgrounds and, for pedagogic and equal opportunity reasons, one or more of these was recorded by the various effective practice projects, depending on their usefulness for the particular project. However, available categories do not necessarily fit with people's own sense of identity. Ethnicity and nationality are highly problematic, contested, and historically variable concepts. Ethnicity, in particular, is constructed out of overlapping categories based on colour, nationality, religion, culture and language. People often move strategically between ethnicities by using bilingualism, dual nationality, multiple identities and repertoires of cultural knowledge (White, 2002: 4). A fixed category can stereotype and give ethnicity or nationality an emphasis over and above other social categories that people belong to. In addition, most monitoring systems do not reflect the changes in immigration patterns which have led to 'hyper-diversity' (Kyambi, 2005) in the London region and, increasingly, elsewhere. The 'other' category for those not from the settled communities now includes people from the Middle East, Asia (outside the Indian sub-continent), South America and the Accession states of the new Europe, as well as many other smaller groupings.

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Table 4.1 **Background characteristics of the sample of learners**

		Effective practice in reading (present study)		Learning and Skills Council 2003/04 *
Sample size – N.B. some categories do not total to 454 because of missing information (e.g., 11 learners' ethnicity was not stated)		454		468,984
		N	**%**	**%**
Gender	Men	191	44	40
	Women	244	56	60
Age distribution	16–19	31	7	17**
	20–29	78	18	19***
	30–39	114	26	25
	40–49	107	25	18
	50–59	68	16	11
	Over 59	37	9	9
Ethnicity	White	371	84	73
	Other (for more detail see Table 4.2)	72	16	27
First language	English	385	89	
	Other	47****	11	
Occupational status	Employed	158	38	
	Unemployed	72	17	
	Unwaged	185	45	
Age of leaving full-time education	Under 15	40	10	
	15	112	28	
	16	179	45	
	Over 16	68	17	
Highest qualification	None	222	55	
	CSE/GCSE/O level (Levels 1–2)	75	19	
	FE/NVQ (Level 3)	88	22	
	A level or above (Levels 3+)	20	5	

* Source: Learning and Skills Council database for 2003/04 (All adult LLN learners with a learning aim in literacy other than GCSE English or key skills)

** 15–20 *** 21–29

**** The 47 learners with English as an additional language had 33 mother tongues between them.

Recording language background is also difficult as there is no straightforward link between ethnic category, nationality, ethnic identity and language. Learners' stated language backgrounds are often a mix of languages they are expert in, languages they have an attachment to, and languages which are part of their inheritance (Rampton, 1990). Also they may use non-standard or historic varieties of these languages, or only their written or spoken forms.

However, ethnic/national/language monitoring is an important tool in tackling social exclusion and understanding teaching and learning. Therefore the reading project used the categories shown in Table 4.2 for identifying ethnicity, while acknowledging their limitations, but did not attempt to collect data on nationality. The higher proportion of learners of white ethnicity in our sample is seen to be largely balanced by lower numbers of learners of South Asian and 'Other' ethnicities.

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Table 4.2 Learners' declared ethnicities

		Percent		
Ethnicity	**Number**	**Separate %**	**Grouped %**	**Learning and Skills Council 2003/04 (%)**
Black – African	13	2.9	8.1	8.3
Black – British	12	2.7		
Black – Caribbean	11	2.5		
Bangladeshi	1	0.2	2.7	9.2
Indian	8	1.8		
Pakistani	3	0.7		
Chinese	5	1.1		0.7
Mixed heritage	13	2.9		1.7
White	371	83.7		73.2
Other	6	1.4		6.9
Total	443	100.0		100.0

4.3 The learners' previous experience of provision

The distribution of answers to the question, 'How long is it since you last did a course like this?' is shown in Table 4.3. The classes had attracted a fair number of people who had not been on a course for some time.

Table 4.3 **Length of time since last course**

More than 10 years	22 %
6–10 years	6 %
2–5 years	16 %
Less than 2 years	56 %

4.4 Learners' voices

Six learners attended the second of the three consultation/feedback days held at the University of Sheffield (described in Section 6.3), and their responses to various questions are set out below. It should be noted that these learners cannot be regarded as a representative sample, in that it is more likely to be the confident and successful ones who are willing to share their experience in this way.

How do you think you did in the assessment?

- One learner said she had liked it and thought she had done well. When asked if she had found it 'intimidating' she immediately responded with a 'no'.
- Another learner also said that she thought she'd done well and had found it 'interesting'.
- One learner said that he had been worried but, after he realised there was no pressure, his 'blind panic' disappeared. He explained how people in his position can sometimes be so nervous that they can't 'see' what is written down in front of them 'even though you concentrate'.

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What milestones do you see as marking your own progress?

- One learner said he had now read his first book (*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams) and had just finished a second. (His teacher said that the 'most fantastic thing' for her was when he came in and said he had read that first book.) In terms of writing, he said he was now prepared to persevere, writing it out about five times to get it right, even although he still found the process difficult.

- Another learner said that she could now understand 'how they want me to answer certain questions'. She also said she read more, and not just the TV magazines but things she wouldn't have read before. With writing, what was key was the realisation that everyone has to do rough drafts first – her teacher had explained this to her. The first big step was actually going to class. Two learners spoke about this. Doing this built up confidence. One learner described how she had to pluck up courage even to enquire about what classes were available.

- With some prompting from their teachers, the other learners were happy to share their achievements with the group, which included:
  - writing the first letter ever to her brother ('He was shocked and said, don't let that be the only letter you write to me!')
  - writing a book review for the first time ('I was quite proud of that')
  - achieving National Test levels 1 and 2 and about to start GCSE English.

  This same learner had also got a new job in a college as a learning support worker for learners with profound learning difficulties; she could now write a CV; and she had had a story printed in the Daily Mail. (This story features in the extract from the transcript at the end of this section.)

How important are the National Tests?

The learners seemed to be in favour of them, even although they were aware that there was always the chance of failure. One learner said 'I'd rather have a go and fail than not have a go.' One explanation given was that a requirement for many jobs was Level 2 English.

Are there factors which get in the way of learning?

This was not a question that the learners seemed able to answer, not even in terms of practical considerations such as childcare, although the teachers and practitioner-researchers were able to make various suggestions (see Section 6.3).

Was there any specific thing that had helped?

The final question about any other barriers or specific things that had helped the learners was again met with silence. One teacher suggested that for one pre-Entry learner (not present) having one-to-one help from a volunteer had been crucial.

- Thus prompted, two learners indicated their teacher and said that she had helped them a lot and was more like a friend. It was not like at school. The one-to-one help was 'tremendous' and had helped build confidence and self-esteem.

- Earlier on, one of these learners had mentioned the different atmosphere in adult education compared with school. She described it as being treated as 'an equal'.

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The following extract (Vignette 4.1) about one learner's experience from the transcript of the session illustrates the pride felt by learners in their achievements.

Vignette 4.1 **One learner's statement of the benefits she gained**

One learner talked about how she was so nervous that it took her about 40 minutes of pacing up and down outside before she dared to go in to enquire about what help she could get with her reading and writing. When she was given the forms, she didn't have her glasses with her ('Yes, really') and joked about how often people would have heard that excuse! ('It was the best thing I've ever done in my life.')

She said that last year she had been made redundant after 17 years working in a factory and she thought she would not be able to get another job. 'Now I have done my English Levels 1 and 2 and maths Level 1, have just signed on to do GCSE English and I've just got a job in a college as a learning support worker for learners with profound learning difficulties. I'm able to write a CV'.

She also talked about how she had never written a letter, but, 'five weeks ago I emailed a complaint to the Daily Mail. I'd now got the confidence to do that, even though it took me about three hours sitting with my dictionary, but I was so passionate about it I had to do it....They didn't print it but they did send me a reply and the next day it was in the Daily Mail as a story, word for word.'

She said that it was not attributed to her, but her tutor agreed that it was what she had sent and, as she gleefully added, 'They had not even had to change her spelling because she had spent so long getting it right!'

Both from these comments and general experience, it is clear that measuring progress in reading is more complex than any tests devised by researchers or awarding bodies. A worthwhile research topic would be to investigate more systematically what learners perceive as markers of their progress.

4.5 Learners with learning difficulties or disabilities

Most classes had no observed learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, but 20 classes had at least one such learner. Two classes consisted entirely of such learners, another of five people with Down syndrome and two with severe learning difficulties (on this class, see Section 6.10), and a fourth entirely of people recovering from mental health problems. A total of 108 other learners were said to have dyslexia, of whom 50 had been formally assessed, and the rest were judged by their teachers to have dyslexia. In all, there were at least 170 learners with some form of learning difficulty or disability (37 per cent) in the sample.

4.6 Returners, drop-outs and representativeness of the retained sample

In the few categories where direct comparisons with national data were possible (see again Table 4.1), the 454 learners who provided data at the pre-assessment seemed reasonably representative, except perhaps for under-representation of some ethnic minorities and of young people.

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However, of more importance for the validity of the study was the representativeness of the retained samples, because if the learners who dropped out and those who stayed differed significantly, the generalisability of the findings even to the original sample would be limited. Of the 454 learners who had provided data at the pre-assessment, full data were gathered on 298 (66 per cent of the original sample). This group are referred to as the 'returners'.

Though the retention rate was satisfactory, were the returners representative of the original sample? To investigate this, statistical comparisons between the returners and the drop-outs were undertaken, looking for possible differences on:

- each of the background characteristics, as gathered through the learner profile;
- their levels of reading attainment as measured in the pre-assessment;
- their attitudes to reading as measured in the pre-questionnaire.

None of the comparisons showed a statistically significant difference between returners and drop-outs. It was therefore concluded that the returners were adequately representative of the full original sample.

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5 Learners' progress

Except where stated, the statistical findings reported in this chapter are based on returners only.

5.1 Learners' achievement of accreditation and progression to further study

In both years, teachers were asked at the end of the year for information on whether their learners had achieved an accredited qualification and/or gone on to a further course of study. The results for the two cohorts together are shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. Inevitably (because the information was gathered when courses were already over) there were larger than usual gaps in the data, especially on further study.

Table 5.1 **Accredited qualification achieved, both cohorts**

	All learners on whom information was available		Returners only	
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
None	147	43	102	38
Entry level	83	24	68	26
Level 1 or 2	109	32	95	36
Total	339	100	265	100

Table 5.2 **Further course of study, both cohorts**

	All learners on whom information was available		Returners only	
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
None	33	10	18	7
Same course	74	22	71	27
New course	117	35	100	38
Missing	115	34	76	29
Total	339	100	265	100

The number of returners overall was 298, so data on achievement of a qualification were available on 89 per cent of returners; 62 per cent of this group (163 out of 265) had achieved a qualification. Also, 171 returners out of 265 (65 per cent) had either returned to continue the same course or started a new one. At first sight, the finding on accreditations achieved is remarkably positive – but it does contrast with the reading data gathered by the study reported in the following section. It may be that the accreditations achieved were actually certifying where learners already were, rather than attesting to progress.

5.2 Reading attainment across the three occasions

Table 5.3 shows the average scaled scores and standard deviations for attainment in reading,

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by cohort. The scaled scores were standardised on a 0–100 scale with a national average of 50 and standard deviation of 10. The average scores for this study were all somewhat below the national average, though probably not significantly so. However, the standard deviations were all much larger than 10. This suggests that our samples were much more diverse than the sample on which the reading assessment instrument was normed. Consistent with this, the ranges of scores were very wide: on all six occasions there was at least one learner whose scaled score was zero, and on four occasions there was at least one learner who got so many questions right that their scaled score was the maximum, 100.

It is important to note that there was a technical difference between the test used at the pre-assessment in the first year and the versions used on all five other occasions: the first pre-assessment used a pilot version of the tests, and the scaling of scores from it was derived differently. This does not affect analyses against sub-samples, but does mean that the over-time difference between the pre- and mid-assessments for the first year may not be fully reliable, and the first cohort's pre-score is therefore not reported.

Table 5.3 **Reading attainment, by cohort**

		Occasion		
Cohort		**Pre-**	**Mid-**	**Post-**
2003/04 (N = 123)	Average scaled score		43.1	41.9
	(SD)		(24.9)	(25.6)
2004/05 (N = 179)	Average scaled score	40.0	46.5	46.2
	(SD)	(22.9)	(23.6)	(25.0)

N = sample size; SD = standard deviation

Analysis of the reading assessment data showed no significant differences between the mid- and post-assessments in either year. However, in 2004/05 there was a statistically significant gain between pre- and mid-assessment ($p<0.05$).

The point was made at a consultation day (see Section 6.3) that 'assessment fatigue' seemed to have set in by the third occasion. This may help explain why the mid- and post-scores did not differ significantly.

These findings immediately raise the question, 'Were there any factors which appeared to correlate with better progress?' This question was pursued in various ways: via an analysis of the errors learners made on the reading assessment and correlations with initial scores, the learners' background characteristics, the attitudes questionnaire, amount of self-study between classes, and attendance. These factors are now investigated in turn.

5.3 Did progress in reading depend on initial reading level?

No: the correlation between initial scores and change in scores between pre- and post-assessments was not significant.

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5.4 Error analysis

An analysis was carried out of the errors made by learners in the first cohort at the pre- and post-assessments, using just the 13 open-ended items common to both occasions. There were 226 analysable incorrect responses in the pre-tests, and 133 in the post-tests. Three categories of error emerged as the most frequent:

1. Logical answer based on misunderstood text, i.e., the learner had difficulty reading the item and therefore guessed.
2. Limited understanding of text/item, e.g., the learner picked out a word or phrase but from the correct item – sometimes apparently at random or, at best, with only a tenuous connection.
3. Scanning of text for key words contained in original item and copying out of words immediately following those key words.

While the proportion of category 1 errors dropped between pre- and post- (from 15.9 per cent to 5.9 per cent of total errors made), there was a rise in the proportions both of Category 2 errors (from 13.7 per cent to 28.9 per cent) and of Category 3 errors (from 15.5 per cent to 19.2 per cent).

Contrary to what might be expected, the comparison between the types of errors made on the pre- and post-assessments would seem on the surface to reflect less understanding on the post- than on the pre-assessment.

It is possible to speculate about the reasons for this change: learners' reading ability may have decreased between assessments, which seems highly unlikely, or learners' motivation may have decreased by the third assessment, in some way affecting their responses – but these possibilities seem inconsistent with the findings on attitudes (see Section 5.6). Conversely, it may be that confidence and ability increased and learners felt able to attempt the more complex questions, and thus made more basic errors as they were working at the limit of their ability level.

5.5 Exploring individual differences in changes in reading attainment

A series of correlations between changes in reading attainment and learners' background characteristics was carried out.

- **Gender:** Women made slightly but significantly more progress than men.
- **Age:** There were no significant differences in progress between age bands (for the age bands see Table 4.1).
- **Ethnicity:** The detailed ethnic profile of the sample was presented in Table 4.2. Because the numbers of ethnic minority learners were small, for purposes of analysis all ethnicities other than white were collapsed into a single category. White learners performed better than others at pre-test and at post-test, but neither group made significantly greater loss or gain than the other.
- **Home language:** The amount of progress made by learners with English as an additional language did not differ from that of the majority whose first language was English.
- **Occupational status:** In the 2004–05 cohort only, those who were employed or self-employed made a significantly greater gain than those who were unemployed – see Table 5.4. Most of the categories were too small for statistically significant differences to emerge.

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- **Age of leaving full-time education:** There was no relationship between the age of leaving full-time education and change in reading scores.
- **Qualifications:** In the 2004–05 cohort only, learners with any further education or NVQ qualification on average made particularly good progress – see Table 5.5. Their improvement was significantly greater than that made by those with no qualifications or CSE/GCSE/O Level.
- **Time since last course:** It made no difference (on average) how long it had been since learners had been on a course.
- **Dyslexia:** There was no significant difference in change in reading scores between those who had dyslexia and those who did not.
- **Having been diagnosed with dyslexia:** There was no significant difference in change in reading scores between those who had been assessed as having dyslexia and those who had not.

Table 5.4 **Changes in average reading scores between pre- and post-test, 2004/05 cohort, by occupational status**

Occupational status	Average change in reading score	SD	N
Employed/self-employed	10.5	9.7	68
In full-time education	7.7	7.3	9
Looking after home/family	6.4	10.5	22
Sick/disabled	8.8	12.4	20
Unemployed	-0.4	10.2	39
Retired	5.7	8.2	12
Overall	6.8	10.8	170

N = sample size; SD = standard deviation

Table 5.5 **Changes in average scores between pre- and post-test, 2004/05 cohort, by educational qualifications**

Level of educational qualifications	Average change in reading score	SD	N
None	5.9	11.3	95
CSE/GCSE/O Level	3.8	11.1	36
Any FE qualification/NVQ	11.5	9.9	36
A Level or above	6.7	6.7	6
Overall	6.7	11.1	173

N = sample size; SD = standard deviation

5.6 Findings from the attitudes questionnaire and correlations between reading attainment and learners' attitudes

Statistical analyses were not carried out on the 20 individual items separately, but on the three parts of the questionnaire (see Section 2.7).

There were no significant changes in either frequency of literacy activities or attitudes to literacy (parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire). However, there was a significant improvement in learners' self-confidence (part 1 of the questionnaire) – see Table 5.6 and Figure 5.1. Aggregated self-ratings on the ten items in this part of the questionnaire could, in theory, range from 10 (total lack of confidence) to 40 (total self-confidence) but, as Figure 5.1 shows,

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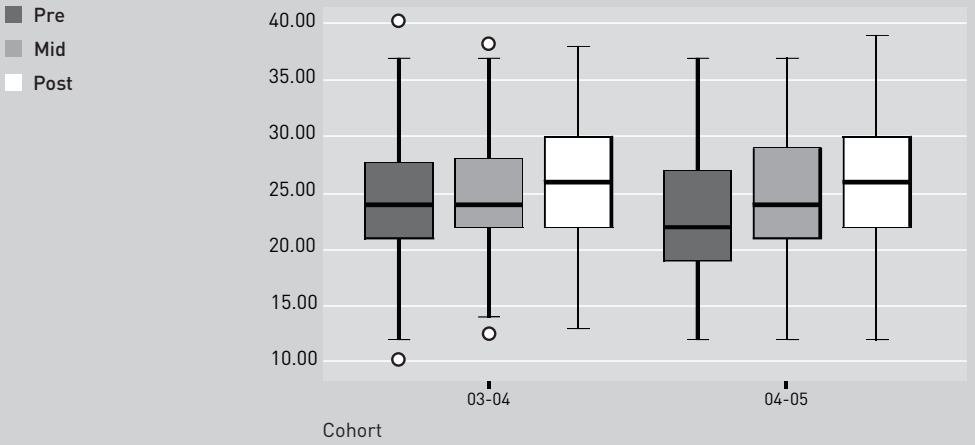
only one learner on any occasion was at either end of this distribution (see the outliers at pre-assessment in the 2003–04 cohort). All of the average self-ratings clustered around the mid-point of 25.

Table 5.6 **Changes in learners' self-confidence**

		Occasion		
Cohort		**Pre**	**Mid**	**Post**
2003/04 (N = 119)	Average change in self-confidence	24.3	24.9	25.9
	(SD)	(5.8)	(5.1)	(5.3)
2004/05 (N = 179)	Average change in self-confidence	23.4	24.8	25.9
	(SD)	(6.0)	(5.5)	(5.5)
Overall (N = 298)	Average change in self-confidence	23.8	24.9	25.9
	(SD)	(5.9)	(5.3)	(5.4)

N = sample size; SD = standard deviation

Figure 5.1 **Changes in learners' self-confidence**



NB The small circles with numerals indicate individual learners with 'outlying' self-ratings.

But was there any relationship between changes in reading attainment and learners' self-ratings? Only a weak and inconsistent one.

Rather surprisingly, the improvement in learners' self-confidence was *not* related to the changes in reading scores; nor were their self-ratings on frequency of literacy activities.

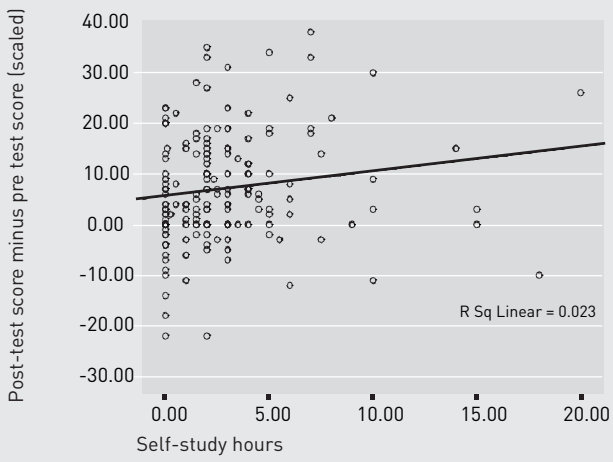
Only Part 3 of the questionnaire (items 15–20, asking about enjoyment derived from literacy) showed a fairly consistent relationship with change in reading scores. Learners whose reading benefited more from the classes reported slightly but significantly greater enjoyment of literacy at post-test than at pre-test, and had higher self-ratings than others on this at post-test. These relationships were very weak, however (less than two per cent of shared variance).

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5.7 Were changes in reading attainment related to amount of self-study between sessions?

Yes. Learners who reported more self-study between classes made better progress. This has also emerged as an important factor in the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning in Oregon (Reder, 2005). Data on this factor were gathered only in the second year, but 178 learners (all but one of the returners in that year) provided relevant information. Though the correlation was not very strong, its effect can be clearly seen in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 **Scatterplot of improvement in scaled reading scores pre-test to post-test by number of self-study hours**



5.8 Attendance

Did the changes in reading attainment relate to regularity of attendance?
Yes. The relationship was positive and significant (more regular attendance was associated with greater improvement), but very weak.

However, learners for whom both pre-to-mid and mid-to-post attendance data were available (N = 278) attended, on average, around 30 hours in those two periods combined, even though the interval between the pre- and post-assessments had been designed to allow up to 50 hours' attendance. This figure does *not* fully represent the attendance of the typical learner in a year, for two reasons. First, it does not include the three assessment sessions themselves – two-thirds of the learners in the study attended all three, and about six hours should be added to the average for the year on this basis. Secondly, it does not include any sessions attended before the pre-assessment or after the post-assessment. This would particularly affect the figure for 2003/04, because the pre-assessments in that year occurred somewhat later than those in 2004/05 – none earlier than November 2003 and some as late as January 2004.

The project team estimated that the average length of time between the pre- and post-assessments across the two years was about six months (26 weeks); taking out four weeks for the Christmas and Easter breaks and two more weeks for a half-term and the mid-assessment would leave 20 weeks. Given that the maximum amount of attendance in 20 weeks would therefore be 40 hours, an average of 30 hours would actually represent quite

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regular attendance. Because the pre-tests in the second year were carried out rather earlier in the academic year, both the maximum attendance possible and the average actual attendance would have been greater in that year. In the *Progress in Adult Literacy* study (Brooks et al., 2001b) in 1998–99, many learners had attended for 50 or more hours between the two assessments, and those learners made the greatest average progress. It is therefore possible that learners in this study would have gone on to make more progress if the gap between assessments could have been longer.

Did the changes in reading attainment depend on the class attended?
Probably. The classes differed markedly in average change in reading scores. In the 2003/04 cohort, the best class had an average improvement of almost five scale points, while the worst experienced an almost 12 point decrease. Similarly, in the 2004/05 cohort, the best class improved by 19 points, while the worst got worse by three points. So, although the classes were very small, differences between them were probably not just random fluctuations. However, the numbers of learners in each class were so small (range 4–15 on roll, but numbers attending were almost always lower, with eight classes running for at least one session with only two or three learners; see Table 6.1) that statistical tests would not show these differences to be statistically significant.

Were changes in reading attainment related to other provision attended during the course?
No. Somewhat fewer than half of the learners were also attending some other provision. There was no correlation between attending other provision or not and change in reading scores.

5.9 Summary

This is the list of factors that were *not* found to be significantly related to change in reading: scores at pre-test; age; ethnicity; English as first or additional language; age of leaving full-time education; time since last course; having dyslexia; having a formal diagnosis of dyslexia; the improvement in self-confidence; attending other provision. Table 5.7 summarises the factors that *did* appear to be related to changes in reading attainment.

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Table 5.7 **Summary of factors associated with change in reading attainment**

Factor	Relationship to change in reading attainment
Errors on the reading assessment	The 2003/04 cohort (whose average score appeared to go down) made more basic errors at post-test than at pre-test. (No analysis was done for the 2004/05 cohort.)
Gender	Changes in scores were slightly better for women than for men.
Occupational status	In the 2004/05 cohort only, employed and self-employed learners improved significantly more than those who were unemployed.
Formal qualifications	In the 2004/05 cohort only, learners with any FE or NVQ qualification improved significantly more than those with no qualifications or CSE/GCSE/O Level.
Attendance	More regular attendance was associated very weakly with improvement.
Enjoyment of literacy	Learners whose reading benefited more from the classes reported slightly but significantly greater enjoyment of literacy at post-test than at pre-test, and had higher self-ratings than others on this at post-test. These relationships were very weak, however.
Self-study	Learners who reported more self-study made better progress.
Class attended	There were wide differences between classes in the amount of progress.

The last item immediately raises the question, 'Were the differences in progress between classes related to how the teachers taught?' Chapter 6 lays the groundwork for this by describing what went on in the classrooms, and Chapter 7 then addresses the actual question.

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6 Teachers' practice

The focus in this chapter is firstly on building up a profile of the observed teachers (Section 6.1). Then their concerns as teachers are analysed (6.2) and further issues arising from the feedback/consultation days are explored (6.3). We then move onto classroom practice, with an examination of classroom layouts and teaching materials (6.4), groupings (6.5), and patterns of classroom activity (6.6-7). Two further sections cover general teaching strategies and opportunities for learner involvement (6.8) and specific strategies for the teaching and learning of reading (6.9). A case study of a class of adult learners with Down syndrome is presented in Section 6.10, followed by a short section on what was *not* seen during the observations (6.11).

6.1 Teachers' profiles

Across the two years, 47 teachers were involved in teaching the 59 classes (several taught more than one, either in the same year or in consecutive years, or both). Information gathered from all 47 included gender, whether English was their first or an additional language, whether they had received Core Curriculum training, whether they had any teaching assistants, and the numbers of learners in their classes. Three (covering three classes) could not be interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the other 44 teachers (covering 56 classes), and the information from those interviews, and on gender, teaching assistants and the numbers of learners for all 47 teachers, is tabulated in Table 6.1.

Gender

Of the 47 teachers, 36 were women and 11 were men, and the great majority of classes observed were given by female teachers (46 out of 59).

First language

English was the first language of all but one teacher.

Experience

Over three-quarters of those interviewed (34) had additional teaching experience in other subjects. Nearly half of these teachers (16 of the 34) had infant or primary school experience. All but two had previous adult literacy teaching experience, which varied from one year to 28 years, with a mean of nearly nine years.

Assistants

In 26 of the 59 classes, the teacher had either no teaching assistant or very little help. In 23 classes, the regular number of assistants was one or two, and in the remaining ten, there was often or sometimes more help. Some implications of the availability of assistance in the classroom are discussed in Sections 6.2, 6.5 and 7.3.

Learner numbers

Most class numbers (27) were in the range 5-9, with some (20) sometimes or always below this and others (12) sometimes or always above this.

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Table 6.1 **Profiles of the observed teachers**

	Teaching qualifications					
Teacher's class ID and gender	Generic	In adult literacy	Previous teaching	Years of experience in adult literacy	Number of regular assistants	Range of learner numbers (total in class, including those not in project)
041 F	Not interviewed				1	11–15
051 F	PGCE	9282, 9285	Maths GCSE/ A Level	12	1	8–11
052, 055 F	PGCE	9285	Primary, secondary	26	052 – 1–2 055 – 1	6–10 6–8
053, 054, 057 M	Teaching Cert, Dip special/ remedial ed	9282/3	Primary, secondary; badminton, history, geography	3–4	053 – 2–3 054 – none 057 – none (except carer for 1 learner)	3–6 2–8 6–8
056 F	PGCE	9281/2/5	ESOL (children); psychology	8	1–2	10–14
058 F	PGCE,	T30, 9282/5	GCSE/A Level maths	12	1–2	5–13
081, 086 F	PGCE	None	Infants	22	081 – none 086 – none	4–7 3–5
082 F	Cert Ed	None	Infant	13	1	7–9
083 M	Cert Ed	None No CC training*	ESOL	New	1	4–7
084 F	Cert Ed, 7407,	None	None	3	None	9–11
085 F	PGCE	Level 4 numeracy	None	Nearly 2	1–2	4–9
091, 092 F	PGCE	TEFL	Secondary French	6	091 – 4–5 092 – 4	6–8 8–10
111 F	PGCE	9282	Primary and secondary adult ed (langs)	5	None	3–6
112 F	Cert Ed	9285	PE (secondary)	17	1–2	5–8
113 F	Cert Ed	9282/3	Primary	5	1–2	5
114 M	7307	9282/3	None (except short time as volunteer)	4	3–4	6–7
115 F	Cert Ed Primary	None	Primary	4–5	2	3–6
116 F	PGCE	None	Primary	3	2	7–8
121 F	7307	9282/5	None	9	1	5–6
171,172 F	Cert Ed, B.Ed	None	Primary/ secondary/ FE	2	171 – None 172 – none	4 4–7
173, 178 F	None	9282/3, 9285	Work-based training	New teacher	173 – 1 178 – none	5 5–7
174, 176 F	Cert Ed	None	Primary	20	174 – none 176 – none	5–7 6–9
175 F	None	RSA diploma	None	20	1	7–9
177 F	PGCE	None	Primary; secondary (special needs)	3	None	6–9

* All the other teachers had received Core Curriculum training.

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Table 6.1 **Profiles of the observed teachers** (cont.)

	Teaching qualifications					
Teacher's class ID and gender	Generic	In adult literacy	Previous teaching	Years of experience in adult literacy	Number of regular assistants	Range of learner numbers (total in class, including those not in project)
191 M	PGCE, 7307, Cert Ed FE	None	SEN (secondary)	4	None	3–5
192 M	7407,	9281,9485 Level 4 literacy	IT	3	1–2	6–10
241, 242 F	Cert Ed	None	Primary and secondary	28	241 – none 242 – none (except 1/2 carers for individual learners)	5–10 5–6
271 F	7307	9281/2	GCSE English literature	6	3–6	4–9
291, 292, 293 F	B Ed	None	Primary	24	291 – 1 292 – 1–3 293 – 1	7–10 9–10 5–7
331 M	RAF in-house qualifications in in technical instruction techniques	None	Instructor in RAF	1	1	9–11
361,362 F	Cert Ed	None	6th form and secondary home economics; primary	10	361 (1 once only) 362 – none	5–7 4–6
381 F	Not interviewed				1	5–6
401 F	PGCE	9281, 9285	Lecturer in office skills	4	None	3–7
411 F	7307	9282/3, D32/33	Secondary supply – maths, English, IT	10	None	5–7
421 M	PGCE	None	Secondary science	9	1	4–8
422 F	7307	Level 4 literacy	Horse riding	7	1	6–8
431 F	Cert Ed	9285	GCSE	14	None	9 (based on information from one session only)
441 M	None	9285	None	4	None	5–6
451 F	7307	379/2/3 Initial Cert in teaching basic skills,	None (except 2 years as volunteer)	3 or 4	None	6–9
452 M	7307	9281/2	None except as trainer of bank staff	5	None	4–5
471 M	PGCE	Level 4 literacy	University teaching (theology)	2	1	6–7

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Table 6.1 **Profiles of the observed teachers** (cont.)

	Teaching qualifications					
Teacher's class ID and gender	Generic	In adult literacy	Previous teaching	Years of experience in adult literacy	Number of regular assistants	Range of learner numbers (total in class, including those not in project)
481 F	Not interviewed				None	3–5
491 F	7307	None	None (except as volunteer)	4	2	4–6
541 F	Cert Ed	9285, D32/33	None (except as volunteer)	10	None	6
501 F	Cert Ed	9285 level 4	Primary and secondary (geography)	15	1–2	4–5
502 F	PGCE	9285	TEFL	15	3	4
561 M	PGCE	TEFL, 9281/2	ESOL	3	None	4–10

Teaching qualifications

The teachers provided information on both their generic and their adult literacy teaching qualifications, and an analysis of these based on the relevant columns of Table 6.1 is provided in Table 6.2. The adult literacy teaching qualifications are divided into those available before and after the introduction of the core curricula and the Level 4 qualifications.

Table 6.2 **Teachers' qualification profiles**

	Number of teachers
Fully qualified with Cert Ed and Level 4	3
With Cert Ed and C&G 9285 certificate or similar	12
With a generic and an adult literacy teaching qualification, but where one or other, or both, qualifications are of an introductory nature	11
Cert Ed/PGCE only, with no adult literacy teaching qualifications	13
With a lower level generic qualification only	2
With a subject-specific teaching qualification only (these three are at very different levels: one introductory, one 9285 and one at a postgraduate level)	3

Current standards now expect adult literacy teachers to have both a full teaching certificate and a Level 4 subject-specialist qualification. Two of the teachers were fully qualified in this way as literacy teachers, but the data were gathered at a time when few teachers had yet had the opportunity to acquire the new Level 4 qualifications. One other teacher was fully qualified, but as a numeracy teacher.

Twelve of the 47 teachers had both a generic teaching qualification (Cert Ed, PGCE or equivalent) and a subject-specific literacy teaching qualification in the form of the 'old' City & Guilds 9285. A further 11 teachers had qualifications of both types, but one or other, or both, of the qualifications was of an introductory nature only.

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Thirteen teachers had a full generic teaching certificate, but no qualifications in teaching adult literacy. A further two teachers had less than full versions of generic teaching qualifications, also with no literacy teaching qualifications.

Three teachers had qualifications in teaching adult literacy, but no generic teaching qualifications.

Three teachers were not interviewed about their qualifications.

Of the 31 teachers with full generic teaching qualifications, 20 were in the context of training to teach in schools.

From the perspective of upskilling the profession, it could be considered that there is still some way to go.

6.2 The teachers' concerns

Some of these concerns were prompted by specific questioning from the practitioner-researchers, on the topics of attitudes to the core curriculum and to assistance in the classroom. Other concerns were voiced as additional comments, recorded by the practitioner-researchers but not usually initiated by them. These were on a variety of issues that were presumably particularly important to the teachers. The responses to the two specific questions on the adult literacy core curriculum and assistance in the classroom are analysed first, followed by other concerns.

The adult literacy core curriculum

The question asked was, 'To what extent have you changed how you teach in response to the requirements of the core curriculum?' This turned out to be the starting point for a whole critique of the curriculum, not just the changes involved. On the whole, more teachers were positive than negative about it and, for the newer teachers, it was the only system they had known and they were mostly in favour of it. Many teachers, including the more experienced, spoke in terms of the curriculum being more 'structured', 'focused', generating 'good ideas', raising the profile of adult literacy, increasing teachers' confidence and clarifying issues of differentiation, although the highest praise came from those who had been teaching adult literacy a relatively short time – 'brilliant' (three years), 'it's my bible' and 'life is easier because of it' (four years).

Criticism of the curriculum revolved around: teachers feeling under 'pressure' to work through it; the burden of paperwork/bureaucracy involved; having to 'teach to the curriculum rather than what learners want'; the perception of it as 'restrictive', 'inflexible' or 'inappropriate'. Reservations were also expressed about the need to 'focus on practical English rather than creative', and one teacher expressed a preference for a previous syllabus. The DfES-produced booklets were criticised as always needing to be adapted, as they offered insufficient coverage of topics.

Assistance in the classroom

The question here was, 'Do you welcome help from volunteers/assistants?' A few teachers reacted with a simple 'Yes'; many more expanded on their replies. The overwhelming majority were broadly in favour, whether or not they actually had assistance in the class, one exception

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describing them as only 'a mixed blessing'. Just over half the classes observed (31) regularly had assistants and/or volunteers, but 28 classes out of the total of 59 had no assistance available for any of the observed sessions.

Learner/staff ratios varied from virtually 1:1 when there were multiple assistants and/or small classes, to 11:1 where there was no assistance. Teachers who did have volunteer(s) or assistant(s) often said they 'couldn't manage without' the help and wished they could have more. From the observations carried out, it seemed that most assistants were assigned to work on a one-to-one basis with individual learners, usually those at the lower levels in the class. They also undertook practical jobs like tea-making, photocopying, etc.

Other comments

Administration

The comments under this heading reflected similar concerns to those prompted by the question on the core curriculum. One teacher, who regularly said he felt overburdened with paperwork and subsequently left the profession, was not alone, as the following remark shows: there are now 'too many hoops to jump through – you spend as much time on paperwork as on teaching'; pressures on teachers to produce additional paperwork also meant there was less time to plan properly and less time to develop projects for and with learners; and the amount of paperwork caused one teacher such stress that she resigned in the summer term.

Learners

Many teachers expressed detailed understanding of and concern for their learners, hence the high number of comments under this heading. Anxiety and frustration were expressed by many teachers when they felt a session had not gone as well as planned. There was a frequent regret expressed at having to spread themselves too thinly: 'I worry about not getting round them all, not giving them quality time'; it was difficult to give each learner enough attention. Indeed, trying to give learners individual support was a high priority amongst the teachers. Dyslexic learners in a class were regarded as being in great need of this. Also, generally, one-to-one tuition was regarded as essential for individuals who need a 'great deal of support'. For learners who actually need to learn how to read, one-to-one help would be the way to achieve this, according to the teacher of a class where no help was available; another stated that 'I don't have the time for the one-to-one work, although one-to-one is most profitable for learners. If I had one learner for three or four weeks, I could achieve so much.' Elsewhere, there was concern about provision for Entry 1/2 learners. In one case, their class closed because of small numbers and, because of that provider's streaming policy, they could not be accommodated in one of the higher-level classes.

Resources and accommodation

Teachers who had to operate away from a well-resourced centre or college felt at a disadvantage. For one teacher going out into the community, away from their resource 'base', it was difficult to deliver anything other than worksheet-based approaches. However, another teacher regarded working in community education as preferable as it made it easier to treat learners as individuals and not be so focused on targets – travelling between centres can create a difficulty with resources. One teacher, teaching in a room with no adult literacy resources whatever (an art studio), said it would be 'my dream to plan a lesson and know I have the resources to hand'. There were also concerns about stocks of certain resources, e.g., dictionaries, even at apparently well-resourced centres, and audio cassettes to enable individual work to be managed more easily. There was also mention of a lack of suitable structured reading resources available for beginner readers.

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Conclusion

The adult literacy workforce emerged from the interviews as, on the whole, well-qualified and experienced. There were strong feelings about excessive bureaucracy, and inadequate pay and conditions prompted some teachers to speak out. The overarching concern that emerged was about doing justice to their learners and their needs. In this, the teachers sometimes felt thwarted by the burden of paperwork, and at times limited or non-existent resources, lack of (suitably trained) help in the classroom and the consequent difficulty of giving each individual learner the help that they needed within large and/or mixed-level classes. Furthermore, the views stated about the benefits and drawbacks of volunteers and assistants give some helpful pointers for improving training and classroom practice.

6.3 Issues arising from consultations

Introduction

In addition to regular training and consultation meetings at the University of Sheffield for the practitioner-researchers, three special consultation and feedback events were held, in September 2004, September 2005 and February 2006. All were attended by the project team, including most of the practitioner-researchers, and several of the observed teachers. The 2005 meeting was also attended by six learners who had participated in the project.

The three feedback and consultation days were highly successful. This can be measured both in terms of the participants' enjoyment and enhancement of their professional development, and in terms of benefit to the project. The insights gained helped us to focus on issues that are important to practitioners and learners, and thus to shape some of our research questions and follow additional lines of analysis.

The first consultation/feedback day – 8 September 2004

Seventeen people, including ten teachers, attended:

- Most teachers reported their learners as interested in the project and happy to be involved.
- The assessments were well-liked as such. One teacher reported her learners as wanting to take the materials home with them.
- However, assessment fatigue had set in generally by the time of the post-assessment and few were keen to do it a third time. This may help to explain why the mid- and post-average reading scores did not differ significantly (Section 5.2).
- Overwhelmingly, the teachers said that being observed didn't affect how they planned their lessons or taught them.
- The teachers said it was hard to judge how much progress a learner had made immediately after the end of the lesson, or from a standardised test. Many learners have their own sense of how they have improved (see Section 4.4).
- It was recognised that there are literacy classes where the learners are there for the 'social situation' rather than education.
- There was agreement that the learners are also being helped to maintain their skills.
- Non- and beginning readers need to attend classes more than once a week.

Generally the feedback from the teachers was very positive about the experience of participating in the study. Concern for their learners seemed paramount, and it was striking how much the teachers' sense of well-being depended on their learners being happy. The importance of confidence came up again and again (but contrast the lack of correlation between the learners' growth in self-confidence and progress in reading, Section 5.6).

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The second feedback/consultation day – 2 September 2005

On this occasion, 30 people attended, including nine from the team of practitioner-researchers, plus ten teachers and six learners from classes observed during the second year. The learners' contributions are summarised in Section 4.4.

The third consultation/feedback day – 17 February 2006

This was attended by 15 people; in addition to the project team, including most researcher-practitioners, four observed teachers were also able to come. The main aim of the meeting was to share the latest findings and to draw on reactions and practitioner insights to inform further analyses for the final report. This time, the major issue to emerge seemed to be the difficulty of providing suitable teaching for mixed classes, where ability levels could range from Entry level 1 to Level 2.

6.4 Classroom organisation

Introduction

This section looks at some of the physical characteristics of the observed classes, firstly in terms of classroom layouts and secondly with respect to the teaching materials used. Teaching and learning took place in a variety of settings, with a range that included dedicated and well-resourced adult literacy classrooms in colleges and adult centres, other rooms (for example, an art studio) in such institutions, school classrooms, used both within school time and out-of-hours, and spaces in community centres shared with other services (e.g., with a Citizens Advice Bureau).

Analysis of room layouts

This analysis of the room layouts is based on the plans drawn by each practitioner-researcher of the classrooms used for their observations. Across the two years, plans were available for 45 of the 59 classes. Five different room layouts were identified, in order of frequency of use:

A One main table (or smaller tables pushed together), around which all the learners sat
B Separate smaller tables, varying in number from two to five
C Tables in a horseshoe configuration with teacher's table at the open end
D Tables (with computers) around the edge of the room
E Traditional arrangement with desks/tables in rows and all learners facing the same way.

Similar correlations emerged between room layouts and grouping patterns in the data from both years. The use of layouts A and C, ostensibly more conducive to group work, did not guarantee it, as there were instances of both substantial and minimal whole-group work taking place in these layouts. However, where there was almost entirely group teaching, layout A was favoured over all others. Layout B correlated with little or no group teaching, but a substantial amount of whole-group teaching did take place in layout D. No information was available about whether the classrooms had been arranged according to the teachers' preferences or whether there was no scope for altering the recorded layouts. The latter scenario may perhaps be inferred more readily when the class took place in a 'borrowed' space rather than a dedicated one.

Teaching materials 2003/04

As part of each observation, the practitioner-researchers were asked to collect the teaching materials used. Not all materials were available, but worksheets were collected in sufficient

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numbers (from 21 of the 23 classes) to provide the basis for some conclusions about the paper-based materials in use. They cannot, however, be regarded as truly representative. It was partly because of this that an analysis of materials from the second year was not undertaken, and partly because there did not, *prima facie*, appear to be any significant difference in the types of materials collected. In brief, the main findings were:

- The majority of materials were commercially produced, printed on white A4 paper, using sans-serif fonts. Handwritten materials were rare. In the few instances where coloured paper was used there was no obvious preference for a particular colour.
- Most of the commercially produced sheets were downloaded from websites. BBC Skillswise was the most popular, but many of the sites accessed were not dedicated adult literacy ones.
- Of the non-web sources used, abc Production sheets were used most widely, followed by the Liverpool Community College materials, DfES and Brown & Brown.
- Several of the teacher-designed materials included photocopied sections from newspapers, magazines or poetry books, and were usually the main sources of 'realia' in the classroom (cf. Vignette 6.1, below).
- There were fairly equal numbers of materials at text and at word level, with far fewer at sentence level. Only a minority of the materials actually had the relevant core curriculum sections noted on them (perhaps because they pre-dated its introduction).

Any conclusions can only be tentative, as the materials on which this analysis was based represent: a) group activities more often than individualised ones; and b) the most easily reproduced (and portable) paper-based materials. Despite the perception, in most cases, on the part of teachers of a change in attitudes to teaching and materials since the introduction of the core curriculum, it was surprising how little that was reflected in the type of materials in use. Indeed many of the materials still in circulation (other than web-based) pre-dated the core curriculum.

Vignette 6.1 **'Realia' as teaching materials**

Not all materials in use were 'worksheets', whether commercially produced or teacher-designed, despite the impression given by the analysis of materials collected. The following extract gives an example of how materials brought in by a learner could be used as the basis for a teaching and learning activity in the classroom:

Observation notes (class 112, week 1) record that learner M, working over a period of 30 minutes one-to-one with volunteer tutor N, 'has brought notes from a church meeting she attended, the agenda and some leaflets about the venue. N tells me (the observer) that she was unable to attend the same meeting, so M is going to tell her about it, while writing up her notes into a report … M is telling N about the Centre where the meeting was held, showing her leaflets and maps … M starts to make notes based on her agenda of the meeting. N looks and says 'u sound' giving the example "umbrella"…'

[Comment: The use of the real item is of course valid, as is the general idea of building incidental teaching into the activity. However, as with the other phonics examples in Vignette 8.1 in Section 8.3 below, the phonology in this case might be misleading. The word 'umbrella' does not begin with a 'u sound' (as if spelt 'yewmbrella') if volunteer N said /juː/, the name of letter <u>, usually known as 'the long "u" sound'. Even if N had said 'short "u" sound', meaning the phoneme /ʌ/ with which umbrella actually begins, it would have been better to say the sound of the phoneme, often informally written 'uh'.]

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6.5 Groupings

This heading refers to whether learners were operating as a whole class, individually or in small groups, and with or without assistance from the teacher, a volunteer or paid classroom assistant. (In what follows, volunteers and paid assistants are collectively referred to 'assistants'.) Experience in the field and during the preceding project on adult learners' difficulties in reading led to a pragmatic classification of the possibilities into six categories:

A Whole class with teacher/assistant
B Alone
C 1:1 with teacher
D 1:1 with assistant
E Learner pair with no support from teacher/assistant
F Small group (two or more) with support, or small group (three or more) without support.

The decision to make E a separate category was based on the frequency with which (it was thought) learners were set tasks to do in pairs working without assistance – 'buddying', as it is often called (but as it happened, this turned out to be the least frequent mode of working). If such a pair received a 'visit' from a teacher or assistant, for the duration of the visit the grouping was coded instead as F.

Outline statistics for the categories are presented in Table 6.3. The values are numbers of minutes, e.g., over the 59 observed classes learners who attended spent on average 29 minutes working alone.

Table 6.3 **Learner groupings in class, by average number of minutes**

Grouping category	Average number of minutes per session	SD
A (Whole class with teacher/assistant)	25.4	24.3
B (Alone)	29.1	24.9
C (1:1 with teacher)	4.6	6.5
D (1:1 with assistant)	6.3	16.9
E (Learner pair – no teacher/assistant support)	3.6	8.2
F (Small group, with or without support)	4.4	8.8

SD = standard deviation

Working as part of the whole class and working alone were the predominant modes of working. Relatively little time was spent in any of the other groupings. Indeed, over half the learners spent no time at all working in groupings D, E and F.

Further inferences can be drawn from these data. First, the average length of a session was about 120 minutes. For the average learner, the groupings listed took up about 73 minutes (sum of averages for the six categories), or about 61 per cent of time in class. What was happening during the other 47 minutes? Some was social time (opening chat, tea breaks, etc.), but most of it was work (but not reading-related: working on writing, discussing Individual Learning Plans with the teacher, etc.).

Secondly, in five of the groupings it could be assumed that learners were receiving active reading tuition or practice, the exception being working alone. If the average 29 minutes spent

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working alone are subtracted from the average 73 minutes spent on all reading activities, it seems that learners received on average 44 minutes (37 per cent) of active reading tuition or practice per session.

The topic of 'grouping' took on greater salience during a project team meeting in Sheffield in February 2004. As a result, Yvonne Spare undertook an analysis of grouping patterns in 2003/04. Later, an analysis of grouping patterns in 2004/05 was added.

6.6 Patterns of classroom activity 2003/04 and their implications

Group work followed by practice

Ninety-two teaching sessions in 23 classes were studied during the first year. Of these, a large number were found to contain whole-group teaching: 62 sessions in 18 classes, a pattern seen in over two-thirds of sessions. Forty-three sessions in 14 classes followed a style which may be simply described as group work followed by practice. This usually consisted of a taught lesson, ranging from ten minutes to an hour, where the teacher involved the whole group in the teaching of some point, often a reading strategy or a spelling or punctuation rule, followed by individual, paired or small group practice. Frequently the teacher would have prepared worksheets, usually differentiating the level of work in mixed-level groups.

Lessons containing no group teaching

Twenty-seven sessions in ten classes were observed to consist entirely of individual work. Five teachers taught all of their sessions in this way. (Five classes varied between the pattern of group work and practice and having no taught whole-group session at all, usually for identifiable reasons.)

The implications of grouping for the learners

1. The importance of class atmosphere

The question being investigated was whether group work promotes better class atmosphere and peer support. The evidence was inconclusive: in the classes where group work took place there was plenty of evidence of mutual support between learners, but there were also sessions in the classes where work was individualised in which the observers noted the positive class atmosphere.

2. Learner dependence

Two classes showed the greatest evidence of learner dependence. The first was the class which had the highest number of assistant teachers of any of the observed classes. Almost all of the work carried out in this class was one-to-one. The second class consisted mainly of learners working alone on worksheets, whose dependence on their teacher led to a tendency for them to wait a long time doing nothing constructive.

Three other classes show similar, but less marked, evidence of learner dependence.

Conclusions

Much seemed to depend on the attitude and preferences of the teachers. Of eight teachers questioned about the frequency of group teaching, only four mentioned the influence of the core curriculum as their main reason, contrary to what might have been expected. It must be significant that the class with the greatest evidence of learner dependence, leading to long

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periods of inactivity, was the class whose teacher expressed the most negative attitude towards his teaching. For a statistical finding arising from this topic, see Section 7.4.

6.7 Patterns of classroom activity 2004/05

This further analysis draws on data from 36 classes, taught by 35 different teachers, in 2004/05, giving a total of 144 observed sessions.

- The majority of sessions contained at least some whole-group teaching. There were only three teachers who used no whole-class teaching at all. All the other teachers' sessions included at least one which contained some element of whole-class work, with a total of 107 sessions which included whole-class work, varying from three minutes to 128 minutes.
- By far the most common combination of groupings was whole-class work plus individual work, the balance between the two most often favouring a greater proportion of work done alone.
- Thirteen teachers varied from session to session in their inclusion of whole-class teaching or not, and this decision may have been a response to particular learner needs.
- Only three teachers never did any whole-class teaching at all during the observations, on the grounds of having classes with a wide range of abilities, learners who were frequently absent, or very small numbers. The two teachers with larger classes had support from assistants, which raises the issue of a possible connection between assistance in the classroom and less whole-class teaching.
- On the basis of evidence from classes which had sessions of only whole-class teaching and (virtually) nothing else, whole-class teaching seemed to correlate with lack of assistance in the classroom. Of the 15 classes that were conducted without any assistance from volunteers, all but one featured at least some whole-class work.

Summary

The data from both years yielded similar findings. These can be summarised as the following trends:

- Predominance of the 'group work plus practice' model
- Similar reasons given for not doing whole-class work, mainly the difficulty of finding suitable joint activities for different levels of learners
- The influence of the core curriculum was mentioned by many teachers as the reason for changing to group teaching
- An obvious but clear correlation between proportion of whole-class work and presence/absence of assistants, i.e., little whole-class work with assistants, considerable whole-class work with no assistants.

6.8 General teaching strategies and opportunities for learner involvement

The general strategies observation analysis comprised 19 items, blocked into two parts: A) General instructional strategies (11 items); B) Opportunities for learner involvement (8 items). Each item was rated for every class observed, on a four-point scale where 0 was labelled 'Not observed' and 3 was labelled 'Observed to a high degree (characteristic of the teacher)'.

The inter-correlations between all 19 items were very high. Because of this it was decided to

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treat the whole instrument as a measure of a single latent factor, designated as 'quality of teaching observed'.

The average rating per session was 2.1, distinctly towards the high end. In other words, the general quality of teaching observed was high in the opinion of the fieldworkers, who were themselves experienced practitioners. They judged that the teaching on the whole had many positive features (e.g., flexibility, direct teaching, opportunities for practice, links to life outside the classroom, praise and encouragement), and that the teachers provided good opportunities for learner involvement (e.g., contributing their own ideas, thinking about tasks and discussing them, expressing themselves without being immediately corrected).

It is clear from the high average that the ratings were skewed towards the positive end of the scale. One implication of this is that there was not much range in the data for correlations with other data to operate on. This point is taken up in Section 7.5.

6.9 Specific teaching strategies

Outline statistics for four of the five main specific strategies categories are presented in Table 6.4. (The fifth category, 'Other', was so miscellaneous that statistics for it would be misleading; however, some of the individual items from it are mentioned below.) The values are numbers of minutes, e.g., over the 59 observed classes learners who attended spent on average about three minutes (weighted average for the two cohorts) in activities that used multimodal strategies, for example studying word shapes, using coloured overlays).

Text level strategies were used most often, followed by word level strategies. Sentence level and multimodal strategies were relatively infrequent. This rank order was the same for both cohorts.

There were huge variations in the amount of time different learners received the different categories of strategy, as shown by the range data. From this, and the fact that most of the standard deviations were larger than the averages, it is clear that all categories (even those generally rare, such as multimodal) were used extensively with a minority of learners, but hardly or not at all with many.

Table 6.4 **Specific teaching strategies, by average number of minutes per session and cohort**

Cohort	2003/04			2004/05		
Category of specific teaching strategies	**Average number of minutes per session**	**SD**	**Range**	**Average number of minutes per session**	**SD**	**Range**
Text level	19.2	19.7	0–94	12.4	13.4	0–90
Sentence level	7.7	10.7	0–53	5.3	6.9	0–32
Word level	12.5	9.3	0–54	9.9	9.8	0–53
Multimodal	3.7	4.9	0–25	2.5	5.6	0–48

SD = standard deviation

The most commonly used specific strategies (those experienced by most learners for at least one minute per session they attended) are listed in Table 6.5. They were generally similar for both cohorts.

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Table 6.5 **Most commonly used specific teaching strategies**

Code		Average number of minutes per session
		2003/04 Cohort
1.1.4	Learner reads text silently	13.23
5.3.1	Appraisal/feedback given immediately	10.45
1.1.6	Discussion of text	7.01
3.2.1	Discussion of vocabulary during a reading	5.76
3.3.5	Other word study (e.g., word lists, puzzles, word searches)	4.92
3.2.2	Use dictionary to find meanings	5.39
1.1.2	Teacher reads text aloud while learners follow own texts	3.97
		2004/05 Cohort
1.1.4	Learner reads text silently	11.57
5.3.1	Appraisal/feedback given immediately	8.54
3.3.5	Other word study (e.g., word lists, puzzles, word searches)	6.72
3.2.1	Discussion of vocabulary during a reading	4.46
3.2.2	Use dictionary to find meanings	5.47

Learners reading silently was the most frequent specific strategy in both years. This suggests that this was the largest single component of the average 29 minutes per session that learners spent working alone (as reported above). Of course, this means learners were practising their reading, but could they or should they have done this between sessions? Does this strategy improve their fluency or accuracy or comprehension if not linked to discussion or oral practice or some form of comprehension exercise? Similarly, are word lists, puzzles and word searches effective in developing reading comprehension? For two positive examples of silent reading activities, see Vignette 6.2.

Vignette 6.2 **Silent reading – specific strategy 114**

The finding that silent reading was the strategy that occupied the greatest amount of class time, coupled with the substantial amount of time learners spent working alone, requires some exemplification. For example, in one session (class 501, week 1), all learners received a 114 coding for times that varied from 6 to 44 minutes. However, this strategy was never used on its own; as they read through the worksheet passages, learners were simultaneously identifying unknown words, highlighting them and using dictionaries to find out word meanings. Time was also spent one-to-one with one learner who needed more help, listening to him read the text aloud. The reading was followed by comprehension exercises, done individually.

An alternative to silent reading as a prelude to comprehension exercises is demonstrated by the following description of a session (class 362, week 2) on contracts and 'reading the small print'. The teacher distributed sheets with information about telephone contracts, with comprehension questions. She read the first part of the sheet to the learners (specific strategy 112) and asked the first question ('Where would you find these texts?'). This was followed by further questions about features of this particular type of text and then a class discussion. The learners then continued reading the next text, this time with the learners being asked to read out in turn. The log notes state, 'No-one has any real problems with reading aloud, although D makes a few very minor errors, e.g., reads "communications" as "communication". He is not corrected.' Again this was followed by questions and discussion,

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and this time the tutor wrote up the main points on the whiteboard. The learners were then given a second sheet with the text of the actual contract and read it silently for about three minutes before further questions, discussion and taking turns to read it again. These whole-class activities occupied about 40 minutes, and only then did the learners work alone, on a task which involved writing a summary of the main points.

6.10 A case study of a class of adult learners with Down syndrome

One of the classes recruited in the second year comprised seven learners, of whom five were adults with Down's syndrome. Their teacher had been working with adult literacy groups for some time and was currently following a course leading to a certificated qualification. She was regularly helped by an assistant, also experienced. Both staff and most of the learners had worked together in the previous academic year.

The sessions displayed common characteristics, adopted by both staff:

- Casual, familiar conversational approach, but without ever losing group control
- Very little formal exposition, with what there was always supported by a medium other than speech and almost always involving the learner
- Considerable support/encouragement of even the smallest effort/achievements
- Staff involving themselves as participants in the activities they were presenting, ostensibly at the same level as the learners
- Relatively swift move to individual participation in group work or to individual work (mainly copying), with staff sitting singly or with pairs to encourage and support
- Use of minimal but effective role-play techniques to encourage involvement, often with the learners taking the lead role, or with staff pretence as 'learners'
- Absolute acceptance that the pace had to be measured, and that progress would be slow.

Over the year, the learners' growth in confidence was evident. It was most marked in one learner who, by the end of the year, was a markedly different person – open and communicative, not just wanting to please by her responses but wanting to get involved. It was also possible to see that some learners had made a little progress, even at the minimal level of literacy that these learners needed in order to cope with their lives.

6.11 What was *not* seen?

It would of course be entirely unreasonable to list many such features, but it does seem reasonable to ask whether approaches which seem from existing research to be effective were evident in our data.

In the systematic review of randomised and other controlled trials mentioned in Section 2.6, the best conducted single trial (Rich and Shepherd, 1993) had evaluated the use of reciprocal teaching (see Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar and Brown, 1984) with adult literacy students. Reciprocal teaching is an approach in which pairs of learners take turns to be 'tutor' and 'student', e.g., in formulating questions for each other about a text. While activities of this general sort were observed in this study, they were rare and could not be said to cohere into a deliberate strategy.

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Kruidenier's (2002) review of research on reading in adult literacy, also mentioned in Section 2.6, suggested that adult learners might benefit from being taught word attack skills, fluency in reading aloud, repeated reading and explicit comprehension strategies:

- 'Word attack skills' in that review principally meant phonics but, as found in Besser et al. (2004) and as discussed in Section 8.3 below, phonics teaching seems to be infrequent in adult literacy teaching and, when found, often inaccurate.
- Fluency in reading aloud seems hardly to be taught at all on this side of the Atlantic, though it is in widespread use in North America at both initial and adult levels. It may be that many adult literacy teachers here share the reluctance voiced by one in our study – she did not like to put pressure on her learners to do this, and always checked with them privately beforehand if they would be willing to read aloud in class. That seems to have referred to individual reading aloud. The North American practice seems to refer more to choral reading, where individuals' uncertainties need not be revealed; individuals would only be asked to read aloud if they were confident and had signalled their intention to do so, and if one faltered the group would join in.
- Repeated reading is an extension of that technique: classes and individuals practise reading a familiar passage aloud until they can do so faultlessly. Again, in North American experience, it seems to build confidence and comprehension rather than just being an exercise.
- Teaching explicit comprehension strategies brings us back to reciprocal teaching. It is clear from the research literature that the teaching of comprehension – which, after all, is the point of reading – is the least researched topic in the field at both initial and adult levels.

Also largely absent from our observational data were language experience approaches, which reputedly were much more frequent a decade or more ago. One of our specific strategy codes was 513, 'learner reads own writing' after having composed it, which might have reflected a language experience approach but was infrequently observed.

6.12 Summary

Information from interviews and from feedback and consultation days was used to build up a detailed profile of the observed teachers. Nearly all teachers had generic teaching qualifications but, although all but one had received core curriculum training, fewer than half had qualifications in teaching adult literacy. Many had considerable teaching experience and somewhat more than half had assistance in the classroom. Their views covered a range of issues, but paramount amongst these was their concern for their learners. Valuable insights were also gained about the drawbacks and benefits of using volunteers to assist in the classroom.

Classroom layouts showed that the most popular arrangement was one large table with learners sitting round. The arrangements used also correlated to an extent with grouping patterns. The analysis of grouping patterns showed an overall preference for the model of 'group work followed by practice'.

Scores on the general teaching strategies and opportunities for learner involvement indicated a single measure of teaching quality; although a wide range of teaching quality was observed, most teaching was assessed as of high or fairly high quality. The specific teaching strategy recorded most frequently was silent reading. The teacher and assistant working with a class of mostly Down syndrome people provided a clear example of sensitive and effective teaching, but several approaches which, from the literature, seem effective, were largely absent from our observational records.

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7 Teaching and learning

Which factors, if any, in teachers or teaching, were correlated with learners' progress in reading and/or improvements in their attitudes? The question is addressed in turn from several angles: teachers' characteristics; help in the classroom; classroom groupings; general teaching strategies; opportunities for learner involvement; and specific teaching strategies.

7.1 Teachers' profiles and changes in reading scores

Table 6.1 lists teachers' qualifications (also analysed further in Table 6.2) and years of experience in teaching adult literacy. Correlations between their qualifications and years of experience and changes in their classes' average reading scores were examined. There appeared to be no relationship with either factor. The finding on teachers' qualifications differs from that of the *Progress in Adult Literacy* study (Brooks et al., 2001b), but the finding there may be more reliable because of the larger sample (170+ teachers against our 47).

7.2 Availability of assistance in the classroom and changes in reading scores

Table 6.1 also shows which teachers had volunteers or paid assistants helping in their classrooms and which did not. A comparison of that information with average change in reading score per class revealed no overall relationship between assistance in the classroom and change in reading scores. This finding again differs from that of the *Progress in Adult Literacy* study (Brooks et al., 2001b), but again may be less reliable.

7.3 Class groupings and changes in reading scores

The class groupings analysed in Section 6.5 were correlated with changes in reading scores. (Because of the much smaller variation in changes in attitudes, no attempt was made to correlate class groupings with changes in attitudes.)

Working alone was significantly and *negatively* associated with change in reading scores. Thus, greater amounts of time spent working alone were associated with *worse* progress. The relationship was very weak, but does call in question the high proportion of time learners spent working alone, as reported in Section 6.5.

On the other hand, working in pairs was *positively* associated with change in reading scores. On average, learners who worked more in pairs made better progress. This pattern was weak, however, and appeared only in the 2004/05 cohort. Three contrasting examples of 'buddy' or pair work (one computer-based) are given in Vignette 7.1.

Other groupings were not associated with change in reading scores.

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Vignette 7.1 **Pair work/buddying**

In one session (class 116, week 3), a total of 91 minutes of pair work for two learners was recorded. This was an informal arrangement, in that the teacher had not deliberately set out to pair them, but did not intervene other than visiting to give feedback. (Other learners did not form such pairs, perhaps because some were already working one-to-one with assistants.) The pair work took place entirely in front of computers, working on a Skillswise section the learners chose together (on sentences with associated quizzes). This was facilitated by the class set-up, in that there were more than enough computers to go around and they were arranged close together in rows. The two learners kept pace with each other, discussing the instructions, checking their answers and comparing scores.

A contrasting session (class 361, week 1) demonstrates how a tutor incorporated pair work into her lesson plan. After a whole-class session on advertisements and persuasive writing, the tutor handed out differentiated worksheets and attempted to pair learners who were working at the same level. The two learners at Level 1 were told, 'Get together, get ideas from each other'. They disregarded this and worked on their own. However, when the teacher asked the two Entry Level learners to work together, one immediately moved her seat so they were sitting together. They discussed the worksheet (on adjectives) at length together and helped each other look up entries in a dictionary. When the teacher gave feedback, it was done jointly, rather than one-to-one.

With a different class (362, week 3), however, this same teacher 'seized the moment' to provide a buddying opportunity. One learner (J) arrived very late, after the whole-class session on pronouns and distribution of individual worksheets. The tutor told her, 'S. will explain what you've to do'. S laughs – "If I can!" J sits down next to S, who explains briefly but accurately about pronouns and what the task involves.

7.4 Patterns of activity in class and changes in reading scores and attitudes

As mentioned in Section 6.6, a statistical analysis was undertaken on the first cohort's data to see whether learners in the three groups of classes (every session has a whole-class section plus individual work; all individual work in every session; mixed) differed in their progress in reading and/or changes in their attitudes. The results showed that there were only minute and statistically non-significant differences.

7.5 General teaching strategies and opportunities for learner involvement, and changes in reading scores

Neither general teaching strategies, nor opportunities for learner involvement, nor the whole instrument, correlated significantly with change in reading scores over the course of the year. At first sight this seems very disappointing. However, it should be remembered that the teaching in most sessions was rated as of high or very high quality, thus significantly reducing the possibility of detecting a significant correlation. This finding, therefore, does *not* mean that teaching quality, as it was judged in this study, made no difference to learners' progress.

Because the range of changes in learners' attitudes was much smaller than the range of changes in reading scores, no attempt was made to correlate general teaching strategies or

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opportunities for learner involvement with changes in attitudes.

7.6 Specific teaching strategies and changes in reading scores

There was no relationship between the main categories of specific strategies and change in reading scores.

7.7 Summary

Overall, few relationships were found between aspects of teaching and change in reading scores. Change was significantly related to just two variables: working alone and working in pairs. Learners who worked alone less in class made better progress, and learners who worked in pairs more made better progress. Both relationships were very weak, however.

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8 Insights from the practitioner-researchers

8.1 Origin and topics of the individual analyses

The idea of asking the practitioner-researchers to contribute analyses arose initially during a project team meeting in Sheffield in February 2004. As experienced practitioners, their insights about what they had observed out in the field were particularly pertinent. It was suggested that incorporating these would provide a helpful and complementary addition to the other, quantitative, analyses that were being carried out. Some key topics were identified, and practitioner-researchers' particular areas of interest and expertise were built on.

The five practitioner-researchers who worked for both years of the project, namely Colette Beazley, Judy Davey, Richard Finnigan, Yvonne Spare and Jan Wainwright, undertook analyses based on the first year's data. Two of these analyses – Richard Finnigan's error analysis and Yvonne Spare's grouping patterns analysis – are summarised elsewhere in the report (Sections 5.4 and 6.6). This chapter presents the other three analyses (Sections 8.2–4).

These five practitioner-researchers were also each asked to contribute a short piece on the experience of working on the project and the ways in which their professional lives were enhanced. These are presented in Section 8.5, with the concluding subsection summarising the contribution made by the practitioner-researchers.

A practitioner-researcher who worked only on the second year of the project, John Harman, contributed the item on adults with Down syndrome (Section 6.10).

8.2 Teachers' perceptions of learners' progress, and the impact of the core curriculum on the nature of this assessment

Most of the 19 teachers had received core curriculum training, and the more experienced amongst them said it made them more focused rather than radically changing their teaching methods. This change was also reflected in the assessment of their lessons, because they tended to judge learners' progress by how close they were to achieving the targets set at the beginning of the lesson.

Overall, the comments the teachers made about progress showed an awareness of the learners' needs, and in most cases this led to planning for the next lesson. The majority of the teachers mentioned problems that learners had faced, but these were not discussed in a negative way. It was more a case of this being a challenge to be overcome in the next lesson.

Another concern raised by an experienced teacher (17 years) was the danger that teachers could teach to the curriculum even if it were irrelevant to the learner. This fear seemed to be borne out by two of the teachers (273, 083), who rated progress made by how much of the curriculum had been covered rather than by how much had been learnt. Teacher 083 was driven by the quantity of material he mistakenly thought he had to 'get through', and consequently the learning experience of the learners was spoiled. It is interesting to note that

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this teacher had not received any core curriculum training, but had just been given the book to follow.

A quarter of the teachers mentioned 'buzz' or 'enjoyment' when assessing their lessons. This element in a lesson can be overvalued because it can mask the fact that no learning is taking place. However, enjoyment can be motivational and therefore a key to successful learning. There is, of course, the possibility that the researchers' questioning techniques encouraged positive or negative accounts of the lessons.

8.3 Writing which supports reading

Some links between reading and writing are suggested in the core curriculum, and examples of integrated activities are given. From the catalogue of specific strategies used to teach reading (the *Observation Coding Manual*), I noted the strategies (three-digit sub-categories) in which writing formed an integral part – see Table 8.1. In selecting these, I listed those in which writing is seen to support reading in some way, rather than where it is actually the reading which supports the writing activity. For instance, in the case of 3.2.2 (Use of dictionary to find meanings and also for other purposes including spelling), dictionary usage enabled learners to complete written work related to their reading, and so would be excluded from this analysis.

Discussion

There were more instances noted of **text level** work than sentence or word level. Over 50 per cent of observations reported written work at this level, in the form of comprehension and cloze[1] exercises based on text. In many cases, instruction was given on scanning published materials in order to make notes about page content. The text was then read in detail, either as a group or individually, followed by a written exercise. Text at an appropriate level was also used for highlighting and/or underlining punctuation, key words and parts of speech. Teachers were also observed instructing learners to look at the purpose of text and to write their own essay, advertisement, letter, etc. in response to a textual stimulus. Learners were also observed writing summaries of texts.

At **sentence level,** groups were observed working on punctuation. This mainly took the form of filling in missing punctuation on prepared text or by completing worksheets. In 24 of the 92 first year observations, written exercises were used, either computer- or paper-based, to reinforce punctuation and capitalisation. Work on linking words and parts of speech was reinforced in 16 observations using gap-filling, cloze or writing own sentences.

At **word level**, exercises following on from the reading of text were seen to include: synonyms, prefixes, suffixes, key words, plurals, pronouns, and finding words beginning with particular letters or letter combinations.

1 Cloze procedure is a technique in which words are deleted from a passage which is then presented to learners who insert words as they read to complete and cconstruct meaning from the text.

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Table 8.1 **Strategies in which writing supports reading**

1	**Text level**
1.2	Written exercises to develop comprehension related to text read.
	1.2.1 Comprehension exercises in published materials
	1.2.2 Comprehension exercises from teacher-designed materials
	1.2.3 Other exercises based on text (e.g., cloze)
2.	**Sentence level**
2.1	Interpretation of punctuation
	2.1.2 Written exercises on punctuation/capitalisation to aid understanding (e.g., filling in missing punctuation)
2.2	Knowledge of sentence structure/grammatical patterns
	2.2.3 Written exercises on sentence structure/word order and knowledge of different types of word to predict meaning (e.g., cloze exercises)
3.	**Word level**
3.2	Comprehension
	3.2.3 Identification of unknown words in a text (e.g., underlining, writing in list by learners, writing up by teacher)
3.3	Word analysis and manipulation
	3.3.5 Word study (e.g., word lists, puzzles, word searches and anagrams)
4.	**Multimodal strategies**
4.1	Visual strategies
	4.1.5 Use of highlighters, underlining, etc.

Although 'Instruction on reading strategies' (1.3) does not refer directly to writing activities, often such instruction was followed by a written exercise, e.g., 1.3.1 (Recognition of different purposes of text), 1.3.5 (How to do skimming/scanning) and 1.3.6 (Use of encyclopaedias and other reference systems).

It is also worth noting at this point that instruction in the following was usually supported by written exercises:

3.3.1 Studying parts of speech and their definitions at word level
3.3.2 Instruction in analysing words by syllables
3.3.3 Studying inflectional and derivational affixes
3.3.4 Recognising words with common stems

Other word study such as word lists, puzzles and word searches (strategy 3.3.5) was observed in 33 per cent of sessions. Time spent on these activities ranged from 5 to 110 minutes, and these were mainly done by learners working on their own with support as required. In multi-level classes, however, differentiation merely seemed to mean that the same worksheets were worked through at a different pace with a higher or lower level of support.

Learners were also encouraged to identify unknown words in a text by underlining, highlighting and writing them in lists, and this was observed in 23 per cent of the sessions. In many cases, teachers explained the origins of different words in the English language in order to clarify some spelling patterns rather than to facilitate reading.

At this level it was noted that very few teachers had found a structured approach to phonics

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work. Learners were exposed to a range of initial sounds, 'blends' (consonant clusters), digraphs, etc., but there was no systematic method of determining which sounds were known, which needed some reinforcement and which needed to be taught. See also Vignette 8.1.

Vignette 8.1 **Phonics**

There was a broad understanding of some of the problems associated with grapheme-phoneme relationships and attempts to discuss these with the learners. Thus (class 116, week 2), the teacher wrote up 'ch' on the board and asked her learners what sound it made. On the basis of their response, she then wrote 'church' and 'cheese' followed by 'champagne' and 'choir', to draw their attention to how 'silly' and 'annoying' English can be. This led on to an interesting presentation on, and discussion of, the origins of the language.

Another teacher (class 171, week 2) drew the learners' attention to the sound system of English by means of a session on hieroglyphics. The log entry is as follows: 'Tutor explained how hieroglyphics worked and that English vowels needed a picture for long sound and short sound. This was demonstrated and tutor mentioned how problems with English spelling arose because it had more sounds than letters. Students then saw how hard c and soft c had different pictures. Printed out hieroglyphic alphabet.'

However, in practice, misleading information was often given to the learners, usually when ad hoc decoding or spelling situations arose. For example (class 082, week 4), the teacher read aloud some words a learner had written and talked about the 'ea' pattern in one word (bead). She explained that when you have two vowels, with 'e' before 'a', then the first vowel is the sound you hear. [Comment: While this is mainly true for the digraph <ea>, there are about 60 English words, some of them very frequent, in which <ea> represents the phoneme /e/, usually known as 'the short "e" sound', e.g., bread, head, lead (the metal), read (past tense); and also three very frequent words in which <ea> represents the phoneme /eɪ/, usually known as 'the long "a" sound': break, great, steak. As a more general rule, the American formulation 'When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking' has been shown to have so many exceptions as to be useless, so this teacher perhaps does well to restrict its scope here to one digraph. This term might have come in useful for talking about such matters.]

Another log extract (class 114, week 4) records what starts as a spelling lesson: 'For "favour" (the teacher) asks (learner) to spell "our" – she says "h-o-u-r". He says "Like our house", but C (another learner) interrupts: "Ar 'ouse – that's how we speak here." The teacher goes on to explain that when two vowels are together, one of them doesn't sound. It sounds like "or" – "fav-or". He tells her to study the words "society" and "breaches" and he will ask her how to spell them later.' [Comment: This teacher falls into two traps – the unreliable 'two vowels' rule mentioned above, and asking for the spelling of a word-sound which has at least two spellings (our, hour), first without contextualising it and then with a context which is unreliable across accents. It would have been better to gloss our as 'belonging to us'.]

Indeed, in general the grapheme-phoneme correspondences for vowels were poorly grasped and consistently badly explained, with over-reliance on getting learners to fill in worksheets on long/short vowels and 'magic e'; there seemed no awareness of the existence of diphthongs.

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The core curriculum lists phonemes under Entry Level 1 Writing and suggests using these to aid recognition of phoneme-grapheme correspondences at Entry Level 1 Reading (properly grapheme-phoneme correspondences in this context). In the observations, I noted that written work on phonemes was generally related to spelling rather than to assist reading, and, for many learners, use of this term and of a phoneme-based approach might work much better if tackled first in the phoneme-grapheme direction, that is for spelling.

Arranging words in alphabetical order was also observed in some classes, in order to aid the use of manuals, directories, etc. The use of forms, on screen and paper, was a widespread practice which was used to support both reading and writing, and it enabled learners to become familiar with relevant vocabulary and recognise key social/personal words and phrases (3.1.1).

Finally, the use of highlighting and underlining text as a visual strategy to support reading was observed on ten occasions, and was generally used by learners working one-to-one with a teacher or assistant.

By way of conclusion, it can be noted that in most observations some form of written work was used in order to support reading.

8.4 Observed use of ICT

Introduction

Use of ICT was assigned a general code in the catalogue of strategies (5.2.1) to encompass all instances observed, and it was therefore possible to capture generic usage. Observed use of ICT was secondary to the observation of reading activity and, because of the nature of the coding, data obtained from observations and analyses were less detailed.

Method

A total of 91 sessions were analysed for usage of ICT. ICT usage was found in 22 of these observations. Secondly, those 22 observation logs were scrutinised to find the following information:

- number of learners involved
- observed activity
- software used
- class time for ICT usage
- grouping
- specific reading strategies used with ICT
- points of interest.

Information on availability of ICT equipment was requested from individual fieldworkers in the following format:

- number of computers in classroom
- whether the room used was dedicated to ICT
- availability of ICT equipment in the centre during session time.

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The core curriculum

The core curriculum (2001) was an important indicator of potential uses of ICT within the teaching of reading, and was available to teachers. In the Curriculum it is also stated that there are 'examples of the use of literacy and numeracy in different contexts'. Examples of potential and more detailed sample activities at text, sentence and word levels at all learner ability levels are included.

ICT strategies for teaching reading are promoted throughout the Curriculum for reading in examples, including using word processing software, online form completion, use of graphics, web hunts, email, predictive text and so on, providing a useful resource.

Availability of resources

ICT equipment was available in 18 of the 23 classrooms where observations took place. However, the number of computers varied from having one in a classroom to dedicated ICT rooms (2). A high proportion (13) had a small number of computers (up to three).

In some cases where there were either no or small numbers of computers, equipment was available on the premises but was not observed being used by the literacy classes.

Number of learners involved

A total of 22 observations of 91 showed use of ICT, with ten of the centres (45 per cent) involved in the first year using ICT in at least one observation. However, the distribution was uneven, with three centres demonstrating the use of ICT during all the observations and five using IT resources in only one observation.

There were only two centres that used ICT with the whole class or small groups. There was much evidence of teachers using ICT with one or two learners during a class, with learners working individually and on the whole independently.

Observed activity

Although described as observed use of ICT, only use of computers was observed, with one exception: a demonstration of text messaging and discussion of the language of texting.

A limited range of activities was observed:

- finding information using a web search
- online software
- dedicated software (CD)
- quizzes
- use of Office software.

The range of software observed is shown in Table 8.2.

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Table 8.2 **Range of software observed in use**

Dedicated/online software	Websites accessed	Office applications
BBC Skillswise	RHS	MS Word:
Greenfingers	BBC – TV programmes listings	– copying written work
Checkpoint	Hieroglyphics website	– letter writing
Reading disc*	Bigsmokedebate.com	– use of spellcheck
Letter taster*	Learner choice – to produce	– inputting text
House game	a review of a programme	– thesaurus
Penfriend		– changing fonts
Franklin Wordmaster		– coloured screens
GAMZ		WordArt
Starspell		
Driving your car		

* Software undefined

Use of BBC *Skillswise* was observed in nine classes and was the most widely used resource. MS Word was used primarily for inputting text, but evidence was found of discussion of preferred screen colour and font style. A post-session quotation from a teacher relating to a change of screen colour was that 'the use of the coloured screen was helping (learner 7) and he was starting to see patterns in words' (174).

As well as Franklin Wordmaster, used during discussion of possible spelling (171), Word's thesaurus was used by learners when producing typewritten work (291).

On the whole, learners were directed to software and given an explanation, and then worked independently, with teacher support. There was limited evidence of learner pair activity or group working, but peer support was indicated in several observations, particularly when learners were working individually and experiencing problems.

When finding web information, learners tended to be directed to websites and then work independently. One interesting exception to this was with a class of full-time learners who were undertaking a course to improve their literacy through the use of ICT. During one observation, learners had their own choice of topic to research through a web search to review a television programme. The search was preceded by whole-group work on the subject. Learners also incorporated pictures from the internet to illustrate reviews. There was a wide range of ability in the class, from pre-entry to Level 2, and different aims were provided for individual abilities (291(1)).

Another example of group work being used was a web search for hieroglyphics, following a discussion of the changing nature of language and the use of text messaging. It was interesting that, post-session, the teacher felt that the session had been 'lively and interactive' and that it had 'awakened interest in how language is changing and that English is a living language' (171).

There was some indication of learner choice (291 choice of topic, 112 some learner-requested aims), although on the whole learning materials were chosen by the teacher. One learner was observed working on the GAMZ website, and comment from the teacher revealed that 'she enjoys that program' (271).

Four instances of 'distraction' were noted, two in which learners accessed alternative

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websites, eBay, a fan website and a games site. In another observation, learners accessed email whilst waiting for the teacher. However, the core curriculum states that the structure of the standards provides 'examples of the social roles and activities in which adults need literacy and numeracy in order to function independently and exercise choice', so accessing choice of site could be viewed as learner autonomy and indicate that learners are achieving the aim of the curriculum.

Points of interest

There was very limited evidence of the level of teacher expertise in ICT, although this was indicated within two observations, when one teacher admitted to not being proficient with ICT and another was defined as an experienced ICT teacher.

Different levels of ICT expertise within a class of learners did not appear to cause problems, although there were some instances of the teacher teaching basic word processing skills.

Conclusions

There was limited use of ICT in the teaching of reading, which could be the result of various factors:

- Resource limitations – Approximately 22 per cent of classes observed had no ICT equipment. When resources were available, they were not always used. A further 50 per cent of classrooms had either one or two computers. However, in 82 per cent of centres, ICT equipment was available.

- Teacher expertise and training – Do teachers have the necessary expertise and ICT training? Core curriculum training is a requirement at most centres, but does this include the effective use of ICT in teaching reading?

It is possible that certain resources are more effective in the teaching of reading. It may be possible to review all software and web-based resources used and compare them with the strategies used with individual learners, to establish effectiveness.

How the resource is used could be an important factor in learner progression. Examples were seen of resources being used as a teaching tool for single strategies and, on other occasions, as part of a more structured approach and integral part of a themed activity.

8.5 Benefits to the practitioner-researchers' professional development

The five practitioner-researchers describe very different developmental journeys and outcomes, which will be reproduced in their entirety in the fuller version of this report to be made available on the NRDC website. All, however, serve to illustrate the 'symbiosis' of research and practice that is embodied by practitioner-researchers. Extracts from each account follow.

Colette Beazley

- I have been involved in literacy and numeracy teaching for 30 years, so I felt confident in the subject area.

- I had been observed in 2002 by a researcher on the NRDC project on adult learners'

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difficulties in reading, so I knew that I must ensure that tutors were as comfortable with me being in the room as I had been with my observer. Fortunately, each practitioner-researcher worked alongside an experienced researcher on the first observation. This double observation certainly gave me confidence in recording further sessions. I think I have learnt more computer skills by being on the reading project than in all the ICT courses that I have started over the years and never finished.

- Observing practice and also looking at observations carried out by other members of the project in order to look at writing to support reading has served to make me more critical of my own planning and teaching. Reading other observations also helped to spark an interest in financial literacy, which was the focus of one of our observed classes, and I have been able to build on this in my own teaching.

- My developmental journey continued when I attended research conferences and not only heard about current research being undertaken but also was involved in talking about our project to others. This showed me how much insight I had gained during my role as a practitioner-researcher.

- During the latter years of teaching, my main focus had been family learning, and I was pleased when I was recommended, as a result of my research experience on the project and my teaching background, to carry out an evaluation of a residential family learning project. I am also a *Skills for Life* Quality Initiative facilitator and am working with my local authority on a financial literacy project

Judy Davey

- I had over 20 years' experience of teaching adults, mainly in a vocational area. I had gained some experience of research and research methodology from the organisation where I had worked, and from my Masters degree and two years of a doctorate.

- My experience in this area had been predominantly in identifying and organising support for learners on vocational courses to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. But as the project progressed, I realised that I had been constantly embedding literacy within my vocational teaching and using many of the strategies identified as specific to the teaching of reading. The project has helped me organise and put the knowledge gained into a structure which I could usefully employ.

- My research knowledge has gained both from quantitative and qualitative research analysis of classroom observations and from discussions within the team around methodology.

- Attendance at conferences and seminars has enabled me to look laterally at possibilities for research into literacy within a vocational area.

- Within the project, I was asked to identify areas where ICT had been used. My analysis left me with many unanswered questions regarding the use of ICT and motivated me to research the topic further.

- I was approached by a member of an organisation who had become aware of my teaching and project experience. The result of this is that there may be an opportunity for me to use the experience of the last two years to move into another and complementary area.

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- The work was valuable to my personal development. It has extended the boundaries of my self-perceived expertise and enabled me to be open to wider opportunities.

Richard Finnigan

- It is difficult to decide which aspect was the most interesting or beneficial to me personally, although carrying out the classroom observations would have to be near the top, including meeting learners and gaining their trust, and developing skills in maintaining as objective and non-interventionist a stance as possible.

- Carrying out the independent analysis into errors made on the reading tests vies for top place, however, with the challenge of identifying patterns among the incorrect or partly incorrect responses in the answer booklet – a fusion of comparing quantitative data with a good deal of intuitive analysing; trying to spot similarities between groups of answers. I found this a fascinating and absorbing exercise which built on similar work I had undertaken for my MSc.

- The conferences we were able to attend provided the opportunity to find out what interesting projects were running elsewhere, to be more able to fit 'our' project into the wider context, and to participate in presenting a workshop.

- I discovered that certain qualities I possessed were ones which suit research work, such as meticulousness and an (over)analytical mind. I learned that in research work you cannot have too much attention to detail. It is this discovery which has kindled in me an interest, and an ambition, to continue working in the research field. And indeed I am currently (February/March 2006) working on another NRDC research project, the evaluation of the *Skills for Life* Quality Initiative, and in April began work on two further NRDC projects at the University of Nottingham.

Yvonne Spare

- I had been a teacher of adult literacy for 14 years, including some time as a manager. I had recently completed an MA in Education, which included a research module.

- Teaching on the Level 4 Certificate for adult literacy tutors, I was seeing for myself what a diverse group of people we are as tutors – different backgrounds, experience, skills, and maybe teaching methods as well. Here was the opportunity to take a closer look at some of those different methods, to see what works and maybe to learn something myself in the process.

- I had the privilege of sitting in with a wider group of tutors than I would have under any other circumstances and this allowed me a much broader perspective than the team-teaching or occasional observations I had previously carried out. I saw tutors using methods and resources I had not thought of myself, and examples of different kinds of classes, learners and patterns of activity. With an objective eye, I could see how these factors were working without the familiar pressure of managing it all myself.

- I met and talked to a wide variety of learners. These were not so different – many of their problems, their worries, their aspirations, seemed familiar from my own classes over the years. Here, though, I had the opportunity to measure their progress objectively over a whole year.

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- Although the findings had to be, and were of course, objective, it was impossible, as a working tutor, not to be continually thinking, 'That's a good idea', or 'That seems to be working' – or, no less importantly, 'The learners really seemed to enjoy that session.' There is so much I will take back with me to the classroom.

- But as well as informing my teaching practice, I have discovered that I enjoy the research process, too. Participating in this study has given me the skills to take part in other research projects (a small-scale evaluation of a family literacy project for travellers' families, the NRDC evaluation of the *Skills for Life* Quality Initiative, and an NRDC study of family literacy, language and numeracy) and the opportunity to use my teaching experience in a way I had not foreseen.

Jan Wainwright

- I had no prior research experience. Being a practitioner-researcher enabled me to keep working as a basic skills tutor, but at the same time acquire some research skills. I have gained a valuable insight into the world of research and feel encouraged to do more.

- Towards the end of the project the practitioner-researchers joined in discussions which helped the team propose hypotheses for further investigation. The experience of working with expert researchers means that I feel more able to formulate research questions. My ICT skills were weak in 2003, but with support I rapidly became more proficient, which enabled me to cope with the demands of the job.

- My interest was further fuelled by attendance (funded by the project) at national and international conferences. I was encouraged to participate in workshops and explain the methodology and aim of the reading project, and summarise its progress. I was also pleased to have the opportunity to take part in a PowerPoint presentation and outline our research methods to a Lifelong Learning Institute seminar.

- Being a member of the research team meant I was no longer confined to the bottom of the staircase, but met educationalists from every step. It was interesting to hear policy firsthand and see how it can be misinterpreted as it filters down – sometimes becoming an unnecessary burden to practitioners. The experience of working on the project has indirectly sustained my enthusiasm for teaching, which can be reduced in these times of targets and cutbacks.

- So it can be seen that my professional development has been considerably enhanced by being a practitioner-researcher, and I hope the project has also gained because, although research should inform practice, practice can inform research. The practitioner-researchers embody this symbiosis.

Summary of benefits to practitioner-researchers

Working on the project was felt by the practitioner-researchers to be a rewarding experience, building as it did on years of teaching experience and, in some cases, previous research experience too. The main benefits can be summarised as follows:

- insights from observations which could inform their own teaching
- training which enhanced research skills, including computer skills
- opportunities for contributing to aspects of research design and data analysis

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- opportunities to attend conferences, keep abreast of developments in the field and gain experience of presenting at workshops
- growth of confidence and in role as researchers
- enhanced career prospects.

8.6 Conclusion

There is perhaps a significant contrast between the practitioner-researchers' analyses in the first half of this chapter and their personal accounts in the second half, namely that by the end they had both gained many ideas they could apply in their own practice and knew much more about what was being done only partly or hardly at all. This suggests that a further part of the profession's need for upskilling could be met by providing many more practitioners with opportunities to observe practice in other practitioners' classes. As our practitioner-researchers have shown, such opportunities can be grasped with enthusiasm and profit.

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9 Summary of findings and recommendations

9.1 Findings

Progress

Learners are progressing and achieving: many learners achieved an externally accredited qualification at the end of their course (163 out of 265), and many went on to further study (171 out of 265). Progress was supported by regular attendance.

Pair and group work encourages progress:

- Learners who spent more time working in pairs made better progress; and learners who spent less time working alone in class made better progress. Learners need time to work in pairs and small groups, and teachers need to know how to facilitate that.

- However, the most frequent patterns of classroom observed were either a whole-class opening section followed by individual practice or entirely based on individual work. In both cases learners worked alone for substantial amounts of time – this was the most frequent grouping strategy, corresponding with silent reading as the most frequent specific teaching strategy.

- The influence of the core curriculum was mentioned by many teachers as the reason for making greater use of group teaching.

We found that:

- Women made slightly better progress than men
- Employed people made better progress than the unemployed
- People with an FE/NVQ qualification made better progress than those with no qualifications.

Learners' progress was *not* affected or inhibited by many factors which might otherwise be thought of as having an impact on their achievement:

- age
- ethnicity
- English as first or additional language
- age of leaving full-time education
- time since last course
- having dyslexia
- pre-test scores in reading.

The importance of improving learners' self-esteem and confidence is well known; we found evidence of a significant increase in confidence amongst learners.

Time to learn

There is more to literacy provision than taught hours and contact time: self-study is also

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essential if learners are to persist and progress. We found that learners who reported more self-study between classes made better progress, and this is re-enforced by similar findings from the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning in Oregon (Reder, 2005).

Learners need enough time to learn:

- The average amount of attendance by learners between the pre- and post-assessments was only 30 hours. By contrast, in the *Progress in Adult Literacy* study in 1998–99 (Brooks et al., 2001b), many learners had attended for 50 or more hours between the two assessments, and those learners made the greatest average progress. Evidence from the National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) suggests that learners require in the region of 150–200 hours if they are to progress by one level within the *Skills for Life* qualifications framework.

- We found no significant differences between the mid- and post-assessments in either year (although in 2004/05 there was a gain between pre- and mid-assessment). The evidence suggests that learners in this study would have gone on to make more progress if the gap between assessments had been longer.

Teaching strategies

Although a wide range of teaching quality was observed, most teaching was of high or fairly high quality. Few classes were judged to be middling or poor. The instrument used was adapted from the authoritative Condelli study (Condelli et al., 2003) and covered teaching strategies and apparatus for learner engagement.

Very frequent teaching strategies were:

- giving appraisal/feedback immediately
- discussion of vocabulary during a reading
- other word study (e.g., word lists, puzzles, word searches)
- and using a dictionary to find word meanings.

Several approaches which the literature suggests are effective were rarely seen:

- encouragement of fluent oral reading. Early findings from the development project on encouraging fluent oral reading suggest that it can re-engage reluctant readers, produce some excellent progress, and provide more active reading in class than is currently the case
- reciprocal teaching (where pairs of learners take turns to be 'tutor' and 'student')
- explicit comprehension strategies
- accurate phonics teaching
- language experience approaches.

These approaches are priorities for further development, and their rarity helps explain why progress was in some cases limited.

Teachers should allow more time for learners to engage in 'active reading' – or reading aloud – as opposed to reading silently or non-reading activities. On average, active reading tuition occupied less than half the class time.

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The adult literacy core curriculum

Most teachers were positive, speaking of the curriculum as being more 'structured', 'focused', generating 'good ideas', raising the profile of adult literacy, increasing teachers' confidence and clarifying issues of differentiation. Highest praise came from those who had been teaching adult literacy for a relatively short time.

Criticism of the curriculum revolved around: teachers feeling under 'pressure' to work through it; the paperwork/bureaucracy involved; having to 'teach to the curriculum rather than what learners want'; the perception of it as 'restrictive', 'inflexible' or 'inappropriate'.

Teachers' qualifications

Current standards now expect adult literacy teachers to have both a full teaching certificate and a Level 4 subject-specialist qualification. Two of the teachers were fully qualified in this way as literacy teachers, but the data were gathered at a time when few teachers had yet had the opportunity to acquire the new Level 4 qualifications. One other teacher was fully qualified, but as a numeracy teacher.

Twelve of the 47 teachers had both a generic teaching qualification (Cert Ed, PGCE or equivalent) and a subject-specific literacy teaching qualification in the form of the 'old' City & Guilds 9285. A further 11 teachers had qualifications of both types, but one or other, or both, of the qualifications was of an introductory nature only.

Thirteen teachers had a full generic teaching certificate, but no qualifications in teaching adult literacy. A further two teachers had less than full versions of generic teaching qualifications, also with no literacy teaching qualifications.

Three teachers had qualifications in teaching adult literacy, but no generic teaching qualifications.

Three teachers were not interviewed about their qualifications.

Of the 31 teachers with full generic teaching qualifications, 20 were in the context of training to teach in schools.

We make no assumptions here about how the status of teaching qualifications has affected teaching skills.

9.2 Recommendations

Development work and quality improvement

It is a priority for initial teacher training and for continuing professional development to provide teachers with specific and general strategies for teaching reading, and in particular:

1. oral fluency
2. explicit comprehension strategies
3. reciprocal teaching
4. phonics
5. language experience approaches.

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Initial teacher training and continuing professional development should provide support for teachers in making more creative use of curriculum materials.

Teachers in training need to be shown in more detail how to teach reading in ways adapted to their learners' needs, and therefore how to assess those needs, especially where learners have 'spiky profiles' of achievement.

Teachers, curriculum managers and providers should be supported in enabling learners to spend more time on learning tasks; this will include, in addition to more contact time and taught hours:

1. self-study, which will both increase time on task and encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning
2. distance learning
3. ICT-supported study
4. intensive provision.

Learners would benefit from spending more time working in small groups during course time, rather than most of their time working alone.

There is a need to support teachers in developing strategies for balancing pair and group work with time given over to learners working alone. These strategies should be developed and introduced into initial teacher education and continuing professional development programmes.

At the level of classroom practice, the most practicable ways to reduce the amount of time learners spend working alone are to increase whole-class work and opportunities for learners to work in pairs – for example, in a buddy system.

Teachers already in the field appear to have little opportunity for reflection on their practice. Our practitioner-researchers' accounts suggest that more opportunities need to be provided for teachers to observe in other practitioners' classrooms.

Policy

There is every reason to continue to make provision for learners of a range of ages and ethnicities, with English as their first or an additional language, who left school at different ages and/or have spent varying lengths of time away from education, and who may or may not have dyslexia.

As the field expands, the availability of more classes should be built on to facilitate 'streaming' of learners by initial attainment in reading and writing – currently, most classes have to cater for a range of levels.

Research

Approaches which have been found to be effective elsewhere (mainly in North America) should be tried out and their effectiveness investigated. Examples include teaching reading fluency and accurate phonics teaching. NRDC is undertaking field trials of incorporating practice in oral reading fluency into classroom activities (see above).

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A detailed development and research project should be carried out on phonics teaching in adult literacy. NRDC has developed a proposal to train adult literacy teachers to use phonics, and to assess the effectiveness of phonics teaching in the adult literacy classroom.

We should explore comparisons between:

- intensive courses and the typical pattern of extended provision
- large and small amounts of whole-class teaching
- more and less time spent working alone.

9.3 Limitations to this research

We acknowledge the following limitations to our research:

- The amount of time between assessments is likely to have been too short for evidence of substantial progress to emerge.
- The assessment instrument only assessed comprehension at text level; no data were gathered on progress in other aspects of reading, such as word recognition.
- Active reading tuition was found to occupy less than half the average class time.
- Some basic aspects of reading were not assessed; word recognition, for example.
- Several effective teaching strategies were rarely seen.

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EFFECTIVE TEACHING
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Funded by the Department for Education and Skills as part of ***Skills for Life***: the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.

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