



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIELD OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION

State of the art in Scotland

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The following report has been compiled as part of the TRAIN “Professionalization of Literacy and Basic Education – Basic Modules for Teacher Training”, an EU Socrates Grundtvig funded project, in collaboration with partners from Germany, Cyprus, France and Slovenia.

The report details the background to adult literacy policy and national strategy in Scotland and the current structures in place for the professionalization of adult literacy teachers including the different types of qualifications available and the national strategy for teacher education within the adult literacy and basic skills sector.

The information contained in the report has been compiled from a number of government publications, publications from stakeholders in the adult literacy and basic skills sector and readings and texts from academic researchers in the field.

Information gathering for this report took place over a three-month period from January 2007 to the end of March 2007 and involved primarily internet-based research and discussions with expert practitioners in Ireland involved in the adult literacy and adult basic education sector.

2. Development of Literacy and Basic Education in Scotland

2.1 Overview on development, national policy, strategies and action plans

Scotland has a national adult literacy and numeracy strategy in place since 2001. Prior to this point, there had been a varied approach taken to the provision of adult literacy support and tuition by the numerous stakeholders involved. The OECD¹ report on the International Adult Literacy Survey survey found that 23% of adults surveyed in Scotland had very low literacy and numeracy skills and a further 30% had skills that may have been inadequate to meet the demands of a knowledge society. This figure represented up to 800,000 adults in Scotland who, according to the survey, had low literacy skills. Given the high percentage of the population involved the Scottish Executive² recognized that the issue needed to be given priority and a number of research reports were commissioned to further understand the extent of the literacy problem and to provide the basis for a national strategy to address the issue.

Prior to 2001, a number of strategies had been employed to address the adult literacy issue. In 1975 the Scottish Office³, established the Scottish Adult Literacy Agency (SCALA) to support local authorities in the provision of adult literacy services. Up to this time literacy tuition had been provided on an ad hoc basis through local authorities and community and voluntary groups. A budget of £100,000 was allocated to SCALA to assist local authorities to develop schemes of provision for adult literacy learners. By 1979 SCALA came to an end and literacy and numeracy provision was subsumed into the adult basic education agenda within the local authorities. During the period 1979 to 2000, support for adult literacy learners was ad hoc and depended on individual local authorities and community and voluntary groups. In 1992 policy guidance given to local authorities was that literacy and numeracy were only a minor concern and there was no need to employ trained literacy specialists.

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997, Literacy Skills for Knowledge Society: Further Results from the International Adult Literacy Survey, Paris, OECD.

² Scottish Executive is the devolved government for Scotland responsible for most of the issues of day to day concern in Scotland

³ Scottish Office is the former name of the Scottish Executive

The OECD and IALS reports issued in 1996 and 1997 respectively caused a strong reaction from the Scottish Executive. In 1999 a Scottish Executive circular⁴ advised Local Authorities on responsibilities in relation to the formulation and coordination of community learning strategies and plans and literacy and numeracy were identified as priority areas. A National Advisory Group⁵ on Literacy and Numeracy was set up in 2000 by the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning to examine Literacy and Numeracy and the Scottish Executive announced new political commitment and financial support for adult literacy and numeracy. A number of research reports⁶ were also commissioned by the Scottish Executive in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the adult literacy issue. One of these reports was an audit⁷, which identified all providers of adult literacy support and tuition and examined modes of support, the number of learners and those involved in teaching and supporting the various programmes. At the time (July 2000) the survey estimated that the providers of tuition and support had 15,000 literacy learners each year and support was being delivered by 1300 paid staff and 1600 volunteers. Funding came primarily from local authorities, the European Social Fund, local enterprise and social inclusion partnerships.

A new national strategy was developed by the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department of the Scottish Executive. This new strategy was based on the above survey and associated recommendations produced by the Adult Literacies Advisory Team along with the other research reports commissioned at this time. The strategy entitled "Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS)" was based on four key principles:

- A Lifelong Learning approach
- Free to Learners
- Targets priority groups
- Grounding change in research and learner consultation

This new national strategy was launched in July 2001 and aimed at doubling the number of learning opportunities for adult literacy and numeracy learners over three years. The strategy set out with the aim of assisting 80,000 learners over three years and doubling annual capacity within three years to over 30,000 learners each year. A total of £24.1m was allocated to the strategy and £18.5m channeled through the local authorities to Community Learning Strategy partnerships and Further Education Colleges.

The strategy adopts a social practice model, where literacies are a key dimension of community regeneration and part of a wider lifelong learning agenda. The strategy puts the learners at the center of the learning process working to a curriculum focusing on individual needs and promoting independence and critical awareness. Interestingly the approach taken by the Scottish Executive and the goals and objectives of the strategy are quite different from those identified by the Moser report⁸, which led to England's adult literacy and numeracy strategy. The English strategy was designed to complement the school process and mirror educational processes used with children in school settings, the same report directly attributes poor schooling as the reason for poor basic skills in adults.

The need for training for adult literacy and numeracy practitioners was also highlighted in the new national strategy and there was a commitment to develop a new teaching qualification for adult literacy tutors.

⁴ Community Education Circular 4/99 (1999), Edinburgh, Scottish Executive Education Department

⁵ The Adult Literacies Team

⁶ These reports are detailed in the bibliography

⁷ Adult Literacies in Scotland (2000) Adult Literacy & Numeracy: a survey of programmes in local authorities and further education colleges, Edinburgh, City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Executive

⁸ Improving Literacy and Numeracy: a fresh start (1999) London, Department for Education and Employment, UK

The strategy also recommended the development of a curriculum framework for adult literacy and numeracy learners in order to meet individual needs and to provide for opportunities for a broad range of learning opportunities and options to progress both to formal accredited programmes and other non-formal programmes.

There have been a number of reports produced since the launch of ALNIS, which critically examined progress in the areas outlined in the national strategy⁹. There has been a marked increase in the number of learners accessing the service; between 2001 and 2005 over 100,000 new learners¹⁰ availed of support and tuition. A budget of £65 M has been committed up to 2008. A new Professional Development Award (Professional Development Award: Introduction to Adult Literacies) has been launched by the Scottish Qualifications Authority for adult literacy teachers and a new teaching qualification is expected to be launched in 2007. An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework model has been produced and support to the local authority partnerships is provided through Learning Connections, a national agency, part of Communities Scotland, which is part of the Scottish Executive Housing and Regeneration Agency has been given operational responsibility for implementation of the national adult literacy and numeracy strategy.

2.2 Structures and systems of Literacy and Basic Education in Scotland

Since the launch of the National strategy in 2001 there has been a significant increase in funding into adult literacy and numeracy services. This increased level of support and funding has meant some changes in the structures around which provision is delivered.

Prior to the launch of ALNIS, adult literacy tuition and support was delivered by the local authorities, Further Education Colleges and Community and voluntary organizations throughout Scotland. Community and voluntary groups have played an important role in developing supports for adults with literacy difficulties and the importance of a Community orientated partnership based approach was reflected in the ALNIS. This set out new structures for the support of adult literacy learners. Funding was to be routed through 32 local authorities to Community Learning and Development Strategy partnerships. Each area has now established an adult literacy and numeracy partnership, who are required to produce an action plan explaining how funding will be used to build capacity and increase the range of learning opportunities. Each action plan is monitored by the Scottish Executive Enterprise Transport and Lifelong Learning Department. A National Training project was set up in 2001 to support these partnerships and in 2003 Learning Connections was set up to support the national strategy. Learning Connections are part of Communities Scotland, the Scottish Executive Housing and Regeneration agency. The national strategy is therefore a cross-departmental led initiative with the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department responsible for policy making and strategy development and Learning Connections – Communities Scotland, part of the Housing and Regeneration Agency responsible for training, support and research.

The 32 local authorities in Scotland were given responsibility for implementing the new national strategy and were appointed coordinators of Community Learning Strategies with a budget of £18.5m over three years (2001-2004). The local authorities work in conjunction with Community and Voluntary groups and Further Education Colleges in the development and delivery of literacy and numeracy provision for adults.

The principal stakeholders in Scotland include the Scottish Executive (Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department, Housing and Regeneration Agency and the Inspectorate

⁹ Report on the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2004-2005 (2005), Learning Connections, Communities Scotland, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

¹⁰ Changing Lives: Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (2006) Edinburgh, HM Inspectorate of Education, Scottish Executive

of Education). Under the remit of the Department of Education and Training, Communities Scotland is the national agency whose role is to help achieve the policy objectives and Partnership agreement commitments of Scottish Ministers. One of their objectives is to allow everyone access to learning and employment opportunities and to enable people to live free from poverty, inequality and discrimination. Communities Scotland has a number of teams within its structure and one of those teams is Learning Connections. Learning Connections develop policy and practice for adult literacies, community learning and development and they promote the engagement of local people in the regeneration of their communities.

Other stakeholders include the Scottish Universities including:

University of Aberdeen,
University of Glasgow
University of Dundee
University of Edinburgh
University of Strathclyde

At a national level the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the UK Department for Education and skills have an important role to play in determining the teacher qualifications for adult literacy teachers.

Community and voluntary groups through the Community Partnerships also play a key role in delivering and supporting the national strategy.

Finally other organizations such as the National Research Centre for Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) in the UK and the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK form key stakeholders in the Scottish national strategy.

3. Concept of Teaching Literacy and Basic Education

The national adult literacy and numeracy strategy, launched in 2001, recommended that quality assurance processes be introduced across all organizations involved in the provision of adult literacy tuition and support. It proposed a national training strategy which would provide for national training standards for all staff, including volunteers, and recommended that a new qualification for specialist literacy and numeracy practitioners be developed. It also recommended that all staff and volunteers providing literacy tuition should meet the national standards by 2005.

Prior to 2001, given the diversity of provision of adult literacy support, adult literacy tutors came from a wide range of backgrounds including traditional second level teaching backgrounds, adult basic education and community education. There were no standards for appointment to a position that involved adult literacy support and qualifications required depended on the type of organization that was involved in the delivery of adult literacy tuition and support and their general standards for appointment to full time and part time positions.

3.1 National Strategy in the field of professionalization of literacy teachers

Following publication of the ALNIS and the subsequent increase in funding through the Community Learning Partnerships, more positions became available and a number of organizations became involved in the development of standards and ultimately qualifications for those working in adult literacy.

Learning Connections, part of Communities Scotland, developed a Professional Development Award¹¹ which was launched by the Scottish Qualifications Authority in 2003. It was targeted at tutor assistants and people new to adult literacy and was the first national qualification available in Scotland. This new qualification is mapped at level 6 on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework¹². After a period of consultation and dialogue with stakeholders Learning Connections developed “Benchmarks for a new qualification – Teaching Qualification:Adult Literacies” (TQAL) which were published in 2005. A teaching qualification programme is currently under development and will offer options to qualify at levels 8 or 9 on the Scottish Framework, this is equivalent to Higher Diploma and ordinary Degree level.

There have been a number of policy papers on the area of teacher education in the Lifelong Learning sector in the UK over the past years and a number of studies and research reports have been produced. These policy initiatives will have a bearing on the situation regarding qualifications for those working in the basic skills sector in Scotland. Although the Scottish Executive has responsibility for adult literacy support and tuition through Communities Scotland and Learning Connections, the UK government has not devolved all responsibilities to the Scottish Executive therefore policy decisions in this area in the UK may affect those working in Scotland.

There are a number of different full time and part-time positions available within the adult literacy sector in Scotland and the most common for an adult literacy tutor is the position of Skills for Life Tutor (also known as Basic Skills Tutors), these are full time positions and qualifications required to secure appointment are currently a level 4 teaching qualification and a subject specialist award. The teaching qualification award must be recognized by Lifelong Learning UK¹³. A number of teaching qualification awards have been developed for the Lifelong Learning sector and a specific Teaching Award for Adult Literacies is currently under development in Scotland.

Currently those working in the sector are deemed qualified if they possess a general teaching award at level 4 in addition to a subject specialist award.

The subject specialist award for literacy tutors is in Literacy, Numeracy or ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). Adult Literacy Teachers may currently complete these two qualifications separately and they are widely available through universities, colleges and City and Guilds.

Experienced practitioners working in the adult literacy sector in Scotland who may not possess the required qualifications, all are now required to work towards a basic qualification (level 2 and 3 of the Scottish framework). There is also a system in place to recognize prior experience called Professional Recognition of Learning and Skills to enable experienced adult literacy tutors gain credits towards an award for experience and skills gained to date.

Other positions available are “Skills for Life Support Workers” (also known as Support Assistants), who are required to possess a level 2 or level 3 award. At level 2 there are a number of qualifications available for example City and Guilds (9295) Adult Learner Support (Literacy, Numeracy, ESOL).¹⁴ Those in possession of the level 2 award may then progress to a level 3 qualification. These level 2 and level 3 awards are available through a number of organizations throughout Scotland usually in Further Education Colleges and are accredited by bodies such as City and Guilds, various Universities and local colleges.

¹¹ Professional Development Award:Introduction to Adult Literacy

¹² The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework maps all qualifications from level 1 to 12, 12 being Doctorate level

¹³ Lifelong Learning UK – UK Statutory agency responsible for teacher qualifications across the UK including Scotland

¹⁴ Also known as a Basic Skills for Volunteers Certificate

Teaching standards at local levels have also been targeted and there has been a drive to improve standards of provision and support across all areas of tuition and support. A resource pack known as “Literacies in the Community: Good Practice Framework”¹⁵ was developed by the Adult Literacies Team, commissioned by the Scottish Executive (to become Learning Connections in 2003) in 2000 and was distributed to all those involved in adult literacy tuition and support.

A report produced by the Scottish Inspectorate of Education in 2005, which reviewed tuition and support to adult literacy learners, concluded that the majority of staff had appropriate experience and a substantial minority had a recognized teaching qualification¹⁶.

4 Review of Literacy Teachers Competences

The following competences required for adult literacy teachers in Scotland have been compiled using documentation produced by expert practitioners in Scotland and standards set down by the Scottish Qualifications Authority who have approved the SQA Professional Development Award: Introduction to Adult Literacies Learning. This award has been developed by the Communities Scotland National Training Project (now Learning Connections) following the recommendations of the Scottish Executive report Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland¹⁷.

This is currently the only qualification developed specifically for adult literacy teachers (a teaching qualification in adult literacies is currently under development).

In addition to this, Learning Connections and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland have published benchmarks for the Teaching Qualification :Adult Literacies, which also provide guidelines on the competences required by literacy teachers in Scotland. This document sets out the national competences for tutors working in the field of adult literacies.

- An understanding of adult literacies programmes in Scotland and current policies and strategy
- An ability to demonstrate a broad understanding of good practice in adult literacies provision
- An ability to demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of a limited range of educational theories of learning including the adult learning process
- An ability to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching strategies for reading, writing and numeracy
- An appreciation of the community education approach to adult literacies
- An ability to adopt a learner-centered approach with adult learners
- Understanding how adults learn and what motivates adults to learn
- An ability to demonstrate an understanding of group working processes and approaches
- To be able to understand the role and responsibilities of the adult literacies teacher
- To possess excellent inter-personal skills and the ability to be able to relate to wide range of adult learners including those with learning difficulties
- An understanding of critical learning, reflective learning and evaluation

¹⁵ Adult Literacies in Scotland (2000) Literacies in the Community, resources for practitioners and managers, Edinburgh, City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Executive

¹⁶ Changing Lives: Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland, A report by HM Inspectorate of Education, 2006, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

¹⁷ ALNIS

Other competences identified included:

- An ability to build relationships with adult literacies learners
- The aptitude to be able to develop and use a wide variety of materials when working with adult literacies learners
- An understanding of short term and long term goals in an adult literacy learners environment
- An ability to Deliver Learning Activities
- An ability to use a range of learning activities with adult literacies learners
- To be able to demonstrate an understanding of ICT and its role in learning activities for adults
- To be able to demonstrate the use of a range of search techniques

4.1 Good practice in the field of teacher training

Following the release of Literacies in the Community resource pack in 2000 and the production of Introductory Training in Adult Literacies¹⁸ in 2002 a new emphasis was put on the training and professional development of adult literacy teachers in Scotland.

All organizations involved in the provision of adult literacy tuition and support have been encouraged to provide opportunities for adult literacy practitioners to complete in-depth initial training (ITALL) and subsequently progress towards a qualification. The qualification available to new adult literacy teachers is Professional Development Award: Introduction to Adult Literacies Learning.

The introduction of the resource pack (LIC) was a first step towards providing a standard for basic training for adult literacy teachers. This pack outlined 7 principles that form the basis of good practice and have been designed to inform and support effective practice. This pack is used by the Community Learning Partnerships to provide training and support to their adult literacy teachers and the fact that it is widely accessible means that all those involved in adult literacy support and tuition have access to it.

The second initiative that encourages good practice in adult literacy teacher training is the production of Introductory Training in Adult Literacies Learning by Communities Scotland in 2002 (revised 2004). This details guidelines on teacher training in adult literacy and outlines content and methodologies to be used for initial teacher training within adult literacy. It has played an important role in developing standards among practitioners and providing a platform from which qualifications have been based.

The introduction of a system (Professional Recognition of Learning and Skills) which recognizes prior experience and skills is a positive development and looks to recognize skills as well as experience. Many of those working within the adult literacy sector have accumulated years of rich experience however find themselves “unqualified” for full time positions within the sector due to lack of qualifications. This system allows experienced practitioners to gain credit for their experience and then work towards a recognized award.

Finally the production of benchmark statements for a new Teaching Qualification for Adult Literacy Teachers is another example of good practice in that it has involved consultation on a wide basis with national stakeholders and aims to develop a qualification that is immediately recognized as appropriate for those working in the sector. This is opposite to the approach taken in Ireland, where the qualification was developed but the position of adult literacy teacher and associated qualifications remains undefined at a national level.

¹⁸ ITALL 2002 (revised 2004), Communities Scotland, Scottish Executive

4.2 Prevailing problems and challenges

The challenges facing teacher training within the adult literacy sector in Scotland include the lack of higher level literacy specific teaching qualifications, although these are expected to be ready during 2007, and the accessibility of these programmes once they become available. Encouraging volunteers and part-time teachers to pursue further studies continues to be challenging however given there is now a requirement for all basic skills tutors to possess a minimum level of qualifications there is a further incentive for them to do so.

Two areas mentioned in the Scottish Inspectorate of Education Report in 2006 are worth mentioning. They relate to literacy teaching and concern the lack of a thorough assessment procedure and lack of individual learning plans for all adult literacy learners. These will be important to track progress of adult literacy learners and demonstrate progression in terms of learner progress.

Funding will affect the future of basic skills tutors since many part-time positions are dependent on annual funding streams and it may prove difficult to retain experienced teachers in a field where there are relatively few full time positions.

Professionalization of the adult literacy and basic education sector continues to be a focus for the Scottish Executive and a genuine commitment at national policy level has meant that much progress has been made since the publication of ALNIS in 2001.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

Scotland has a national strategy for adult literacy in place since 2001 and this has been supported by significant increases in funding to increase opportunities for adult literacy learners, to ensure a high quality service is delivered to learners and to provide for professional development for those working in the sector.

Scotland had a high number of adults identified in the IALS survey in 1996 with low literacy skills (800,000) and responded to this by developing both national policy and strategies to address the issue.

Professional qualifications have been developed for adult literacy support workers and a teacher qualification for adult literacy teachers is under developed and expected during 2007.

The Scottish strategy is based on a social practice model of literacies and is supported using a community driven approach, which adopts a partnership mode of working with stakeholders in local regions. This model is seen as innovative and effective in terms of involving a broad range of stakeholders outside the formal education system and brings literacy support closer to the community.

There is a dedicated national organization, Learning Connections, with a remit to provide support to all organizations – statutory and voluntary within the adult literacy sector and the Scottish Executive retains policy and strategy related responsibilities.

The Scottish academic community have pursued an active research agenda in the field of adult literacy and are recognized at an international level for their contribution to the field.

The Scottish strategy continues to evolve and has been subject to regular evaluation and review. The strategy is in place up to 2008 at which time it will be reviewed,

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