



United Kingdom  
National Commission for UNESCO



University  
of Glasgow



## LITERACIES MATTER! SCOTTISH AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

University of Glasgow- 10th Sept 2010

### BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

This event was hosted by the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) Scotland Committee in partnership with the Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning (CRADALL) at Glasgow University, the Communities Team at Learning & Teaching Scotland and Stirling University.

Literacy is at the heart of basic Education for All and is essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy. UNESCO leads the **United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-13)** which aims to improve literacy levels and empower people worldwide (<http://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/> )

This seminar gathered 150 Scottish practitioners of literacy and policy makers in Glasgow, and aimed to:

- 🏛️ mark International Literacy Day and raise awareness of the issues related to literacy worldwide
- 🏛️ present the 2009 Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies
- 🏛️ relate worldwide issues in literacy to local issues focusing on the empowering role of literacy and its importance for participation, health and wellbeing, citizenship and social development, and lastly,
- 🏛️ foster debate in the lead to the new Adult Literacies Strategy of the Scottish Government, to be launched in 2011.

The seminar participants made some key recommendations during this event, which they felt, at a time of increasing financial constraints, key policy makers in local authorities ought to take on board.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Build effective partnerships between employers, employees, government, LTS, NHS to embed a sustainable culture of lifelong learning**

**Record and monitor the impact of literacies learning on lives as well as quantitative targets**

**Promote the symbiotic relationship between literacy for work and civic participation**

**Ensure that funding restrictions do not have a negative impact on established and developing gender sensitive provision**

## PRESENTATIONS

### Adama Ouane



*Director of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)*

Discussed this year's theme for International Literacy Day: *The power of women's literacy*. Ouane argued that we should celebrate women's empowerment through literacy and pay tribute to the women and men who work behind the scenes to help others acquire literacy skills and gain entry to a world of opportunities. Global literacy development continues to need political commitment, allocation of sufficient resources, stronger partnership with civil society and networks, provision of valid and reliable data and evidence and systematic professional approaches.

### Ralf St.Clair



*School of Education, University of Glasgow*

Presented analysis based on the Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009 showing that literacy skills in Scotland are comparable with many of the world's leading economies. Three-quarters (73.3%) of the Scottish population have a level of skills recognised internationally as appropriate for a contemporary society. However, around one quarter of the Scottish population (26.7%) may face occasional challenges and constrained opportunities, and one person in 28 (3.6%) faces serious challenges in their literacies practices.

### Michael Omolewa



*Former Nigerian Ambassador to UNESCO*

Drew attention to the contributions Scotland had made to the educational development of Africa, and explored some of the ways that the application of literacy is critical. Reading and writing help one to discover the principles and techniques for living well. Literacy supports access to information on staying healthy at home and at work through reports, newspapers, journals and blogs, and also contributes to a healthy communal life.

### Cesar Guadalupe



*UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)*

Described UNESCO's emerging approach to measuring literacies strengths around the world (LAMP). The tool has a level of inclusiveness that goes well beyond the technical complexities associated with testing and surveys. The challenges include a need to foster public interest, and communicating the message that LAMP is not a "study", it is a methodological development effort, a capacity development effort, and a data generation effort.

## WORKSHOPS- CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In workshops during the morning participants were asked to identify the major challenges they saw facing key two areas where literacy matters: employment and education. In the afternoon they were asked to develop specific recommendations for policy and practice in

three areas: health and wellbeing, gender and civic participation. The results are presented below.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **1. Literacies & Employment**

- Communication and shared goals
- Impact of technology: Innovation
- Tight budgets
- Good systems and resources to engage and sustain learners in lifelong literacies learning
- Effective partnerships between employers, employees, government, LTS, NHS to embed a sustainable culture of lifelong learning
- Continuing to embed a social practices approach in literacies learning for and in employment

### **2. Literacies & Education**

- Maintaining a broad approach to literacies —it's both skills for employment and individual or personal benefits
- Moving social practice based views of literacy into schooling
- Need to record and monitor both impact on lives and quantitative targets
- Approaches to partnership working: protocols and collective responsibility
- How to be effective in attracting and engaging lifelong
- RESOURCES!

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Literacies & Health and Wellbeing**

- Consider literacies as part of health care and also as a resource for a healthy life
- Recognise the need for strong, effective partnerships working to integrate key components of health in order to provide holistic support
- Demonstrate the link between adult literacy for health and wellbeing and the Curriculum for Excellence, and illustrate that link with examples of good practice

### **2. Literacies & Gender**

- More rigorous research
- It should be recognised that gender is always an issue for both men and women in creating policy and practice, although traditionally women accrue more disadvantage
- Ensure that funding restrictions do not have a negative impact on established and developing gender sensitive provision

### **3. Literacies & Civic Participation**

- Address fears among learners as well as tutors and practitioners
- Promote the symbiotic relationship between literacy for work and civic participation
- Promote the social practice model

All presentations and materials from the seminar can be accessed on: [www.unesco.org.uk/events/literacies\\_matter!\\_scottish\\_and\\_global\\_perspectives](http://www.unesco.org.uk/events/literacies_matter!_scottish_and_global_perspectives)