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National Commission
for UNESCO

**INTERNATIONAL
SEMINAR
ON LITERACY**

St Antony's College
University of Oxford

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Seminar Report

Literacy for All: Britain's Response to the Global Challenge

Seminar Convened by
Education Committee, UK National Commission for UNESCO

In association with

UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET)

and

British Association for Literacy in Development (BALID)

Acknowledgments

The United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO is indebted to many different individuals and organisations for their assistance with the arrangements for this seminar.

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The inspiration for the Seminar was provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Education for All Global Monitoring Team that it hosts. We were grateful to UNESCO for sending two of its most experienced and authoritative professionals in the field of literacy, Adama Ouane (Director of the UNESCO Institute of Education in Hamburg) and Leslie Limage (Division of Basic Education at Headquarters in Paris), to lead our discussions. We thank them personally for the enthusiasm and skill with which they performed this task and responded to questions and issues raised in discussion. We were also very much obliged to the EFA Global Monitoring Report Team for making available copies of the 2006 Report, with its title theme of *Literacy for Life*, to participants.

We were fortunate, too, in the high quality of UK speakers – Alan Rogers, Jan Eldred, Andy Nelson, Rosemary Preston and Lalage Bown - who ably responded to the presentations from our international colleagues, described and reflected on the UK's own experience in this field, explored the challenges of working with others, and summed up the day's proceedings. David Johnson, Juliet McCaffery, John Oxenham and Peter Lavender kindly chaired the plenary sessions.

The success of a meeting of this kind depends largely on the contribution made by participants. The programme attracted a 'full house' and the lively contributions from the floor reflected the deep experience and commitment on the part of those attending, drawn from international organisations, government, public agencies, academic teaching and research, international students, and a wide range of voluntary organisations. The National Commission is grateful to all those who took part and for their lively participation in the debate.

The Department for Education and Skills provides the Education Committee of the National Commission with its programme funds. The difference between fee receipts and the total cost of the seminar was met from that source. We are much indebted to the Department for this essential financial support.

The Seminar was planned by a group which included Jan Eldred, Seamus Hegarty, David Johnson, Peter Williams and the National Commission Secretariat. We would like to pay a special tribute to Alex Inglis and Linda Leung at the Secretariat for their unremitting efforts to convert our plans for the Seminar into successful reality. We are indebted to Linda for applying her editorial skills to the timely production on this Report in the face of extremely tight deadlines.

This event was conceived and largely operationalised by members of the Education Committee's Africa Working Group. The current Chair is Peter Williams who provided overall direction of the project. Members of the Working Group express their thanks to Christine Whatford, Education Committee Chair, and to Alec Boksenberg, Chair of the National Commission for UNESCO, for their encouragement in this enterprise and their personal participation in the event.



Disclaimer The conclusions and recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of UNESCO or the UK National Commission for UNESCO. The views and expressions contained herein, except for where authors have provided written texts of their presentations, have been recorded verbatim by rapporteurs and may not always accurately reflect the nuances of the speaker. We have tried as far as possible to circulate a draft report to those cited and to verify that their comments as recorded are accurate.

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Preface

This report is about international efforts to attain Literacy for All, and Britain's part in them. It records the proceedings of an important dialogue on literacy, convened by the UK National Commission for UNESCO at Oxford on 2 December 2005. The Seminar took place less than a month after the launch in London of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) for 2006 whose theme was Literacy for Life.

The achievement of universal literacy is an integral part of the global campaign for the attainment of Education for All (EFA). UNESCO is the UN agency charged with co-ordinating the international effort and has confirmed the achievement of EFA as its top priority in the Education Sector. In recognition of this, the UK National Commission for UNESCO, through its Education Committee, has engaged in trying to promote greater awareness in the UK of the global challenge, of how UNESCO can be strengthened in its co-ordinating role, and of what the UK – both Government and civil society – can do to make a positive difference. In 2003, the then National Commission published a report *Education for All: UK Perspectives* which examined the global situation and the particular challenges faced by the UK as a member of the world community in meeting the six EFA goals set in Dakar in 2000. The present Education Committee has established working groups on EFA, and on education in Africa where much of the global EFA deficit is situated.

Through its working groups, with the Africa Working Group in the lead, the Education Committee of the National Commission decided to convene a seminar in Oxford to address prospects for attaining the EFA literacy goal. The theme was highly topical. At its General Conference in October 2005, UNESCO confirmed that literacy was one of the three priorities for its efforts to support education development in Africa (the others being strengthening the teaching profession/teacher training, and addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS on education). In November, the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006, with Literacy for Life as its theme, was launched in London.

The UK National Commission for UNESCO and two partner organisations, the UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) and the British Association for Literacy in Development (BALID) agreed to co-operate in arranging a two-stage programme to address the global literacy situation and to respond to the GMR's assessment, from a UK perspective. The National Commission organised the Seminar reported here in Oxford in December 2005. The second stage colloquium, to which this report will form one of the inputs, will be convened by UKFIET and BALID in London in January 2006.

Some 50 participants attended the one-day Seminar entitled "Literacy for All: Britain's Response to the Global Challenge", representing perspectives from international organisations, government, public agencies, academic teaching and research, international students, and a wide range of voluntary organisations.

The overall aims of the Seminar were:

- To make known to a wider audience the findings of the GMR report on literacy and to subject these findings to constructively critical comment;
- To reflect on the policy and practice of literacy programmes, including approaches in the UK, in order that countries across the world might learn from each other;
- To explore, and make known to UNESCO, the range of expertise and resources available in the UK;
- To indicate to UK civil society where there are openings for constructive engagement with, and contribution to, UNESCO's and other international literacy programmes.

Within this framework three principal themes were identified and served as the basis for discussion at the seminar:

1. **Definition and measurement of literacy.** What is literacy and how do we measure it? Crucially, how are different conceptualisations of being literate managed in a global trend study?
2. **Exchange of international experience.** Some countries have been more successful than others in meeting the challenge to reduce levels of illiteracy. The UK itself has important recent experience in this area. What can be done to exchange policy knowledge and best-practice strategies?
3. **Scope for UK engagement with the international literacy agendas.** UNESCO is the recognised international lead agency in the promotion of literacy and the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO has an important role to play in sensitising the UK public and its public institutions to the need for collective international action to improve the human welfare and human development of the world's population. What is being done and what more can be done by the UK to help UNESCO realise its mission in the field of literacy?

In order to address this agenda, as the Seminar Proceedings section of this report documents more fully, the limited time available was divided into three main sections, following the programme reproduced in Appendix 6.

In an extended first plenary session, participants were guided by two prominent professionals from UNESCO, Adama Ouane and Leslie Limage, in reviewing the international literacy situation. This involved examining the progress achieved and outstanding issues in literacy, as assessed in the GMR 2006, and taking note of current international programmes under the UN Literacy Decade. A lively discussion period, including a response by Alan Rogers, ensued.

The focus then switched to adult literacy policy and practice in the UK. Jan Eldred reviewed the Government's Skills for Life Strategy in plenary, with a response by Andrew Nelson followed by brief discussion.

The final part of the Seminar addressed issues of partnership and co-operation and the promotion of literacy. Rosemary Preston, in plenary, analysed the problems for practitioners and consultants in doing substantial work on literacy in a climate of short-termism and instrumentalism imposed by national government and international assistance agencies. This was followed by a discussion session in which the participants divided into four groups to consider what priorities the UK should take forward in working on the international literacy agenda.

A short final session included report-back from the discussion groups and a brief response by Lalage Bown to the day's proceedings in which she highlighted some of the conclusions and issues that had emerged.

The Seminar might have set itself too ambitious a list of objectives to be addressed in deliberations confined to one day. However, many of the aims of the Seminar were indeed fulfilled and the important presentations and useful exchanges constitute a basis on which the National Commission hopes to build. The National Commission will:

1. disseminate this report as widely as possible among interested parties;
2. participate actively in the second-stage colloquium in London (January 2006) and, together with other partners, refine its thinking about the UK's contribution to literacy globally; and
3. work with government and civil-society partners in the UK and with UNESCO, to translate some of the ideas and conclusions reached into concrete actions.



Peter Williams

Chair, Africa Working Group, Education Committee
UK National Commission for UNESCO



Christine Whatford

Chair, Education Committee
UK National Commission for UNESCO

Background

The international community is committed to achievement of Education for All and EFA is the top priority for UNESCO in education. In 2000 at a Conference in Dakar (Senegal) convened by UNESCO, the global community re-committed itself to Education for All, setting six specific goals. Goal #4 expressed the literacy goal as a commitment to “achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults”.

Literacy has been the focus of a number of important UN initiatives, mainly through UNESCO as the acknowledged lead international agency (see Appendix 1). Yet until now literacy has been something of a Cinderella in the world campaign for EFA. In the period following the Jomtien Conference which launched Education for All in 1990, literacy has taken second place to efforts to achieve access for all children to good quality primary schooling and to bring about gender equality in school enrolments. More recently, however, literacy has come back into focus as a key element in EFA efforts with the launch in 2003 of the UN Literacy Decade, and with literacy as the theme of the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR).

Although the objectives of schooling for all, and of literacy for all, have sometimes been represented as competing goals, particularly in terms of budgetary allocations, they are in fact interdependent. As the 2006 GMR emphasises, universal primary education should be one key component of a three-pronged approach to achieve universal literacy, the other constituents of which should be the scaling up of youth and adult literacy programmes, and the development of rich literate environments. At the same time it is evident that the extension of literacy to adults, especially mothers, is an important way to ensure parental interest in and support for the school enrolment of their children.

As the lead agency in co-ordinating international efforts to attain EFA, UNESCO houses an independent team charged with assessing progress with achievement of EFA through production of an annual EFA Global Monitoring Report. Successive GMRs from 2002-2003 onwards have dealt with universal access, gender equality, and quality of education. The (fourth) 2006 GMR focuses on literacy with the theme title Literacy for Life. Its main findings and recommendations are presented on pages 8 and 9 of this Report.

The UK has exhibited a strong commitment to the EFA campaign and the GMR team's work is substantially funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). That the launch of the 2006 GMR took place at Whitechapel, a culturally diverse area of London in which literacy rates are traditionally poor, signals the position that Britain is aware of the global state of education for all and is not complacent about its own achievements in this respect. Indeed, the Whitechapel IDEA store in which the launch took place represents, according to Christine Whatford, Interim Director of Education, London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Chair of the Education Committee of the UK National Commission for UNESCO, “the ‘Rolls Royce’ approach to literacy that can be afforded in a developed country. It provides accessible and inviting opportunities to learn in a first-class physical environment in the heart of an area of social deprivation with high levels of adults who are not literate in English.”

Speakers at the launch included Rt Hon Baroness Amos, Leader of the House of Lords, Lord President of the Council and former International Development Secretary for the UK Government; Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO; and Nicholas Burnett, Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report Team.

Baroness Amos underlined Britain's commitment to EFA and the cause of universal literacy:

We can't respond to the demands of the 21st century while five million adults in the UK do not have basic literacy; 15 million lack basic numeracy; and more than 6.5 million working adults do not have the equivalent of five good GCSEs.

Taking up one of the central messages of the GMR about the need for the mobilisation of substantially increased funds if the EFA targets are to be met, she pledged the UK's readiness to back its supportive policy stance:

We have promised more aid, now we need to promise to provide more of it to basic education. Donors need to double the share of aid going to basic education. If they do, as DFID has, then it will be possible to achieve the education goals. This will allow countries to create more ambitious national plans to achieve education for all, including making literacy a real priority...Promises must be turned into action. We will do our part.

These positive affirmations by the British Government provided an encouraging context for the discussions in the Seminar on how Britain could engage constructively in efforts to deliver Literacy for All. However, these challenges cannot be underestimated. They are summarised in the 2006 GMR (see pages 8-9).

What is....

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to a set of timebound and measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. 8 MDGs set to be achieved by 2015:

- (i) **Halve Extreme Poverty and Hunger**
Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day. Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
- (ii) **Achieve Universal Primary Education**
Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
- (iii) **Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**
Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015
- (iv) **Reduce Under-Five Mortality**
Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five
- (v) **Reduce Maternal Mortality**
Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio
- (vi) **Reverse the Spread of diseases, especially HIV/AIDS & Malaria**
Half and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
- (vii) **Ensure Environmental Sustainability**
Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources. Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.
- (viii) **Create a Global Partnership for Development**
With targets for aid, trade, debt relief, access of information, access to essential drugs, youth, and special needs for land-locked countries.

The Dakar Goals on Education for All

At the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (April 2000), the international community affirmed its commitment to accelerate progress towards the six Education for All (EFA) goals through a number of mechanisms and strategies contained in the Dakar Framework for Action. Two of the MDGs (ii and iii) are focused on corresponding EFA goals.

- (i) expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- (ii) ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- (iii) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;
- (iv) achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- (v) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- (vi) improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO)

"since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" (Preamble to UNESCO Constitution)

UNESCO was born on November 16, 1945. It is headquartered in Paris and supports over 50 field offices and several institutes and centres throughout the world.

It has five major programmes: education, natural sciences, social & human sciences, culture and communications & information.

These underpin activities and projects in areas such as literacy, technical and teacher-training; international science collaboration, promotion of cultural diversity; and international normative agreements.

Through its strategies and activities, UNESCO is actively supporting the MDGs, especially goals on poverty reduction (i), education (ii), gender disparity (iii) and sustainable development (vii).

UNESCO's role in Education for All and Literacy

UNESCO is the lead United Nations agency for education and in co-ordinating international efforts towards EFA, through mobilising political will and co-ordinating all stakeholders in education including development partners, governments, NGOs and civil society.

UNESCO is also the lead agency for the UN Literacy Decade (2003-12).

See Appendix I and visit www.unesco.org for more information.

UK National Commission for UNESCO

The United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO was re-established in March 2004.

Unique to UNESCO, national commissions function as essential partners in UNESCO, acting as catalysts to involve civil society and key national actors in UNESCO's programme and policy areas.

The UK National Commission is an independent body with a network of over 100 individuals and organisations under a National Steering Committee. It works in partnership with Government within the underlying contexts of (i) developing UK input to UNESCO policy-making and debate from all parts of the UK and sections of society, (ii) building a more effective UNESCO which achieves positive outcomes in areas over which it has competence and (iii) encouraging support in the UK for UNESCO's ideals and work.

National Steering Committee *

Alec Boksenberg	Chair of National Commission & Natural Sciences
Christine Whatford	Deputy Chair and Chair of Education
Sue Davies	Chair of Culture
Sian Healey	Deputy Chair and Chair of Communication & Information
Michael Scott	Chair of Wales Committee
Jonathan Margetts	Northern Ireland Government Representative
Ian Donaldson	Scottish Executive Representative
Tim Mason	Generalist
Richard Ennals	Generalist
John Gordon	Generalist
John Morgan	Generalist
Ivor Gaber	Generalist

* Chair of Social and Human Sciences to be appointed

Visit www.unesco.org.uk for more information.

2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report

Summary Findings at a Glance

Progress towards Education for All

Steady progress has been made since 1998, especially towards universal primary education (UPE) and gender parity among the poorest countries, but the pace is insufficient for the goals to be met in the remaining ten years to 2015.

<p>Encouraging trends represent considerable achievements in many low-income countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary-school enrolments are up sharply in both sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, with nearly 20 million new students in each region. ▪ Globally, 47 countries have achieved UPE (out of 163 with data available). ▪ Projections show that 20 additional countries (out of 90 with the relevant data) are on track to achieve UPE by 2015; 44 countries are making good progress but are unlikely to achieve the goal by 2015. ▪ Girls' primary enrolments have also risen rapidly, especially in some of the lowest-income countries of sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia. ▪ Gender and educational quality measures are increasingly visible in national education plans. ▪ Public spending on education has increased as a share of national income in about 70 countries (out of 110 with data). ▪ Aid for basic education more than doubled between 1999 and 2003 and, following the G8 summit, could rise to US\$3.3 billion per year by 2010. ▪ The Fast Track Initiative has emerged as a key coordinating mechanism for aid agencies. 	<p>Major Education for All challenges remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UPE is not assured: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – About 100 million children are still not enrolled in primary school, 55% of them girls. – 23 countries are at risk of not achieving UPE by 2015, as their net enrolment ratios are declining. – Primary-school fees, a major barrier to access, are still collected in 89 countries (out of 103 surveyed). – High fertility rates, HIV/AIDS and armed conflict continue to exert pressure on education systems in the regions with the greatest EFA challenges. ▪ The 2005 gender parity target has been missed by 94 countries out of 149 with data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 86 countries are at risk of not achieving gender parity even by 2015. – 76 out of 180 countries have not reached gender parity at primary level, and the disparities are nearly always at the expense of girls. – 115 countries (out of 172 with data) still have disparities at secondary level, with boys being under-represented in nearly half, in marked contrast to the primary level. ▪ Quality is too low: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enrolments in early childhood care and education programmes have remained static. – Fewer than two-thirds of primary school pupils reach the last grade in 41 countries (out of 133 with data). – In many countries, primary teacher numbers would have to increase by 20% a year to reduce pupil/teacher ratios to 40:1 and to achieve UPE by 2015. – Many primary-school teachers lack adequate qualifications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literacy gets short shrift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 771 million people aged 15 and above live without basic literacy skills. – Governments and aid agencies give insufficient priority and finance to youth and adult literacy programmes. ▪ Aid for basic education is still inadequate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At US\$4.7 billion in 2003, bilateral aid to education – 60% of which still goes to post-secondary education – has increased since 1998 but remains well below the 1990 high of US\$5.7 billion. – Total aid to basic education accounts for only 2.6% of Official Development Assistance; within this category, adult literacy's share is minuscule. – While aid to basic education will likely increase in line with overall aid, its share would have to double to reach the estimated US\$7 billion a year necessary just to achieve UPE and gender parity. – Disproportionate volumes of bilateral aid go to middle-income countries with relatively high primary enrolments. – By mid-2005, the Fast Track Initiative had resulted in pledges of only US\$298 million.
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Literacy is...

Literacy is:

- A right still denied to nearly a fifth of the world's adult population.
- Essential to achieving each of the EFA goals.
- A societal and an individual phenomenon, with attention needed to both dimensions.
- Crucial for economic, social and political participation and development, especially in today's knowledge societies.
- Key to enhancing human capabilities, with wide-ranging benefits including critical thinking, improved health and family planning, HIV/AIDS prevention, children's education, poverty reduction and active citizenship.

The literacy challenge has absolute and relative dimensions, particularly affects the poor, women and marginalized groups, and is much greater than conventional measures indicate:

- In absolute numbers, those without literacy skills are mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific. Prospects for meeting the 2015 goal hinge largely on progress in the 12 countries where 75% of those without literacy skills live.
- In relative terms, the regions with the lowest literacy rates are sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab States, all with literacy rates around only 60%, despite increases of more than 10 percentage points since 1990.
- Illiteracy is associated to a significant extent with extreme poverty.
- Women are less literate than men: worldwide, only 88 adult women are considered literate for every 100 adult men, with much lower numbers in low income countries such as Bangladesh (62 per 100 men) and Pakistan (57 per 100 men).
- 132 of the 771 million people without literacy skills are aged 15 to 24, despite an increase in this group's literacy rate to 85%, from 75% in 1970.
- Direct testing of literacy suggests that the global challenge is much greater than the conventional numbers, based on indirect assessments, would indicate, and that it affects both developed and developing countries.

The literacy challenge can be met only if:

- Political leaders at the highest level commit themselves to action.
- Countries adopt explicit literacy policies to:
 - Expand quality primary and lower-secondary education;
 - Scale up youth and adult literacy programmes;
 - Develop rich literate environments.

Scaling up literacy programmes for youth and adults requires:

- Active government responsibility for adult literacy policy and financing as part of education sector planning.
- Clear frameworks to coordinate public, private and civil society provision of literacy programmes.
- Increased budgetary and aid allocations. Literacy programmes receive a mere 1% of the education budget in many countries. An additional US\$2.5 billion a year to 2015 will likely be needed to make significant progress towards the Dakar literacy goal.
- Basing programmes on an understanding of learners' demands, especially their language preferences and their motivations for attending class, in consultation with local communities.
- Curricula that build on these demands, with clearly stated learning objectives and the provision of adequate learning materials.
- Adequate pay, professional status and training opportunities for literacy educators.
- Appropriate language policies, as most countries facing stark literacy challenges are linguistically diverse. The use of mother tongues is pedagogically sound but must offer a smooth transition to learning opportunities in regional and official languages.

Developing literate environments and literate societies requires sustained attention to:

- Language policies.
- Book publishing policies.
- Media policies.
- Access to information.
- Policies to get books and reading materials into schools and homes.

Acquiring, improving and using literacy skills happens at all levels of education, and in multiple formal and non-formal contexts. Achieving each of the EFA goals depends strongly on policies that foster literate societies and set high standards for literacy, the foundation for further learning.

Conference Proceedings

Welcome

Seminar participants were welcomed by David Johnson, Fellow of St Antony's College and member of the Centre for African Studies, University of Oxford, and by Christine Whatford, Chair of the Education Committee of the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

David Johnson described the many different intellectual activities at St Antony's College, especially in the areas of international relations and the role played by the Centre for African Studies in this.

Christine Whatford reminded participants that the global campaign for universal literacy posed challenges for industrialised countries in relation to their own populations, as well as for developing nations. The UK, through both government and civil society, should maximise its support for UNESCO in carrying out its leadership role in literacy

and other aspects of EFA and, at the same time, attend to literacy issues on its own doorstep.

The seminar was designed to reflect this twin-tracking approach. The structure of the programme, beginning with an examination of the international situation and the findings of the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report, and going on to examine relevant UK experience and the opportunities for co-operation, was based on this perspective. ■

Section 1

Literacy: The International Challenge and Response

Adama Ouane (Director, UNESCO Institute of Education) and Leslie Limage (Basic Education Division, UNESCO) opened the seminar with a presentation of the main findings of the 2006 Global Monitoring Report before reviewing the global situation and trends in literacy. Ouane and Limage examined the progress achieved and the challenges remaining to achieve the literacy targets as set out in the GMR; and noted the current international programmes under the UN Literacy Decade.

In response to the presentation, Alan Rogers explored how to link up the UK constituencies and overseas development; how to build real research into practice; how to balance out what literacy is actually 'for'; and how to cope with the diversity of literacies and their measurement.

The International Challenge

The first session was devoted to a commentary on the global literacy situation and a presentation of some of the main findings of the Global Monitoring Report.

Adama Ouane and Leslie Limage used a selection of slides taken from the EFA Global Monitoring Report as the basis for their comments.

They began by stressing how important it is to understand why literacy matters and what is meant by 'literacy'.

Why literacy matters

The following sets out the rationale for emphasis on literacy in international development efforts:

Benefits: why Literacy Matters

- **Self-esteem and empowerment:** widening choices, access to other rights
- **Political benefits:** increased civic participation in community activities, trade unions and local politics

- **Cultural benefits:** questioning attitudes and norms; improves ability to engage with one's culture
- **Social benefits:** better knowledge of healthcare, family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention; higher chance of parents educating children
- **Economic benefits:** Returns on investment in adult literacy programmes are comparable to those in primary level education

From UNESCO EFA GMR, 2006

Ouane and Limage welcomed the GMR analysis of returns to literacy and the view taken that the extension of literacy should be regarded as an investment and not as consumption. They emphasised that literacy is the very foundation of lifelong learning. This calls into question the oft-encountered heavy stress on the economic justification (rate of return of investments and so on) for literacy, and the relative neglect of social and human benefits and instead recognises that literacy provides social benefits as well as economic return.

It is refreshing that the Global Monitoring Report takes this broader position. While drawing attention to the economic benefits of investing in literacy, it reminds us also of the role of literacy in the alleviation of poverty, and its human rights dimension, as well as its multidimensional nature as reflected in the concept of plural 'literacies'.

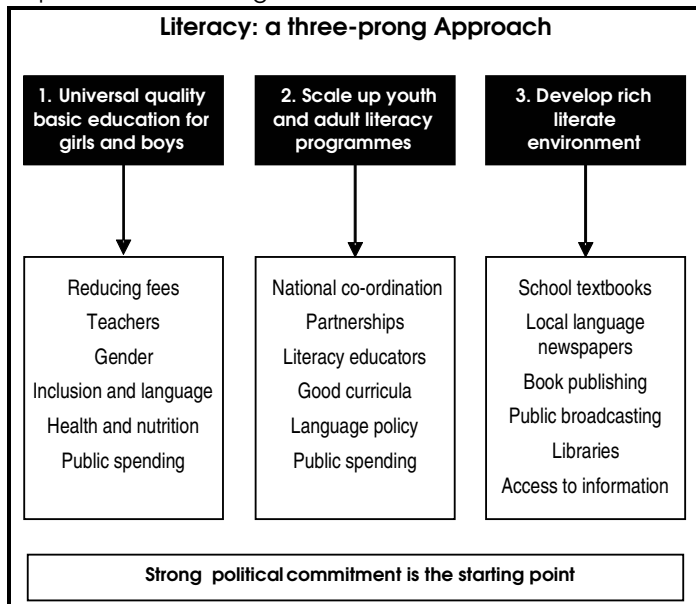
The speakers pointed to self-esteem as a very real benefit of being literate. Even though it is admittedly difficult to measure, there is strong evidence of the relationship between improved self-esteem and literacy. Increased self-esteem contributes to political benefits for civic development, bringing individuals a stronger sense of self-identity and cultural awareness.

The measurement of literacy

Limage suggested that the importance of measuring literacy rates accurately, and the most appropriate indicator of literacy achievement, depend on the particular context. A constraining factor in producing estimates of literacy/literacy rates is that all original data is collected by the country itself. The GMR's analysis makes use of many different indicators for literacy measurement simultaneously: no one approach is adopted to the exclusion of others. Although conventional measures are necessarily given some prominence, the GMR illustrates the effects of using the alternative literacy indicators that are more commonly used in industrialised countries.

The three-pronged approach to illiteracy eradication

The presenters went on to examine the GMR's advocacy of a comprehensive strategy for eradicating illiteracy combining formal basic schooling, out-of-school programmes for youths and adults, and the creation of literate environments. This strategy is presented in the Report in the following terms:



From UNESCO EFA GMR, 2006

In combination, these three strategic thrusts could contribute to the attainment of a literate society. China was an example of a country that had successfully adopted this three-pronged approach.

Commenting on the different elements in this analysis, Adama Ouane noted that a strong point of the GMR was its recognition of the link between child literacy, largely developed through schooling, and adult literacy. He stated it was a public responsibility to provide literacy for all age groups. He stressed the importance of paying staff on literacy programmes properly, since voluntary workers cannot provide the sustained commitment and skills required. In efforts to provide a rich literacy environment, improved access to reading materials and a sustained commitment to publishing quality reading and learning materials are vital. There is a clear link between education, development and culture. Particularly important is the reminder that the three-pronged strategy needs to be underpinned by strong political will.

i) Quality basic schooling for all children

How can good quality universal school education be achieved? Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda have increased enrolment almost five times. The factors that led to such improvement appear to be common across countries: good teachers; adequate support arrangements; attention to nutrition, which may include school meals; strong government commitment and proper levels of spending. Abolition of school fees has played a decisive role in both Kenya and Malawi.

ii) Literacy Programmes

Leslie Limage recalled that literacy issues concerning children and adults alike in industrialised countries have been prominent for some 40 years. The UK, for example, engaged in 1973 in its own adult literacy campaign for native English speakers. However, at that time, little was done to link the quality of teaching and learning of reading and writing in schools with the growing awareness of adult basic skill needs. In France, the recognition came in 1983 and in the US, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, etc., in between those two dates.

The first attempts to address literacy issues in both industrialised and developing countries in the same forum only occurred in 1980 when UNESCO and the International Council for Adult Education held a conference in Berlin on national literacy campaigns in historic perspective. Literacy researchers and practitioners from industrialised countries began to discuss their concerns and later a first seminar specifically addressing literacy in industrialised countries was held in 1981 in Eastbourne. Leslie Limage was involved in these initiatives and was subsequently able to assist the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg to hold a first conference on industrialised countries in 1986; and later, as Co-ordinator of the United Nations International Literacy Year (ILY) Secretariat in 1990, helped to bring literacy issues in both developing and industrialised countries to international attention at UNESCO.

After ILY, however, adult literacy declined as a major preoccupation of both UNESCO and the international community following the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. The focus of this conference, primarily about donor and international agency commitments, led to a much greater

concern for primary education. It is to be hoped that the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006 will help to put literacy for all age groups, especially out-of-school youth and adults, back on international policy and commitment agendas.

iii) A rich literate environment

Ouane and Limage went on to stress that a literate environment is the key to sustaining literacy. Improved access to quality teaching- and learning-materials is an area where Europe has a real opportunity to make a contribution. In this context the strengthening of accountability in book purchasing and distribution is an issue that requires particular attention.

The GMR shows that there is a need to shift from individual literacy to societal literacy. In understanding the process of societies becoming literate it is important to recognise different types of literacy. Countries that have only recently had access to a written tradition would score poorly on reading/writing-based indicators but perhaps more highly on other indicators.

As the GMR had pointed out, in the first half of the 20th century and into the early 1970s, a number of countries engaged in major social, economic and political transformation based on, among other things, recognition of the importance of both children's and adult literacy for all their populations. Literacy campaigns and programmes were fully integrated into reform and expansion of all levels of formal education in countries such as the former Soviet Union, China, Viet Nam, and Cuba. In countries undergoing full-scale economic development, literacy is a key ingredient of the development process. In such cases, the unit cost of large-scale well-conceived literacy programmes are found to be much lower and certainly more sustainable than short-lived or fragmented NGO or international organisation-driven projects.

The UK was one of the first industrialised countries to recognise that literacy is a national issue and is currently well-placed to re-focus attention on it. There is now a much higher expectation for the UK to mobilise resources especially in respect to the focus through UNESCO on Literacy for Empowerment (LIFE). Internationally this effort includes support to 32 countries (including 18 in Africa) with populations of more than 10 million or 50 percent

non-literate nationals. The present time is a good moment to explore options of European support for literacy and for developing a north-south dialogue.

Cost of achieving universal literacy

The speakers also note that the GMR considers the cost literacy. Literacy activities currently account for only 1% of the education budget worldwide.

Literacy activities and costs vary by country. One study estimates that the average cost per learner is US\$47 in Africa, US\$30 in Asia and US\$61 in Latin America. On this basis if as many as 550 million people are currently non-literate, then there is a need to invest approximately US\$2.5 billion per year to overcome this. Such figures do not, however, reflect the real cost of developing and delivering a quality programme.

These macro-data demonstrate the need for a sustained international commitment to education. Although bilateral aid to education has almost trebled between 1998 and 2003, it accounts for less than 2% of development assistance. Multilateral aid is increasing rapidly.

Conclusion

The two presenters concluded by observing that the GMR is unique in its compilation and development. Eighty background papers were commissioned for the Report, whose findings are thus the product of evidence-based research. They hoped that the Report would prove to be a milestone in the development of international understanding of the need for improving political support and financial investment in literacy at both international and national levels, and of the many complications of measuring success in improving literacy rates worldwide.

The GMR had drawn attention to the importance of the linkages between developing and industrialised countries. In this context, the Oxford seminar and subsequent Colloquium would be useful occasions to critique the Report and to bring together thoughts, issues and concerns for carrying its agenda forward. They provided an opportunity for professionals in developed and developing countries to work together to achieve a fully literate world. ■

Response by Alan Rogers, Professor of Education at the University of East Anglia

Alan Rogers was invited to respond to the presentation made by Ouane and Limage and to reflect critically on the GMR.

Rogers raised four questions:

- How do we link up the UK constituencies and overseas development?
- How do we build real research into practice?
- How do we balance out what literacy is actually 'for'?
- How do we cope with the diversity of literacies and their measurement?

On bridging the gap between UK literacy constituencies and overseas development

Rogers noted that literacy efforts in the UK had long been considered separately from overseas development. But among the plethora of development organisations in the UK, there is now an increasing awareness of the links. This is evidenced by the increasing publication of books and journal articles on such connections, which he expects to have an impact. Rogers commended this new trend, but pointed to the need for a real two-way exchange. He questioned the efficacy of the traditional and uneven

flow of UK development workers to overseas locations rather than inviting participants from developing countries to share in the grassroots experience in the UK.

On building a research base into literacy practices

While noting that the GMR 2006 was "solidly research based", Rogers pointed out that programmes on the ground often lack such a foundation. He stressed the need, especially in developing countries, for literacy development practitioners to have access to library resources on literacy. This was not to endorse purely theoretical research, but was a call for including research in practice.

On the purposes of literacy

To Rogers, the problematic title of the GMR 2006, '*Literacy For Life*', seems to imply wrongly that one cannot have one (i.e. life) without the other (i.e. literacy). He pointed out that all of the expected beneficial outcomes that advocates claim literacy will help to produce - such as health, citizenship, entrepreneurship, livelihood, empowerment - are also attained by some people who are not literate in the classical sense. The relationship is therefore not one of simple causation. Accordingly there is a danger of over-emphasising the deficit approach to literacy - focusing on what potential learners cannot do rather than what they can do. Amartya Sen has highlighted the need for positive human capacity building, an approach that Rogers sees as essential to the literacy movement.

Also, there is the matter of penetrating the actual power structure of literacy development programmes. 'Literacy for Whom?' Whose agenda is this? Should it be necessary to persuade people to participate in literacy programmes, or does the need to do so merely prove that the agenda is not theirs?

On the issue of multiple literacies

Rogers proposed a 'literacy comes second' model. He observed that in development work it was simply assumed that literacy had to precede industrialisation when in fact historically the reverse was true. Accordingly, he argued for promoting literacy through 'embedded literacies' that become part and parcel of, say, learning skills within the workplace or income development projects. This implies that there are in fact 'multiple literacies' that exist in a variety of forms and languages. Rogers noted that earlier GMRs had merely paid lip-service to this idea, but that this perspective was now getting stronger.

Often times, Rogers suggested, though learners might be proficient in informal-, vernacular-, or proto-literacies, they are still considered technically illiterate according to an elite definition of literacy that governments use to include some people while excluding others, as is the type represented in the GMR 2006. One must question this traditional power structure and abandon the current 'one size fits all' model in favour of a framework that represents a diversity of literacies. Alan Rogers provided a memorable example of the kind of literacy he had in mind by recalling a seamstress who kept notes of her clients' measurements, orders and fabrics in a notebook without being 'literate' in the classical sense.

In closing, Rogers raised four additional issues:

- How far to differentiate between children and young adults in literacy campaigns and to cater for them separately.
- The question of making explicit the difference between professional and non-professional literacy trainers and providing 'train the trainer' programmes for both.
- How does/should ICT factor into everything else?
- The neglect of numeracy by the GMR, which, echoing an earlier comment from the floor, he thought was scandalous. ■

See Appendix 2 for the full text of Alan Rogers' response.

Questions and Discussion

Observations and questions from the floor followed, to which all three speakers responded where time allowed.

Language for literacy

Peter Williams (National Commission for UNESCO) raised the question of language policy and what research showed about the best language for attaining literacy: the mother tongue, a regional 'lingua franca' or an international language like English, French or Spanish.

Response. Adama Ouane observed, with regard to the language issue, that Niger has a reported literacy rate of 16%, which relates to learning in French. This example illustrates that the literacy rate is contingent upon which language is assessed for the purposes of measuring literacy. If all students in Niger who are literate in Arabic were included in the literacy assessment, the country's literacy rate will be close to 50%.

Should we therefore measure literacy by the national language or other languages? In this context it is important to consider the return to literacy in terms of cultural values. In Senegal there is a good programme, because it addresses the cultural value of learning. There is evidence that literacy acquisition in Wolof has been a vehicle for cultural revival.

There are many positions on the language issue. While most children learn best in their own language, choice by learners is critical especially in contexts where different languages give differential access to economic opportunity in terms of the market for goods and services.

Religion/Ideology-driven literacy

Peter Williams said he was under the impression that historically, national achievement of literacy had often been linked with the requirements of religion or national ideological campaigns with agendas of indoctrination. He wondered whether the evidence was that these programmes had delivered literacy that gave a basis for effective learning or merely delivered a sterile form of learning based on memorisation and repetition.

Response. Leslie Limage noted that historically, early school-based literacy tended to be religion-driven and hence based around memorising holy books. The mass literacy campaigns of the 20th century have moved away from that model to focus on promoting critical reading and writing skills. Schools have made the greatest difference everywhere in the world, whether they are responsible for social reproduction, or about literacy and numeracy. Literacy campaigns are more than just economic and social tools, since people feel that their life is going to change as a result of learning.

Investment in primary vs. secondary education

There is a contention in the GMR that it is through primary schooling that literacy has become the vehicle for spreading literacy. But investment in primary education alone is not the solution. In some countries, investing only in primary education is creating an imbalance.

Discrete literacy vs. integrated literacy

Peter Lavender (NIACE). It is very easy to put literacy into a separate box. Literacy needs to be integrated into other adult learning. In other words, it is important to consider the need for integrated literacy as well as discrete literacy.

Response. With respect to the question about 'boxes' around different levels and forms of education, Leslie Limage replied that UNESCO structures reflect the education systems of its Member States. Since UNESCO is an intergovernmental organisation, it has always structured its work around the official forms and levels of education in member countries: early childhood education, primary, secondary, adult education, higher education. It has rarely been '*avant garde*' in this respect.

Literacy is about creating and producing, not just receiving

Jane Mace (Independent Consultant) argued that in literacy strategies more attention should be paid to encouraging the production of literacy materials, especially in relation to publishing. The GMR could have stressed this more. Active community involvement in promoting literacy and the content of literacy is key to an effective literacy movement. In Nepal, for instance, village workers take on the role of scribes.

Response. Leslie Limage replied that the Report's main purpose is to monitor progress at country level in achieving the six EFA goals and that of international organisations in supporting them. The publication is not intended to be the definitive research survey or statement

on all related issues. So, in that respect, while this volume addresses most literacy-related issues, it does not necessarily do so comprehensively, let alone definitively. Half the publication is devoted to a prose narrative and the other half is based on data collected and analysed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics followed by further interpretation by the GMR editorial team.

Pedagogy

John Stannard (CfBT). Pedagogy is an immensely complex area. Are there common principles in promoting literacy for young people and literacy for adults? Perhaps there is a need to take on shared practice, for example combining children's literacy development with forms of adult education (for example home-school literacy approaches).

Numeracy

Juliet McCaffery (BALID) pleaded for more attention to be given to numeracy, alongside reading and writing.

Response. Adama Ouane agreed that the issue of numeracy is has not been adequately addressed in the GMR. The issue, however, is not lost from sight. In terms of its constituent aspects, literacy has been defined as '2Rs', '3Rs' and '3Rs plus'. In 2Rs, literacy is defined only as reading and writing. 3Rs are reading, writing and numeracy. 3Rs plus goes beyond minimum levels of achievement in these three skills.

Political power and literacy

Angela Githitho-Muriithi (Cambridge) noted that literacy programmes are commonly seen as a powerful tool for social progression. Literacy can also be used as a political power tool. In Kenya, for instance, during the development of the new constitution, pictures of fruit were used to give people the form of literacy needed for exercising democracy. People did not have the ability to read the constitutional documents in full and instead followed the lead of their member of parliament. Partial reading abilities may not be enough, but those who have the benefit of an education have enormous scope to use it to their own and the collective advantage.

Response. Leslie Limage said that although the UN and UNESCO in particular have been promoting education as a key factor in development for some 60 years, historically access to literacy in many instances had been seen as a potentially dangerous skill if too widely spread in the population. Access to literacy was forbidden by religion or political power. Early mass schooling efforts primarily promoted rote memorisation and learning rather than critical reading and writing skills. The notion of a right to education, or more specifically to literacy is very new and probably the major contribution of the United Nations since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Industrialisation and literacy

Alba de Souza (UK National Commission for UNESCO) referred to what Alan Rogers had said about the link between literacy and development, including workforce development. In the context of the complementarity of industrialisation and literacy, is one talking about literacy for development or development for literacy?

Response. Adama Ouane said he questioned the 'literacy comes second' school of thought, because it was not evident that literacy would automatically result from other development efforts. ■

Further Discussion

There followed a more extended dialogue on two issues that had been raised in the presentations, particularly by Rogers.

What makes certain types of research more effective than others? *Victoria Brasler, UK National Commission for UNESCO*

Adama Ouane replied that the perennial and problematic gap between research and practice/policy is how to create research-based policy. He disagreed with Alan Rogers - who proposed 'in situ' peer training, the primacy of research in the field and the creation of teams of practitioners and researchers - that only grassroots research can have an impact. Though significant research comes from grassroots work or other fieldwork missions, the policy implications of such research are not fully worked out.

David Johnson pointed out that the links made between literacy and research are not just for policy but for knowledge and understanding, especially in a newly emerging field such as multiple and multi-modal literacies. Ouane agreed that policy linkage will develop as research grows, adding that one of the many strengths of the GMR 2006 is the way in which it brings in grassroots information and systematises research findings.

Leslie Limage noted the editorial independence of the GMR Team. The GMR team commissioned a large number of background studies and surveys in preparation of the Report, but the selection and interpretation of the material is their own. The GMR does not seek to make final pronouncements or lay down simple key policy directions for progress towards the EFA goals. Rather it seeks to reflect the complexity of issues and to monitor, within agreed international parameters, progress made and obstacles identified.

Roy Carr-Hill of the Institute of Education pointed to the problem of applying quantitative research in the context of literacy. The sampling frames used to obtain estimates of the number of illiterates invariably miss the poorest of the poor, inhabitants of slums and those in institutions etc. **Peter Hannon** of the University of Sheffield concurred and re-emphasised the need for a pluralist vision of research.

How is the role of literacy affected by the rapid development of technologies, even within the timeframe of the Literacy Decade up to 2012?

Mary Hamilton, University of Lancaster

There seemed to be widespread agreement about the dichotomy in the position of ICT in literacy development: on the one hand, its great potential and on the other its unsustainability in situations where the literacy deficit was greatest. Both **Ouane** and **Limage** agreed that the current state of ICT thinking is 'overrated', made-up of 'dreams and visions'. Though ICT helps, its very unsustainability in the end creates new needs. Moreover, its application is still based on literacy.

Rupert Maclean from the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre in Bonn, Germany argued that although conventional literacies have their place, they are not enough. Maclean emphasised functional and multiple literacies and multiple intelligences, as mentioned earlier by Rogers, and thus believed strongly that ICT can be very important, citing specific studies in Vietnam and South Africa that involved the successful use of ICT in workforce development. To him, ICT offered a cost-effective way of reaching large numbers of people. ■

Concluding Remarks

In winding up this phase of the proceedings, Ouane made three further points.

Ouane agreed with Alan Rogers' observations on the danger of programmes being supply-driven. A pedagogically sound programme is one that is capable of generating a demand for education. There is a need to create interest in continuing to learn. Primary school literacy often extends only to learning the ABC. Other programmes have gone further. In Brazil, for example, learning for life and work is emphasised.

There had been frequent references in discussion to multiple literacies. Ouane, however, had reservations about the very practicability of pursuing literacy programmes through the 'multiple literacies' lens.

Attempting to factor in the plethora of languages, cultures, etc. is an organisational nightmare. One response to the literacy/multiple literacies debate, which will undoubtedly 'rage' on, is a return to the basics of humanistic education, suggesting that one should focus on how literacy (and numeracy for that matter) relates to life, looking at maths, reading, writing, and all other subjects as a process of critical thinking and engagement.

Further attention is needed to tease out what is meant by 'political will'. The issue of political will recurs throughout the report, but it is not completely clear what exactly is being referred to. ■

Section 2

Literacy: The UK Challenge and Response

Janine Eldred, NIACE, reviewed the UK Government's Skills for Life Strategy and the evolution of its implementation in the last five years. Whilst recognising the Strategy's success in raising awareness of literacy, language and numeracy across all levels of UK society, Dr Eldred pointed to pockets of exclusion identified by practitioners and challenged all to examine whether the current Government literacy strategy would indeed achieve literacy for all.

In response, Andrew Nelson reviewed the implementation of the Skills for Life Strategy from the Government's perspective and explored the lessons learnt in the process.

Skills for Life Strategy: Does it mean Literacy for All?

The UK Government's *Skills for Life Strategy* launched in March 2001 was developed in response to Sir Claus Moser's report ("A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy" 1999), which investigated the issue of literacy and numeracy in England. The Strategy reaffirmed the Government's priorities in the areas of literacy and numeracy to 2010.

The government set Skills for Life targets to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults by 2004, 1.5 million by 2007 and 2.25 million by 2010.

Providers and practitioners welcomed the Moser Report and the *Skill for Life strategy*, which addressed specifically, for the first time since the 1970s, the potential learning needs of millions of adults and recognised the need to build the capacity of staff, the curriculum and resources.

What has been done?

An enormous amount of effort, energy and funding has been galvanised in the fields of literacy, language and numeracy to implement the Strategy, which was underpinned by four themes: increasing demand, ensuring capacity, raising standards and improving achievement.

A dedicated government unit, the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU), recently re-named the Skills for Life Strategy Unit, was formed to oversee progress and implementation. The newly-formed national Learning and Skills Council also took responsibility for planning and funding as well as ensuring the quality of provision.

The Government's programme included identifying priority target groups, the national "Get On" campaign to promote literacy and numeracy, new standards and support for teachers / providers of literacy and numeracy, teaching and learning materials, pathfinder projects, national curricula additions with associated testing standards, and annual national conferences to share experience and best practices.

NIACE (National Institute for Adult Continuing Education) is also closely involved in the delivery of the Strategy. NIACE has engaged in advocating, promoting, researching and developing adult learning through a diverse range of

activities, including community-level programmes, family learning, family literacy and family numeracy, developing approaches to dealing with learning disabilities; and providing training to literacy tutors.

Queries and Concerns

Whilst there is much to applaud in what has been achieved, Eldred noted a number of concerns.

The *Skill for Life Strategy* is closely aligned with the Skills Strategy (2003) and the White Paper: *Getting on in Business; Getting on at Work* (2005), thereby placing increased focus on literacy, language and numeracy skills for employment and work. Learning for personal development and other societal reasons seems somewhat side-lined. What about learning and literacy for freedom of expression, discovery and assertion? This in turn raises the question of whether the target group the strategies identified is too narrowly defined. Are we in danger of excluding people from benefits and advantages others take for granted?

One of the most keenly questioned and debated areas is the summative assessment of literacy, language and numeracy, i.e. tests. Whilst recognising the importance of measurable outcomes and national targets, Eldred urged that consideration be given to the appropriateness of current forms of assessment and to examine whether the rigid "entry levels" resulted in excluding certain groups of potential learners.

Numeracy remains one of the most challenging areas of literacy in terms of defining its boundaries, promoting its relevance to everyday life and the shortage of qualified trainers. The shortage of qualified teachers of literacy and their general low status remain an area of concern.

Changing demography points to the increased need to consider people for whom English is not a first language. The UK has been slow to develop systems to recognise qualifications, skills and experience.

Looking Ahead

As the Skills for Life Strategy developed, it could be argued that it has shifted away from some of the initial

priorities and aspirations the Moser-led committee wanted to fulfil. On the one hand, it has brought about widespread awareness of the importance of literacy, language and numeracy. On the other, set in a framework of literacy for all, it seems that some planning and some unintentional outcomes have resulted in the exclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable.

The Government should review the Strategy's initial goals and modify these in the light of development and new evidence. This takes political courage and conviction but would result in responsive policies. Practitioners need to reflect on where government policies and the interests,

needs, desires and aspirations of individuals, groups and communities meet.

England has much to share with other countries from what it has developed and achieved over the last five years. It must also honestly and critically acknowledge where the challenges still lie.

There is much to share but still much to learn if the Skills for Life Strategy is really to result in literacy for all. ■

See Appendix 3 for Janine Eldred's presentation.

Response by Andrew Nelson, Department for Education and Skills

Andrew Nelson reviewed the implementation of the Skill for Life Strategy since 2001.

Young People and Adults in Employment

The development of Functional Skills is an essential element of the "14-19" and "Skills" White Paper: *Getting on in Business; Getting on at Work* (2005) committing the Government to reforms for young people in schools and adults in work, underpinned by the determination to get "the basics" right. Functional English, mathematics and ICTs will be compulsory elements of the GCSEs (2008-9) and made compulsory elements of the new Specialised Diplomas (2008).

In the Work Place

The Skills for Life Strategy has identified priorities for policy development in the work place. Specific schemes and agendas have also been set for employer engagement.

Teacher Training

Success for All (2002) set a target for the number of full-time and part-time college teachers to be qualified by 2006. For the first time, new teachers who wish to teach adult literacy and numeracy in the post-16 sector will be required to gain qualifications that meet the subject specification.

Skills for Life Quality Initiative

The Initiative was launched in 2003 aimed at improving the skills of practitioners. Over £34 million has been invested in the Initiative since the start.

Lessons to be Learnt

One of the difficulties with implementing *Skills for Life* was the introduction of standards, curricula, learning materials and tests for learners whilst at the same time developing new standards and qualifications for teachers. Many providers find it difficult to introduce the learning infrastructure before they have raised the expertise of teachers.

Nelson noted that for Europe to maximise its focus on adult literacy and hence contribution to the EFA goals, a Europe-wide adult literacy network would be required. The EU should be encouraged to support this. NIACE and UNESCO Institute of Education would be key partners. ■

See Appendix 4 for Andrew Nelson's response.

Questions and Discussion

Observations and questions from the floor followed to which Eldred and Nelson responded.

Knowledge transfer

Have you identified approaches to understand indiscriminate knowledge/sensitivity of transfer and its context sensitivity? What should be the approach to and content of such transfer?

Response. The Skills for Life Strategy has not addressed either systematically or rigorously how it will work with international partners. DfES has done some work so far and has been involved in international work. The focus of international development remains with DFID. DfES has tried to identify critical successes and make them generalisable through discussing and sharing key findings with other countries including the Middle East and North Africa. The challenge, however, lies in the lack of resources.

Government co-ordination

The Social Exclusion Unit published findings that many in the UK have low literacy. What kind of dialogue take place in Whitehall amongst government departments?

Reponses. There is need for such dialogue. Perhaps the UK National Commission can play a role in facilitating it, in the case of DfES and DFID.

Education spend

What is the educational budget in real terms? How does the £678m committed compare with other initiatives?

Sustainability

Literacy is a big policy focus in the UK with irreversible progress. What needs to be put in place to ensure sustainability? In Australia, for instance, there was a similar language policy initiative in the early 1990s but progress has not been maintained.

Response. It is difficult to get partners and stakeholders to understand the importance of sustainable strategies. The need remains to identify and align priorities in relation to issues of literacy and numeracy. Practitioners and civil society should collaborate to maintain the policy focus and work together to keep literacy high on the agenda in the UK and EU.

Individual vs uniform learning

There are different ways to measure learner achievement. How should individual requirements be assessed? How can one create a standardised learning system for people with different requirements and learning needs? How should we address this tension?

Response. In terms of standard versus individual needs and the need to embrace diversity, the Government has in place two schemes. (1) PLRA – Planning, Learning and Recording Achievement – is specifically designed for language, literacy, and numeracy capture; and 2) RRPA –

Recognising and Recording Progress Achievement. Both are driven and determined by individual goal setting and are well-researched and funded.

Government, however, only provides funding for programs that are geared to the test.

Demand

How do we address demand, (capacity, standards and achievement) when one-third of the adults across the UK claim that they have done no learning in school, and that they had no desire for learning? How do we drive up demand? What is happening with respect to addressing demand/drive up demand?

Response. Eldred and Nelson recognised that there has not been a systematic approach to addressing and raising demand. NIACE has been looking at campaigning and promotional activities and researching on issues of barriers and triggers. NIACE has consulted with learners and teachers about motivation for learning and has been sharing experiences and working together with other partners. NIACE believe that literacy is essential for encouraging connections to the rest of the world. ■

Section 3

Sharing Experience and Working Together

Rosemary Preston in plenary analysed the problems arising for consultants in doing substantial work on literacy in a climate of short-termism and instrumentalism imposed by international assistance agencies.

This was followed by a discussion group session in which participants, in four groups, considered priorities that should be addressed as part of the UK's active engagement in the international literacy agenda.

Partnerships, Poverty and Literacy

Rosemary Preston took as her theme 'Partnerships in achieving Literacy for All and reducing poverty'. Although partnerships between public and non-state (private and voluntary sector) organisations are vital to the quality of literacy provision, there is need to examine the conditions under which they can be most effective in delivering useable, sustainable skills to the poor. In sharing experiences one needs to take account of all stages of policy, programme and project cycles. In this, comparative research is crucial. Preston reminded seminar participants that many modes of provision in the UK draw on experiences of countries with much lower incomes. These projects had been piloted over a number of years in much less stable literate environments.

Historical Background

In looking at the history of campaigns against illiteracy, Preston argues that partnerships and international cooperation have always been central. International recognition of the importance of literacy grew after a government campaign to eradicate illiteracy in southern Italy in 1947. This gave rise to the formation of several private institutions concerned with literacy. By the 1950s and 1960s, large-scale government-driven literacy campaigns in Eastern Europe, Cuba and several post-colonial states were supported by a myriad of private and public sector organisations. A world campaign was agreed in 1963, with a call to countries that had literate populations to assist those that had not.

The Experimental World Literacy Programme, 1967 to 1973 marked 15 years of international co-operation around literacy and human development (largely articulated around agrarian development) and, by the 1980s, UNESCO had adopted simultaneous global strategies for literacy and primary education, appealing this time for technical co-operation between developing countries.

The 1990s, which included the International Literacy Year (1990) and the Jomtien Conference, marked the beginning

of co-operation - between UN agencies, the World Bank and governments in the developing world - around basic education and literacy for women and girls, as the most important priority for sustainable human development.

Partnership Today

Preston argued that partnerships have always been key to the development of literacy strategies but that today these partnerships function under severe constraints mainly because of statutory requirements and increasing layers of bureaucracy. Preston makes a parallel between a small programme of basic learning for immigrant women in a UK inner-city area and a local NGO in a developing country. Both are subject to insecure, very short-term funding and an increasing culture of compliance and the imposition of state or multi-donor regulation and requirement.

Further, she argued that, in the name of enhancing public sector capacity to fulfil policy objectives, a market-oriented, decentralised system is being put in place everywhere for the non-state provision of services at sub-national levels.

Preston's main concerns can be summarised as:

- Short-termism in investment. Focus seems to be on getting projects going with less thought on sustainability.
- Knowledge-reduction process – only getting to the beginning level of a substantive project is detrimental to the development of knowledge and capacity necessary for seeing it through and for sustaining it.
- Much policy orientation is commercially-oriented. Is there a tension between profit and equity? It would appear that the priority of achieving equity and focusing on the most marginalised is pushed to the wayside. A reduced investment in the poorest is widening the literacy divide. ■

See Appendix 5 for Rosemary Preston's presentation.

Questions and Discussion

In the short time available for questions and discussion the following points were made from the floor.

- The problem that a new conception of what literacy is for raises questions about a neo-colonial perception of literacy in the age of globalisation.
- There was resonance in the UK with the notion of short-termism in funding encountered in international work. The National Research and Development Centre was cited as an example of a British agency subjected to short-term funding.
- Concern was also expressed that investments in new initiatives may not be sustainable. More thought should be given to investing in building staff capacity. ■

Discussion Groups: What Opportunities are there for UK Involvement in International Programmes?

Participants were invited to consider the opportunities and issues for UK involvement in international programmes in four discussion groups. Key recommendations are summarised below.

Discussion Group A

Emefa Amaoka, Valena Belletini, Bilal Barakat, Alec Boksenberg, Lalage Bown, Victoria Brasier, Roy Carr-Hill, Alba de Souza, Janine Eldred, Katie Epstein, Paul Fordham, Marije Geldof, Angela Githitho-Nuriithi

Generalisation of Experience

Paul Fordham voiced pessimism on the possibility of generalising UK experience. A contextualised generalisation requires a dual experience. The increased role of nationals in development work had unfortunately decreased the amount of credible contact and the number of people with such dual experience. Emefa Amaoka re-emphasised this need for a long stay (in both directions) in order to learn the local context.

Marije Geldof pointed out that indeed this was borne out by the composition of the Group as its discussion was about dialogue but with only one side represented.

Politics and Donor-Driven Priorities

The issue of the underlying power relations and politics was repeatedly raised, calling into question the MDGs and whether, as Alba de Souza questioned, these were donor-driven targets or commitments reflecting genuine grassroots buy-in. Angela Githitho-Nuriithi asked the Group to consider an example of how, even when politics appear to work in favour of literacy, the real consequences could be negative, in that a politically-expedient campaign for free primary education led, in the absence of planning, to hopeless over-crowding of classrooms.

Cross-cultural Collaboration

Lalage Bown said that extensive collaboration in academia seemed to contradict the notion that cross-cultural collaboration was impossible. Alec Boksenberg also pointed to his experience in using science as a vehicle for dialogue in the Balkans. Both Bown and Boksenberg nevertheless recognised that dialogue and collaboration in academia and science could be more straightforward compared to that in formal education.

With that in mind, the Group recognised that crucial ingredients for effective collaboration and for engaging with local and national governments were (i) appropriate infrastructure, and (ii) a critical mass of intellect. ■

Discussion Group B

Thelma Henderson, Jenny Hsieh, Kay Jackaman, David Johnson, Peter Lavender, Candice Lee, Nirmala Lee, Leslie Limage, Ian Livingstone

Awareness of Literacy Activities

Raising the level of current knowledge about literacy activities. This involved strengthening research but also greater attention to dissemination of findings. One should ensure, for example, that research carried out by the National Research and Development Centre and other bodies was brought into the current domain and used more effectively.

Facilitating Exchange

Visits by overseas providers of literacy programmes should be facilitated. Organisations such as NIACE are well-placed to provide networking facilities and opportunities.

Embedded Literacy

The concept of 'embedded' literacy should be promoted. Literacy could be embedded in general training programmes.

Partnership Approach

In reporting on ideas and training techniques used in industrialised countries, it was important to avoid the risk of appearing "colonial". Reciprocity in relationships and cooperation is a very important principle. ■

Discussion Group C

Sharon Loza, Jane Mace, Rupert Maclean, Ian Macpherson, David Mallows, Juliet McCaffery, Charles McGregor, Andrew Nelson, Hiromi Orumi, Adama Ouane, John Oxenham, Sasha Pavlovich

Adequate Support

Adult education, including literacy, should form part of the basic education programmes supported by external assistance.

Government Priority

The UK Government should give literacy a higher priority in British aid to education and should exert its influence with partners in industrialised countries to ensure that promotion of literacy was accorded full attention in their development cooperation efforts.

Best Practice and Knowledge Sharing

There is scope for beneficial learning from the knowledge/transfer and other strategies being used by our development partners. The German Adult Education Association was cited as an example of a source of experience that could usefully be tapped. ■

Discussion Group D

Bilal Barakat Jason Pennells, Alan Rogers, Wendy Spratling, John Stannard, Prachi Srivastava, Richard Thompson, Megan (Margaret) Warner, Christine Whatford, Ozlem Yazlik

Channelling Government Spend

It was noted that UK voluntary organisations and NGOs were having reduced access to funding for international co-operation activities as DFID was channelling resources directly to recipient governments. This created, in some cases, difficulties for organisations to sustain programmes and activities. It was also noted that donors are also increasingly reluctant to fund UK organisations. Funding shortage has forced many UK-based organisations to partner with overseas organisations in order to secure funding.

In many ways this could be viewed as a positive development, as it encouraged international collaboration and capacity building.

The Group recognised that even where public funding support for NGO projects was drying up, there was scope for civil society to influence government spending in the area of international development and promotion of literacy.

Establishing Links

The Group considered the links established between schools through the Global Gateway, British Council and the UNESCO ASPnet Project. Similar links can be built between adult education bodies in different countries. The Group recognised that some links of this kind might already exist, and it suggested that they should be the subject of mapping and information sharing.

Partnership Approach

The Group recognised the need to move away from a prescriptive to a partnership approach when working with developing countries.

Qualification Accreditation

One practical suggestion was that the UK could develop a certificate in Adult Literacy Tutoring. It was felt there would be a wide take-up.

Best Practice and Information Sharing

There are organisations and associations at country level which national governments use as vehicles to train literacy facilitators. Such practices should be further promoted. ■

Section 4

Summing Up

Lalage Bown, Council for Education in the Commonwealth, summed up the day's proceedings and highlighted key conclusions and issues that had emerged.

Lalage Bown pulled together some of the main threads in the day's discussion and highlighted some of the main issues, challenges and suggestions.

The summary was an immediate reflection on the Seminar, shared with all present, not a more distant consideration of the recorded proceedings – which is left to readers of this report. It will be seen that the main themes and aims of the seminar as outlined in the preface, were extensively addressed.

It was agreed by all that the methodologies used during the day were apposite for adult learning. In particular the initial dialogue between Adama Ouane and Leslie Limage was an attractive and interesting way of covering substantial information and confronting many of the main questions about literacy.

The Importance of UNESCO

It is essential to start by recognising the significance of UNESCO in the literacy field. The organisation was involved in the promotion of literacy ideas and literacy work almost from its foundation. In conceptualisation, the Faure Report, *Learning to Be*, was a rallying of international opinion more than 30 years ago around ideas of life-long learning (which were reiterated during the Seminar). UNESCO is influential in the realm of ideas and an arena for exchange of experience on a basis of equality among member nations, uncontaminated by any suspicion of patronising. This is essential since, as many of us are aware, some of the most interesting literacy concepts and practices have emerged from countries of the South. A lesson for countries such as Britain would be to strengthen a listening attitude when engaged with poorer countries. Some current awkwardness in the relationship between the UK and others was brought out in Rosemary Preston's discussion of sharing experience.

In paying tribute to the value of UNESCO, it has to be noted that the organisation needs greater support for its international literacy work, since resources within its budget allocated to lifelong education and appropriate literacies at different life-stages are very meagre. It mainly relies on extra-budgetary funding for all this. We need to support an international effort to encourage UNESCO to budget more solidly for its literacy work.

In Britain, the re-establishment of the National Commission was welcomed by seminar participants and it was suggested that perhaps its presence could help draw together the disparate government and voluntary agencies who all have a hand in literacy provision.

Literacy as a Right

One reason for flying a flag for literacy is that it is considered to be a basic human right. This assertion by Ouane and Limage was met with consensus. Whether it was always a right is not relevant here. In the 21st century anyone without access to some kind of literacy is condemned to be a non-participant in society, unable to share in the general pool of information, to be an actor in the knowledge community or to understand any level of politics. There are many everyday examples of this, such as, workers for big companies which decide to pay wages into banks, leaving those workers helpless before cash machines and clerks demanding signatures; or women who are asked to elect a representative without any idea what for.

Rights require legislative force and it was therefore recommended that governments should be encouraged to assume some form of statutory responsibility for literacy. Whether this was at local or central government level, and what range of literacies would be covered, was not discussed during the Seminar. It may be commented that there are examples of successful central government intervention and of quite disconcerting failures, while although local government activity is closer to local communities, its financial under-pinning may be scanty. The fundamental point was that a legal framework was advocated enshrining the right to literacy.

In terms of rights, there was concern about the quality of what was offered to learners. There is not much use in having a programme supported by law if the quality is poor. The issue of quality is written largely over the whole EFA agenda and there was mention by several speakers about properly trained teachers/facilitators using appropriate pedagogy and about suitable management to ensure worthwhile programmes. This is timely, since the history of literacy work outside formal schools, especially for adults, is bedevilled by the assumption that it can be done by barely-trained volunteers and with little attempt to assess their effectiveness. There are, of course, resource implications here. So we follow a trail from rights to law to quality to resources.

Research and Policy

A theme throughout the day was the relationship between research and policy. Participants took a pluralist view of the nature and role of research and affirmed that professional researchers had to find new ways of "bringing in the grass-roots". It was nevertheless recognised that if research was to inform national policy it had to deal with "macro" issues as well as "micro" concerns. It was a strong thread throughout that there was very often disjunction

between national lifelong learning plans and community activities and concerns. Research could help to bridge this gap. It was noted that sensitively conducted impact studies were helpful at all levels of government (and for the NGOs which support literacy programmes). Current knowledge about literacy activities was rather disorganised; there are immense quantities of documentation, but there has been little attempt to analyse findings to answer specific conceptual or policy questions. Jan Eldred pointed out that such research was needed in Britain, particularly to disentangle the purposes of literacies and to relate literacy to oracy (particularly in the era of the mobile phone).

Focal Points

Several important issues which were touched on in the Seminar might well make foci for both policy-makers and researchers. This is not an exhaustive list, but these points are perceived as current challenges.

- The new thinking about literacy/literacies, which was thoroughly canvassed by Alan Rogers, has inspired many literacy practitioners and led to various innovations. At the same time, once the concept of diverse types of literacy skill for diverse communities and individuals is accepted, there are major questions for both policy-makers and practitioners about such matters as a core curriculum or a generally accepted style of pedagogy (politicians and funders probably need to hold on to the possibility of some standardisation!).
- Speakers from Britain implicitly or explicitly raised the question of what are the drivers for literacy. Over the years there has been plenty of research on individual motivation, but there has not been much attempt to pull together ideas on what drives communities or polities. Several of the large international NGOs are involved in advocacy and Gordon Brown's Commonwealth Education Fund catalysed some of this. A challenge for Britain would be how to press the literacy case here as well as abroad.
- Behind all the presentations and exchanges was the consciousness of the global commitment to EFA by 2015 and a very particular focus of worry was the failure so far of many countries to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal of full inclusion of females in education by the current year. The gender parity target has been missed by 94 countries out of the 149.
- Apart from the curricular issues raised by the idea of multiple literacies, there is also the reminder of the traditional "3rd R" – that is: numeracy. Still more attention needs to be given to the nature of numeracy and its acquisition by adults.

- Resources have already been mentioned, but it is not possible to face any of the other matters without looking into the funding and hence the costing of literacy work at all levels.

Fundamental Policy Issues

Besides these focal points, the discussions threw up two fundamental policy issues.

The first, raised by Andrew Nelson, relates to transferability. The more appropriate a programme is to its own context, the less, he suggested, is it applicable to a different environment, whether in another part of the same country or in another country with a different scale of non-literate population and entirely different social and economic circumstances. As mentioned earlier in relation to curriculum and pedagogy, policy-makers need to ask themselves what *principles* are transferable.

Secondly, all present were very conscious of the topical concern over sustainability. Is there such a thing as an irreversible literacy programme? Clearly, one reason for the limited success of many literacy efforts is to do with the short-term funding which is the norm for literacy (whether NGO project or major national campaign). It was noted that it was impossible to verify claims made for ICTs in literacy in developing countries precisely because of the limited nature of ICT projects. More dependable long-term support ought to have a better result. In connection with this, appreciation is in order for the DVV (German Adult Education Association), funded by the German Government, which has in many cases gone in for the long haul.

Conclusion

It is hardly surprising that there were one or two omissions. Usually any literacy gathering involves much discussion of participation and participatory methodologies. Perhaps these were little touched on because they are nowadays taken for granted (at least in theory), but also because the focus was on broad policy matters and the challenge for the UK of global literacy concerns.

It is perhaps appropriate to conclude by reminding ourselves that the central player in any literacy programme was the learner and that all policies should be for his/her benefit. There is enough research to demonstrate that learners are perfectly capable of taking hold of what literacy is on offer and using it for their own purposes. But the fundamental research finding has been that any literacy acquisition fortifies a person's confidence and self-worth. It is that confidence which is the starting point for everything else. The sustainability of all programmes depends on maintaining that confidence. ■

Appendices

Appendix 1: UNESCO and Literacy

UNESCO is the lead UN agency for education and as part of its education strategy it leads in coordinating international cooperation and sustainable national literacy strategies, campaigns and programmes, working in partnership with other specialised agencies in the UN system, including UNICEF, ILO, UNDP, the World Bank, UNPF, UNHCR, WFP, WHO and the FAO. UNESCO also builds networks and institutional capacity to develop and apply sound experience in literacy policy and practice at the national, regional and international levels.

Through its work in literacy promotion worldwide, UNESCO contributes to individuals' abilities to take charge of their own lives and livelihoods.

Through the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), UNESCO focuses world attention on literacy issues and successful programmes and initiatives. In addition, UNESCO defines, monitors and evaluates literacy acquisition through its Institute of Statistics, the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), and other contextualised research. It has recently launched a Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) programme.

The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012)

The Decade (2003-2012) aims to extend the use of literacy to those who are currently denied access. The Decade will focus on the needs of adults with the goal that people everywhere should be able to use literacy to communicate within their own community, in the wider society and beyond. Literacy efforts have so far failed to reach the poorest and most marginalised groups of people – the Decade will particularly address such populations, under the banner of "Literacy for All: Voice for All, Learning for All."

The Decade aims to achieve locally sustainable literate environments which will give people opportunities to express their ideas and views, engage in effective learning, participate in the written communication which characterises democratic societies, and exchange knowledge with others. This will include increasingly the use of electronic media and information technologies, both as a means of self-expression and for accessing and assessing the vast stores of knowledge available today.

Literacy is a plural concept, with diverse literacies shaped by their use in particular contexts. The Decade will work to promote literacies across the full range of purposes, contexts, languages, and methods of acquisition which communities of learners identify for themselves.

Expected outcomes include:

- Significant progress towards the 2015 Dakar goals (3, 4, 5), in particular, a recognisable increase in the absolute numbers of those who are literate among women (accompanied by reduction in gender disparities); in excluded pockets in countries that are otherwise considered to have high literacy rates; and in regions of greatest need (Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the large 'E-9' countries).

- Attainment by all learners, including children in school, of a mastery level of learning in reading, writing, numeracy, critical thinking, positive citizenship values and other life skills.
- Dynamic literate environments, especially in schools and communities of the priority groups, so that literacy will be sustained and expanded beyond the Literacy Decade.
- Improved quality of life (poverty reduction, increased income, improved health, greater participation, citizenship awareness and gender sensitivity) among those who have participated in the various educational programmes under EFA.

Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE)

LIFE is UNESCO's new 10-year initiative, launched in October 2005 and designed to accelerate literacy efforts in countries that suffer heavily from illiteracy. The initiative targets 34 countries that are home to 85% of the world's illiterates. Its main goal is to contribute to the achievement of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by addressing the needs of those who have been denied access to literacy.

LIFE supports targeted literacy learning opportunities, integrated approaches that link literacy to life skills or community-based interventions by identifying a variety of cost-effective quality programming strategies.

LIFE seeks to empower learners through country-led action, informed by evidence-based research.

LIFE works on several fronts:

- Reinforcing the national and international commitment to literacy through advocacy and communication.
- Supporting the articulation of sustainable literacy policies.
- Strengthening national capacities for literacy programme design, management, and implementation.
- Enhancing innovative literacy initiatives and practices at the country level.
- Conducting research and facilitating sharing of information about literacy.

- Creating partnerships between national governments, NGOs, civil society, UN agencies and donor countries and the private sector to advance the literacy agenda.
- Enhancing capacity for monitoring and evaluating of literacy programmes and initiatives.

Literacy Assessment Monitoring Programme (LAMP)

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)' Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) was developed in cooperation with various international agencies to gather quality data on literacy through new national household surveys repeated on a five to ten-year cycle. The LAMP instruments and methods were developed by, and validated in, six countries: El Salvador, Kenya, Mongolia, Morocco, Niger and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

UNESCO sees LAMP as a fundamental tool for policy development and implementation of its Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) programme. LAMP will provide the basic data upon which LIFE implementation plans and adult literacy programmes can be built.

LAMP employs a sample survey of adults (aged 15 or more) to identify the full range of literacy - from the most basic reading and writing to the skills needed to participate fully in a learning society. The comparative dimension of LAMP allows it to assist in monitoring and programme design both at national and international levels. LAMP also builds statistical capacity, in the area of surveys and literacy assessments, to be used for improving policies and intervention strategies.

LAMP provides valid, reliable, comparable and interpretable literacy data through carefully conceived and tested instruments. These data seek to help governments to focus on real needs and allow them to target resources where they are most needed. This form of transparent and evidence-based decision-making will also give donor agencies more confidence in a country's capacity to deal with poverty alleviation, economic growth and political independence.

Capacity building is an important and essential part of LAMP. Throughout, LAMP provides training to local authorities and institutions, in order to strengthen local capacity to undertake direct literacy assessment. LAMP is implemented in conjunction with authorities in countries to ensure ownership, which is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the programme. ■

Appendix 2: Alan Rogers' Response to presentation of Adama Ouane and Leslie Limage

First, I wish to thank Dr Adama Ouane and Dr Leslie Limage for their comprehensive introductions to a very complex report. They have left me with relatively little to say. This response will therefore take the form of a series of questions which both the report and their presentations have left with me.

To position myself, I am an adult educator; I do not claim to have any expertise in the area of children's schooling except perhaps in non-formal settings. Secondly, while I have experience of adult education (more generally) in the West, I do not have experience of adult literacy (and numeracy) in the West; most of my work has been in so-called 'developing countries'. And thirdly I am more of a practitioner than a planner or policy maker.

Increasing the Dialogue

My position as someone who works mainly overseas raises the issue that whereas in the UK, the areas of basic education/ literacy (whether for adults or children) and 'development' have been kept apart for many years, in most developing countries the two are intimately linked.

There are signs of increasing linkages in the UK between these two. The National Research and Development Centre - NRDC (concerned primarily with adult literacy and numeracy in the UK) has run at least two seminars about the same kind of work in 'development' and has published one major report entitled *Linking Literacy and Numeracy Programmes in Developing Countries and the UK*; the English adult education centre, National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is increasing its interest in this area. The recent publication of four books, all very similar, bridging both areas, is quite remarkable¹. But the participation of key practitioners from developing countries in these discussions (including this one) has been relatively small.

So my first question is: **how can we promote this cross cultural dialogue in really productive ways?**

The UK National Commission for UNESCO can play a part in this.

Linking Theory with Practice

My second point is that this report is based on a great deal of research, much of it specially commissioned. I understand that at least 80 papers in all on both policy and practice were available to the GMR team – too many for all the team to read all of them! I rejoice in this but there is a problem. The problem seems to me to be not how to increase research for reports such as this but

how to link research to the practice of building literacy practices in all countries and all parts of all countries.

This raises for me two questions: **how can we build research into practice rather than encourage rarefied research?** So far the important findings of academic research do not seem to percolate into the practice of literacy building. Can we build research into practice? can we help the literacy educators (to use the GMR term for facilitators and teachers of literacy to adults and out-of-school-youth) and indeed literacy learners in their own way to become researchers to explore the specificities of their own learning contexts? and how to disseminate this research?

And secondly, **how can we build on the research of this GMR Report?** There is a danger this report will be taken as the final word – which we all know the GMR team would regret. It needs to be expanded, tested in each location. I have recently returned from Pakistan where a search revealed there is no national centre for research and development of literacy in that country. And Pakistan is not alone in that. So, how can we encourage further research into contextualised literacies?

Literacy For ...

The title of this report of 'Literacy for Life'. This follows the trend of promoting programmes with a title including the words 'Literacy for ...' (for empowerment; for livelihoods which in some regions is now giving ways to 'small businesses and enterprises'; for health; for citizenship etc); now 'for life'.

I see several issues here. It is of course important to stress that the benefits of learning literacy lie partly in its usefulness. But we need to be careful that we do not fall into negativism, into a deficit mode. Such a title may give the impression that adults cannot engage in these activities **without** literacy skills; that they cannot be healthy or wealthy or empowered or indeed exercise citizenship without first learning literacy skills. That would be very regrettable, for we do need to help **all** adults to become healthier, to increase their prosperity, to exercise their citizenship etc even if – for one reason or another - they are not able to master literacy skills for themselves.

Our promotion of literacy learning must not itself become exclusive. Both development today (with Sen's view of development building on capabilities rather than on deficits) and adult learning theory (starting with what the learners are doing rather than with what they cannot do) both reject a deficit approach. Thus we can now agree that every person can go some way towards fuller empowerment, citizenship, health, prosperity *without* their individual exercise of literacy, although they will achieve a greater measure of these goals through exercising literacy for themselves.

¹ Fowler Ellayne and Mace Jane 2005 *Outside the Classroom: researching literacy with adult learners* Leicester: NIACE; Larson Joanne and Marsh Jackie 2005 *Making Literacy Real: theories and practices for learning and teaching* London: Sage; Pahl K and Rowsell J 2005 *Literacy and Education: understanding the New Literacy Studies in the Classroom* London: Paul Chapman Publishing; Papen Uta 2005 *Adult Literacy as Social Practice: more than skills* London: Routledge

So the question which arises for me is this: **How do we encourage a notion of 'literacy for something' without encouraging negativism and a deficit approach?** There is a fine balance to be drawn.

A second and similar issue arises about **whose agenda counts?** Literacy for some specified purpose may appeal as their top priority to some potential literacy learners but not to all. The agenda of aid agencies and education ministries is not always the same as the many varied agendas of the people on the ground. The importance of arousing motivation to fulfil *our* agendas has always been recognised in literacy learning programmes; but motivation-raising can easily become persuasion; we all know that many forms of 'participation' (such as Workers' Participation in industry) is designed to overcome resistance to the management's proposed changes rather than to listen to the agendas of others.

A third issue that arises with programmes entitled 'literacy for ...' (in this case 'for life') is that there is an implication that literacy comes first, that learning literacy will lead (automatically) to some desired change and benefits - for example, that building national literacy percentages will lead to greater economic growth. But recent studies have suggested that in some cases this is not true. In so-called 'Western societies', it would seem that industrial growth came first and that mass literacy followed. The same also seems to be true of literacy and individual identities as Judy Kalman has shown². The intention to change identities will often precede the demand for learning literacy skills. This issue of the relationship between literacy and change (social and individual) in both the so-called West and the so-called developing countries is the key element in the programme undertaken by the Literacy and Development Group at the University of East Anglia. So the question here is: *Can we identify and build on those changes which in themselves are encouraging the demand for literacy learning rather than asserting that learning the formal literacy will precede and inevitably lead to personal and social change?*

Multiple Literacies

The 'pluralities of literacy' are increasingly being recognised, at least in rhetoric. The first GMR Report mentioned this, and recently UNESCO has produced a working paper with this title. I am not talking about literacy in different languages although these are important: the person who can read - that is, really read, not just recite - the Koran in Arabic but cannot read or write texts in their national or local language are using a different literacy from that being promoted by the national educational system. Rather, I am talking about different literacies in the same language. The notebook which a tailor keeps of her clients' measurements and of the materials used; the activities of the carpenter who covers the wall of his workshop with designs cut out of trade journals and notes on them dates and costs; the notes children send round classroom under the desks and the text messages they send out; the jottings which shopkeepers maintain of

credit and the lists of car components which garage mechanics have learned to read and write without going to school or adult literacy learning programmes; the notes written on the fridge door (if there is one) or on a calendar on the wall in the home; all of these are different literacies and may be exercised without any skills in the formal schooled literacy.

There are of course problems for policy-makers, planners and practitioners with this concept. For one thing, it does not translate into non-English languages. But that fact does not make the pluralities of literacy go away; it does not mean that in any Francophone or other language context there are no such things as these other forms of 'alphabetisation'; we need to find out how they are framed in these language contexts.

If then there is a plurality of literacy, *which literacy are we measuring here in this report?* We are aware that those who use these literacies but are unable to use the literacy of the classroom are often termed (and often term themselves) as 'illiterates'. The danger is that a report like this leads to an increasing ignoring of these other literacies. They have been called 'vernacular' or 'informal' literacies, even 'proto-literacies', terms which give them a status below the literacy being sponsored by the educational authorities; but they are in fact the most functional of all literacies, more functional than what is learned in the classroom or adult literacy learning centre. They are literacies embedded in life-related activities; and they are important to those who use them.

Recognising the plurality of literacies raises issues not only about this report but about the practice of literacy promotion. For example, *How can we encourage these literacies while at the same time encouraging the state-sponsored literacy of the classroom?* The one thing which most literacy promoters now agree on is that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not effective. We need to find ways of encouraging embedded literacies as well as the schooled literacy of the classroom. We need to stop isolating literacy on its own and locate it within a different development sector. One danger of a report like this is that it will encourage the ring fencing of literacy learning which has gone on in the past.

One way which is being tried is the so-called 'literacy comes second' approach, an approach which starts with some other developmental activity and includes relevant literacy learning into the programme as one of the set of needed skills to engage in that developmental task. I am aware that some find the phrase 'literacy comes second' problematic because it seems to water down the priority which aid agencies and educators give to the formal state-sponsored literacy.

But it does reflect the priorities of many adult learners. Field research frequently shows that many adults, especially very poor adults, do not give a high priority to learning the formal schooled literacy for themselves, whatever they may feel about it for their children. And adult educators know that we need to 'start where they are', with their priorities, not with our priorities. We therefore need a balance between demand-led provision and supply-led provision.

² Judy Kalman 2005 Mothers to daughters, *pueblo to Ciudad: women's identity shifts in the construction of a literate self*, in Alan Rogers (ed) *Urban Literacy: communication, identity and learning in development contexts* 2005 UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg

And if the phrase 'literacy comes second' is unacceptable, the phrase 'embedded literacies' carries much the same implication for practitioners; our objective is the same, to promote a relevant rather than a standardised literacy for as many adults as need it to accomplish their own developmental aspirations.

And this raises a key issue: *how can we measure these embedded literacies?* Just because it is difficult does not mean it is not important to do this. In fact, there are ways of measuring these literacies but the problem is that most governments and most educational agencies do not recognise these literacies and the ways of measuring them. Which is why they don't appear in this report in any major way.

A Further Agenda for Study

I have a number of other questions which this report raises in some form or another but which are not fully addressed in its pages – for example:

- how to balance out the different needs of children, out-of-school-youth, and adults?
- how to promote the increasing competence of the literacy educators without at the same time promoting the formalised standardised forms of training which characterise much professional school teacher education?

- how to react to the growing penetration of ICT (such as mobile phones) into most countries?
- why is numeracy so poorly represented in its pages - despite the work of Adults Learning Maths (ALM), Maths4Life, and the current interest in home-school mathematics?

There is no space to consider these here. So my key questions are

How can we use this Report to

- (a) continue to encourage the dialogue between literacy learning agencies in the so-called 'North' and 'South' which is beginning?
- (b) continue to build research into the teaching of literacy skills?
- (c) encourage the application of the formal literacy being taught in life situations without at the same time encouraging a deficit and negative approach?
- (d) recognise, encourage and measure the different literacies embedded within many lifewide activities and not concentrate exclusively on the formal literacy of the classroom? ■

Appendix 3: Jan Eldred on The Skills for Life Strategy: Does it mean Literacy for All?

Policy Context

In March 2001, the UK government launched its strategy to address the development of adult literacy, language and numeracy, called Skills for Life and has subsequently renewed its commitment to prioritise work in this area to 2010. It is this strategy and the associated targets which have shaped and formed the majority of teaching and learning, research and developments in this previously neglected curriculum area. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have developed their own strategies and approaches. This paper focuses on developments and experiences in England.

In 1998 the government asked Sir Claus Moser to chair a national working group to investigate literacy and numeracy in England. It was asked to consider how it might support and develop activities to help adults by investigating the effectiveness of different kinds of provision, identifying and sharing models of good practice, examining the funding as well as ways of increasing the volume, quality and effectiveness of literacy and numeracy.

The 1999 report entitled *A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy* suggested that up to seven million people, one in five adults in England, needed to develop their literacy, with even more people operating with low or no qualifications in maths. It described how, for many people, this created disadvantages at work as well as in life in general. It also indicated that limited skills are a brake on the economy. The report drew on the International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD).

A Fresh Start informed the Skills for Life strategy, which initially set targets for reaching 750,000 people from particular groups and improving their literacy, language and numeracy by 2004. By this date, 862,000 adults had gained 1,273,000 literacy, language and numeracy qualifications. The next targets are for 1.5 million people to have improved literacy, language and numeracy by 2007 and for 2.25 million people by 2010. Government commitment could not be clearer.

Historical Background

Providers and practitioners in this field of work generally welcomed *A Fresh Start* as well as the Skills for Life Strategy. Whilst there has been a slowly growing awareness of the value of adult literacy, language and numeracy learning since the 1970s, by and large it has remained marginalised from mainstream adult learning.

In the majority of instances, whether the provision was promoted by the voluntary sector, in the adult and community learning context (supported by Local Education Authorities) or in colleges of further education, it was offered as part-time learning, taught by part-time, often hourly-paid tutors. It was built upon a strong tradition of volunteer tutors, only some of whom were trained.

Teaching and learning resources, especially those associated with new technologies were extremely limited. Staff training and development was very varied across the country. Some staff held national teaching qualifications as well as specialist literacy, language or numeracy qualifications. Others had received a minimal training programme of up to 36 hours. Not only were the potential learning needs of millions of adults to be addressed by the Skills for Life Strategy, but also the necessity to build the capacity of staff, the curriculum and resources.

The Moser report of 1999 identified the huge variation in quality and quantity of provision across the country, regardless of the purposes and the providers of the learning activities. It believed that this was due to years of neglect:

"At present all too little is done. The teaching of basic skills to adults is often marginalised, remaining something of a Cinderella service. In this report we propose a wide-ranging National Strategy..."
(Moser, 1999, p8)

What has been done?

An enormous amount of effort, energy and funding has been galvanised in the fields of literacy, language and numeracy to implement the Skills for Life strategy, which was underpinned by four themes: increasing demand, ensuring capacity, raising standards and improving achievement. A dedicated government unit was established, the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU), recently re-named, the Skills for Life Strategy Unit, to oversee the progress of the strategy. The newly formed national Learning and Skills Council also took responsibility for planning and funding as well as ensuring the quality of provision.

Priority groups were identified in the strategy. They include unemployed people, prisoners and those who are under the care of the National Probation Service, public sector employees and people in work who have few or no qualifications below national qualification level 2, young people who have few or no qualifications at this level, speakers of other languages, some parents and those living in disadvantaged communities.

A national campaign, called 'Get On', has encouraged thousands of adults to overcome their anxieties about declaring that they would like to develop their literacy, language or numeracy skills. All kinds of promotional materials and approaches have been adopted, from posters, post-cards and pencils to TV adverts, roadside billboards and local animations. The Gremlins images have emerged as characters we love to hate. A national telephone helpline has been established under the responsibility of *learn direct*. The promotion has not been confined to potential learners but has also targeted staff in key positions in organisations which might support and refer people to learning. This has included Government

departments and employers in general, as well as a wide range of voluntary and community organisations.

Building capacity in the ability to deliver learning opportunities has been another strand of activity. All delivery sectors have been involved, including the voluntary and community sector, workplace and work-based training as well as Local Authorities and Colleges of Further Education. The Skills for Life Strategy Unit is committed to work with a wide range of partners to meet its aims.

New standards have been set for literacy and numeracy teachers, and since September 2002 all new teachers are required to gain qualifications, which meet the specifications. The standards are designed for different roles involved in supporting learning and are at national qualification level 2 for volunteer tutors, at level 3 for those who support learners, and at level 4 for those who assess, plan, teach, monitor and evaluate learning programmes. All post-compulsory teacher-training standards are currently under review by the Sector Skills Council, Lifelong Learning UK. Programmes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for existing staff have also been introduced under a wide and varied programme of opportunities called the Basic Skills Quality Initiative.

Core curricula have been introduced, based on national standards for Literacy, Language and Numeracy. In addition, a Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework has been designed for people, with learning difficulties and disabilities, who are unable to access the national curricula. Guidance on how adults with learning difficulties and disabilities can be involved in literacy, language and numeracy has also been published, called 'Access for All'.

A great many teaching and learning materials have been commissioned and produced; they all relate to the national standards and the core curricula. They include not only paper-based but also web-based materials, as well as e-learning opportunities. ICT has proved to be not only a motivator for adults to become involved in basic skills activities but also a lively and imaginative way for many people to learn. ICT has become the fourth skill for life. Materials to support learning literacy, language and numeracy in the context of work, community learning and vocational training have also been developed and initial assessment materials have been prepared.

National Literacy and Numeracy Tests have been developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). These offer an opportunity for people to demonstrate their abilities, measured against national standards.

Pathfinder projects have been delivered in literacy, ESOL and numeracy. They are ways of testing out what seems to work best in delivering and assessing, as well as what needs to be in place to support learning. A pathfinder examining provision for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is scheduled to end in March 2006.

Another is running on ICT and on Whole Organisational Approaches to delivering literacy, language and numeracy.

Guidance to support providers who are inspected under the government's inspection system, to monitor and support the development of high standards, has been published.

The strategy acknowledged that there is much we do not know about literacy, language and numeracy teaching and learning; it is under-researched. The launch of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) has helped to fill this gap and meet the need for evidence-based policies and practice to inform development. It has an ambitious range of projects and studies and links with similar research in other countries. It actively involves practitioners in setting up and implementing its research e.g. the Practitioner-led research Initiative at Lancaster University.

Skills for Life is the theme for three large, annual national conferences. These set out to share interesting and effective activities and practices, as well as research and development, so that as many people as possible can engage with the dynamics of development, hear from government ministers about policy directions and discuss and debate arising issues.

So, a great deal is happening in adult literacy, language and numeracy in England! This summary only indicates broad areas of development; beneath each one is a complex web of creative and challenging activities, all designed to meet one of the under-pinning themes.

What is NIACE doing?

NIACE, the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education, is a body that advocates, promotes, researches and develops adult learning; it is closely involved with the delivery of the strategy. Its completed and current programmes reflect and illustrate something of the diversity of the work needed to implement the strategy.

We have worked on several programmes relating to community contexts with the voluntary sector. A partnership with *Ukonline* and *learnirect* has delivered awareness raising and training to their staff on integrating literacy, language and numeracy in their centres. We have been involved in several initiatives to develop conceptual frameworks about embedded or integrated approaches, as well as to identify effective and interesting practice. We are currently working with NRDC to research the effectiveness of embedded and non-embedded approaches to delivery in Further Education Colleges.

Family learning, Family literacy and Family numeracy have been increasingly acknowledged as important planks of the strategy. These programmes have contributed enormously to parents' and carers' knowledge and understanding of literacy, language and numeracy, by helping them to help and learn with their children. NIACE has conducted evaluations in this area, developed toolkits

and worked on teacher standards. We have also evaluated the Step into Learning programme, working with staff in neighbourhood nurseries and with the parents using their services.

In partnership with the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) we have identified common and effective approaches to dealing with dyslexia and published a Framework for Understanding Dyslexia. We are leading the consortium which developed the Pathfinder for literacy, language and numeracy, for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. NIACE has also been leading the development of ESOL for Citizenship, on informal learning and young adults, and is working with partners on the Maths4life project as well as on promising practice with the Offenders Learning and Skills Unit. Our workplace literacy, language and numeracy work has involved working very closely with the former NHSU and more recently with the Department of Health and the Sector Skills Council, Skills for Health. We are working with employers on dyslexia in the workplace as well as developing materials to help specific sectors, such as the construction industry.

Not only has NIACE been involved in guidance and materials development, it has also delivered training to thousands of tutors. It continues to be involved in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) consortium known as the Skills for Life Quality Initiative. We have also been involved in trying to identify how to encourage and support more and different adults into teaching, whether they are new or are returning teachers on the RETRO programme.

I don't want this to sound like an advert for NIACE! Rather this is an illustration of how work in literacy, language and numeracy is wide-ranging, diverse and challenging.

Queries and Concerns

There is much to applaud, celebrate and commend in the Skills for Life Strategy. Literacy, language and numeracy have never had such a high profile. The government should be commended for having the vision to invest public money in such a key area of activity. Literacy, language and numeracy are the sources of energy which power other activities in daily life and work. Our society is predicated on assumptions that we can read, write and do maths; key surveys indicate that is not the case and the UK government has risen to the challenge to help improve the learning and lives of many people.

However, as with all dynamic development, there are also areas of concern and question some might be anticipated; others not.

Almost five years after its launch, the Skills for Life Strategy is now closely aligned with another government policy, the Skills Strategy (2003) and the White Paper, Skills: Getting on in Business; Getting on at Work (2005). This puts a firm focus on skills for and in employment. It also indicates a shift from a flagship strategy to a support strategy.

Whilst NIACE has welcomed a great deal of the content of the strategy, there is a concern that a focus on literacy, language and numeracy skills for employment and work ignores many of the purposes for which people want to learn literacy, language and numeracy. We understand the emphasis on employment; after all, it is through work that personal and family economic welfare improves. But, how do we include learning for personal development, about personal finances, for interest and for social and community support? People who are interested in making sense of environmental issues, develop community activism or create a women's support group, all of which help to develop cohesion, reduce social isolation and build supportive and responsive communities, can be lost in such a tight focus.

Moreover, the demography of the UK indicates that we are an ageing society; older people may be more interested in preparing for an active retirement than for work. We know, through the Wider Benefits of Learning Unit, that people who continue, in later years, to be involved in learning are healthier than those who don't. Where does the right to continue to learn differently situated literacies, for different purposes, at different stages of our lives, sit in a context of skills for work?

The Skills Strategy is sharply geared to supporting progression towards and achievement of a level 2 qualification. Recent work by John Bynner and Samantha Parsons of the Institute of Education, from the 1958 and 1970 cohort studies, indicated that,

"...Substantial difference in life chances, quality of life and social inclusion were evident between individuals at or below entry 2 compared with others at higher levels. Entry 2 skills were associated with a lack of qualifications, poor labour market experiences and prospects, poor material and financial circumstances, poor health prospects, and little social and political participation." (NRDC Reflect journal, Oct 2005, p33).

This raises the question of which target groups the Skills for Life strategy is now aiming to help. Are we in danger of excluding people even further from benefits and advantages others take for granted? If level 2 achievements are the real government goals, how do we help those who are a long way off gaining such qualifications?

A recent study by the Social Exclusion Unit at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister resulted in a report, *Improving Services, Improving Lives*. This highlighted the increasing marginalisation from public services of those people who have the least qualifications and whose literacy and skills are under-developed.

Many, many people get by. Bynner suggested that even if they acknowledge difficulties, the likelihood of them doing something about it by joining courses and classes is very slim. The necessity to find creative, interesting, relevant and responsive approaches to reach and engage people in learning is as challenging as ever.

Current Literacy, learning opportunities appear not to be designed to attract all groups of people. In spite of

campaigns to promote learning, those who, arguably need it most, don't seem to feel that organised learning has very much to offer to them.

A shortage of qualified teachers of literacy is another area of concern. The generally low status of staff, due to their part-time employment and often insecure contracts, does not readily attract new teachers to this area of work. The situation has improved, but there are few guarantees that if people train for this highly specialised work they will gain permanent, full-time employment.

Years of neglect cannot be overcome quickly and confidence in this part of the adult learning sector has to be built. Whilst some recruitment programmes are in place, such as the NIACE-led RETRO project, employment prospects are far from guaranteed. We need to consider how employers can be supported to create and sustain employment opportunities rather than respond to shortages in the historic way.

Associated with this shortage is a history of under-qualified staff in the sector and although, as indicated, standards, specifications and training are in place, it takes a long time to develop staff to deliver high-quality teaching and learning. The real impact of the investment in this area will take a long time. Meanwhile, there are few indicators that more job opportunities will be available, and so staff will continue to be marginalised. The best are likely to seek opportunities outside the sector. Some of the most vulnerable learners will therefore continue to be taught by some of the least well-qualified staff.

We have much to learn about long-term strategies to address long-term neglect, if we are to offer high quality opportunities to support literacy, language and numeracy for all learners.

One of the most keenly questioned and debated areas is about the summative assessment of literacy, language and numeracy, commonly known as the tests! My colleague, Peter Lavender, contributed to this debate in the NIACE publication, *Testing, Testing, 1,2,3*. The Skills for Life Strategy promised the UK Government Treasury that learners would improve. It was agreed that improvement should be measured by successful completion of a national test in either literacy or numeracy. Success in these tests provides the evidence to fulfil the national targets. A major focus of concern is whether multi-choice testing is the most appropriate form of assessment for people who, by and large, have had negative experiences of testing and examination in their initial education. Low levels of confidence and high levels of anxiety amongst learners have been well documented. Many tutors have expressed great concern about introducing testing to their learners. Others, however, have found that if they approach the topic sensitively and carefully, learners have enjoyed taking the test and demonstrating their abilities.

The test is only available to those studying at Entry level 3 and above, so the achievements of learners at lower levels of study, whilst acknowledged, cannot be counted towards the national target. This might have a perverse

influence on who is encouraged into learning by providers who are urged to work towards the national targets. Learners operating at entry level 2 and below may be excluded or marginalised in favour of their counterparts learning at higher levels. Teachers may feel less fulfilled and satisfied with their efforts if they know that the achievements of their learners at entry level 2 seem less valued than those at higher levels. Reduced teacher motivation may impact upon learners too.

Some learners' achievements, therefore, are not counted towards the national goals. Surely the achievements of all learners should be celebrated, acknowledged and counted as part of the national targets if literacy learning and achievement is for all.

Cynics might also suggest that some learners who were already operating at the level at which they were tested, but who had no previous qualifications, have gained a national certificate. Gaining accreditation is to be encouraged and applauded but the test is no evidence that their skills have improved. We do know how to use other ways of capturing gains and improvements in learning such as the Planning Learning and Recording Progress and Achievement (PLRA) process or the Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) or, indeed, NIACE's work on Catching Confidence activities. We know how to capture improvement in appropriate, relevant and learner-centred ways.

One of the most challenging areas of the strategy is numeracy; where do its boundaries lie, in relation to maths? and how do we encourage people to become involved, recognise its importance in relation to personal effectiveness in so many different domains of life, especially in relation to finances, as well as the workplace? The huge shortage of staff equipped to teach in this area is also problematic. We know from reviews of teacher-training that there are many staff who are terrified of maths, as their own skills are not developed sufficiently to teach it. The numeracy strategy cannot be effectively delivered in such a context and the challenges are clear; the solutions are less so. Numeracy difficulties illustrate how, in spite of this form of literacy being designated a priority by the strategy, finding ways to motivate, engage and retain teachers as well as learners means that many people are missing out.

Changing demography suggests that we should place even more emphasis on the interests of people for whom English is another language. In addressing skills gaps in the UK, people entering the country often have much to offer; we have been slow to develop systems which acknowledge qualifications, skills and experience. ESOL provision should focus on offering optimum opportunities so that people can transfer existing skills into the UK context rapidly and easily. We know that only a small percentage of jobs in the next decade will be filled by young people. Migrant workers will be needed to help fill some of the jobs gaps. The challenge is to determine where priorities should lie; who should, or should not pay for tuition; where the differences between English as a Foreign Language and English for Speakers of Other

Languages lie; and how to determine priorities between people who have been in the UK for many years and new migrants. Should a policy of literacy for all mean that learning is free to the learner in all situations? In reviewing such challenges - and NIACE is about to launch an independent review of ESOL - there is a danger that some people miss out.

Another target group, which may not be receiving the best possible deal from the Skills for Life strategy, is people with learning difficulties and disabilities. The recent Little review of provision for people in this target group has warned of the danger of providers using the strategy as a funding convenience. Literacy, language and numeracy learning may not be the best possible route for some learners but because the strategy has been well funded, some providers may have felt that by placing their provision in this category they have protected opportunities for their learners. This might be true for some. For many others, literacy, language or numeracy learning goals are unrealistic and their personal learning has been distorted as a result. Literacy for all means that for some people it is positive to say 'No thank you' to some parts of the literacy strategy; learning must respond to individuals not to policies.

As the Skills for Life strategy has grown and developed, it could be argued that it has shifted away from some of the initial priorities and aspirations the Moser-led committee wanted to fulfil. On the one hand, it has gained a massive widespread awareness of the importance of literacy, language and numeracy to learners and potential learners, providers and employers. On the other, set in a framework of literacy for all, it seems that some planning and some unintentional outcomes are not achieving gains for all learners. Some of these unintentional outcomes are that the poorest and most vulnerable people continue to miss out.

It must be argued that as the strategy has matured, it should review its initial goals and modify these in the light of development and new evidence. This takes political courage and conviction but would result in responsive policies.

Much remains to be researched and discovered, especially about teaching and learning of literacies, what pedagogies work. Including embedded or integrated approaches, how do we develop oral skills? What impact does learning have on social and economic well-being

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and how can we not only persuade more and different adults that literacy learning has something to offer to them, but also to challenge assumptions based on a hegemony of literacy as a fixed, and dominated activity in which everyone can engage?

The wider debates about whether literacy is a vehicle for liberating people to be better informed, better equipped to understand, discuss and challenge, also continue. If the Skills for Life Strategy is seen as a way of instructing and equipping people with the technical skills to read, write and do maths, then there seems little space for literacy for freedom of expression, discovery and assertion. Where are the opportunities to read for pleasure, enjoy poetry, be creative or be a critical citizen? The result of narrowness, one might argue, is impoverishment of the spirit and lack of self fulfilment, which ultimately lead to frustration and dissatisfaction amongst individuals and communities. In turn these also lead to poor economic performance where potential and creativity are untapped. Power can be released through literacy and language learning or exercised over people who struggle to command it. In England, the power for change is clearly evident; only time will tell whether it liberates or controls.

We have had little opportunity to systematically reflect on the last five years and ask the questions about what we have learned about adult literacy, language and numeracy, what we might do differently and what we would like to do next. If we are to learn from our experiences and capitalise on them to ensure that more people are included, more reflection, discussion and analysis must be undertaken. We need to reflect on where government policies and the interests, needs, desires and aspirations of individuals, groups and communities meet. Taking stock now might help England to assess whether its strategy is really offering literacy for all, as well as identify how it might work with others to develop their strategies too.

England has much to share with other countries from what it has developed and achieved over the last five years. It must also honestly and critically acknowledge where the challenges still lie. Looking to partnerships will not only share our policies and practices but also help us to reflect and overcome some of those difficulties. There is much to share but still much to learn if the Skills for Life Strategy is really to result in literacy for all. ■

Appendix 4: Andrew Nelson's Response to Jan Eldred's Presentation

Skills for Life is the national strategy for improving adult literacy, language (ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages) and numeracy skills in the UK. Launched in March 2001, Skills for Life was developed in response to the Moser Report which looked at adult literacy and numeracy. The strategy caters for the literacy, language and numeracy needs of all post-16 learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, from pre-entry level up to and including level 2.

A national needs and impact survey of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills revealed 1.7 million (5%) of adults aged 16-65 have literacy skills below Entry Level 3 and 5.2 million (16%) below Level 1. Additionally, 6.8 million (21%) of adults aged 16-65 have numeracy skills below Entry Level 3, and 15 million (47%) below Level 1.

In 2001 it became clear that ESOL was equally important and needed to be included in the strategy. Skills for Life drew on the experiences and approaches of the national literacy and numeracy strategies developed for schools. However the situation for schools and those in post compulsory education is very different in terms of planning, funding, geography etc.

The government set Skills for Life targets to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults by 2004, 1.5 million by 2007 and 2.25 million by 2010.

Skills for life, as established by the strategy, include reading, writing, speaking and listening, using numbers, basic skills, essential skills, employability skills, key skills, literacy, numeracy and language, and functional skills which are core elements of English, mathematics and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.

Functional Skills

The development of Functional Skills is an essential element of the '14-19' and 'Skills' White Papers as it commits the Government to ambitious reforms for young people in schools and adults in work. The Skills White Paper and the 14-19 White paper have a common agenda in their determination to get 'the basics' right. They should always be considered together as the two halves of Government education policy.

Functional English, mathematics and ICT will be compulsory elements of the GCSEs in those subjects and it will not be possible to gain a grade A*-C without passing the Functional Skills in that subject at Level 2. In English this will be the case from 2008 and mathematics 2009.

Functional English, mathematics and ICT will be compulsory elements of the new Specialised Diplomas

launched in 2008. Individuals of whatever age who possess these skills will be able to participate and progress in education, training and employment as well as develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes and behaviours that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work. '

From April 2001 to July 2005, it is confirmed that over 3.7 million learners took up 7.8 million learning opportunities, of which 3.3 million learners and 7.4 million learning opportunities were LSC-funded. As of July 2005, 1,130,000 learners are confirmed to have counted towards the Skills for Life PSA target, therefore exceeding a 2005 milestone of 1,000,000 achievements.

In the Work Place

By policy development, implementation, embedding change, and irreversible progress, the Skills for Life in the workplace has established priorities including:

- Stimulating demand – by working at each level with Sector Skills Councils, directly with employers, with advisory and information services and with Trade Unions.
- Ensuring capacity and planning for delivery – working with the Learning and Skills Council and with the Association of Learning Providers to open access to funding for private and work-based learning providers to deliver skills for life.
- Developing the support infrastructure so that intermediaries can play their part in supporting employers to understand the need for Skills for Life learning opportunities and how they can access provision.
- Developing awareness and understanding of the National qualification certificates so that learners are keen to seek them as recognition of their skills and employers have confidence in them as a firm indicator of skills levels achieved.

With the Skills for Life Unit promotions and communications strategy, the following schemes and agendas have been set to emphasize employer engagement in tackling the Skills for Life agenda:

- Employer Training Pilots (ETP)-- developed a programme of Skills for Life interventions which includes a range of ETP guidance materials for employers, employees, business advisors/brokers providers.
- Work Based Learning Basic Skills Project – a joint learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Unit project which made available £12.5 million to fund Work Based Learning (WBL) providers to deliver basic skills.
- Get on at Work - Move On (known as Get on at Work by employers) is a national project offers Level 1 and 2 learners the national with a free brush-up course.

- National Occupational Standards Mapping - To support teachers Sfl Unit developed a mapping website which links literacy and numeracy standards to vocational qualification units.
- Revised Employer Toolkit - The toolkit is a high quality resource for both employers and organisations seeking to engage employers with SFL. It helps them plan strategies to tackle skills shortages in the workplace. We are working with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and organisations like the Royal Mail to tailor this resource to suit their specific needs.
- Asset Skills (the SSC for the facilities management sector) have been commissioned by the Sector Skills Development Agency to lead on Skills for Life across the Skills for Business Network
- NHSU is developing its own Skills for Life and Health Strategy
- The Employers Organisation for Local Government (EOLG) is working with all local authorities to drive forward Skills for Life development amongst employees
- Trade Union Learning Services and the new Union Learning Academy (Trade Union Learning Reps.) 70% of supported projects include a Skills for Life element and develop the role of Skills for Life Union Advocates.
- Business in the Community and KPMG are working together to engage large high profile employers. There are 29 business Employer Champions already out of a planned network of 40, a Skills for Life yearly business award.
- IIP UK are developing a Skills for Life guide for employers making the link between Skills for Life and IIP.
- The Learning and Skills Council fund a number of Workplace Basic Skills Advisers who help employers tackle skills issues.

Skills for Life Teacher Training

Success for All (2002) set a target of 90 per cent of full-time and 60 per cent part-time college teachers to be qualified by 2006, and all but new entrants by 2010. For the first time, all new teachers who wish to teach adult literacy or numeracy in the post-16 sector are now required to gain generic teaching qualifications that meet the subject specifications. In addition, Skills for Life teachers must also gain a Level four qualification as a subject specialist in adult literacy, adult numeracy or adult ESOL.

Skills for Life Quality Initiative

The Skills for Life Quality Initiative (SfLQI), managed by the LSC, was launched in April 2003. Since 2002, over £34 million has been invested in the SfLQI, resulting in an estimated 24,000 staff improving their skills. During 2004-05:

- 8,500 practitioners received short non-accredited training courses
- 3,200 basic skills tutors received accredited training at levels 2, 3 and 4

- 1,706 leaders and managers were trained
- 521 Teacher Trainers were trained to support regional activity
- 1,018 Skills for Life practitioners received Key Skills training
- 9,061 provider consultations were delivered by a facilitator
- 37 Professional Development Modules at Level four were developed. In addition, a further £5 million was invested in publicly funded providers not in receipt of LSC funding, including Jobcentre Plus and prison education.

Key features of a successful strategy

- Information on the scale of underachievement
- Strong drive
- Commitment from key partners
- National strategy
- Targets to measure progress
- Identification of resources
- National attainment and teaching standards, and a curriculum framework
- Guidance on motivating learners
- Plans for the professional development of teachers, support staff and volunteers
- A framework for monitoring and evaluation
- Right to high-quality learning opportunities
- Commitment to adapt education provision to meet the needs of the learner

'Lessons to be Learned'

Perhaps one of the difficulties with the implementation of Skills for Life was the introduction of standards, curricula, learning materials and tests for learners at the same time as new standards, new qualifications were being developed for teachers. Many providers found it difficult to introduce the learning infrastructure before they had increased the number and expertise of teachers. Skills for Life now gives equal weighting to literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

Likewise, attempts to follow the schools strategies were not always helpful.

And although data collection has been vital to establish levels of need and underachievement, there is often such a time lag before the data is available and analysed that it has been difficult to use this to monitor progress and refining the strategies.

Further areas of exploration

- An opportunity model rather than a deficit one?
- Targets can distort practice?
- Protect those most in need ?
- Clearer targeting of priority groups?
- Situated literacies rather than functional literacy? ■

Appendix 5: Rosemary Preston on Partnerships, Poverty and Literacy

Introduction

The final sections of the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Reports (GMRs) address policy requirements and ways in which the international community should act to facilitate EFA achievements in the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) time frames.

In sections IV and V of Literacy for ILfe we are reminded that there has to be a clear understanding of how people use literacy in different languages and modalities, to fashion programmes and print materials enhancing relevant skills and their application. In terms of policy and administration, governments should have explicit literacy strategies for schools, for adults in the community and for the enrichment of the literate environment. Strong leadership has to integrate inputs in education across other sectors, the work of local implementation teams and community ownership.

National financial strategies and increased public spending are also urged. In the face of deficient provision in poor communities everywhere, particularly for adults, key agenda items are: the strengthening of the literacy infrastructure; the scaling up of interventions; improving curricula, materials and teaching methods (perhaps through new technologies); enhancing the status of literacy teachers and trainers; ensuring effective multi-lingual basic and then post-basic learning.

Literacy for Life tells us that US\$26bn is required for 550m people to complete a 400-hour literacy programme, over a two-year period. Its statistical tables show national levels of investment in primary education over recent years, in relation to GNI. They do not break this down to show how much has gone to develop the literacy/numeracy of either children or adults. We also see how levels of overseas development assistance to education have varied, but not what they represent as a proportion of public expenditure in individual states. Without this there can be no estimate of government contributions independent of vulnerable fixed-term funding.

We are reminded that aid is currently increasing, but that it remains below the level of three decades ago, while nothing guarantees the poorest countries or groups as prime beneficiaries. Worse, after a decade and a half of the EFA campaign and a decade before the MDG deadlines, the allocation to basic education is in decline. Donors give short shrift to literacy, but claim to support the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), reluctant to pay what they have pledged. There is no information on direct funding to basic literacy and numeracy development, from whatever sources; but laments are heard (at least in GMR 2005) that significant contributions are still being made by-passing formal budgetary support mechanisms, some of them from bi-lateral sources.

Literacy for Life (section III), reminds us briefly that civil-society organisations (CSOs) are crucial players in monitoring basic education and (section IV) that partnerships of public and non-state (private and voluntary sector) organisations are vital to its quality. Without comparative research into what such arrangements have contributed at what cost in the past, certainly over the 25 years of public service decentralisation, we have to ask about the conditions under which they can be the most effective way of delivering usable, sustainable skills to the deprived (the poor, women, the old, the disabled, marginal immigrant and indigenous groups), on a large scale, in richer and poorer countries. We should be sharing experiences to enhance what we do at all stages of policy, programme and project cycles; to understand what we can expect to achieve in future; and how to ensure that we do. Research into these processes becomes crucial.

In a step towards this, the presentation considers the case of community-oriented activities to increase the basic skills of adults, supported by inter-organisational partnerships. It attempts to parallel modes of provision in the UK, drawing on experiences in countries with much lower incomes. This is mindful that the dominant forms here now had been piloted over a number of years in much less stable literate environments. The paper accepts that literacy is a gateway to acquiring new knowledge and skills, but perceives these to be hierarchically and socially structured. Acquisition of an increasing range of supplementary literacies is required for more diverse and higher levels of understanding, but simultaneously creates advantaged population groups and favours those already established.

Evolving Provision

Historically, basic skills of literacy and numeracy were informally acquired, as well as in more organised ways, with text-based religions, benevolent societies, skilled professionals, traders and artisans as the key promoters. This was as true from the Middle Ages in Western Europe, as it was under colonialism elsewhere. With industrialisation, these forms of provision continued as states came to promote basic skills, obligatory schooling, and compensatory learning for adults who could not read and write.

Over the last 50 years we have seen evolving literacy philosophies, associated pedagogies and globally inspired interventions of different kinds which seek to impart sustainable basic skills across the world. Overlooking the Russian campaign of 1919, Beeby (1966) suggests that literacy was not a strong international concern until after the foundation of UNESCO.

In 1947, a government campaign to eradicate illiteracy in southern Italy, supported by the creation of a series of private institutions, raised international awareness.

Regional conferences in Mexico and Egypt encouraged fundamental education. By 1958, there was the integration of UNESCO-promoted, fundamental education literacy activities into community development projects.

During the 1950s and 1960s, governments of Eastern Europe, Cuba and egalitarian post-colonial states were organising large-scale literacy campaigns, supported variously by volunteer university student monitors, military units, trade union organisations, religious bodies, women's groups and youth associations. A world campaign was agreed in 1963, with a call to countries having literate populations to assist those that had not. The 1965 endorsement of functional literacy for growth, linked to agricultural and industrial production and supported by UNDP, led instead to the Experimental World Literacy Programme, 1967 to 1973.

Over the same period and beyond, politically conscious participatory non-formal learning developed in Latin America and elsewhere. This was inspired by Freirean approaches to literacy, funded bi-laterally and implemented variously by governments and NGOs. In some cases it inspired the development and consolidation of adult literacy in more affluent parts of the world.

In the 1980s, UNESCO adopted simultaneous global strategies for literacy and primary education, appealing this time for technical co-operation between developing countries. The regional projects which resulted then prioritised basic education for women and girls and post-literacy education activities to encourage reading habits.

International Literacy Year (1990), the Jomtien Conference and the revitalisation of basic education, saw the emergence of co-operation between UN partners (UNDP, UNICEF, and the World Bank), their Member States and NGOs, as basic education and literacy for women, girls and the most poor became the global priority for sustainable human development.

This informed major long-term literacy programmes in a number of places, among them India, Egypt, Ghana and Nigeria. Supported by bank loans and multiple sources of bi-lateral grant funding, they often run parallel to local initiatives run by other bodies. New approaches, standing alone and within such programmes, include literacy for income-generation and productive lives, literacy for health and the management of HIV/AIDs, and literacy for the protection of the environment.

Closer inspection will show how the above literacy interventions reflect the evolution of thinking about development practices and its interaction with the changes in international funding, the shift from ambitions of industrial modernisation to meeting more modest needs and rights entitlements. What stands out is that, unlike schooling, literacy education for adults throughout the period has nearly always depended on multiple sources of support for fixed periods of time. This has made for the fragmentation of literacy training, within and between states, even when provision appears to be on an unusually large scale, while the widespread failure to pay

and professionalise teachers keeps it and them on the lowest rungs of educational status ladders.

All this has to be seen in the light of the practicalities of provision. Unlike the mass schooling of the young, the shame of illiteracy has to be overcome to stimulate and sustain adult demand for basic skills, often on a one-to-one basis, before classes begin and once they are in progress. This requires continuous commitment on the part of practitioners in Coventry or Kolkata, Sheffield or Sofala. It means that desired learner groups are small and very local, while distance is a significant obstacle to their mobilisation and coordination, in remote badly-resourced and weakly literate areas (Thiara and Preston, (no date); Hannon et al., 2003; Cabral, 1995). Without looking at how all this is managed and on what scale, we cannot seriously envisage the eradication of illiteracy by 2015

Partnerships Today

From the above, it is clear that civil-society organisations have always been key to the organised teaching of literacy and numeracy. Today, as non-state providers (commercial, non-profit and voluntary), their involvement is often a statutory requirement being imposed everywhere at different levels, by institutions of national, regional and global governance. It may appear simple, but seen as whole, it is usually very complex.

A small programme of basic learning for immigrant women in inner-city Coventry meets local authority priorities, managed by a local university and implemented by a team of three badly paid, part-time staff over a seven-year period, is a small scale intervention. With insecure, very short-term funding, the implementing staff generate demand in local immigrant communities, animate a difficult programme of participatory learning and spend significant amounts of unpaid time in writing and rewriting small funding proposals to keep the activity afloat.

These proposals go to public and private bodies, in the UK and abroad. For every successful bid, management and implementing teams subordinate themselves to new layers of administration above, agreeing to comply with each donor's terms of reference and evaluation requirements and all that this entails for the preparation of reports in differing formats. Hannon et al (2003), based on work in Sheffield, refer to the complexity of these arrangements in community-focused literacy and to the hierarchy of partnerships that can be involved. As state regulation of the quality of provision has become the norm, new bureaucratic loads are being added.

In low-income states, the complexity may be greater and the certainties less, exacerbated by weakness of technical expertise, organisational capacity and infrastructural handicaps (lack of telecommunications, roads, transport and basic services).

A loan-based national literacy programme will involve multiple international funding partners, but down the administrative layers, through provincial, district and community governments, coordination may well be in the hands of an INGO (or a strong local NGO), with national

institutions, smaller CSOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) providing a range of direct inputs.

These might include training in a number of different skills, related materials production and capacity-building. In a recent evaluation in Mozambique (Preston, 2005), two co-ordinating INGOs were each serving large areas in different provinces and building the capacity of 20-30 local implementing bodies and assuming responsibility for strengthening the coordinating skills of provincial and district governments as well, in comprehensive educational schemes where literacy was one of more than a dozen different components. In each case this required assisting these organisations with funding proposals, as well as preparing their own to ensure continuity of their activity.

In the name of enhancing public sector capacity to fulfil policy objectives, a market-oriented, decentralised system is being put in place everywhere for the non-state provision of services at sub-national levels. Its rationale is familiar as a mechanism for maximising cost-effectiveness through competitive tendering and outcomes-based management. For Nordtveit (2005) in one of the Literacy for Life background papers, this translates into a risk-avoidance strategy on the part of funding bodies and a significant reduction of their own transaction costs.

However, bureaucratic maintenance requirements increase with organisational size and should do so exponentially in the case of inter-organisational partnerships. Providing a poorly resourced service to the poorest, least advantaged communities means that such costs are displaced downwards to more vulnerable layers of organisational matrices, as they approach insecure community-based implementers.

At this point the costs of this displacement are passed on to consumers, as the process comes to have an adverse effect on the quality of service and a negative impact on what it can in the end achieve. There is widespread concern at the exacerbation of inequity through these processes, particularly when the distribution and competency of organisations supplementing national provision is uneven. Those who stand to gain most are those at some point in the delivery system and not the ultimate end users.

A variant that further reduces transaction costs at the upper end of the matrix is the silent bi-lateral donor (Koopman, 2005). This makes payments to the active donor. With potentially serious ethical implications, it remains invisible lower down the partnership hierarchy, having no engagement with the service delivery system. Lower down, pressure to reduce the costs of services to marginal groups is seeing the justification of shortened periods of learning at all levels, from basic literacy, through primary schooling and up to initial teacher training and beyond, heedless of the quality and sustainability implications of the knowledge acquired. Less marginal groups are not pressured for such reduced exposure.

UK Involvement

Earlier presentations and the above paragraphs confirm that the funding and management of community-oriented basic learning for adults in England mirror trends in far less healthy economies. Recent articles on inter-agency working in England and Scotland (Glenny, 2005, Tett, 2005, Roaf, 2002) are all examining aspects of the process. Less usually, a comparative study of communication in complex programmes and projects supported by international funding mechanisms, included two UK case studies, one of them seeking to increase literacy in the Midlands, and 20 in a range of primarily poorer countries (Preston, 2005).

By-passing national government, upward communication for local authority implementers in the English Midlands was through a private managing agency, located in a different part of the country, which provided the link to the supra-national funding authority. Unaccustomed to these mores of international management, staff in the Midlands found the lack of contact with the primary client an unfamiliar and destabilising experience, which left them ignorant of the locus of day-to-day control of their work. They became more demoralised when they learned that the intermediary agency had developed its reputation in international educational development in the poor areas of post-colonial states. Accustomed to perceiving themselves to be in the world's mainstream, they felt tarnished through this association with managers who had what they saw to be doubtfully relevant expertise to what they were trying to do.

Britain is a key international player in the provision of education. As expertise has increased in low income states, it is rare now for the service-delivery/end-user interface to require costly expatriate resources, so it is a key partner in the initiatives of the IMF and the World Bank (IFI), contributing as a bi-lateral donor to money that they control, other forms of more direct intervention, including in some instances acting as a silent partner. At one level of expertise, Britain provides significant inter-government policy advice and financial services. At another, UK organisations, private, non-profit and charitable, contribute as managing, coordination and implementing agencies, joining sub-national partnerships serving specific areas, many of them contracted by the British Government. In the interests of public accountability at home, Britain sends expatriate expertise to evaluate this work at selected points of its delivery cycles. It may or may not be British.

Taking a Global View

There are many common features to basic skills interventions for adults in richer and poorer states. They may include short-term cross-national funding, repeated investment in original continuation funding bids, training staff to do this and aggressive financial management (automatic percentage reductions to successful bids, funder-incurred delays to inception that cannot be recuperated, and further fund retrenchment with associated under-spends). Down the organisational matrix there are technological divides, with practitioners at the user interface lacking telephones, IT and transport. This is also the point at which the salaried labour force stops,

with attendant ethnic and gender discrimination. This may change with quality institutionalisation which disposes donors to support less poor and marginal groups, where risks to outcomes and renewed financial support are reduced.

I have argued elsewhere (Preston, 1997, 2002, 2005a) that the global planning tools which guide the whole process demand very specific supplementary literacies, in this case of design, management and evaluation. Short-term funding procedures and the formulation of repeated requests for support to enhance the most basic levels of expertise lie at the heart of this. They lend themselves to significant deskilling in each of these spheres, as well as in the areas of specialist expertise that the activities supported are said to be developing, confirming the

status of those deemed capable of appraising their application.

Eventually, in the UK as elsewhere, some informants in the complex projects study rationalised these experience as funder commitment to the political formation of supra-national regional allegiances and global citizenship, paying lip service to loyalty to individual nation-states and the significant reduction of poverty. Until we have replicated studies of the economics of these processes we are not in a position to accept the validity of such observations, nor therefore to promote them. As advocacy activists move to argue again the case for publicly financed services as crucial to poverty alleviation, there is an urgent need for the information they will provide. ■

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Appendix 6: Seminar Programme

- 9.30 Arrival and Registration
- 9.50 Welcome by David Johnson, *Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford*
- Opening Remarks by Christine Whatford, *Vice-Chair of the UK National Commission for UNESCO and Chair of the Education Committee*
- 10.00 **Session 1: Literacy: The International Challenge and Response**
The global situation and trends. Analysis and conclusions of the 2006 Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Policy and programme thrusts through UNESCO and other international programmes. Presentations by Adama Ouane, *Director, UNESCO Institute of Education (Hamburg)* and Leslie Limage, *Basic Education Division, UNESCO (Paris)* followed by questions to the speakers.
Chair: David Johnson
Rapporteurs: Emeffa Amoako and Jeaniene Spink
- 10.50 Coffee
- 11.15 **Session 2: Response and Discussion**
Response to the presentations by Alan Rogers, *School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia* followed by discussion.
Chair: Juliet McCaffery
Rapporteurs: Candice Lee
- 12.10 **Session 3: Literacy: the UK Challenge and Response**
Presentation by Jan Eldred, *National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)*
Response by Andrew Nelson, *Skills for Life Strategy Unit, Department for Education and Skills* followed by discussion.
Chair: John Oxenham
Rapporteurs: Jenny Hsieh and Sharon Loza
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 **Session 4: Sharing Experience and Working Together**
Presentation by Rosemary Preston, *University of Warwick and Immediate Past Chair of UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET)* followed by brief discussion.
Chair: Peter Lavender
Rapporteur: Bilal Barakat
- (Including a 30-minute exploration, in groups, of opportunities for UK involvement in international programmes.)
- 15.05 **Session 5: Reports and Round-up**
Key points from group discussions, and Round-Up by Lalage Bown, *Council for Education in the Commonwealth*
- 15.25 Closing Remarks by Peter Williams, *Chair, Africa Working Group, Education Committee, UK National Commission for UNESCO*
- 15.30 Tea and depart



Appendix 7: Seminar Participants

Emefa Amoako, *University of Oxford*

Valena Belletini, *University of Cambridge*

Bilal Barakat, *University of Oxford*

Alec Boksenberg, *UK National Commission for UNESCO*

Lalage Bown, *Council for Education in the Commonwealth*

Victoria Brasier, *UK National Commission for UNESCO*

Roy Carr-Hill, *Institute of Education, University of London*

Alba de Souza, *UK National Commission for UNESCO*

Janine Eldred, *National Institute of Adult Continuing Education*

Katie Epstein, *The British Council*

Paul Fordham, *University of Southampton*

Marije Geldof, *Royal Holloway College, University of London*

Angela Githitho-Muriithi, *University of Cambridge*

Mary Hamilton, *University of Lancaster*

Peter Hannon, *University of Sheffield*

Thelma Henderson, *UK Forum for International Education and Training*

Jenny Hsieh, *University of Oxford*

Alex Inglis, *UK National Commission for UNESCO*

Kay Jackaman, *The Reading Agency*

David Johnson, *University of Oxford*

Takehiko Kariya, *University of Tokyo*

Peter Lavender, *National Institute of Adult Continuing Education*

Candice Lee, *University of Oxford*

Nirmala Lee, *London Metropolitan University*

Leslie Limage, *Basic Education Division, UNESCO*

Ian Livingstone, *Basic Skills Consultancy*

Sharon Loza, *University of Oxford*

Jane Mace, *Independent Consultant*

Rupert Maclean, *UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre*

Ian Macpherson, *University of Oxford*

David Mallows, *Institute of Education, University of London*

Juliet McCaffery, *British Association for Literacy in Development*

Charles McGregor, *British Association for Literacy in Development*

Andrew Nelson, *Department for Education and Skills*

Hiromi Orumi, *University of Cambridge*

Adama Ouane, *UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg*

John Oxenham, *Council for Education in the Commonwealth*

Sasha Pavlovich, *University of London*

Jason Pennells, *International Extension College*

Rosemary Preston, *University of Warwick*

Alan Rogers, *University of East Anglia*

Jeaniene Spink, *University of Oxford*

Wendy Spratling, *Ghana School Aid*

Prachi Srivastava, *Research Fellow, University of Oxford*

John Stannard, *Principal Consultant, CfBT*

Richard Thompson, *Institute of Education, London*

Megan (Margaret) Warner, *Council for Education in the Commonwealth*

Christine Whatford, *UK National Commission for UNESCO*

Peter Williams, *UK National Commission for UNESCO*

Ozlem Yazlik, *University of Cambridge*



Appendix 8: Biographies of Speakers

David Johnson, Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford

David Johnson is a Fellow of St Antony's College and University Lecturer in Comparative Education. He specialises in the study of educational systems in Africa and Asia with reference to policy, curriculum and learning. He has a particular interest in literacy studies and has undertaken several longitudinal and comparative studies of literacy in South Africa, Malawi, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. He is the coordinator of the literacy strand of a major ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Project, 2002 – 2005 which studies literacy and numeracy in homes and schools in England and Wales.

Publications include a special edition of a journal on Globalisation, Assessment and Literacy (2003 with Gunther Kress) and a book on Literacy in the Home and School due out in 2006, co-written with colleagues at the University of Bristol.

Adama Ouane, Director, UNESCO Institute of Education (UIE), Hamburg

In 1976, Dr Ouane received his Ph.D in applied linguistics from the Institute of Linguistics at the Moscow Academy of Sciences. From 1977 to 1982, he was the Deputy National Director-General for Literacy and Applied Linguistics in Mali, Professor at the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Bamako and Consultant to UNICEF, UNDP, the Agence de la Francophonie and the World Bank.

He directed the overall linguistic development plan of Mali and launched the first programme of the use of local languages in schools. He has a very long association with the UNESCO Institute for Education, where he served as a Senior Research Specialist from 1982 to 1995. His responsibilities included research, capacity-building and technical support to Member States, NGOs and CSOs in the area of literacy, post-literacy, curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation. He also designed and implemented a large number of inter-regional programmes in these areas.

Dr Ouane has published many books and papers on literacy, post-literacy and continuing education, adult and lifelong learning, mother tongue and multilingual education. Prior to his becoming the Director of UIE in 2000, from 1995 to 1999 he was a Senior Programme Specialist as well as leading specialist responsible for literacy, adult education, non-formal and basic education at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. He was the main author of the major education reports prepared by UNESCO and one of the key organisers of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFITEA V).

Dr Ouane has published extensively on literacy, post-literacy and continuing education, adult & lifelong learning, mother tongue and multilingual education. Besides speaking many African languages, he is fluent in English, French, Russian and German.

Leslie Limage, Programme Specialist, Basic Education Division

Dr Leslie J. Limage has been concerned with international literacy policy and practice for nearly 30 years. She holds undergraduate degrees from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her graduate degrees in Comparative Education, Economics of Education and Sociology of Education were undertaken at the University of Paris and at the Institute of Education, University of London. Her doctoral dissertation in 1975 was a comparative study of literacy policies and practices in four very different political settings: Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, France and the United Kingdom. She was directly involved in the 1974 British literacy campaign, as well as being a school teacher and adult literacy tutor and organiser at the time.

She joined the OECD in 1978 where she was responsible for a research programme on education for multicultural societies involving some 20 countries. She joined UNESCO in 1983. She was coordinator of the UN International Literacy Year Secretariat in 1990 and has published extensively on international and national literacy issues both for UNESCO and in her personal capacity. She has also taken leave from UNESCO as Visiting Professor of Comparative Education with a focus on development, literacy and comparative education systems and reforms at the University of California, Los Angeles and Arizona State University. Over the past five years, she has been based in the Division of Educational Policy and Strategies but is now re-located with the Director of the Division of Basic Education in UNESCO.

She contributed to the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report with three background papers on (a) literacy-related terminology; (b) histories of literacy and histories of development; and (c) book sector policies, literate environments and literacy considerations. She wrote the issues paper for the recent Working Group on Education for All meeting (July 2005), intended to focus the international community on more concerted action to promote sustained resources and commitment for literacy.

All of her work on literacy includes attention to basic skills for all age groups and in the full range of country conditions: industrialised, transition, post-conflict or crisis reconstruction, developing countries and the various combinations of conditions within countries. Her current research in a personal capacity addresses the constraints of international organisations and aid agencies to engage in internal reform for greater effectiveness in promoting a fully literate world.

Rosemary Preston, International Centre for Education in Development, University of Warwick

Rosemary Preston was until recently the Director of the International Centre for Education in Development at the University of Warwick. She has undertaken basic and policy oriented research in international and comparative education and human development, focussing on Andean America, South Pacific and Southern Africa. She has worked across all sectors of education, with particular interest in labour and war-related migration, gender, continuing professional development lifelong learning, community dynamics, international policy and aid. She is past chair of BAICE and UKFIET. Publishing widely, she is past editor of Gender and Education and Compare.

Alan Rogers, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia

Alan Rogers is currently a visiting Professor of Adult Education at the Universities of Nottingham and East Anglia. He started his career teaching history in adult education, particularly local community history in community development projects. After an initial period in the north-east, he spent 20 years at Nottingham University as resident tutor, staff tutor, Senior Lecturer and Reader where he founded the Centre for Local History. He gradually began to engage in training courses for teachers of adults, and from 1972 began to work in third world development programmes on adult training and education (mainly India). In 1979, he was invited to become Director of the Institute of Continuing Education in Magee University College, Londonderry.

In 1985 when the New University of Ulster was merged with the Ulster Polytechnic, he decided not to accept any of the positions offered and took early retirement. He acted as founder Secretary General for the Commonwealth Association for the Education and Training of Adults 1985-1988 and established Education for Development based at the University of Reading, a specialist agency working overseas in adult education. He held an Honorary Professorship at the University of Reading from 1986 until 1998 and a professorial fellowship at the University of Surrey 1988-1993. In 1998, he retired from Education for Development to freelance.

He is Convenor for the Uppingham Seminars in Development and the Uppingham Press and he engages in research, evaluation and training programmes overseas. While at Reading, Nottingham and East Anglia, he has been engaged in teaching courses at masters and doctoral level on adult learning and teaching, and on non-formal education in developing countries, and supervises Masters dissertations and Doctoral theses. He continues to write and publish extensively. He is Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, Royal Historical Society and Royal Society of Arts. He is currently the Reviews Editor for the International Journal for Educational Development.

Janine Eldred, Senior Development Officer, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

Jan Eldred oversees the work of the literacy, language and numeracy team and the health and disability team at NIACE.

Jan has over 35 years' experience of working in education with more than 30 years in the field of adult education.

Her particular interests include foundation programmes, access to learning, widening participation and adult literacy and numeracy.

Originally qualified as a primary school teacher, she has worked as a tutor and tutor organiser in Adult Basic Skills, a community outreach worker, an LEA Further Education officer and Head of Faculty of Foundation Studies in a general college of further education. She has taught literacy, numeracy, family learning and Basic Skills Tutor Training. She has also worked with students with learning difficulties and disabilities as well as with students with behavioural difficulties.

Her qualifications include an M Ed in Adult and Continuing Education and an Ed D in Adult Literacy as well as the Management Charter Initiative at level 5.

Her publications include reports on outreach and unemployment, ALBSU teaching materials, articles on Adults Learning, a policy paper on adult literacy, several reports and books based on the Adult and Community Learning Fund and books in the NIACE Lifeline series.

Andrew Nelson, Skills for Life Strategy Unit, Department for Education and Skills

Andrew Nelson is an adviser on international work for the Skills for Life Strategy Unit in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and he also works on the DfES agenda at Government Office North West. Prior to taking up these responsibilities Andrew was Regional Director for Skills for Life in the North West of England.

He has worked for over 20 years in the school, further, adult, higher education sectors and in youth and community work. This experience has included teaching and responsibilities for the funding, marketing and programming of adult education. Before working for DfES, Andrew was a member of the Basic Skills Agency National Advisory Committee in England for over six years.

Andrew has worked with the governments of Poland and the Czech Republic as a Lifelong Learning Adviser. In 2004, he was the UK representative on the European Commission WGB which considered the development of key competences including literacy and numeracy. In 2005, he was a member of the G8 delegation to the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMEANA) Literacy Initiative conferences in Algiers and Cairo. Currently, Andrew is assisting DfES to develop a 'toolkit' for supporting literacy policy development in Africa and the Middle East.

Andrew has a degree in Social Studies, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Econ), an M.A. in Social and Community Work and a PhD focussed on conceptualising and improving the delivery of equal opportunities within local government. He is also a qualified youth and community worker.

Lalage Bown, Joint Deputy Executive Chairperson, Council for Education in the Commonwealth

Lalage Bown, FRSE, AcSS is a past President of BALID, studied Modern History as an undergraduate and Adult Education as a postgraduate at Oxford. She then worked in university adult education at six universities in four African countries. Her last position was the Dean of Education at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. She was for 11 years Professor and Head of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Glasgow. Her interests in adult literacy include consultancies and evaluations in various parts of Africa, a pioneer study of the impact of literacy acquisition by adult women in developing countries and chairing a study on the application of Freirean principles in a post-industrial context (Edinburgh).



Report Editors: David Johnson, Peter Williams, Linda Leung

Report compiled by:
David Johnson, Jeanine Spink, Emefa Amoako,
Bilal Barakat, Jenny Hsieh, Candice Lee, Sharon Loza
(Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford)

Design: Linda Leung

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United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO

Secretariat

c/o United Nations Association

3 Whitehall Court

London SW1A 2EL

www.unesco.org.uk