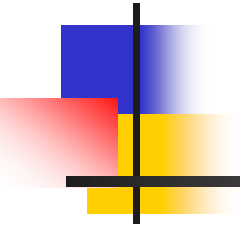


# Reaching Adults with low levels of literacy



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# Research Studies

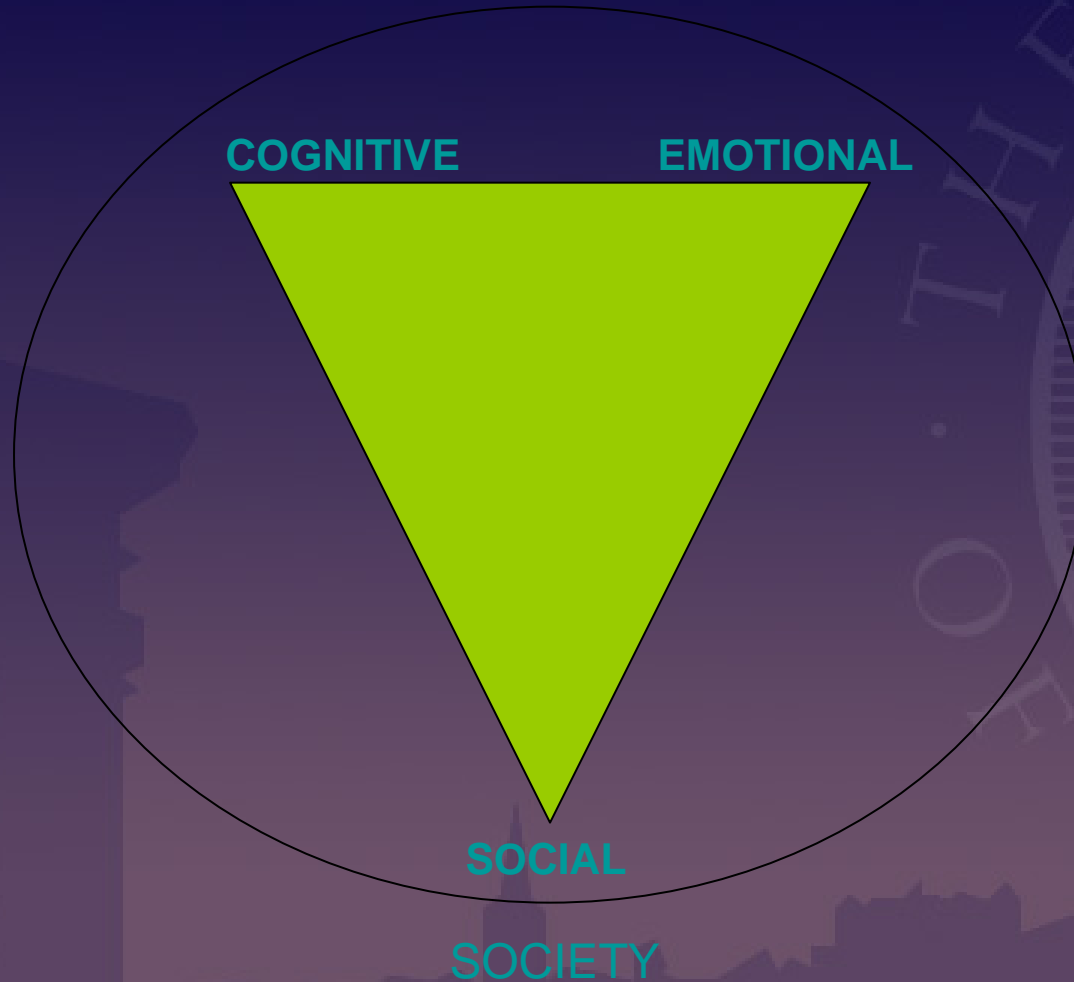
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## Data drawn from three studies

- Parsons and Bynner's (2008) analysis of the Scottish cohort of the 2004 survey from the 1970 British Cohort Study
- Tett et al's (2006) study of literacy and numeracy learners who were participating in provision (funded by the Scottish Government)
- Maclachlan et al's (2008) study of persistence of vulnerable learners (funded by the Scottish Government)



# The tension field of learning



From Illeris, K (2004) *'The three dimensions of learning'* NIACE



# Impact of inequality

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## **Differences in school experiences**

- Parsons and Bynner (2008) found that people with literacy difficulties as adults were less likely to have had help with reading and numbers at school.

## **Post school education**

- They also found that this group had mainly left full-time education without qualifications and not accessed any further learning opportunities.
- This situation has not changed with the national equality panel report (2010) finding that there is a long tail of low achievement among school-leavers particularly from low-income boys and Gypsy Travellers.



# Disposition to learning

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- Poor experiences of school are particularly important in influencing a negative disposition towards learning

*The teachers were 'more interested in the bright ones, the ones that could get on... They sort of just left me to one side... I tried to do me best, but I just felt that because I wasn't bright and I wasn't brainy that people just didn't want to know.'* (student)

*'In English and Maths classes if you got picked on by the teacher...and when you got it wrong - you got hit. So there was fear - no one would put up their hand unless you were 100% sure, and that marks you.'* (student)



# Social networks

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- This is affected by the social networks that people belong to since if engaging in education is not part of the norms of your social group then participating is difficult.
- However, where there is a sense of shared experiences and values amongst class members then this can change.

*At the classes, you feel at ease, you feel good. Most people's problems are worse than mine... No one throws stones at anyone else, - we're all in the same boat but for different reasons.*



# Barriers

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## **Personal sensitivity**

- *I felt I was too old to learn*
- *I was worried that it would be too like school*

## **Stigma attached to literacy learning**

- *I was worried that people at work would find out that my spelling was really bad*

## **Lack of publicity about provision**

- *I didn't realise that there were classes like this*



# Motivation

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## **Self-improvement**

- *I want to better myself and do something with my life*
- *It will prove I'm capable of doing things for myself*

## **Development of skills**

- *I want to write letters and read them without asking my husband*
- *I need to read the notice board at work*



# Engaging in literacy provision

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- **Importance of easily accessible environments**

*It was easy to come along here as I just phoned up and then saw the organiser who asked me about what I could do. If it had been more difficult I don't think I would have come along.'* (student)

- **Outreach/lead in time**

*I spent two years at X developing a relationship with these guys and it took me quite some months in the 'Drop In' facility just to get their confidence and trust and I think that goes a long way to them buying in to it, then going into class sessions, that we're doing now. We couldn't have done that in week one.* (tutor)



# Persisting with learning

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- Having a positive identity as someone capable of becoming more literate represents a resource that individuals can continually draw upon when engaging in learning and it may also be an outcome of engagement in learning
- *‘Coming here helps me keep on going. I don’t think I’m a failure any more.... It’s making me feel good doing something I wanted to do for myself. If I don’t come I could fall on my arse again. It’s boosting my self-esteem, giving me more confidence and helping me know I can get a job’*



# Pedagogy and Practice

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## **Flexible curriculum that responds to the learners**

- The tutors here offer me lots of choice and help me to move on to the next thing when I'm ready

## **Group work built a positive learner identity**

- *The whole group gets on well together and it gives me support to try things that I find difficult such as writing on the flip-chart.*

## **Positive tutor- student relationships**

- *It motivates me that the tutors are working so hard to help me. I've already been able to write a letter and had a good result from it. I feel it's the first time anyone's reacted to anything I've said.*



# Participating built confidence

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- Psychological (self esteem, own potential and achievements, independence, happier, voice opinions, more aware)
- Skills related (speaking to others, using the computer, reading papers and books, filling in forms, shopping)
- Activities/facets of their lives (approaching strangers for information, feeling safer, dealing with conflict, standing up for themselves, not needing an interpreter)



# Outcomes

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- *I'm not crabbit anymore because I'm not avoiding problems, I'm tackling them head on.*
- *I don't need to depend on others and have changed to being very hopeful and helpful.*
- *There's no more fighting with my daughter when it's homework time because I can help her with it which I couldn't do in the past.*
- *I'm more confident in speaking to others so I'm not scared to go to interviews now.*
- *I am a union rep at work...people now come to me for advice with problems with staff.*