

**Adult Literacy discourses, their philosophical origins  
and their impact: case studies of the values and  
assumptions of practitioners**

**Volume 1**

by

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**A thesis submitted to  
The University of Birmingham  
For the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Education  
The University of Birmingham  
12th March 2010**

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## ABSTRACT

This research identifies the assumptions underpinning different discourses about literacy and investigates their impact on the professional values of adult literacy practitioners. Four key discourses are identified, 'Literacy as skills', 'literacy as an experiential process', 'literacy as a social practice', and 'literacy as a critical transformation process'. The research explores the philosophical roots of these different discourses, and also those of the different learning theories which act as a framework for the teaching and learning of literacy. Informed by a postmodern perspective, based on Lyotard's (1984) concepts of 'meta-narratives', 'little narratives', 'language games', and 'the differend', the research 'brings life' to the literacy discourses by using the 'professional narratives' of adult literacy practitioners as data. These are presented as a number of individual case studies. The findings clearly indicate that the 'literacy-as-skills' discourse, imposed by policy-makers and now embedded in the power structures of educational institutions, is not supported by this particular group of research participants, who are strongly orientated towards the 'literacy as a social practice' and the 'literacy as an experiential process' approaches.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to:

my husband, Michael, for his belief that I could do this, his encouragement when I doubted my ability to finish it, his patience about the absences from home it involved, and his understanding in respect of the demands it took on my time.

my daughter, Tessa, and her partner, Jacob, for their interest, and the provision of welcome breaks in Barcelona where they live.

my son Robert, and his partner, Joanne, for the times they have taken charge of the domestic front, and for the wonderful news that I am soon to become a grandmother.

my supervisors, Doctor Nick Peim and Professor Marilyn Martin-Jones, for their scholarship, professional guidance, sensitive understanding and unwavering encouragement. Their support has been invaluable.

my friends Kari Flornes, Gill Boag-Munroe and Chris Hines, for their valued companionship, shared laughter, and supportive shoulders which I leaned on sometimes. We met at Birmingham University, where we started our doctoral journeys at the same time. I am thankful for our wonderful friendship

my friends in Moseley and Harborne including Jenny, Cally, Chloe, Vicky, Adne and Joseph. Their jokes, escapades and brilliant company have made my stays in Birmingham a joy.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the adult literacy practitioners who participated in my research. They had very busy schedules which they kindly interrupted in order to provide data.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABSSU	Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
ACE	Adult and Continuing Education
AE	Adult Education
ALBSU	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
ALLN	Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy
ALRA	Adult Literacy Resource Agency (later BSA)
ALU	Adult Literacy Unit (later BSA)
APU	Assessment of Performance Unit
BAS	British Association of Settlements
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBET	Competency Based Education and Training
DES	Department of Education and Science
EEC	European Economic Commission
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council

HE	Higher Education
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NATECLA	National Association of Teaching English and other Community Languages
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NIACE	National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education
NLS	New Literacy Studies
NRDC	National Research and Development Centre (for Adult Literacy, language and Numeracy)
NWRAC	North West Regional Accreditation Council
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
RaPAL	Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

## Chapter one

### Influential Personal Experience

#### 1.1 Introduction

My research is about the philosophical assumptions adult literacy practitioners value, implicitly or explicitly, for their work and training. These have been shaped by events which relate to practitioners' personal, professional experiences in the UK adult literacy sector since the mid 1970s up to the present day. In order to track these events I attended a workshop at the 2001 Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) summer conference organised by Hamilton and Hillier's (2006) research team. They were producing an oral history which focused on key events and changes in the field of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (ALLN) since the 1970s. Practitioners attending the workshop were asked to form small groups and identify the key events in ALLN they had experienced over that period. The group discussions were audio-recorded and analysed into a set of five timelines (Hamilton and Hillier 2006:164), and categorised as 'Policy Initiatives', 'Institutions', 'Media Programmes', 'Professional Development', and 'Accreditation and Accountability' (see Appendix A). My research does not cover everything mentioned in these timelines but I did not take anything out in case it had resonance with something my research participants might mention. In Appendix A, the Hamilton and Hillier timelines are linked to my 'Autobiographical Timeline'. This was done in order to give a personal, temporal and contextual anchor to the aforesaid events, and also to chart a history of adult literacy developments that I and my research

participants had experienced over the last thirty years or so. I first became involved with adult literacy in the early 1980s and it is the events which I have experienced since then which are the focus of this chapter.

The ‘Autobiographical Timeline’ in Appendix A has been categorised into two ‘tracks’, one relating to my qualifications and training, and the other to my professional experience. The former mentions my initial training experiences: one specifically related to the teaching of adult literacy which I undertook as a volunteer tutor, and another which was more concerned with the teaching of adults in general, which I undertook when I obtained my first paid post as a part-time tutor. These training courses took place many years ago in the early 1980s. However, thinking back and remembering the names of some of the theorists mentioned on the courses, such as Carl Rogers (1961; 1983) and Malcolm Knowles (1970), I recall that they placed stress and value on humanist approaches to the teaching of adults. This chapter also mentions two other events, which are listed on the Hamilton and Hillier timelines: the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the late 1980s (‘Accreditation and Accountability’ timeline), and the publication of the Moser Report (1999) (‘Institutions’ timeline). The latter led to the current *Skills for Life* (2001) policy document about teaching and learning in the field of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (ALLN). Although the field now has the title, ‘Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy’, in my time it has also been known as ‘Adult Basic Education’ (ABE), ‘Adult Basic Skills’ and ‘Basic Education’. The timelines list the onset of NVQs and *Skills for Life* only briefly but this should not belie the fact that they have had a great influence on everyone in the mainstream provision of what is now termed ALLN. The reason for introducing them here, at the beginning of this research narrative, is

because they became the stimuli which eventually inspired my PhD. They are quintessential to the research and are the roots from which it stems.

## **1.2 Organisation of Chapter**

Section 1.3 briefly describes my initial training for adult literacy which took place in the early 1980s and illustrates how it was based on humanist assumptions about adult education which were popular at the time. This provides a backdrop and, in part, a reason as to why the two influential events mentioned above had a profound effect on the, then, trends in teaching adult literacy. Section 1.4, deals with the first of these events; the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the late 1980s. Section 1.5 deals with the second, which is the publication of the Moser Report (1999) which led to the currently active, *Skills for Life* (2001) policy document for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (ALLN). The next section, section 1.6, introduces the ideas of Lyotard (1984) and is an account of the start of my ‘philosophical journey’ which is an investigation into the nature of literacy and who is in a position to decide its properties and who can make decisions about what must be taught and how. Lastly, section 1.7 raises some key issues relating to the aforesaid events and experiences. These have led to the research questions which I focus on in this thesis, and which are listed near the end of the section.

## **1.3 The Early Days**

In 1982, I became a volunteer on my local adult literacy scheme after seeing the work advertised in the local paper. After ringing up the co-ordinator, for what was then termed ‘Adult Basic Education’ (ABE) I was invited to the first session of the volunteer training

course organised by the local Further Education (FE) College in Leyland, Lancashire. In those days FE colleges were part of the Local Education Authority's (LEA's) remit and the college was responsible for adult education (including ABE of which adult literacy was part) in two of the county's education districts; Chorley and South Ribble. I lived in the Chorley district and contacted the Adult Basic Education co-ordinator for this particular area. The South Ribble district had a different co-ordinator employed by the same college.

The training course, involving attendance at weekly two-hour training sessions over a six week period, stressed from the beginning that our approach should be student-centred. It emphasised that wherever possible literacy teaching should be 'egalitarian' and based on student's 'needs' and 'interests'. I no longer have any course aims or course outlines for volunteer training existing from this period so I have referred to adult literacy research published at that time in order to remind myself of the, then, trends in adult literacy. Very little published research exists from this period but aspects of Levine's (1986) book *The Social Concept of Literacy* enables me to set my early experiences in what was then the wider context of adult literacy in the UK.

One reason why so little research exists for this period is that adult literacy did not become "a major social problem" (Levine 1986:150-153) for the UK until the mid 1970s. He points out that this did not mean the number of adults needing literacy tuition suddenly increased at this time or that literacy tuition did not exist. Prisons, hospitals, voluntary organisations and the armed services were providing some tuition but it was not on a national scale. This began to change in the mid 1970s as a number of elements converged. Levine refers to a Department of Education and Science research report that was published

in 1972 which suggested that about 4% of fifteen year olds were leaving school with reading ages of nine or less. According to Levine this report possibly stimulated the interest of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Education Officers who began to talk to producers about programmes for non-readers. In November 1973 their plans were aired at a British Association of Settlements (BAS) conference titled 'Status Illiterate – Prospects Zero' which was chaired by Lady Plowden and which was very successful and well-publicised. This led to the formation of the National Committee for Adult Literacy in order to develop provision and which was also chaired by Lady Plowden. In 1974 the BBC broadcast a three year programme for people with literacy issues which publicised the use of volunteers and a telephone referral service for intending students and tutors. Eventually the BBC joined forces with the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) to ask the Department of Education and Science (DES) for financial assistance. After more lobbying the government responded by providing £1 million to be used by LEAs to provide paid staff to tackle the issue of adult literacy. An Adult Literacy Resource Agency (ALRA) was set up to distribute the money and to provide support in the way of expertise and training materials. In 1978 ALRA was replaced by the Adult Literacy Unit (ALU) which later became the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU); the term 'basic skills' had been added because ALBSU now had a remit for numeracy and ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) as well as literacy. It was after ALBSU was established that I became a volunteer tutor in 1982 and started my training. Since then, ALBSU has become the Basic Skills Agency (BSA). Levine's book was published in 1986 but refers to research which was carried out in the late 1970s and early 1980s and so it bears relevance to the time I started as a volunteer.

Levine's research was specifically about the Nottingham Adult Literacy Scheme in the 1980s but some of the issues he raises are pertinent to my experiences. For instance, he mentions that the Nottingham volunteer training course lasted for 12 hours spread out over six weeks and took place several times a year whenever a suitable number (12-16 people) of would-be volunteers warranted it. The training course I took in Lancashire was organised in the same way. Levine points out that the Nottingham training was based on three main principles which are strongly reminiscent of the principles involved in my own training. The first principle was that teaching should be related to adult learners' needs which were jointly negotiated between learner and tutor. This meant that learning activities and materials specifically designed for adults were preferred. Next, the second principle, egalitarianism, involved stressing the limits of the tutor's own literacy and the suggestion that tutors could, and should, learn from learners. Lastly, the third principle emphasised preference for task-related teaching pertinent to learners' lives rather than reading schemes or phonics (although these were not ignored). There was no fixed 'syllabus' and learners' current abilities and needs determined which skills were taught. In chapter four I demonstrate how these principles are strongly associated with humanist approaches to adult education. According to Levine volunteer tutors fell naturally into two categories, those with teaching experience and those without. In those days ABE had very little funding and it was common practice to appoint volunteer tutors who were not qualified teachers to teach learners on a one-to-one basis in their homes or in a class if there was enough funding to provide a venue. Many practitioners welcomed this because it avoided a 'school-room' atmosphere developing which might have a negative effect on learners who associated school with what they might regard as their literacy 'failure'. Volunteers who were qualified teachers were also asked to take this issue on board:

There was a sense in which the tutor training course attempted to embrace two opposite objectives – to prevent teachers transferring, in a wholesale way, existing attitudes and methods developed for beginning reading with children – to give non-teachers sufficient knowledge of available techniques to allow them to go into the rather daunting first contact with confidence. (Levine 1986: 105-106)

At the end of the Lancashire course I was accepted as a suitable volunteer and given my first two learners who attended two different weekly, evening classes. The two learners were adults with special needs; Keith and Ann. Ann had Down's syndrome. I later acquired two more home-based learners; Roy, a local farmer and Maria who was a native Italian and needed tuition for English as a Foreign Language. I was expected to plan and prepare my teaching sessions myself and ask for advice from the paid tutors as and when I needed it.

In 1983, after working as a volunteer tutor for nine months, I was asked if I would like to be employed as a paid, part-time tutor. I welcomed this opportunity and became a part-time Tutor Organiser responsible for Home Tuition. There was a tradition of volunteers teaching people in their homes because in the 1970's there was not enough funding to pay for tutors or class venues. By the time I started paid employment some classes did exist and learners were encouraged to attend in order to overcome their isolation. However, learners who were shy about attending classes because they did not want to be seen going to what was sometimes regarded as a 'low-status' class were given a volunteer who would visit their homes on a weekly basis. (I had done this work myself when teaching Roy and

Maria). It was now my job to assess 'home students', as they were then called, and match them with suitable volunteers. After a few months I also took on more classes and was asked to teach an Adult Basic Education (ABE) group at the local prison. In this way the early 1980s saw me launched as a tutor of adults, part of this 'launching' involved attending 'Module A', a training scheme provided by the NWRAC (Northwest Regional Accreditation Council), an organisation which existed when training and funding for adult education was still in the control of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). However, 'The Further and Higher Education Act' of 1992 turned FE colleges into self-governing organisations and shifted educational policy-making from LEAs to central government; a process known as 'incorporation'. A new centralised funding agency, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), was also established.

The NWRAC courses brought together experienced adult tutors who worked at Further Education (FE) colleges belonging to the same LEA so that they could provide training days and training weekends for new recruits. 'Module A' was about the practical application of adult learning theory and was considered to be generic because it was the most useful and it was recommended for all new tutors of adults. However, it was not compulsory. There were other modules to do with curriculum development and resources but 'A' was considered the most important. At the college where I worked, prospective tutors attending for interview were always asked if they were prepared to undergo training for the teaching of adults. Most people, including myself, welcomed the insight that the course might provide although not everyone was happy about it – especially people who had been teaching in schools a long time and thought themselves 'experienced'. Some people, however, changed their minds and decided to attend the training when it was

pointed out to them their ‘experience’ was based on teaching children in school whereas teaching adults was ‘different’.

It was during these training sessions for professional, paid tutors, that the ‘difference’ between teaching adults and teaching children was explained more fully, but mostly in practical rather than theoretical terms. The practical training course we were taking was based on the ideas and theories of Carl Rogers (1961; 1983) and Malcolm Knowles (1970) and their names were mentioned frequently during training sessions. Their ideas are rooted in the Liberal Humanist tradition; a tradition which believed in ‘education for its own sake’ (Hamilton and Hillier 2006: 115) and which influenced adult education policy in the UK at this time (1970’s and early 1980’s). This tradition had a discourse or ‘language game’ (see Lyotard (1984) in chapter two) which stipulated that:

- Children had to attend school on a compulsory basis and were therefore a ‘captive’ audience whereas adults could “walk with their feet” if they disliked the tutor or the learning experience. Therefore, we were no longer ‘teachers’ but ‘facilitators’ and this involved a new way of approaching students.
- The job of a facilitator was to provide a friendly productive learning environment.
- Learners were to be encouraged to negotiate their own curriculum with the facilitator who should help them become self-directive.

- Adult learners had experience which should be used to direct learning activities as far as possible.
- Facilitators should adopt experiential approaches to learning.

Throughout this training course, we, as trainee tutors of adults, were taught (as far as possible) in the way that the course directors expected us to teach our students. It was a novel experience and the only demands made were that we attend all the course sessions (about 4 – 5 residential week-ends) and carry out an observed teaching session which was held at the end of the course. I took on board many of the new ideas, especially those of self-directed learners and experiential learning and a negotiated curriculum. They seemed particularly suited to Adult Basic Education students who, at that time, did not have to go through any kind of accreditation process (which tends to put limits on how far a student can self-direct their learning) unless they wanted to. Rather than go into details here, however, the assumptions which underpin humanist theories of adult learning and adult literacy will be discussed later in chapters four and five respectively. For now, the point is to stress that the ideas in the humanist ‘language game’ such as self-directed learners, ‘experiential learning’ and a ‘negotiated curriculum’ became the mainstay of my adult literacy teaching in the early 1980s.

Later, when I became a full-time Adult Literacy Coordinator in 1984, I started to attend meetings where I met with other coordinators from across Lancashire and learned about more ‘critical’ approaches to adult literacy. During this time I absorbed the ideas of Paulo Freire (1972) who had a radical and emancipatory approach to literacy which involved

empowering people and addressing power structures in society. Later, when I started my MA in 1993 at Lancaster University, I absorbed ideas about another critical discourse, 'literacy as a social practice'. This was because some of my MA tutors, such as Barton and Hamilton (1998), were, and still are, well-known scholars using this approach. However, these critical ways of looking at literacy were profoundly affected by the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the late 1980s, and more recently by the *Skills for Life* (2001) policy document for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (ALLN). These placed a growing emphasis on an approach which insists that literacy is 'skills'; a discourse I experienced when I moved into the Higher Education (HE) sector in 2005 in order to teach on the then, new, compulsory Certificate in Education courses for ALLN tutors introduced by *Skills for Life*. Through these different roles I have personally experienced the influence of the four key literacy discourses covered by this research, such as 'literacy as an experiential process', 'literacy as critical transformation', 'literacy as a social practice', and 'literacy as skills'.

#### **1.4 First Event**

In 1986 the Tory Government established the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) which endorsed the idea that only the skills needed for occupational competence should be the basis of qualifications in the post-compulsory sector (Rogers 2001a: 27-28). Within the sector the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) demanded teaching being directed towards the assessment of *competencies* (precise behavioural outcomes) which learners had to *perform* according to strict pre-set criteria linked to occupational standards (Gray et al 2000:28). NVQs, then, were underpinned by Competency based Education and Training (CBET) which was

assessed, in part, through observed performance in the work place (Jessup 1991). Although adult literacy learners were not assessed in the workplace CBET methodology was still used to develop qualifications for them. It was also used to develop qualifications for practitioners. Learner assessment, now compulsory, was based on portfolios of 'evidence' which showed successful completion of prescribed 'elements' of competence.

Qualifications for learners such as Wordpower in literacy and ESOL, and Numberpower in numeracy were established for different levels of attainment. ALBSU became instrumental in establishing this type of accreditation because it eventually funded only basic skills courses which offered it. According to Papen (2005:97), the onset of these courses meant that adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL became more and more institutionalized and formalized and earlier types of provision, such as home tuition, ceased. Papen also points out that the use of NVQ methodology and curricula for accrediting basic skills courses reflected the growing *functional view* policy makers now had about adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, and how they expected it to play a key role in providing a competent workforce.

Papen (ibid: 9) points out that there are various views about the nature of literacy of which functional views are just one aspect. She points out that the other influential views of literacy can be defined as the 'critical' and the 'liberal' (I discuss all of these in depth in chapter five). At this point, suffice it to say that the liberal humanist approach to teaching literacy I had experienced in the early 1980s was now being replaced by the functional skills approach demanded by policymakers and employers who were concerned about the UK's poor economic performance which they blamed, in part, on the poor literacy levels of the working population.

NVQ/CBET methodology was used to develop qualifications for tutors of adult literacy at two different levels. Level one was regarded as a form of initial training for new tutors and experienced volunteer tutors. Level two was aimed at experienced professional tutors who needed to obtain a specific qualification relevant for their work. In 1990 I became a mentor on a two-year pilot tutor-accreditation scheme at the higher level. This was the City and Guilds 9281 (later 9285), “The Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills”. I became involved at the start of the second year. At the end of this year, the final pilot year, the scheme was given a new City and Guilds number, 9285. Afterwards, in Adult Literacy circles the scheme was always referred to as ‘The 9285’.

The strong policy endorsement of CBET, especially in the post-compulsory sector, led to an equally strong reaction against the approach. There were serious misgivings in the field of adult education (including adult literacy education) about the fact that City and Guilds was the accreditation body for both student and tutor qualifications. At that time, City and Guilds was strongly associated with the accreditation of occupational *training* qualifications to do with work-based areas such as plumbing and catering (Clarke 1993). Wallace (2003:116) points out that in adult education generally it led to a value-laden debate relating to whether practitioners in the post-compulsory sector regarded themselves as teachers or trainers. The philosophical assumptions underpinning the CBET model of tutor training differed from those that underpinned the existing liberal humanist initial training and professional development models, and the ‘trainer or educator’ issue became contentious. Those against CBET insisted that its prescriptive character limited the development of ‘professionals’, a term that is very controversial (Helsby 1999). They

preferred models of professional development based on experiential approaches to do with expertise and reflective practice (Hyland 1994). Others suggested a synthesis between competence and reflective practice (Hodkinson and Issitt 1995). The important point is that competence, experiential learning and reflective practice stem from different philosophical roots and this PhD research is based, in part, on the investigation of these roots and their effect on adult literacy in the UK.

### **1.5 Second Event**

The next event was the publication of the Moser Report in 1999. Hamilton and Hillier (2006:14-15) point out that it was informed by the International Literacy Survey carried out by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1997. The survey suggested that seven million adults were in need of ALLN. According to Barton et al (2007), a comparative 'league table' produced by the survey, listed the literacy rates in different countries and Britain was not near the top. Therefore, in the UK, The Moser Report was commissioned and it recommended a new Basic Skills strategy which led to the currently active *Skills for Life* (2001) policy document for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy. The Basic Skills strategy also established a new government unit; the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABBSU) (which later became the Skills for Life Strategy Unit), and the Basic Skills Agency lost its remit for steering in new developments. Responsibility for research and development was given to the newly established National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. The policy changes also introduced new funding arrangements and the FEFC was replaced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The changes also involved the establishment of a new Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

Since the Moser report was published developments in the field of ALLN are, in the main, a continuation of the 'functional' ideologies and aims previously mentioned in respect of NVQs (Papen 2005:97). As I mentioned earlier, the government had moved from organising ALLN locally through LEAs, to establishing a centrally driven policy with a standardised curriculum for all. Nowadays, as a result of the *Skills for Life* policy, adult language, literacy and numeracy have become further institutionalised; there has also been a great effort to 'professionalise' practitioners and volunteers have been phased out. Papen points out that government policy is driven mainly by economic goals but it has also committed itself to linking ALLN to a wider social policy. However, in both cases the government takes a functional 'skills' view and defines ALLN as:

...the ability to read, write and speak in English, and to use mathematics at a level necessary to *function* at work and in society in general. (DfES 1999:2) (My italics)

The *Skills for Life* (2001) policy has made national qualifications for practitioners compulsory and all existing tutors as well as new tutors have to achieve them. They now have to have an initial qualification at Level 4 (undergraduate level) as a minimum requirement. There are also some initial training courses for graduates at PGCE level as well as some advanced courses, such as post-graduate diplomas and MAs which have been developed in Higher Education. Previous forms of accreditation, such as The City and Guilds 9285 tutor accreditation scheme (and the City and Guilds student accreditation schemes) mentioned above, are no longer recognised.

The *Skills for Life* policy also introduced a national curriculum for ALLN learners assessed by National Tests, which was strongly linked to New Labour's newly established Literacy Strategy for schools and which challenged the humanistic notion of "students owning the curriculum" (Hamilton and Hillier 2006:110). Papen describes this further:

For many, the conception of adult basic education in terms of pre-vocational and vocational literacy and numeracy skills fails to recognise people's existing uses of literacy, the skills they possess or the meanings that literacy has for them. Therefore, invariably it results in a deficit view, which focuses on what people can't do, rather than what they can do already...Individual and everyday literacy and numeracy practices go far beyond what is vocationally relevant. But the Skills for Life policy is strikingly silent about people's own reading and writing practices. (Papen 2005:102)

Although the phased-out 9285 was prescriptive because it insisted that certain competencies had to be met; *how* they were met could still be negotiated between the prospective tutor and tutor-educator. However, with the onset of the *Skills for Life* National Curriculum, many practitioners felt that their own professional judgment and 'autonomy' had been further undermined and that they were now regarded simply as 'technicians' working to curriculum values and designs imposed from 'outside': a state of affairs discussed in Barton et al (2007: 13).

*Skills for Life*, then, introduced national curricula for the training of both learners and tutors. In both cases the curricula actually specify not only the content of what is to be taught but also how it has to be taught. This again raises contentious issues about which values should underpin both the education of ALLN learners and the professional development of ALLN tutors.

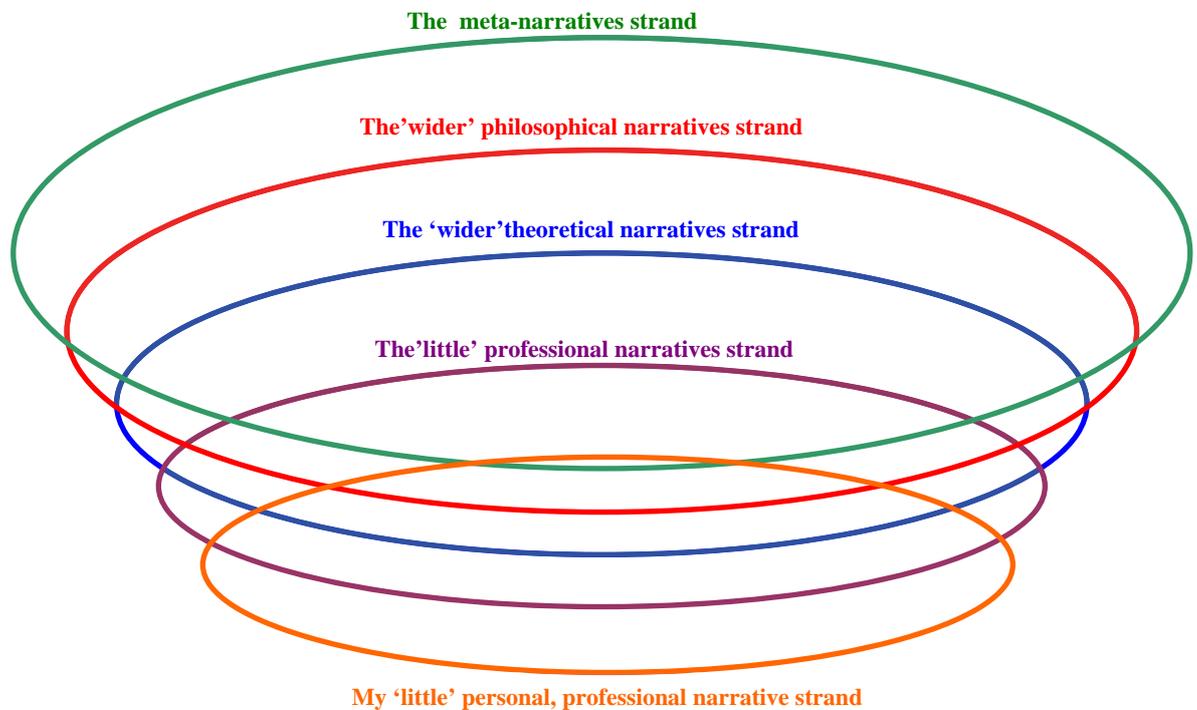
### 1.6 My ‘meeting’ with Lyotard.

We are now at the stage (2008) where the “Skills for Life” policy is well-entrenched in the field of ALLN. However, practitioners from novices to more experienced people, have, between them, experienced a wide number of training programmes influenced by values which stem from different philosophical roots. This has raised issues about competing definitions of literacy and what it is that practitioners are actually being taught when they are trained. It has also given rise to questions about what it is practitioners are actually teaching under the guise of ‘literacy’, how they are teaching it, and why. In my own journey through adult literacy education I have experienced a massive swing from the liberal and humanist teaching traditions preferred in the adult literacy sector of the 1970s and early 1980s, to the more functional, didactic approaches of the 1990s and the 2000s. These approaches come from different philosophical origins so I decided to investigate them for my PhD. This choice was combined with my growing interest in ‘narrative’ as a form of research which had been fuelled by the experience of *narrating* some of the events in my own story, and writing them down here. Then, when I started to read educational philosophy, I came across Lyotard’s (1984) concepts of ‘meta narratives’ and ‘little narratives’. They connected with my interest in using narrative as a form of research, and my research trajectory was determined.

Lyotard's insistence that the knowledge claims contained in the "little narratives" of individuals and small groups are just as legitimate as those contained in modernity's powerful "meta-narratives", reflected the challenges I felt in my own situation. Thus I began to regard my personal, 'professional narrative' and the 'professional narratives' of other practitioners as 'little narratives' worthy of being researched. I became focused on exploring and investigating the philosophical assumptions that *practitioners themselves* perceive, explicitly or implicitly, as having value for their work and professional development.

The assumptions about adult education and adult literacy contained in the dominant, influential theories affecting the field often compete, or have competed in the past, with each other for universal authority. As part of my investigation, and following the influence of Lyotard, I decided to trace these theories back to their roots which led me to the powerful philosophies of modernity such as Positivism, Phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory. My inclination for further investigation, in turn, traced these philosophies back to their origins in the meta-narratives of human emancipation and knowledge unity. I absorbed Lyotard's view that the knowledge claims of the meta-narratives, philosophies and theories could never be 'universal'. They could only ever be provisional and partial because they could not escape their historical, social and cultural influences, influences which, in some cases, they claimed to transcend. In essence, they were all 'stories'; none more legitimate than the other. Nowadays, I see the professional lives and worlds of adult literacy practitioners as consisting of a number of narrative strands; each one interlinked and interacting with the other. The strands are illustrated in Figure 1. The wider the

narrative strand the wider its power and influence. The narrative strands are only briefly introduced at this stage but are fully investigated in the next five chapters.



*Fig1. The interlinking narrative strands*

The top strand represents Lyotard's 'meta narratives' of emancipation and knowledge unity. The 'meta narratives' further generated the very influential modernist philosophical schools of thought such as Positivism, Phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory. I have termed these 'philosophical narratives' and they are represented by the second strand. In turn, the 'philosophical narratives' have spawned many theories about education and educational research. These are on the third strand and I have called them 'theoretical narratives'. My emphasis is on 'theoretical narratives' related to adult education; adult literacy and, because I am engaged in educational research, those related to the research process itself. The top three strands; the 'meta narratives', 'philosophical narratives' and

'theoretical narratives' are visually wider because I perceive them as having a 'wider' influence on adult literacy practitioners. This does not mean that the knowledge they espouse is more legitimate than the knowledge contained in the fourth strand which represents the 'little narratives' of my research participants and which I have called 'professional narratives'. Lastly, I have included the fifth strand which represents my 'little' personal, 'professional narrative'. The important point is that it is extremely difficult to separate all the strands because they are constantly interacting with each other. In order to show that all the strands are interlinked I have overlapped every individual one with all the others.

### **1.7 Issues and Research Questions**

In summarizing my experience of two 'events'; the development of NVQ accreditation for both learners and practitioners in the 1980s, and the introduction of the *Skills for Life* policy in 2001, the main issues arising are, firstly, the move from a liberal humanistic, individual approach to literacy - where learners could negotiate the curriculum with their tutors - to a more and more functional, 'skills' approach where the curriculum for all is decided by policy. This has caused contention between practitioners as to the nature of literacy and what should be taught and how. The government is concerned with improving the UK's economic performance and has devised a national curriculum and tests based on the skills it thinks a competent workforce should possess. On the other hand, many practitioners are concerned that the vocational emphasis favoured by policy does not take account of the interests of individual learners who have many other focuses for their literacy apart from the world of employment. Secondly, when I first started working in the ALLN field, learners played a big part in their own self - assessment and did not have to

participate in any form of accreditation unless they wanted to. Nowadays assessment is compulsory and funding for ALLN provision is dependent on it. Thirdly, although many practitioners welcome the large amount of funding and attention ALLN now receives from government, issues have been raised about whether the national curriculum and tests are having a negative effect on learner's lives. Some learners, retired people for instance, do not want to take a test. Others can be put off by the new screening and testing processes. Papen (2005:102) points out that this group of people, and others who have always been difficult to reach through standard college-based provision, are still not being reached by the new *Skills for Life* system. Lastly, practitioners are concerned about the influence the National Tests have on what is taught and how it is taught. There is concern that some practitioners might be influenced to simply 'teach to the test'. All these issues raise key questions about the nature of 'literacy,' and what actually manifests itself in the guise of 'literacy' in practice. Street (2006:1) raises similar questions and issues in respect of policy making about literacy at international level, and points out that policy debates should be informed by "rigorous intellectual definitions and knowledge of what constitutes the field of enquiry". My perception is that the "intellectual" paths leading up to the 'field' are many and varied. They emanate from a number of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics and philosophy to name a few. The paths often criss-cross each other and it is easy to go off at a tangent. Nonetheless, this research concerns itself with focusing mainly on the *philosophical* path. It asks the following questions:

- What are the natures of the narratives about adult literacy which have emerged in the UK since the mid 1970s?
- What are their philosophical origins?

- What impact have they had on the values and assumptions of adult literacy practitioners?

I want to explore the philosophical path for three reasons. Firstly, from my coverage of the literature so far, not that many literacy researchers seem to travel a great distance along it, and I want to go further than they do. Secondly, although I am only taking one path, I see my journey as a form of personal, professional development that will start to crystallise my own “rigorous intellectual definitions and knowledge of what constitutes the field of enquiry” (Street *ibid*). Thirdly, as I take my steps, like an archaeologist, I am looking forward to unearthing some of the ‘big’ philosophical ‘building blocks’ we have not only built on, but also built over and sometimes hidden. These I will ‘excavate’, and engage with on the way. Fourthly, I want to see how far these philosophical ‘building blocks’ underpin the current ‘structures’ on which our ideas about literacy are built. As I go I take Lyotard (1984) along as a guide to critically inform me about the journey and its tasks.

This chapter has described how events from my personal, professional narrative, or my “*petit recit*” (Lyotard *ibid*) based on *practice*, has led me to an engagement with what Lyotard calls the “meta narratives’ or “grand discourses” and the philosophies and *theories* they have generated, especially in relation to adult education and adult literacy. In other words, my *practice* has led me to an engagement with *theory*. Modernist thought treats ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ as binary opposites, or dualisms, and the two poles pull in opposite directions (Chapell et al 2003). The nature of a dualism means that whichever word comes first is the most dominant. In educational research

circles there are those who believe that theory should inform practice and think in terms of ‘theory–practice’; and there are those who believe practice should inform theory and think in terms of ‘practice – theory’. This polarisation can confuse and distort, and postmodern thinkers such as Edwards (1997) and Usher et al (1997) want to find alternatives. Following their postmodern influence, and that of Lyotard’s (1984), I conflate these binary opposites and give ‘practice’ and ‘theory’ the attention *both* demand. In the next chapter, chapter two, I introduce Lyotard’s concepts about ‘narrative’ itself, and his other key concepts such as ‘language games’ and the ‘differend’. Following this, chapter three focuses on the modernist meta- narratives of human emancipation and knowledge unity; plus their related philosophical schools of thought (philosophical narratives) such as, Positivism, Phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory. In turn, their ‘language games’ have generated learning theories (theoretical narratives) such as behaviourism, cognitivism, humanism, and critical pedagogy, which are discussed in chapter four. These are also related to adult education. It is not until chapter five that I reach the theoretical narratives about literacy itself. However, the ‘excavation’ work in the earlier chapters was necessary to reveal the philosophical ‘provenance’ of the literacy narratives such as ‘literacy is skills’, ‘literacy is an experiential process’, ‘literacy is a critical, transformation process’, and ‘literacy is a social practice’. At this point, having gained some insights into two of my research questions - *What are the natures of the narratives about adult literacy which have emerged in the UK since the mid 1970s? What are their philosophical origins?* - the next chapters move on to my practical research project, which focuses on the third question: *What impact have [all the previous narratives] had on the values and assumptions of adult literacy practitioners?* Chapter six prepares

the ground by exploring how the philosophical narratives have influenced the assumptions underpinning the theoretical narratives about the research process itself. These assumptions are: Research is a 'scientific process'; or an 'interpretative process; or a 'critical process. The chapter also deals with issues relating to the criteria which bring 'intellectual respectability' to research such as 'validity', 'reliability' and 'generalisation' and others. It further outlines the reasons why I chose individual case studies as a research strategy and 'professional narratives' as a way of collecting data. In chapter seven, I discuss the ideas of two scholars engaged in a contentious debate about the aforesaid 'intellectual respectability' of narrative research. One criticises the validity of narrative research from a positivist perspective, and the other supports narrative research and criticises positivism. The following chapter, chapter eight, explores the literature on narrative research itself, and outlines the concept of 'grounded conversations' (Goodson and Sikes 2001); a way of collecting data I used to help participants' 'professional narratives' 'language' themselves into existence. The next chapter, chapter nine, outlines the steps taken when planning the data collection process and focuses on the ethical issues involved. In chapters ten and eleven each participant's 'professional narrative' is presented as an individual case study. These chapters demonstrate how the data from the 'little' 'professional narratives' *bring life* to the 'excavated' philosophical and theoretical narratives as they manifest themselves in the participants' *lived* experiences. The last chapter, chapter twelve, summarises the data and the profiles of the participants.

## Chapter Two

### Introducing Lyotard: ‘Meta Narratives’, ‘Little Narratives’, ‘Language Games’ and the ‘Differend’

#### 2.1 Introduction

In his seminal text *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984), Jean-Francois Lyotard (1925-1998) focuses, in part, on the era of ‘modernity’ and poses complex challenges to those who contributed to its universal modes of thought and their current adherents.

‘Modernity’ refers to the various social, economic and political systems that have existed from around the eighteenth century onwards (Lyotard 1984:3). According to Sarup (1993:130-131), ‘postmodernity’, “suggests what came *after* modernity” (my italics) and refers to the erosion of modernist systems. (This ‘suggestion’, influenced by the term ‘modernity’ prefixed by ‘post’, is debatable. Many scholars have interpreted ‘postmodernism’ differently but I do not intend to go into detail about these ‘interpretations’ at this point because they are discussed more fully in the next chapter, chapter three). According to Sarup (ibid), ‘modernism’ can be described as the culture of modernity, and ‘postmodernism’ as the culture of postmodernity. Lyotard (1984: xxiii) uses the term “postmodern condition” to describe the state of knowledge and the state of culture in what are now highly developed technological societies. He concentrates on the “transformations” which have altered the “game rules” for interpreting cultural activities such as science, literature and the arts. A major concern is definitions (or the difficulty of reaching definitions) of knowledge, its production and its legitimisation.

## 2.2 Organisation of Chapter

Lyotard introduces us to two key concepts, “narrative” and “language games”, which are fundamental to understanding his philosophical stance. In 2.3, his major division of the term “narratives” into “meta-narratives” and “little narratives” is brought into focus. This section links ‘meta-narratives’ to modernity, and ‘little narratives’ to postmodernity. It also examines the Lyotardian claim that modernity is ordered, through consensus, by the dominance of the meta-narratives, one which stipulates that scientific knowledge will bring about human progress and emancipation (political) and the other which speculates that all knowledge will be eventually unified (philosophical). In addition, Lyotard’s postmodern challenge that ‘meta narratives’ are no longer credible is explored; as is the importance he gives to ‘little narratives’ which stress ‘dissensus’, or, in other words, difference, and the power of the individual or small group over the system. In this way the relationship of both ‘meta-narratives’ and ‘little narratives’ to teaching, learning and research in adult literacy is established ready for further exploration in later chapters.

In section 2.4, Lyotard’s second key concept, “language games”, is outlined. These games are multitudinous and have a plurality of “games rules” which do not conform to those of the meta-narratives. Lyotard takes the idea of ‘language games’ from Wittgenstein (1953) and the important connections between these two scholars are investigated. As the section develops another of Lyotard’s (1988: xi) concepts, the “differend” is also introduced. The ‘differend’ describes a situation where the conflicting game rules of different discourses do not have the same rules of judgment and are therefore incommensurate and cannot be resolved. I discuss how my research is about identifying and engaging with the ‘differends’ to do with literacy

and the education of adult literacy practitioners. Lastly, whilst this thesis supports the ideas of Lyotard, the last section, 2.5, raises awareness of criticisms and arguments about some of the issues generated by his ideas.

### **2.3 ‘Meta Narratives’ and ‘Little Narratives’**

There are two overarching Modernist discourses and both use their own narratives to present their different ideas about the relationship of knowledge to our existence. One insists that only scientific knowledge is legitimate and that it will lead to the emancipation and freedom of humanity. The other specifies that the acquisition of knowledge is an end in itself and that it is essential for human progress. It further insists that all knowledge is related and will eventually be unified for the benefit of all. Whilst the first discourse legitimates science because it is assumed to be emancipatory, the second legitimates science because it is assumed that it will contribute to the unification of knowledge (Usher and Edwards 1994:161). For Lyotard (1984), however, as well as the scientific knowledge favoured by modernity, other types of knowledge have always existed. This he has termed “narrative” knowledge. He considers this to be just as legitimate as scientific knowledge even if it is not as powerful. Central to Lyotard’s argument is his belief that the knowledge claims of science and philosophy are, in fact, forms of narrative themselves. They are so powerful however, that he describes them as “meta discourses” or “grand narratives” (He uses the terms ‘discourses’ and ‘narratives’ interchangeably). Their “language games” are used to perpetuate the “myth” that the knowledge they generate is the only ‘true’ form of legitimate knowledge. These legitimating meta-narratives, which subsume other types of narrative, and are placed in a privileged position over them, are what Lyotard describes as ‘modern’. Both work in the same way.

They insist that humanity's progress depends on the truth of all knowledge statements being subject to the rules of a meta-narrative; whichever meta-narrative that might be. A Lyotardian scholar, Malpas (2003), makes the following comment:

Under a grand narrative, all the social institutions such as law, education and technology combine to strive for a common goal for all humanity: absolute knowledge or universal emancipation. Knowledge thus acquires a vocation and a role for the greater good. (Malpas 2003:27)

Lyotard (1984), however, argues that the scientific knowledge claims of grand narratives are not superior to any other kinds of narrative knowledge. This stance does not necessarily reject the knowledge claims of the grand narratives but insists that other types of legitimate narrative knowledge exist.

In traditional societies narratives (popular stories, myths, legends and tales) defined ways people could integrate into the established organisations and institutions of their particular societies. They were a way of defining and applying the criteria of what things are appropriate and competent to say, do, think and hear in a particular community. In this sense, narrative traditions were ways in which communities worked out the relationships that constituted their existence. Statements about "truth, justice and beauty are often woven together" (Lyotard 1984 in Sarup 1993:135).

For pre-modern societies of the past, right up to the present, narrative has been and still is the “quintessential form of customary knowledge” (Lyotard 1984:19-20). For instance, the Amazonian Cashinahua tribe have always followed a fixed formula for passing on narratives about their people and customs. According to Lyotard (ibid) the storyteller begins by saying, “Here is the story of -----, as I’ve always heard it told. I will tell it to you in my turn. Listen.” When the story ends, the storyteller, abiding by the formula says, “Here ends the story of -----. The man who has told it to you is -----”. Thus the storyteller becomes linked to the ancestral hero whilst at the same time he is bonding the past to the present. Malpas (2003) commenting on Lyotard’s ideas, points out that:

“This form of storytelling organises the rituals and structure of the Cashinahua society. They share their historical knowledge through the tales, construct their identity as a group, and order their society through the rules about who is allowed to tell and listen to the stories. (Malpas 2003:24)

Lyotard uses the example of the Cashinahua tribe to explain the intrinsic pragmatics involved in the transmission of their popular narratives. Unlike meta-narratives, these narratives do not prioritise their own legitimation so no legitimation problems arise. Sim (1996:38), another commentator on Lyotard’s ideas, points out that a traditional narrative, like those of the Cashinahua, does not depend on “any meta-narratives for its status, it just simply *is*.” He goes on to summarise Lyotard’s (1984: 19-22) description of the key properties which make traditional narratives work. Firstly, they enable societies to construct criteria of competence and evaluation. The hero of the story succeeds or fails against the criteria which legitimise

and reinforce the social institutions of the culture. Secondly, a wide range of 'language games' (discussed in the next section of this chapter) can be used, as can a wide variety of statements whether they be denotative, evaluative, interrogative or whatever. The scientific meta-narratives of modernity restrict themselves to denotative statements only. Thirdly, *everyone* is included and has an agreed "narrative post" or position such as listener, narrator, or the person to whom the story refers. Lastly, in some cases, like the narratives of the Cashinahua, they follow certain rhythms (as in our nursery rhymes) often becoming ritualistic in the process so that people remember them. In this way the narratives themselves acquire authority, not the narrator. The narrator's only claim to competence for telling the story is because he, himself, has heard it. The listener learns what must be done to become the hero of a narrative, and also has the potential of developing the same authority as the storyteller simply by listening to the story and passing it on to others using the same formula. In Lyotard's words this:

...determines in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen to in order to speak, and what role one must play ... to be the object of a narrative ... narrative tradition is also the criteria defining a threefold competence – "know-how," "knowing how to speak," and "knowing how to hear" – through which the community's relationship to itself and its environment is played out. What is transmitted through these narratives is the set of pragmatic rules that constitutes the social bond. (Lyotard 1984:21)

Pre-modern cultures organise their societies around traditional narratives of this kind. They are based on the relationship between the past (the stories) and the present (their narration). These narratives “define what has the right to be said in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do” (Lyotard *ibid*: 23). In contrast, modernity’s ‘meta narratives’ of science are about human progress. They differ from the traditional narratives of pre-modern cultures because they depict a future where all of humanity’s problems are overcome. They also insist that ‘true’ knowledge has to be legitimated by scientific ‘proof’ and this separates them from narratives that form the ‘social bond’. Narratives that bind the community together do not rely on being legitimated by ‘proof’ but on the “pragmatics of [their] own transmission” (Lyotard (*ibid*: 27) in a community. They are tolerant of scientific discourse and regard it as simply another form of narrative. The opposite, however, is not true. Science is dismissive of other narratives. It represents them as:

... belonging to a different mentality: savage, primitive, underdeveloped, backward, alienated, composed of opinions, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology. Narratives are fables, myths, legends... (Lyotard 1984: 27)

Lyotard points out, however, that even scientists have to resort to language, and therefore to narratives, when presenting their findings. All narratives about knowledge use language which is contextually and culturally based in spite of the fact that the meta-narratives prefer to think of their findings as ‘universal’ and independent of these influences. For Lyotard, scientific knowledge cannot escape being yet another form of narrative knowledge (albeit an extremely

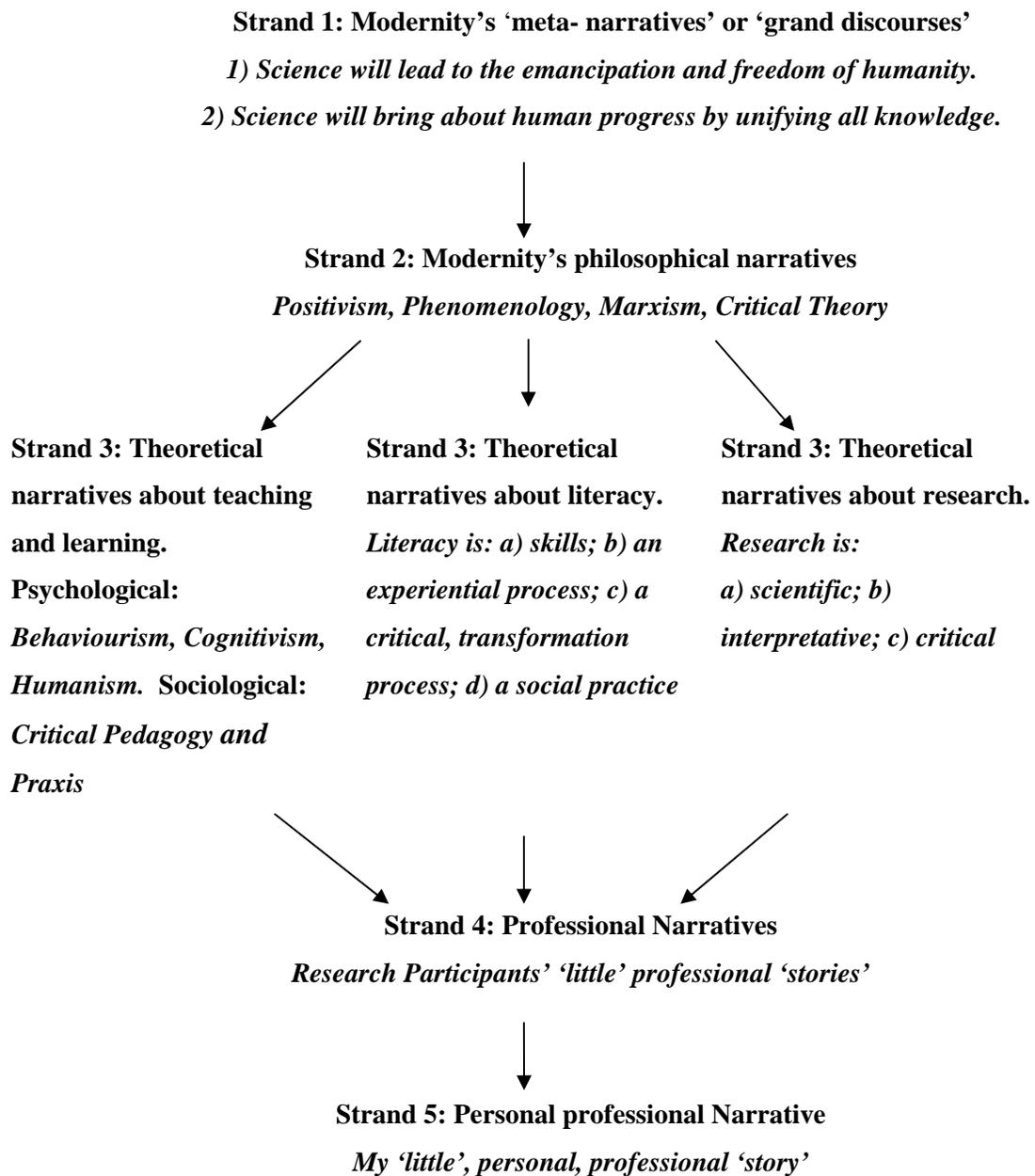
powerful one). The idea that all narratives, scientific or not, legitimate themselves through their own “language game” has led to a crisis about the legitimisation of knowledge that can be further described as a “crisis of narratives”. The idea that one form of knowledge is more legitimate than another can no longer be sustained and has become highly controversial. For instance, talking about knowledge in late twentieth century computerised societies, Lyotard notes that the actual form of knowledge has been reshaped by the advent of new technology and the emphasis on information processing. He argues that:

...anything in the constituted body of knowledge that is not translatable in this way will be abandoned...the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. (Lyotard 1984:4)

In other words, he predicts that only digitisable knowledge will be considered legitimate.

Lyotard is thus concerned with who will decide what knowledge is and who will know what to decide.

All the issues mentioned above are having a profound impact on Western thought. The dominance of the meta-narratives had, and still has, an enormous influence on Western education systems. In turn, this affects adult education including adult literacy education.. For clarification of this ‘influence’ I have ‘opened-out’ the ‘narrative strands’ (shown in Figure I, in the last chapter), and listed what each strand contains. These are in Figure 2 below.



*Figure 2. The narrative strands expanded*

In chapter one, I introduced the idea that the meta-narratives generated the major philosophical schools of thought (now called 'philosophical narratives') such as positivism, phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory. This link is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, chapter

three. Later, in chapter four, I discuss how the ‘philosophical narratives’ further generated psychological learning theories (now called ‘theoretical narratives’) such as behaviourism, cognitivism and humanism. I demonstrate how these have had a direct influence on how adult literacy practitioners are educated and on the practice of teaching adult literacy learners. Chapter five discusses specific ‘theoretical narratives’ about literacy itself. One such ‘theoretical narrative’ defines literacy as ‘skills’. It is an extremely pervasive narrative and is so powerful that it is held by the general public at large (Barton 1994). Its powerful dominance can be seen in the current New Labour government’s policy document, *Skills for Life* (2001). The very first word of the title demonstrates the importance placed on this narrative by policy-makers. My thesis demonstrates its link to behaviourism (theoretical narrative). Then, via behaviourism it is traced back to Positivism (philosophical narrative) and, via positivism it becomes directly linked to the emancipatory meta-narrative and its stress on the importance of scientific knowledge. I trace back the other literacy narratives in the same way.

The wider meta-narratives, then, via their related philosophical narratives and also their related theoretical narratives, have a direct impact on adult literacy. All the narratives interweave with each other and inform the work of adult literacy practitioners, explicitly or implicitly, whether they teach learners or teachers. However, as well as interweaving, the narratives can also become contentious. Firstly, theoretical narratives can cause conflict as in the ‘literacy is basic skills’ and ‘literacy is social practice’ (Hamilton, Barton and Ivanic 2000) debate. Some researchers, practitioners and students adhere to one view and some to the other. On the other hand, there are some practitioners who, intentionally or unintentionally, try and incorporate both views into their practice. Some even try to forget about them completely. Secondly,

conflict can arise when influential people such as policymakers use their power and impose their favoured theoretical narratives on practitioners, learners and researchers in the adult literacy field irrespective of whether the latter agree with them. Thirdly, theoretical narratives about literacy can conflict with the public's general ideas about it. However, the general public is not always aware of all the theoretical differences between adult literacy practitioners. Fourthly, conflict also happens when influential researchers impose their theoretical narratives about adult literacy on practitioners attending their courses in Higher Education (HE). Lastly, conflict can arise when literacy practitioners and literacy learners are influenced by different theoretical narratives. For example, I mentioned, in chapter one, the influence of a very influential, humanist theoretical narrative in adult education which insists that an experiential approach should be taken with adult learners. In other words, adult learners should be able to bring their own experiences to bear on the learning process because it will become more meaningful for them. This view was very prominent and influential when I trained as an adult literacy tutor in the 1980s. As Boud (1993) points out, however, 'experience' is a problematical concept. For instance, whilst in those days I strongly adhered to the theoretical narrative of experiential learning I found that some adult literacy students did not do so. They had expectations that they would be 'taught' in the same way they were at school, which was often their last formal educative experience. They brought to literacy classes a different narrative which they had retained from their past which stipulates that 'education' involves 'being instructed' by an 'authoritarian' or didactic teacher. For me, however, being engaged in the experiential narrative meant that the tutor could be an 'authoritative' source of ideas (as could the student) but not necessarily 'authoritarian' (insisting) over what should be included in the learning process. This could be negotiated with

the student. Differences between the tutor's narrative and the student's narrative could be problematical and cause confusion and wariness for both. On the other hand, however, the difference could be a rich source of imaginative discussion and produce extremely useful ideas for learning, not only for the student but for me as a tutor as well.

Having made the initial links between Lyotard's 'meta-narratives' and ideas about adult literacy I will now concentrate on the 'little narratives'. Sim (1996:32) reminds us that for Lyotard the conflict between modernity and postmodernity in Western societies is a conflict between 'meta narratives' and 'little narratives'. If the overarching certainty of the 'grand narratives' no longer applies in the 'modern' societies of the West, then all that is left are the 'little narratives' of individuals, small groups and communities. These are always influenced by the *mores* of the time, place and context in which they exist. Therefore, their knowledge claims can only ever be partial and provisional. The meta-narratives, however, claim that scientific knowledge is universal and not subject to these influences. In other words, it transcends them and is independent of them.

My research engages with the knowledge claims in the 'little narratives' or "petit recits" as Lyotard (1984) calls them, of practitioners working in adult literacy education and research. Taking my cue from Lyotard I argue that these are just as legitimate, even if far less powerful, than the overarching knowledge claims concerning the purposes and practices of adult literacy made by the meta narratives and their related philosophical narratives and theoretical narratives. These dominant narratives legitimise only certain kinds of educational knowledge and impose it through their powerful influence. They maintain their hegemony by insisting

that knowledge claims made by the various types of educational research must be governed by the rules and parameters of scientific and sanctioned theories (or theoretical narratives) in order to be legitimate. There are counter narratives which resist this but scientific philosophies and theories are often, but not always, imposed at the expense of the knowledge perspectives of the 'little' but still legitimate narratives of research participants, which in the case of my own research are adult literacy practitioners. Thus, Lyotard's "crisis of narratives" impacts hard on educational research and his perspective is very pertinent to the work I am doing because how knowledge is produced, conveyed and learned is central to the practice of education, including the education of students and tutors in the field of adult literacy in the UK. For me, this means it is *the* major issue in my research and the ideas introduced in this chapter will be developed as my thesis progresses.

#### **2.4 Language Games and 'The Differend'**

Different discourses circulate in society using different narratives to explain themselves. Drawing on Lyotard (1984), Malpas (2003:21) points out that the discourse of History constructs narratives of the past, Psychology constructs narratives of the self, and Sociology constructs narratives about humans in social formations and so on. The field of education draws on these disciplines to construct narratives about teaching and learning. Narratives are, therefore, a fundamental part of how humanity understands itself and its existence. Lyotard calls these discourses and their narratives "language games"; a concept that is rooted in the ideas of Wittgenstein. Lyotard acknowledges this debt to Wittgenstein who:

...focuses his attention on the effects of different modes of discourse; he calls the various types of utterances he identifies along the way...*language games* (Lyotard's italics). (Lyotard 1984: 10)

Lyotard (1984:9) concentrates on three particular kinds of “utterance”: “denotative”, “performative”, and “prescriptive” although there are others such as “interrogative”. Each one positions its sender (“the person who utters the statement”), the person who it is sent to (the “addressee”) and what it refers to (the “referent”) in particular ways. In denotative utterances the sender is positioned as the knower and the addressee has to agree or disagree whilst the correct identification of the referent is needed. These utterances are about what is true and what is false. For instance, if a sender said, “The grass is green” They would be the knower and the person they were speaking to (the addressee) would have to understand what is meant by the word “grass” (the referent). The addressee could then agree or disagree. Lyotard’s (1984:9) own example is, “The university is sick”. In contrast, performative utterances are those, which effectively produce the referent. Lyotard’s (1984: 9) example of this kind of utterance is “the university is open” which was “... uttered at convocation”. The addressee, who is immediately placed in a new context by the utterance, does not have to verify whether it is true or false. The sender, however, needs to be an accepted authority (in the case of Lyotard’s example it could be the Dean or Rector of the university) so that their declaration produces what is uttered and immediately repositions both the addressee and the referent. The third type of utterance, prescriptive, also needs the sender to be an authoritative figure but demands that the addressee carries out that which is evoked. Lyotard’s (1984:10) own example is “Give money to the university”. He points out that there are many kinds of

prescriptive utterances such as “orders, commands, instructions, recommendations, requests, prayers, pleas, etc.” No matter what type the utterances, however, whether they are prescriptive, denotative or performative, we cannot escape them or their pervasive variety; “Thus, there are many different modes of discourse and many types of utterance, each of which is a language game” (Usher and Edwards 1994: 156).

Wittgenstein (1953) defines the principle of difference at work in the multiplicity of “language games” as follows:

“Consider for example the proceedings we call “games”. I mean board games, card-games, ball games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? – Don’t say: “there *must* be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’” – but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. - For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. (Wittgenstein 1953: #66)

*(The ‘#’ sign in ‘#66’ at the end of the above quote means I am quoting ‘aphorism’ 66.*

*Wittgenstein (1953) put down his ideas as numbered aphorisms and this is the usual way of quoting him).* The quote informs us that Wittgenstein considers the properties of language in the same way he considers the properties of games. There are many types of ‘game’ and each has its own particular way of being played. Likewise, there are many discourses (language games) in which we exist (play) in our own particular way (rules). We cannot say that the meaning of words in a particular discourse mean the same in every other discourse just as we

cannot say every game has the same set of rules. We can say, however, that there will be language “similarities [and] relationships” in various discourses. Lyotard expands on Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘language games’ further when he says:

“What he [Wittgenstein] means by this term is that each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses in which they can be put – in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to move them.” (Lyotard 1984:10)

By saying that the properties of ‘language’ are synonymous with those of ‘games’ Wittgenstein (and Lyotard) is describing how the game rules of different narratives or discourses and the type of utterance they use only allow certain ‘moves’ to be made. Just as you cannot use the rules of chess and its pieces to play draughts, you cannot use the game rules and the utterances of one discourse to engage in another. Chess and draughts, however, have similarities because both are played on a squared board but the pieces for each game are different and they also use the squares differently. Likewise, individuals play many narrative games using various utterances (pieces), often at the same time. These also have similarities but none are exactly the same. In this sense, individuals exist in a complicated network of rules and each set of rules and its utterances are valid only for the discourse (game) to which they apply:

Lyotard (1984: 10-11) makes three key observations about language games. Firstly, the rules do not legitimize themselves. Rules are the object of a contract, explicit or implicit, between players. Secondly, every utterance is a 'move' in a game. Thirdly, if there are no rules then there is no game and a change in the rules alters the game being played. This means that the 'rules' of language games can be altered and influenced by other games or 'moves'.

“... there are two different kinds of “progress” in knowledge: one corresponds to a new move (a new argument) within the established rules; the other, to the invention of new rules, in other words, a change to a new game”. (Lyotard 1984: 43)

The ways in which individuals act in the social world are shaped by the relationships governed by the constantly evolving language games in which they participate. It is this participation, rather than our 'autonomous self' which constructs and disciplines us in a particular context at a particular time. According to Lyotard (1984:15), “A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island”. Every individual is a “nodal point” in specific communication networks where the multitudinous discourses or language games relevant to them collide and interact.

There are two principles underlying Lyotard's approach to language games. The first principle is to do with both paralogy and agonistics for according to Lyotard, “...to speak is to fight”. This principle, however, should not detract from his second principle that states, “...the observable social bond is composed of these language “moves.”” An explanation of the terms 'paralogy' and 'agonistics' will develop these principles further.

Paralogy refers to inspirational ideas brought about by stimulating conversation (Shawver 2004:1) without necessarily reaching consensus. People who participate in paralogy question, often irreverently, accepted, taken for granted theories because they feel such theories often deny spontaneous creativity in the production of knowledge. They avoid situations whereby people are prevented from talking by being removed from the conversation by the game rules of a domineering discourse. Instead the emphasis is on a “reciprocal generosity” (Shawver 2004:1), whereby attempts are made to listen to (an extremely important aspect of paralogy) and develop an understanding of the vocabulary of all the speakers involved. This means that rather than impose the rules of a universal meta-narrative or any domineering theoretical discourse, the rules of language terms should be defined locally and provisionally. For instance, we might say, “I am using the word in this sense”, or we might say, “In my own words”. In this way the local or “little narrative becomes the quintessential form of imaginative invention” (Lyotard 1984: 60) whereby the narratives of everyone involved, including the marginalized and oppressed can become creative and inspirational contributions. For Lyotard, central to the idea of paralogy is the concept of agonistics:

...speech acts fall within the domain of general agonistics, in the sense of playing.

This does not mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention. ...Great joy is had in the invention of turns of phrase, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the level of *parole*. But undoubtedly even this pleasure depends on a feeling of success won at the

expense of an adversary – at least one adversary, and a formidable one: the accepted language or connotation. (Lyotard 1984: 10) (Author's italics)

Lyotard goes on to say the “idea of an agonistics of language”, however, should not detract from his second principle: that the social bond is composed of such language “moves” (Lyotard 1984: 11). The term ‘agonistics’ generally refers to the art and science of combat and, it could be construed that the idea of being constantly in combat might seem contrary to the notion of a ‘social bond’. This is because the term ‘social bond’ is reminiscent of living in harmony rather than conflict. However, the previous quote shows that Lyotard believes agonistics can be a playful confrontation as well as an angry confrontation. Admittedly, these are two extreme poles and it is important to stress that there can be many conflicts positioned somewhere between them. Indeed, when Lyotard says “...to speak is to fight” he qualifies this by adding “...in the sense of playing”. In this sense, the ‘social bond’ consists of conflicts that are always with us but they can be pleasant, aggressive or both and to varying degrees, depending on the context in which the conflict exists, the type of conflict engaged in, and the position of the ‘combatant’. Therefore, when Shawver (2004:1) defines agonistics as “angry words” which might impose silence on less ‘angry’ participants she appears to be making a very limited interpretation of Lyotard. Conflict (agonistics) does not necessarily presuppose anger.

The important point to make is that paralogical conflicts, angry or otherwise, can stimulate and inspire the production of new ideas because all participants have permission to speak and be heard. If this situation is truly one of “reciprocal generosity” then people who are hesitant to

participate because they are not used to being listened to, will learn to engage and gain confidence. Likewise, those whose narratives are more dominant will learn to listen. If this brings about fundamental disagreement between discourses it is accepted that consensus cannot be reached because the rules of the discourses are incommensurate. It is also accepted that the game rules of any participant's discourse are as legitimate as any other even though they may not be as powerful. Lyotard (1988: xi) calls this the acceptance of the "differend", which he defines as "a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments." This can be very creative, however, because new rules of judgment have to be defined. On the other hand, an overarching dominant discourse that stifles the "differend" is a form of "terror" (Lyotard 1984:64). Referring back to Wittgenstein's metaphor, it is like banning every single game that exists bar one (chess for example) and insisting that it is the only game worth playing. My research is about identifying and engaging with the "differends" to do with literacy and the education of adult literacy practitioners.

## **2.5 Issues Arising**

As well as supporting Lyotard's ideas it is important to be aware of some of the criticisms of them. Usher and Edwards (1994:183) mention a number of such criticisms. Firstly, Lyotard's narrative about 'little narratives' being just as legitimate as 'meta-narratives' is a paradox because one cannot make such a claim without the claim becoming a meta-narrative itself. Lyotard was aware of this but does not provide an answer:

One is then tempted to give credence to a grand narrative of the decline of grand-narratives. (Lyotard 1992:40 in Usher and Edwards 1984:184)

It is important to state here that Lyotard's uses the terms meta-narratives' and 'grand discourses' interchangeably and that they mean the same thing; so does his term 'grand narrative' used in the above quote. 'Grand narrative' is simply another way of saying 'grand discourse' or 'meta narrative'. Secondly, there is criticism of Lyotard's claim that science in the postmodern age, or 'postmodern science', cannot avoid contradicting itself because with the arrival of such things as quantum physics, chaos theory and catastrophe theory it is no longer possible to aim for the total knowledge of a system: Lyotard (1984:58-60) uses research into fractals as an example of our inability to measure coastlines accurately whenever increasing levels of magnification are applied. If accurate measurement and prediction in the physical sciences is not possible then it is also not possible in the sciences of human behaviour. Sim (1996: 41) sums up this idea of Lyotard's by asking, "What price social science, after all, if prediction goes out of the window?" However, Connor (1989:36 in Usher and Edwards 1994:183) counters Lyotard's argument by making the claim that 'postmodern science' is not necessarily tolerant of unpredictability and still aims to construct unifying theories about nature's forces.

Thirdly, it has been argued (Squires 1993 in Usher and Edwards 1994:183) that the rejection of all grand-narratives removes the possibility of collective resistance to them. This leaves Lyotard - a former Marxist - open to the accusation that he has turned into a neo-conservative. However, Sim (1996: 139) counters this by pointing out that "Lyotard opted to continue to

resist capitalism with something like the fervour of a Marxist believer – but without the benefit of the theory itself”.

Finally, in a publication that links adult learning theories with literacy theories, Tusting and Barton (2003:31), who are well-known scholars in the field of adult literacy, critique postmodernism. They accept that whilst “there may not be a single grand narrative that explains” everything there is a danger that concentrating on differences can “exclude the patterns that do emerge from the complexity of adult learning interactions”. These criticisms will be explored in more depth as the thesis develops.

This chapter has provided an initial glimpse of some of Lyotard’s key concepts such as ‘meta-narrative’, ‘little narrative’, ‘languages games’ and the ‘differend’ and has demonstrated their link to my research topic. It has also demonstrated that Lyotard’s ideas are contentious and give rise to much debate. Some of this debate continues in the next chapter, chapter three, which is a thorough investigation of the origins and properties of the meta-narratives and how they have generated philosophical schools of thought such as Positivism, Phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory.

## Chapter Three

### Modernity's 'Meta narratives' and their Relationship to the Philosophical Narratives

#### 3.1 Introduction

Modernity's meta-narratives; their claims for human progress through emancipation and/or knowledge unity; their promotion of 'science'; their related philosophical schools of thought such as Positivism, Phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory, are deeply infused, explicitly or implicitly, into our assumptions about the purposes and practice of education, including literacy education. However, each philosophical school of thought (or 'philosophical narrative') interpreted, and still interprets, the 'meta narratives' according to the rules of their own particular 'language game'. This chapter demonstrates how each of them had, and still has, different assumptions about education and sees it as a way of ensuring that their own versions of 'legitimate' knowledge (and prescriptions for its use) reach the population. However, no matter how they 'package' their versions of 'legitimate knowledge', each philosophical narrative still accepts the overarching claims of the meta-narratives; that education should be about human progress through 'emancipation' and/or 'knowledge unity' brought about by 'science'. This idea was rarely questioned until recently and has been assumed to be self-evidently correct. However, the chapter demonstrates how Lyotard (1984) challenges this assumption. The chapter also prepares the ground for the discussion about narratives to do with learning and teaching (learning theories) in chapter 4, and literacy narratives in chapter five. Their 'language games' have been 'pre-scripted' and/or 'inter-

scripted' by the assumptions of the 'language games' contained in the 'meta narratives' and their related 'philosophical narratives' discussed here.

### **3.2 Organisation of chapter**

Section 3.3 describes the nature of the emancipatory metanarrative and the scientism underpinning the assumptions of its 'language game', which led to the philosophical narrative of Positivism. Likewise, section 3.4 looks at the 'scientific' nature of the metanarrative of knowledge unity. It also demonstrates how the 'language game' of this metanarrative further generated the 'language games' of the philosophical narratives of Idealism, Phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory. Section 3.5 critically discusses these links from a postmodern perspective. At the end of each of the three sections there is a discussion about how the philosophical narrative under scrutiny impacted on Western education systems.

### **3.3 The Emancipatory Meta-narrative**

The modernist meta-narrative, that legitimate knowledge should be based on scientific rationalism in order to bring about humanity's emancipation, emerged in French political thought in the eighteenth century around the time of the Enlightenment (Usher and Edwards 1994:160). At this time the development of the natural sciences (and their popularity) meant that scientific knowledge became extremely important and other types of knowledge resulting from tradition and religion declined, as did the influence of the church. In the seventeenth century Rene Descartes (1596 –1650), had started to integrate philosophy with the 'new sciences' which changed the relationship between philosophy and theology. According to Burnham and Fieser (2001:1), Descartes rejected any knowledge that could be doubted,

including that relating to his own senses. He argued that thinking (mind) was separate from the body, the external world and the existence of a God. Thus he created the mind-body duality. A duality subordinates the latter term and places more importance on the former. Therefore, for Descartes the body is subordinate to the mind. Furthermore, he advocated that knowledge of the world could be explained through logical-mathematical concepts. He believed in applying empiricism and rationalism to his step-by-step scientific reconstruction of knowledge so that doubt could be eliminated. Descartes' ideas were extremely influential as Modernist thought came to insist that the progressive development of human beings is dependent on rationality realised through science. Modernity took three major features of the Enlightenment; the power of reason over ignorance; the power of order over disorder; the power of science over superstition and made them into universal values (Burke 2000:2). The terms reason/ignorance, order/disorder and science/superstition are also dualisms that place more value on the term that comes first. Therefore, anything that was not considered reasonable, ordered or scientific became marginalised. Scientific knowledge became so popular that it was applied to human beings in social contexts.

### 3.3.1 *Positivism*

According to MacKenzie et al (1997:16) and Thomas (2009: 74), 'Positivism' was Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) attempt to use a 'positive method' to apply the knowledge rules of the natural sciences to human behaviour. He founded a new discipline called 'social physics' that we now call the 'social sciences' of which education (and educational research) is part. The Positivist discourse, or 'language game', argues that knowledge can only be 'true' if it is not distorted by the values, ideas and opinions of the people producing and legitimating it or by

the mores of the time and place in which they exist. In other words, 'true' knowledge is 'objective' rather than 'subjective'. Honderich (1995), points out that Modernist science believes in the 'Correspondence Theory of Truth', and aims to discover legitimate knowledge that already *corresponds* to 'facts' that already exist independently from our knowledge of them. Only knowledge that can be 'objectively' known through reason, rationality and science is regarded as 'true'. Therefore, as Hammersley (1995) and Peters and Lankshear (1996) tell us, these assumptions insist that anything 'true' must also be good, right and beautiful and should underpin the aesthetic, ethical and political prescriptions of society so that it automatically become a more just place to live. Thus, the laws and codes of Western societies, on which they built their institutions and organisations, were based on these assumptions which fused into all their economic, political, artistic and cultural systems. Education was seen as an integral part of these systems. It could not escape the effects that scientific developments had on the economic forces of western societies as they brought about "the economic and socio-cultural disruptions which founded industrial capitalism and the nation state" (Usher and Edwards 1994:8).

The emancipatory meta-narrative of science became interwoven with the advancement of capitalism. Its growth was underpinned by inventions and developments in the natural sciences that produced the new machines and factories that mass-produced goods for trade with world markets. Mass production systems transformed the social order and led to the Industrial Revolution that started in the late eighteenth century and spread throughout Western Europe. Lyotard (1984) describes how developments in science and the advancement of Capitalism were inextricably linked:

A technical apparatus requires an investment; but since it optimises the efficiency of the task to which it is applied, it also optimises the surplus-value derived from this improved performance. All that is needed is for the surplus-value to be realized, in other words, for the product of the task performed to be sold ... It is at this moment that science becomes a force of production, a moment in the circulation of capital.”  
(Lyotard 1984:45)

Those who owned and controlled the economy became extremely powerful and the urge to constantly improve productivity and profitability eventually led to practices such as ‘Fordism’ and ‘Taylorism’. According to Edwards et al (2002:14-15), ‘Fordism’ refers to standardised production procedures devised for the sake of profitable efficiency by Henry Ford who mass-produced standardised cars with purpose built machinery for reliable mass markets in Detroit in the 1920’s. ‘Taylorism’ is a management theory that broke down working tasks, again for the sake of profitable efficiency, into their exact component parts and carefully monitored the time it took to complete them. The labour force, as well as adapting to these production systems, also had to be healthy and educated enough to be competent and effective workers. This eventually resulted in the liberal humanist government policies that brought about the European Welfare States at the end of the first half of the twentieth century (Usher 1996b). Their aims were to provide full employment and free health and education without changing society’s power relationships. In this sense, education became more and more important and became instrumental in reproducing the status quo. In the nineteenth century elementary education became compulsory in the UK.

### 3.3.1.2 *Positivism and Education*

The assumption that scientific knowledge was superior resulted in a further assumption; that it was important to pass on this privileged, scientific knowledge to others so that they became aware of its benefits. In order to perpetuate its own 'legitimacy', science took on the job of educating the population so that they could be part of the emancipatory project; something which still has strong resonance today. According to Lyotard (1984: 27-32), in this 'language game' everyone has a "right to science"; to become developed and civilised and be freed from the "obscurantism" of "opinion, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology".

Resorting to the narratives of "freedom" and "progress", the state promotes scientific knowledge for everyone under the guise that it is beneficial for all and "assumes direct control of the training of the "people" in the name of the "nation"". However, as Lyotard (ibid: 23-25) points out, science's legitimation is dependent on denotative utterances where the sender is positioned as the knower and the addressee is in the position of having to agree or disagree whilst the referent needs to be correctly identified. In order to correctly identify referents the education system was/is didactic. The emphasis is on primary and secondary education, which is geared so that senders (teachers) not only introduce prospective addressees (pupils) to the benefits of science but also eventually, through higher education, produce some of them as equals. According to Lyotard (ibid) "Equals are needed and must be created" otherwise the truth of the statements of scientists and also their competence cannot be verified. Therefore, in this language game, research in higher education is dependent on denotative utterances made by researchers and tutors to students. This means that if the senders (tutors or researchers) are speaking the 'truth' about a referent they should be able to provide 'proof' of their statements.

They should be able to contest and deny any opposing statements made about the same referent. The addressees (students) can agree or disagree with the sender but must validate their position with ‘proof’, just as the sender did. There cannot, however, be more than one legitimate ‘proof’ for a referent. Therefore, this gives rise to two ideas. Firstly, that the referent is something which has to be ‘proved’ and, secondly, that there cannot be more than one way of ‘proving’ it.

Lyotard (ibid: 23-25) goes on to say that Higher Education, as well as having the role of providing “equals” also has the role of producing “the functionaries of the state” and the “managers of civil society” who will be the intermediaries in perpetuating the legitimacy of this grand narrative. Chapter five illustrates how ideas about the purpose and practice of literacy and literacy education became overwhelmingly infused with its aims.

### **3.4 The Meta-narrative of Knowledge Unity**

The emancipatory meta-narrative and Positivism became extremely powerful. However, at the end of the eighteenth/early nineteenth century another meta-narrative began to take form, which led to the development of philosophical perspectives such as Phenomenology and Marxism. They developed as a result of the meta-narrative that speculates that all knowledge will eventually be unified. Although Lyotard is well known for his support of Marxism until the late 1960s, he was also interested in Phenomenology in the early stages of his intellectual career (Woodward 2002). Phenomenology and Marxism are both linked to the ideas of Hegel (1770-1831), the German Idealist, who believed that all knowledge would eventually become a single totality in his concept of the ‘Absolute Mind’.

### 3.4.1 *Idealism*

According to Sarup (1978:110-111), one of the basic tenets of Hegel's Idealism is that thought, itself, accounts for the world and that the mind and its object cannot be separated; only the mind is 'real' and only mental actions can account for our experiences. 'Mind' and its object become as one through 'Reason', which is also known as 'Spirit' or 'Life'. Therefore, Reason and/or Spirit are both subjective and objective. As such, some regard Idealism as a revolt against Positivism (Hughes and Sharrock 1997:27). This is because positivism only regards objective, empirical 'facts' as legitimate knowledge. Anything 'subjective' such as individual 'thought' and 'mind' is disregarded. For Hegel, 'Reason' is constantly battling with its own internal contradictions in the process of its evolution to a higher unity. He developed a system of what Duquette (200); and Redding (1997/2001:8) call 'triadic' development. They tell us that Hegel believed it could explain the evolutionary process of humanity from its most basic form; 'being', to its most sophisticated forms such as religion, philosophy, the state, Absolute Mind and/or Spirit (or Life). Triadic development was a three-part process often referred to as the 'dialectic'; although Hegel never used the term himself. According to Sarup (1978:110-111; and Briton 1996:82-3), Hegel saw it as fundamentally religious or metaphysical. In the first stage of the process a statement or condition (thesis) exists. In the second stage the statement or condition is constantly opposed by its own emerging contradictions (antithesis). Thirdly, the ensuing conflict produces a new, advanced way of thinking (synthesis). The synthesis becomes the new thesis. However this also has its own emerging antithesis producing more conflict, and so on. This process keeps adding to the world's development and is an expression of the 'Absolute Mind' attempting to reach self-

realisation. The 'Absolute Mind' is a totality where all history is finally rationalised and all knowledge is unified.

#### 3.4.1.1 *Idealism and Education*

Wood (1998) points out that education was a prominent theme in Hegel's philosophy but he did not produce a theory of pedagogical practice or method. This is unusual because he taught in both secondary schools and universities. However, one of his fundamental ideas is that of *Bildung*. The term can be translated partly as 'education' but it has a wider meaning in that it also refers to 'formation', 'development' and 'culture'. Wood outlines Hegel's concept of *Bildung* further:

*Bildung* is part of the life process of a spiritual entity: a human being, a society, a historical tradition. It occurs not primarily through the imparting of information by a teacher, but instead through what Hegel calls 'experience': a conflict-ridden process in the course of which a spiritual being discovers its own identity or selfhood while striving to actualise the selfhood it is in the process of discovering...the entire process of *Bildung* is fundamentally an inner or *self-directed* activity, never merely a process of conditioning through environmental stimuli, or the accumulation of information presented by experience. (Wood *ibid*: 3-4)

Hegel's concept of self-directed, experiential learning has had a great impact on education systems in the Western world (see section 3.4.2.1 on Dewey). Another of his fundamental

ideas, insisted that objectivity and subjectivity could not be separated; an idea that influenced the philosophical narrative of Phenomenology.

### 3.4.2 *Phenomenology*

According to Moran (2000:4-5), Phenomenology “sought to reinvigorate philosophy by returning it to the life of the living subject”, and describes it as a “practice”; a “way of *doing* philosophy”. He points out that Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher considered to be the founder of Phenomenology, was concerned with describing the phenomena of consciousness, or our taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. It is about the way a subject sees phenomena as structures of experience in their own consciousness. Peim (1993) describes this further by using the example of a three-dimensional object (a house) and showing how a subject always looks at an object from a particular viewpoint. They cannot see all aspects of the object, just those aspects of it in relation to their own perspective, which, in turn, is affected by where they are standing. A subject, therefore, is positioned, and can only make assumptions as to what the other aspects of an object might be from their own particular perspective, based on previous knowledge and experience. In this sense objects “are always given identity in relation *to ideas about what they are* – rather than being simply there in themselves” (Peim *ibid*: 45) (My italics). We often assume that we live in a common world and other people see things as we do. However, according to the phenomenological approach, which applies not only to three-dimensional objects but also to events and abstract ideas, it is not possible to totally define an object, event or idea, nor is it possible to totally define a subject because subjects themselves are “objects for other subjects” (Peim *ibid*: 46-7). In order to avoid the influence of the subject’s prior

experiences and perceptions, which determine how only the subject sees the object (or event or idea), the subject's prior experiences, and the language in which they are expressed, are constantly revised and questioned. According to Moran (2000):

Phenomenology's first step is to seek to avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural traditions, from everyday common sense, or, indeed, from science itself...Freedom from prejudice means overcoming the strait-jacket of encrusted traditions, and this also means rejecting the domination of enquiry by *externally imposed methods*." (Moran 2000:4-5) (My emphasis)

As mentioned earlier, Positivist science actually insists on applying *externally imposed methods* to phenomena in order to acquire empirical knowledge. It foregrounds the importance of epistemological 'rules', based on the natural sciences, for generating knowledge through the external application of 'objective' methodological criteria. At the same time, it insists that 'subjectivity' distorts or contaminates this process. Phenomenology, however, rejects the foregrounding of epistemological rules and concentrates on describing things, as they *appear* 'subjectively' to a subject's consciousness. Just as its adherents regarded positivism as a rigorous science, Moran (2000), tells us that Husserl regarded phenomenology as a rigorous science too. Positivists emphasised 'objectivity' as being a universal or transcendental requirement for the acquisition of legitimate knowledge. Husserl, however, emphasised the importance of 'subjective' knowledge as it was perceived in consciousness and believed that it

was the individual ego that was universal or transcendental, which is why, according to Van Manen (2002b:1), his work is often referred to as 'Transcendental Phenomenology'.

Woodward (2002:3) informs us that Lyotard was specifically "concerned with phenomenology's attempt to find a 'third-way' between subjectivism and objectivism" and whether it had any relevance for Marxism; and that after studying the works of Husserl he turned to the ideas of the Phenomenological Existentialists such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.

According to Moran (2000), Heidegger (1889-1976) was a student of Husserl's who rejected the view that phenomenology was a rigorous science. Nor did he believe in the transcendental ego and the "prioritising of theoretical knowing and cognitive acts over practical living experiences" (Moran *ibid*: 245). According to Moran, Heidegger's philosophy was concerned with "human existence rather than abstract conditions and principles". He was concerned with the meaning of being (Sein) and its relationship to human existence (Dasein) and how it was characterized by temporality and historicity. He was not just interested in *a* being (what-is) but in the nature of being itself. In other words, 'what-is' is open to many interpretations but this does not explain the fundamental meaning of its being. Another scholar, Boeree (2000:5-6), informs us that with regard to human-being (Dasein), the question becomes "how is it that we "are" at all?" According to Boeree (*ibid*: 6), Heidegger attempts to answer this by arguing, like Husserl, that we must rid ourselves of the split between subject and object because this separates "man as knower from his environment as the known" when the two are, in fact, inextricably bound together. Unlike Husserl, however, who thought the phenomenology of

consciousness was transcendent; Heidegger argues that Dasein was, in fact, characterized by temporality. This does not simply refer to our existence at a certain moment in time, a 'now'. Temporality, in this case refers to the original unity of the future, the past and the present. Korab-Karpowicz (2001:7), illuminates this further by saying that the future, the past, and the present relate, respectively, to "existence", "thrownness", and "fallenness", a tripartite ontological outlook through which Heidegger interpreted the world. Once we have 'existence' we start to see potential possibilities for ourselves so, in this sense, 'existence' is about the future. When we start to exist, however, we are 'thrown' into a world that is already there and which has been conditioned and shaped by the past. Therefore, 'thrownness' is about the past because even though it has gone we have a sense of its legacy. As we experience existence we become aware of things other than ourselves. Being *with* these things is the moment of 'fallenness' and is about the present. Boeree (2000:6) explains that we 'fall' if we are 'inauthentic' by failing to face our anxieties and allow ourselves to be led to a false way of being. We do have freedom to make choices but this can be painful. We become 'authentic' by facing our anxieties and make choices that develop us as human beings. Therefore, in this sense, 'fallenness' is about the presence of authenticity and inauthenticity in the present. Existence, thrownness and fallenness (or the future, the past, and the present) continually interact with each other during Dasein's existence. This means the future and the present cannot exist without the past and vice versa. In this sense, Dasein cannot escape its historicity.

The theorists already mentioned above point out that for Heidegger, Husserl's failure to fully account for the influence of temporality and its importance for interacting with our 'being' within the world caused him to reject the latter's notion that consciousness is transcendental.

Consciousness cannot separate itself from the world's influence on our existence. In this sense, Heidegger believed in the phenomenology of existence (Existentialism) rather than Husserl's phenomenology of transcendental consciousness.

Heidegger's ideas have had considerable influence in Western Europe. However the fact that he became a Nazi in the Second World War is a problematic issue for many and there have been attempts to discredit his philosophy because of this affiliation. In the 1980s some very controversial arguments rose up again suggesting that Heidegger could not be a great philosopher if he was a Nazi; or the opposite, that he could not be a Nazi if he was a great philosopher. According to Sim (1996:13-15), Lyotard wrote an essay about the issue in 1988 arguing that this choice was far too simplistic and that Heidegger's silence, or "politics of forgetting", about Nazi atrocities did not mean his philosophy could be ignored.

Woodward (2002) informs us that Lyotard was also interested in the ideas of Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). Merleau-Ponty rejected the many dualisms that stemmed from Cartesian philosophy, particularly the dualism that separated the mind from the body. He totally rejected this split and argued that mind and body could not be detached from each other. According to Robbins (1999), Merleau-Ponty thought that the 'body subject' had been practically ignored by Western philosophy and argued that consciousness is not just related to the mind. Rather, it is the body as a whole that experiences our intentional consciousness. Robbins goes on to say that Merleau-Ponty explains this by using the idea of an amputee's 'phantom' limb. The limb may have been amputated but the mind of the amputee senses it is

still there. Therefore, the body is not a machine governed by the mind, but a living organism by which we “body-forth” our possibilities in the world.

In the early 1950’s Lyotard was very interested in the ideas of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. However, he was still a strong Marxist with a materialist view of the world. Phenomenology failed to account for this effectively because according to Woodward (2002: 3), it was unable to “encompass the objective nature of the relations of production”, and a “materialist world view” and finished up “interpreting class struggle as taking place in consciousness”. Therefore Lyotard rejected phenomenology’s attempt to combine subjectivism and objectivism, and reasserted his belief in the Marxist view that subjectivity was already contained in objectivity.

From a postmodern perspective, Usher (1996a), argues that by taking a form of oppositional reaction to positivism, the interpretative approaches of phenomenology are, in fact, part of the same epistemological discourse as the former. In other words, they are actually the ‘flip side of the same coin’. According to Usher, Positivism’s objectivity/subjectivity dualism that stresses the superiority of objectivity does not actually disappear with phenomenology. The latter simply reverses the order of the terms and, instead, the dualism becomes subject/object that stresses the importance of subjectivity:

A postmodern approach seeks to subvert this dichotomy and suggest alternatives which radically challenge and critique the dominant epistemological discourse *in all its forms*.

(Usher 1996a:26) (My emphasis)

Before taking up his postmodern stance, however, Lyotard kept his Marxist principles (see section 3.4.3) until the late 1960s.

#### 3.4.2.1 *Phenomenology and Education*

Phenomenology laid the foundations for the idea of students as active participants in and responsible for, their own learning (Sarup 1978:71) rather than recipients of knowledge obtained through didactic teaching. For instance, Hegel's ideas of self-directed, experiential learning strongly influenced the early ideas of Dewey (1857-1952) the well-known American philosopher, educator and social activist of the early twentieth century. Dewey was a democratic socialist and in one of his works *Democracy and Education* (1916), he was severely critical of the knowledge of the formalised curriculum devised by 'outsiders' and imposed on students. For Dewey this type of knowledge did not relate to the knowledge needed to survive and grow in life because it was detached from learners' lived experiences. There was no learner-centred learning, no learning by doing and no enthusiasm for lifelong learning. In order to rectify these omissions he started the Dewey School, an experimental school, which was based on experiential learning and the education of the whole person. Books were set aside and used only when needed. In respect of literacy, learners learned it by *doing* it, when something in their experiences told them it was relevant to their own purposes. Dewey considered this to be the most democratic way for them to learn. He felt that the formal literacy curriculum in schools was undemocratic because it was imposed and isolated learners from the literacy they used in everyday life.

### 3.4.3 *Marxism*

Like Phenomenology, Marxism was also influenced by the ideas of Hegel. Feuerbach (1804-1872), a student of Hegel's, became opposed to the latter's idea of putting 'mind' or 'thought' before humanity's material existence. However, according to Sarup (1978:110-112), both Hegel and Feuerbach thought humanity to be subordinate to societal forces as a whole. Hegel thought societal forces to be transcended by the state" and Feuerbach believed the existence of humanity was determined by objective material conditions. In this sense, both of them emphasised the passivity of humanity to these forces. Sarup goes on to say that Marx (1818-1883) fused Hegel's ideas of the dialectic with Feuerbach's radical materialism. He also combined these ideas with the emancipatory meta-narrative. Thus, he wove the language games of the two major modernist meta-narratives together. Although influenced by Hegel and Feuerbach, Marx was also critical of them because both believed in the passivity of human existence. Marx saw the state's interests to be a cover for the interests of the wealthy and dominant class and believed in an active model of humanity. Through a process of thought, awareness and critical realisation, followed by action, humanity could act upon the capitalist forces it had created for itself. For Marx, these forces debased and alienated humanity but through Communism it was possible to be free of them.

According to Lyotard (1984:11), Marx advocated a completely different concept of society. He did not see it as a complete whole but as dualistic and/or divided. Capitalism had created two groups, or classes of people, the rich owners of the means of production and a poorer working class that provided the labour to produce the 'goods'. Another commentator on Marx, Usher (1996b), points out that Marx believed capitalism debased workers, who did not own

what they produced, and that this resulted in their alienation. He also goes on to say that Marx's twentieth century followers thought the practices represented by Fordism and Taylorism were debasing too, and that the liberal humanist government policies which brought about Welfare States after the Second World War, and their aims of full employment and free health and education whilst still maintaining the status quo, did not address the inequalities which alienation produced. Consequently, Marxists strongly attacked the liberal political programme.

A number of scholars interested in postmodernism have commented about Lyotard's involvement with Marxism. According to Peters (1992:2), Lyotard was an active Marxist in the "Socialisme ou Barbarie" (Socialism or Barbarism) group in France from 1954 until 1964. Usher & Edwards (1994:176-7) also point out that he was involved in the student upheavals in France in the late 1960s. Intent on social and political revolution, students and workers seriously challenged the French authorities but did not succeed in producing change. After this, Marxism was considered to have failed and student protest diminished. Usher and Edwards suggest that this could have been a major source of disillusionment for Lyotard and perhaps responsible for his change to a postmodern, pluralistic stance. Usher, Bryant & Johnston (1997) also comment about what might have affected Lyotard's politics at this time:

... the radical approach's over-reliance on the notion of 'false consciousness' and the universal 'truths' that adults need to absorb, understand and internalise before they can become proper citizens, succeeded only in replacing the grand narrative of liberal

humanistic progression and emancipation with just another grand narrative, that of orthodox Marxism. (Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997: 34)

Benjamin (1992); Sim (1996) and Browning (2000), who have all published books about Lyotard, develop the above idea further. They all point out that Lyotard had been struggling with Marxism before 1968, and refer to the 1950s when he was writing articles about Algeria for the “Socialisme ou Barbarie” group. France had colonised Algeria in 1830 resulting in a constant, violent struggle as the Algerians sought to gain back their independence. This eventually led to the Franco-Algerian War (1954-1962). French Marxists insisted on trying to analyse the struggle in Marxist terms. In his articles Lyotard thought this emphasis to be inappropriate because Algerian society had not developed into a Western-type capitalist class-system on which Marx had based his ideas. Algeria did not have a working-class or a bourgeoisie; it had a peasantry. This questioning of Marxist theory resulted in contention between Lyotard and other Marxists. In the end he became critical of the overarching meta-narratives in their Marxist forms as well as in their Positivist/Phenomenological forms.

#### 3.4.3.1 *Marxism and Education*

According to Sarup (1978:69), Marxists still believed, as positivists did, in the meta-narrative of emancipation but argued that in its liberal humanist version it did not question the issue of social stratification. If intelligent working class people became educated enough to join the middle classes, then, in the liberal humanist interpretation of emancipation, social justice had been achieved. For Marxists, however, working class people who actually believed this to be the case were unknowingly supporting the status quo. Instead, Marxists thought that the

working class should be educated out of their ‘false-consciousness’. They had to be radically enlightened enough to understand why they existed in the state they were in and find collective ways to control the economic system, and their lives, for themselves.

Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian educator influenced by Christianity and Marx, put his radical pedagogical views about literacy, and education in general, into practice in the political turmoil that was Brazil in the early 1960s. According to Freire (1984:189) education always was/is a political act. In societies dominated by power-elites they are a systematic way of reproducing the status quo. A liberal humanist education is not the same as Freire’s “liberating education”. The former starts from the assumption that the individual is free, while the latter insists that this is not the case, that we live in an unequal world. In his famous work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) pointed out how education systems in societies dominated by power-elites or “oppressors” were systematic ways of maintaining the status quo. His whole philosophy was based on his assumption that the “oppressed” and their “oppressors” would only reach their full human potential or “humanisation” when the dominance of the “oppressors” over the “oppressed” had ended and the social transformation of their relationship took place; then the “oppressed” would have to refrain from becoming “oppressors” themselves. The latter maintained their dominance through “prescription” which “represented the imposition of one man’s [sic] choice against the other”. It was supported by a “banking” system of education where the “oppressed” are regularly ‘topped-up’ by ‘deposits’ of abstract knowledge removed from real situations and conditions. The assumption is that “oppressed” became convinced that this is the only knowledge worth having (false consciousness) and were frightened by the critical knowledge which could bring fundamental

changes to their lives. Thus, they colluded in their own oppression; a phenomenon Freire (1985:71-79 called the “culture of silence”. According to Taylor (), Freire did not believe humanity could be free until it was conscious it was free

Radical ideas such as these worried the Brazilian authorities so much because they thought Freire was becoming a threat to their use of the education system to maintain the status quo, and they banned him from the country.

#### 3.4.4 *Critical Theory*

Lyotard’s abandonment of Marxism and his subsequent postmodern ideas are seriously opposed by Habermas (born 1929-) who belongs to the second generation of scholars who founded the Frankfurt School of Social Theory in the 1930’s and, according to Stickle (2004: 1), sought to develop a “critical theory of society”. Its early thinkers such as Horkeimer and Adorno were strongly influenced by Marxism and, as Scott & Usher (1999:23) point out, wanted to re-evaluate the Enlightenment in the light of Marxist influences “at a time when the ravages of totalitarianism seemed to be making a mockery of Enlightenment ideals”. Lyotard (1984) expresses his own concerns about this issue:

This model [Marxism] was born of the struggles accompanying the process of capitalism’s encroachment upon traditional civil societies... in countries with liberal or advanced liberal management, the struggles and their instruments have been transformed into regulators of the system; in communist countries, the totalizing model and its totalitarian effect have made a comeback in the name of Marxism itself. And

the struggles in question have simply been deprived of the right to exist. (Lyotard 1984:12-13)

For Habermas, however, the Enlightenment project had not failed; it was simply not complete. According to Scott & Usher (1999:31-2) and Stickle (2004), Habermas believed that communication was a basic social need and involved the making of four validity claims, that what is said and done is *intelligible, truthful, justified* and *sincere* in order to bring about consensus. The way to reach this is through the “ideal speech situation” and “communicative competence”. The “ideal speech situation” is brought about through critical discussion and rational agreement rather than custom or coercion from a dominant ideology. The criteria for “ideal speech situations” should be publicly known and everyone should possess ‘communicative competence’ whereby they have the technical grasp of language plus the knowledge of appropriate ways to proceed in discussion. ‘Fair play’ is crucial and everyone participating has a right to agree or disagree with any factual or normative claims. Differences in the status of participants should be ignored so that ‘fair play’ takes place. For Lyotard, however, this ‘ideal’ situation was impossible to achieve because language is never free from ideology, even language about “ideal speech situations” and “communicative competence”. He also said that certain groups such as the Frankfurt School and “Socialisme ou Barbarie” tried to preserve and refine the “critical model” but:

...the social foundation of the principle of division, or class struggle, was blurred to the point of losing its radicality; the critical model in the end lost its theoretical standing and was reduced to the status of a “utopia” or “hope”. (Lyotard 1984:13)

This was not the case for Habermas who thought “the ideal speech situation” and “communicative competence” could bring about emancipation and pave the way to eventual rational *consensus* about the validity of ‘truth’ statements. This is very different from Lyotard who disagreed with striving for consensus in favour of paralogy and accepting the ‘differend,’ which recognised that *different* ‘truths’ existed.

#### 3.4.4.1 *Critical Theory and Education*

In his book, *The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning and Teaching*, Brookfield (2005) demonstrates how Critical Theory, stemming from the Frankfurt School of thought and its Marxist traditions, can be used powerfully and effectively in adult learning and teaching. It is important to stress that ‘criticality’ is not the prerogative of the Frankfurt School. However, even though my own thinking has taken the ‘postmodern turn’, the Frankfurt School’s exposure of the underlying political, social and cultural assumptions of the major theoretical traditions is important. Like the Frankfurt School, postmodern approaches seek to expose these as well. However, postmodern approaches also challenge the universal assumptions made by Critical Theory itself.

Crucially, Brookfield points out that teaching criticality is not about *how* we teach - as is usually the case with psychological learning theories - it is about *what* we teach. Brookfield (ibid) argues for the importance of theory, especially the worth of Critical Theory, and stresses how its questioning of capitalist ideology has powerful implications for adult education. Importantly, he introduces the learning tasks associated with Critical Theory and

writes a chapter about each of them. In the following list of the tasks I have indicated which theorist Brookfield associates with it. The learning tasks are:

- *Challenging ideology* - Horkheimer (1895-1973), Adorno (1903-1969) and Althusser (1918-1990);
- *Contesting hegemony* - Gramsci (1891-1937);
- *Unmasking power* - Foucault (1926-1984);
- *Overcoming alienation* - Fromm (1890-1980);
- *Learning liberation* - Marcuse (1898-1979);
- *Reclaiming reason and learning democracy* - both about Habermas (born 1929- ).

In *Unmasking Power*, the focus is on the ideas of Foucault (1926-1984). For some this may be a strange inclusion because he is usually associated with postmodern thinking. His name, however, and ideas about power are inextricably linked. Using quotes directly from Foucault, Brookfield describes how the thinkers of the Frankfurt School were virtually unheard of in France during this theorist's intellectual development. If the opposite had been the case Foucault admitted that he probably would not have said some of the things he did, and could easily have followed some of the paths opened by critical theory - a slant on Foucault that is different and engaging.

It is worth spending some time at this point looking at what Foucault had to say about the power/knowledge nexus. According to Foucault (1972:117), dominant discourses are shaped

by *power* relationships and they are constructed and reinforced by “discursive practices” or “anonymous, historical rules” that not only strictly define who can speak but also who must listen. Paradoxically, as Usher and Edwards (1994:85) have noted, the grand discourses themselves assert that knowledge and ‘truth’ are actually distinct from power; that knowledge is neutral in its search for truth, which is something power can corrupt. This manifests itself in the world of education in arguments about “academic freedom”, and the “professional autonomy” of teachers. It is also manifested in claims about the need for “balance” in the curriculum and the castigation of “politicized” teachers and “political education as propaganda”.

According to Usher and Edwards (1994) in these discourses, power is regarded as a negative force in the hands of some powerful people and institutions determined to use it to oppress others. Therefore, power must be removed from the knowledge production process because it distorts and corrupts it. If it is not removed, establishing the ‘truth’ of knowledge will not be possible. For Foucault, however, this is impossible because the issue is not about ‘truth’ as such but who decides what *counts* as ‘truth’ (Foucault 1980:131). Whoever makes this decision is powerful because they are in a position that gives them the authority to decide. If they decide something is not true then it is marginalized. Therefore, knowledge and power are inextricably linked. Foucault is against the idea that the major discourses of history are continually progressing in a linear way becoming more humanitarian and emancipatory as they go. He regards them as “regimes of truth” which we have inherited. Influential groups in society wishing to retain their power continually “reinscribe” them. They are historically located in the past, however, and could only ever be provisional according to social and

cultural influences at the time of their inception. According to Fillingham (1993:100), Foucault believed that history was based on these enduring discourses rather than on economics as Marx believed.

Although critical teaching has the purpose of bringing about transformation, the different theorists mentioned here all pursue it differently. However, according to Brookfield (ibid: 353), one constant theme is common to them all, which is that “critical teaching begins with developing students’ powers of critical thinking so that they can critique the interlocking systems of oppression embedded in contemporary society”.

The next section about postmodernity explores how the knowledge legitimated by the powerful ‘language games’ of the meta-narratives, and those of their related philosophical narratives are now breaking down due to the technological advances of our age.

### **3.5 Postmodernism**

At the very beginning of this chapter I quoted Sarup (1993) who said that ‘modernism’ could be described as the culture of modernity, and that ‘postmodernism’ could be described as the culture of postmodernity (Sarup 1993:131). This ‘interpretation’ of the terms, however, is just one of many. Whether postmodernity is something that came ‘after’ modernity (as the ‘post’ part of the word suggests), or whether it is a continuation of modernity in a fractured form, is a highly contested debate. However, Rose (1991) points out that postmodernism is not always thought of as coming after modernism. She mentions that sometimes it is regarded as both contemporary with it, or, in the case of Lyotard, ‘prior’ to it (something I will discuss later in

this section). Jamieson (1984) prefers to use the term “late modernity” to describe the confusing breakdown of the modernist boundaries of society and its institutions and what it counts as knowledge. Engagingly, Bauman (2000) refers to “Liquid Modernity” which he compares to spilling liquid on a flat surface. Modernity, like the liquid, no longer has solid boundaries. They have become fluid and are trickling away everywhere.

There have been many attempts to ‘define’ postmodernism and it has been called many names. However, they are not “*names* with established referents” (Peters & Lankshear 1996:6) (their emphasis). This would be a contradiction because by its very nature a postmodern perspective is not a single, overarching theory about what constitutes legitimate knowledge; to perceive it as such would be to “totalise” (Usher and Edwards 1994:7). In other words, to define theoretical and/or historical boundaries for things ‘postmodern’ would result in imposing a ‘total’ or universal explanation of what a postmodern perspective actually is. This would be paradoxical because a postmodern perspective questions all such theories or explanations, including any about itself.

Lyotard (1984) himself believes that for things to become modern they must first be postmodern. He refers to the work of artists such as Picasso who have disrupted previous modernist suppositions of what art should be about. Their controversial ideas, however, have now become an integrated and acceptable part of acceptable modern culture. In this sense, “postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant (Lyotard 1984:79).” As I interpret this, I take it to mean that this disruption and fracturing of mainstream notions of accepted presuppositions of how the world should be

is a condition that is always with us, whether or not we call it postmodernity or postmodernism. For Lyotard, the condition is not related to any particular historical age. However, when I wrote this section of my thesis I had a book in front of me with the words “*After Postmodernism*” (Simons and Billig 1994) (my emphasis) in the title, and I remember speculating on what Lyotard might have said if he had seen it.

It is possible to write a whole thesis on the different interpretations of postmodernism by different theorists. However, as I am using the ideas of Lyotard to inform this research it seems sensible at this stage, to focus on his particular interpretation of postmodernism.

Lyotard (1984: xxiv) uses the word “postmodern” to describe his “incredulity” towards the meta-narratives of modernity. For him, they are no longer sustainable because they have fragmented. This “incredulity” is based on the perception that, in spite of the emancipatory promises of the modernist meta-narratives, humanity is still living with oppression, war, disease, and destruction. Irrespective of whether they had taken the positivist/ phenomenological or Marxist forms, the ‘modern’ meta-narratives insisted that human society was moving on and gradually emancipating itself. This had been regarded as self-evident even though disasters such as war, famine and other sufferings kept occurring. According to Burke (2000), they were simply relegated to “blips” which needed to be overcome as we progressed.

Furthermore, according to Lyotard (1984: 4), rapid “transformations”, or changes in technology and Capitalism, have occurred in western societies and these have undermined the

credibility of science's meta-narratives even further. He tells us that in respect of technology, science itself is a discourse relying on aspects of language such as:

...theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics, modern theories of algebra and informatics, computers and their languages, problems of translation and the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages, problems of information storage and data banks, telematics and the perfection of intelligent terminals, paradoxology. (Lyotard 1984: 3-4)

The 'postmodern condition' has arisen because science and technology have been unable to avoid the impact of these developments. The computerisation of knowledge means that its very nature is changing. When discussing this idea of Lyotard's, Hlynka (2001) says that computer languages are not simply new ways of transmitting knowledge; they are also new ways of constructing it. Knowledge is now being broken down into data for computers: a development that has profoundly affected and changed the way it is produced, perceived, accessed, assimilated and disseminated. Lyotard himself stipulates that if knowledge cannot be translated into computer language and sold as discrete information packages it will be abandoned. "The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training (*Bildung*) of minds, or even of individuals, is becoming obsolete and will be come ever more so" (Lyotard 1984: 4-5). He also points out that because of the "mercantilisation of knowledge" nation states will no longer be in charge of the production and distribution of learning, they will be perceived as a factor of "opacity" and "noise". Klages (2001) discusses Lyotard's concept of 'noise' and describes it as:

...a mode of expression or existence that cannot be included within digitisable categories. A parallel might be the radio: clear transmission is “knowledge”, and “static” is “noise”, which interrupts the broadcast of knowledge. (Klages 2001: 1)

In post industrial and postmodern societies “noise” is the opposite of knowledge, whereas in the modernist/humanist meta-narratives the opposite of knowledge was ignorance.

As well as the transformations in technology affecting the nature of knowledge, there have also been transformations in Capitalism. Economic control is shifting from the nation state to other powerful bodies such as globalised, multi national companies (Lyotard 1984:5). As well as influencing economies, some of these companies also influence knowledge production through computerisation of their systems. Nation states and their universities are no longer in sole control of producing and disseminating knowledge. Lyotard (ibid: 9) asks: “Who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?” In other words, with vast amounts of knowledge stored in databases, who decides what knowledge is worth storing (legitimate knowledge) and who will have access to it?” Using the multinational company IBM as an example, Lyotard imagines a scenario where the company owns an orbital path around our planet that contains satellites for communication and/or for storing data banks. Lyotard (1984:6) asks, “Who will have access to them? Who will determine which channels or data are forbidden? The state? Or will the state simply be one user among others?” These are questions that problematise the relationship between multi-national companies and state powers. The saleability of knowledge will be the driving force behind its production because

whoever 'owns' or controls knowledge in postmodern societies will not only be rich but will also be in an extremely powerful position. Lyotard contends that it is conceivable that nation states will one day fight for control of information, just as they battled for control over territories in the past.

The language game of science can no longer rely on the meta-narratives of emancipation and the speculative unity of knowledge for its legitimacy. These narratives are teleological in that they emphasise that 'true' knowledge has ends, emancipation and unity, which are utopian ideals that cannot be reached. Science, therefore, has to find another way of legitimating itself. Instead of concentrating on legitimating knowledge as 'truth', science now concentrates on legitimating it through its usefulness. In post industrial and postmodern times, science has adopted the notion that knowledge will be legitimated through its "performativity" (Lyotard 1984: 41-47). Performativity is judged on how well it minimises the inputs for tasks and maximises outputs. In other words, 'performance' has to be 'efficient' and this becomes a form of prescription itself. For Lyotard, science now concentrates on 'outcomes' rather than abstract principles. "Is it true?" is not the main question about knowledge any more. Instead the main question is "What use is it?" (Lyotard 1984: 51). This is disquieting because performativity as a legitimising principle has no ethics and leads to 'terror' situations where "might makes right".

### ***3.5.1 Postmodernism and Education***

The world of Western education is now so affected by the influences of computerization and performativity that Lyotard's predictions seem uncanny. Peters (1999:2) points out that

Lyotard's writing "directly addresses the concerns of education, perhaps more so than any other single 'poststructuralist' text" in what has proved to be a "prophetic analysis".

The technological advances predicted by Lyotard have now led to digitalised learning packages which individual students can work through at their own time and pace on their home computers. Knowledge no longer depends on being organised and circulated entirely through state-sponsored schools, colleges and universities so competing knowledge producers, other than state institutions, can make computerised learning packages in order to be sold. Therefore, according to Usher and Edwards (1994:175) the "world of education" now "functions more and more like a market place," and that relationships between learners and knowledge have changed. Traditionally, the role of universities was to instil into learners that knowledge should be acquired for its own sake in order to train their minds. Now, however, they have to compete with the idea that knowledge is a packaged commodity exchanged between producers and consumers according to its value for the latter. In adult education, including adult literacy education, this 'value' often takes the form of accreditation for learners that will enable them to 'perform' effectively in the workplace.

Before I finish this chapter I want to remind the reader of what I said in its introduction, which was that, this chapter:

...prepares the ground for the discussion about narratives to do with learning and teaching (learning theories) in chapter 4, and literacy narratives in chapter five. Their 'language games' have been 'pre-scripted' and/or 'inter-scripted' by the assumptions

of the 'language games' contained in the 'meta narratives' and their related  
'philosophical narratives' discussed here.

I ask the reader to bear this in mind as we move on to chapter four.

## Chapter Four

### The Scientism of the Meta-Narratives and Learning Theories

#### 4.1 Introduction

The two words in the term *adult literacy* indicate that the education of learners and practitioners in the field of adult literacy cannot avoid being influenced by learning theories concerned with the teaching of *adults*, nor can it avoid theories concerned specifically with the teaching and learning of *literacy*. I now prefer to think of these theories as *theoretical narratives*, and will use this latter term frequently throughout the chapter. *Theoretical narratives* about the teaching and learning of adults and *theoretical narratives* specifically about the teaching and learning of literacy are inextricably linked because they constantly influence and interact with each other. However, in order to simplify the extraction of some of the main assumptions of both types of theoretical narratives I have separated the two. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on the theoretical narratives to do with the teaching and learning of *adults* generally. The theoretical narratives to do with *literacy* specifically are dealt with in the next chapter, chapter five. Some of the theoretical narratives about the teaching and learning of adults were first developed with children but they became so dominant that they influenced all educational practice, including the practice of adult education.

As the mass education systems of the west became established (see chapter three), questions arose about the best ways for teachers to teach effectively. This chapter demonstrates how the theoretical narratives about teaching and learning (learning theories)

developed, mainly by psychologists, were an integral part of the scientific ‘language game’ (Lyotard 1984) of modernity, which from now on I will refer to as ‘scientism’.

## **4.2 Organisation of chapter**

Section 4.3 discusses the principles of behaviourism and its influence on teaching and learning in Western education systems. In similar fashion sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 do the same with cognitivism, humanism, and Critical Theory, respectively. The last section, 4.7, gives a postmodern perspective on some of the issues raised in the previous sections.

## **4.3 Behaviourism**

By the end of the nineteenth century psychology, or the “science of mental life” (Curzon 2004:35-36), had become important and had started to strongly influence the formulation of learning theories or theoretical narratives about teaching and learning. One of the earliest and most influential of these was the school of classical behaviourism which was prominent around 1913-35. According to Curzon some of the philosophical roots of classical behaviourism can be found in the ideas of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) who was the founder of Positivism. In chapter three I mentioned that Comte devised a ‘positive method’ which insisted that the ‘objective’ research methodologies used in the natural sciences should be applied to research on human beings in social contexts. Although Comte was concerned with ‘social physics’ (the forerunner of sociology) Curzon’s reference to him makes it clear that the dominance of scientism also influenced psychology.

The aim of the behaviourists was to make psychology a respectable and acceptable experimental branch of natural science (Curzon: *ibid*). According to Rogers (2000a:89) they believed that “knowledge is truth, independent of both teacher and learner, that it is the same for all learners and can be known”. In this ‘language game’ knowledge existed ‘outside’ the learner and its warrant could only be established through ‘scientific’ empirical research which had to be ‘objective’ and ‘value-free’. Therefore, behaviourist research was based on scientific empiricism which meant that only behaviour which was physically observable was considered relevant. In the language game of behaviourism, a person’s own thoughts, perceptions, and consciousness were not considered ‘scientific’ if they could not be demonstrated as observable, physical changes in behaviour. Therefore, these unobservable behaviours were classed as redundant. According to Hughes and Sharrock (1997:170), behaviourism reflects, in part, the Cartesian mind-body dualism but concentrated only on the body because it was “within the domain of science”. Unlike the mind, it could be observed empirically. Behaviourism’s main proponents were Pavlov (1849-1936), Watson (1878-1958), Thorndike (1874-1949) and Skinner (1904-90). Pavlov and Skinner are well known for their research carried out on animals.

#### 4.3.1 *Behaviourism and Education*

For Behaviourists the aim of learning is to change behaviour and they assume that learning has been achieved when a learner exhibits physical changes in behaviour which demonstrate that a particular pre-set behavioural outcome has been achieved. Rogers (2002a:89) explains that in order to do this “stimuli from outside the individual provoke responses, and these responses can be *directed* towards achieving desired behavioural changes”. I have emphasised the word ‘directed’ because the empiricist approach of

behaviourism involved intensive, 'objective' observation of *measurable* behaviour which could then be predicted and controlled: in other words, 'directed'. As stated earlier, much of the theory is based on research that was carried out on animals and it was thought that human behaviour could be explained using the same approach. The main assumption underpinning the 'language game' of this theoretical narrative about learning was that all observable human behaviour could be understood as responses to external stimuli (stimulus-response or S-R). Therefore, it was assumed that learning as an observable and measurable behaviour could also be brought about by S-R. According to Walklin (1990:6-7), if a learner's past responses to stimuli had brought about rewards such as praise and approval then they were more likely to respond to stimuli. The response could change according to the learner's past experiences. In order to achieve preferred behavioural outcomes difficult tasks were broken down into their component parts and learners were given positive reinforcement (such as praise or rewards) or negative reinforcement (such as being ignored or punished) in order to establish the required behavioural outcomes at one level of difficulty before going on to the next. This breaking down of tasks into their component parts is very reminiscent of Descartes *step by step*, scientific reconstruction of knowledge mentioned in the previous chapter.

Behaviourists continuously reinforced desirable behaviour and learners were thought to develop in a linear process as they steadily acquired the ability to respond to more complex stimuli. Armitage et al (2003:79) points out that behaviourist learning theories were mainly developed within the child education sector and became so influential that they formed the foundation on which other learning theories were built. The behaviourist influence is still with us today and has overlapped into adult education because it was/is so dominant. Any

teacher, whether based in school, college, or university who has been obliged to define aims and objectives (behavioural outcomes) for their learners, has, in general terms, been following a behaviourist approach. In the 1980s, in the post-compulsory/adult sector, the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) meant that very precise behavioural outcomes were developed which had to be strictly monitored (Gray et al 2000:28). NVQ's demanded teaching being directed towards the assessment of *competencies* (very precise behavioural outcomes) which learners had to *perform* according to strict pre-set criteria which were linked to occupational standards. In chapter one I described how this approach had been used in connection with adult literacy learners and practitioners.

Most educational practitioners accept, in a very general sense, that motivation, rewards and continuous reinforcement can encourage learning. However, many have deeply held reservations about using behaviourist learning theory in excess for a number of reasons. The first reason is an ethical one in that behaviourist learning theory was founded on experiments with animals in laboratories rather than humans in classrooms. The clinical environment of laboratories is worlds apart from the human social activity which goes on in classrooms. Gray et al (ibid:26) points out that animal and human learning are qualitatively different. Furthermore, assumptions about animal behaviour can never be extended enough to include the complexity of human behaviour.

This leads to the second objection: behaviourism is considered reductionist in that it implies that simplistic processes which might be common to animals and humans (at a basic level) and which are easy to measure do not explain the more complex and

sophisticated actions in which humans engage. It is also reductionist in the sense that it fails to recognise the importance of the thought processes of learners. In the language game of behaviourism, a person's mental processes are not considered 'scientific' because they cannot be observed as physical changes in behaviour. By ignoring behaviour which is more abstract and cannot be measured, such as the concomitants of what Armitage (2003:76), amorously describes as *thinking, reasoning* and *understanding*, behaviourism has to be regarded as reductionist because it fails to 'tell the whole story' about the learning process.

Thirdly, by failing to acknowledge a learner's thought processes and how these might contribute to the learning process, behaviourism implies a great deal of learner 'passivity'. Behaviourist learning theory regards the learner as someone who can be manipulated or trained to respond in desired ways to external stimuli. As stated earlier, external stimulation can be applied through rewards or punishments. However, a number of writers on this topic including Gray et al (2000), Wallace (2003) and Curzon (2004) warn about the implications of extreme behaviourism for "brain-washing" (Curzon 2004:41) or "mind control" (Gray et al 2000:26).

#### **4.4 Cognitivism**

Cognitive psychologists also regard the investigation of cognition or thought as a science (Honderich 1995:139). According to Gray et al (2000:28), behaviourism concentrated on measurable, physical behavioural outcomes and disregarded the thought processes of learners because they could not be 'scientifically' observed. However, cognitivists rejected

this reductionism in favour of focusing on how learners learn to ‘know’ or ‘understand’ something. As Rogers (2002a) points out:

In this view of learning ... learners are faced with something bigger than they are, something to which they must adapt themselves. The world of knowledge lies outside themselves. Growth is linear; the development of the ability to cope with increasingly complex knowledge (Rogers 2002a:89).

There are various perspectives linked with the cognitive approach. One such perspective regards cognitivism as ‘information processing’; another as ‘constructivism’, and a third as ‘contextual’ (or socially constructed).

‘Information Processing’ is a form of cognitivism which, like behaviourism, is imbued with scientism because it still assumes that knowledge exists independently from the learner, that learners respond to different stimuli, and that learning development is linear. However, learners are assumed to be active in creating their own mental response to stimuli. According to Foley (2004:81), this approach regarded human beings as information-processing organisms and was concerned with improving their efficiency. He points out that this perspective started to flourish in the 1950s when the development of computers stimulated interest in how people process information.

Early cognitivists such as Gagné (1916-2002) and Bloom (1913-1999) produced ‘scientific’ taxonomies which systematically classified all learning into categories or domains. Gagné is sometimes classed as a neo-behaviourist (see Curzon 2004:63) but

Tusting and Barton (2003:9), who discuss his work in connection with literacy theories, place him in the cognitive school because he mainly focused on internal information processing rather than behaviour.

Curzon (2004: 65) tells us that in order that successful learning conditions could be replicated in other settings Gagné proceeded to analyse them ‘objectively’. He developed an extensive taxonomy which, according to Curzon, was his way of presenting advances “in the scientific study of human learning”. He extensively identified what he thought were the characteristics of learners, the types of learning that took place, and the learning act itself. It was essential for Gagné that lower order skills were mastered before higher order skills otherwise it was assumed that effective learning could not take place. As well as looking at learner characteristics, types of learning, and the learning act he also devised a series of “events of instruction” ( mentioned in Curzon *ibid*: 273) for the teacher to follow.

Another taxonomy, devised by Benjamin Bloom in 1951, is very well known. According to Gray et al (2000:73), Bloom, like Gagné, thought teachers needed some kind of objective or scientific way of knowing whether or not learning had taken place. He classified all learning into three behavioural domains; the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor. Again, the skills and abilities required for each domain were identified and listed in ascending order of difficulty.

Both Gagné and Bloom attempted to create hierarchical and ‘scientific’ (or ‘objective’) taxonomies about learning which started with the learning process at its simplest leading to

learning which was more complex. Their hierarchical way of working is best explained by defining the term 'taxonomy' itself. It is:

“a formal classification based on perceived relationships [often used] in the biological sciences in which organisms are grouped and classified on the basis of class, order, genus, species, etc. Lower classes are subordinated to higher until, finally, the *summum genus*, or most inclusive category with which the science is concerned, is reached” (Curzon 2004:162).

This definition of the term 'taxonomy' demonstrates its strong scientific roots and its hierarchical nature. By their use and appropriation of the term Gagné and Bloom clearly reveal the scientism underpinning their ideas.

The next cognitive development in understanding learning was 'Cognitive Constructivism'. It developed when theorists realised that learners not only assimilated knowledge but actively played a part in constructing it.

While cognitivist models of learning focus on learners developing representational models of knowledge provided to them by their environment, cognitive constructionism shifts the focus to the learner's own process of actively constructing these models through interaction with their environment. (Tusting and Barton 2003:9)

One of the first cognitivists to acknowledge the part learners played in constructing knowledge was Piaget (1896-1980). According to Armitage (2003:76), he was concerned primarily with childhood education and his research spanned a period of about 40 years; from the 1920s to the early 1960's. He classified childhood learning into five stages. These are outlined in Gray et al (2000:29). They are the sensory-motor stage (0-2 years), the pre-operational thought stage (2-4 years), the intuition stage (4-7 years), the concrete operations stage (7-11 years), and the formal operations stage (11-15years). The model has been criticised because it links the developmental stages with levels of maturity and it is argued that the two are not the same.

According to Gray et al (ibid), Piaget's work concentrates on how children think and reason and not just how they behave; and even though it has been severely criticised, it still remains an important basis for cognitive learning theory. According to Armitage (2003:76); and Tusting and Barton (2003:10) Piaget's work with children and his ideas have been considered useful for the study of learning generally because they do attempt to show that learning is in some way developmental. At first glance Piaget's five stages seem purely maturational but he also acknowledged that within each stage children themselves played an active role in their development by interacting with their environment and engaging with their new experiences to extend their existing cognitive development.

The above understandings generated by Piaget were developed further by Bruner (born 1915 -), but he moves on from the assumption that the amount of learning which a learner could absorb is restricted to the 'stage' they are at. Armitage et al (2003); Gray et al (2000); Parson's et al (2001); Tusting and Barton (2003); and Curzon (2004) have

commented on Bruner's work and they can be summed up as saying that, for Bruner, the basic principles or cognitive structures of *any* subject, and their future application, can be mastered by children at *any* age through the process of *discovery learning*. 'Discovery learning' involves presenting learners with problems which are explored and possible solutions found based on what learners already know or have experienced. Bruner stressed the importance of 'insightful learning' experiences which intrigue and interest learners thus stimulating their powers of induction. In this sense, Bruner denied that knowledge was 'objective' or 'out there'. He saw knowledge as an *interactive process* rather than a static body of information; "a transaction between learner as what is learned" (quoted from Gray et al 2000:31). Bruner's 'progressive' approach has been questioned even by other cognitive constructivists such as Ausubel (1918-2008). However, Gray et al (ibid) points out that his great influence still remains in the form of ideas such as 'discovery learning', 'enquiry-based learning' and problem-based learning'.

The third perspective on cognitivism is *Contextual Cognitivism*. In the main, the behaviourists and cognitivists mentioned so far placed emphasis on the development of the learner as an *individual* entity. However, some psychologists advocated that a learner's mental processes could not be decontextualised; they were influenced by the *social* contexts in which they took place. This idea can be found in the work of Bruner but it was developed further by the social constructivists. According to Foley (2004:81), one of the key thinkers in this area was Vygotsky (1896-1934), who influenced many others in the field. They maintained that learning is a fundamentally social process and that people learn through interacting with others. Through the influence of culture and context they interpret and construct knowledge of their worlds.

The three perspectives linked with the cognitive approach; ‘information processing’, ‘constructivism’, and ‘contextual’ (or socially constructed) often fuse together. In general, the principles of the field are that learning changes can take place which are unobservable and do not necessarily manifest themselves as behavioural changes. Cognitivist theory asserts that knowledge is gained through interaction with a stimulating environment and that this process involves the acquisition of new information which the learner assimilates with their existing knowledge and applies it to new situations. Therefore the learner is active in assimilating knowledge. Often learning is considered a linear process and takes place in developmental stages which are not related to stages of growth in maturity.

#### ***4.4.1 Cognitivism and Education***

Cognitivist learning theory has strongly influenced the way teachers design learning programmes. Generally speaking it has resulted in the following ideas. Firstly, learning tasks should be broken down into their component parts and placed in order of difficulty. It is then the teacher’s job to systematically guide and manage the learner through a particular stage until the learning tasks at that stage have been mastered. At all times the teacher should be aware that the learner must process and master the learning at one level before moving on to the next. Learners can then apply the learning already assimilated to new learning tasks. Lower order skills must be developed before moving on to the higher order ones. Petty (2004:13-14) has described this as setting “a ladder of tasks” so that learners can start from the lower rungs and climb gradually from the thought processes involved in simple and concrete learning tasks to the more abstract thought processes demanded by more complex tasks. Petty also points out the importance of setting higher

order tasks. These involve the learner analysing, synthesising and evaluating in order to “ensure fully functioning knowledge”. Restricting learners to lower order tasks only results in ‘surface’ learning which can be easily forgotten.

The writers concerned with post-compulsory and adult education including Gray et al (2000), Armitage et al (2003) and Curzon (2004) have highlighted the objections to cognitive learning theory and they are summarised here. Firstly, although the learner is seen to be active rather than passive, subject matter is still structured into meaningful units by the tutor and these are represented as increasing in difficulty. Secondly, the learner’s ‘active’ learning and development is still seen as proceeding in a linear fashion and as being controlled by the inherent structure of knowledge itself. These two assumptions fail to acknowledge any existing knowledge about the subject area the learner might have, and prevent them from making creative contributions. Thirdly, Piaget’s work was considered to be important for learning generally because it is developmental. Armitage (2003:76), points out that one of the biggest criticisms of his model, especially in adult education, is that development from practical to abstract thought is assumed to have stopped at age 15. Piaget’s critics argue that the development of thought is to do with the range and depth of learning undertaken at any age. Fourthly, although the later constructivists advocated that a learner’s mental processes could not be decontextualised from the *social* contexts in which they took place, the ‘social contexts’ themselves were often those which related only to the classroom. Lastly, the ethos and organisation of classroom contexts was rarely critically questioned.

## 4.5 Humanism

*I just want to note that in this section I refer to two authors with the same surname; 'Rogers'. To avoid confusion I have identified Alan Rogers with the letter 'a', and Carl Rogers with the letter 'b' when referencing them.*

Humanist psychology was originally rooted in the philosophy of phenomenological existentialism and was a reaction against the determinism of behaviourist psychology and cognitive psychology which stem from the philosophy of positivism. Humanist psychology is often seen as a break away from the empirical science advocated by positivism. Rogers (2002a) points out that humanist theories are usually:

...associated with changes away from the certainties of empirical science, the universally valid conclusions of *objective research*, the stability and general applicability of scientific laws, the normally accepted values, into a world of living complexity, uncertainty, instability, the uniqueness of *individual response* and the conflicts of values. (Rogers, 2002a:93) (My italics)

Whereas positivism concentrates on objective knowledge which exists outside the individual, phenomenology focuses on the subjective ways of knowing of the individual. Humanist psychology emphasises that human beings have unique qualities and believes that their freedom of choice (as opposed to the deterministic laws of science) and potential for personal growth will bring about their self-actualisation or optimal self-fulfilment. Two of the key psychologists who played a major role in the development of humanist thinking

are Abraham Maslow (1908-70) with his notion of 'self-actualisation' and Carl Rogers (1902b-87) who stressed the importance of *experience* in its promotion.

Curzon (2004:112) informs us that Maslow (1908-70), a professor of psychology believed in the development of the 'real' self which had to be based on the recognition of the 'higher nature' and 'dignity' of human beings. The determinism of 'scientific' behaviourism could not achieve this because it was narrow and dehumanising in that it treated people as objects. Maslow is famous for his ideas about self-actualisation and saw human motivation as needs-related. Gray et al (2000:33), discuss Maslow's five-tier hierarchy of needs. They are 'hunger and thirst', 'physical and psychological well-being', 'love and belonging', 'self-esteem' and finally 'self-actualisation,' in that order. Unless the more basic ones such as food, comfort and safety were met then the higher order needs, such as self-actualisation could not be realised. Self-actualisation is an individual's ultimate goal.

Maslow's ideas were developed further by Rogers (b) (1902-87), a psychotherapist famous for his 'person-centred' psychology. He believed that human beings were intrinsically 'good' and saw therapy and education as emancipatory processes. In his famous book *On Becoming a Person* (1961, 1977 edition) he pays tribute to the phenomenological ideas of Kirkegaard and Buber who emphasised that human beings were 'free' to make choices but were responsible for their actions. Rogers also outlines some of the key concepts he developed as a therapist such as the idea that all personalities are motivated by a 'core' tendency, or drive, to actualise their full potential and also that personalities have certain 'core characteristics'. One such characteristic is the 'self', a person's conscious sense of who

they really are. The 'real' self is free from 'false faces' which it does not necessarily know to be false. In other words, individuals become free when they stop trying to be what others want them to be and realise that these often adopted 'outside' perceptions are not intrinsic to their genuine self; a self which gradually emerges through experience. Another characteristic is 'phenomenological reality'; a person's subjective perception of reality whether or not it conforms to 'objective' reality. For instance, if a person has had experiences which have promoted a negative self-concept such as the feeling they are unattractive, then this self-concept will exist in spite of the fact that others think differently. A third characteristic is the need for 'Positive Regard' or the necessity of acceptance, love and/or approval from others. As well as this there is also a need for 'Positive *Self*-Regard' whereby an individual accepts and approves of themselves as part of their self-concept.

#### 4.5.1 *Humanism and Education*

The type of learning which Maslow advocates for self-actualisation is discussed in Curzon (2004:112), who points out that he believed in *intrinsic* learning based on the values and perceived objectives of the learners themselves. On the other hand, *extrinsic* learning is imposed from 'outside' the learner and is a collection of habits and associations that do not necessarily have relevance for the learner and are impersonal. According to Maslow (in Armitage et al 2003:67) self-actualisation may only occur 'fleetingly' throughout people's lives. These occurrences are what Maslow calls 'peak experiences' such as the insight gained from a great novel. Self-actualised people have become 'optimal persons' through having more 'peak experiences' than others.

In another of his famous works *Freedom to learn for the 80s*, (Rogers 1983b) acknowledges the work of Dewey whose debt to Hegel was mentioned in chapter three. In this book Rogers applies the ideas he gained as a therapist specifically to education. He outlines the importance of experiential learning which addresses the needs and wants of the learner rather than an imposed curriculum. He identifies two types of learning, one being cognitive and the other experiential. Rogers is at odds with Western education systems which only stress cognitive learning such as the drill of learning multiplication tables as part of a prescribed curriculum, a curriculum which imposes similar assignments on all students and assesses them by standardised tests or instructor-chosen grades. He stresses that this inhibits *meaningful* learning. Instead he advocates experiential learning which he regards as aesthetic rather than just logical. It involves the 'whole person' and combines the logical with the *intuitive*, the intellect with the *emotions*, the concept with the *experience* and the idea with the *meaning*. Experiential learning only occurs when students have the freedom to learn something as and when they feel they need to. They assess their own progress by self-evaluation. This gives the student control over the learning process and its direction (including making mistakes) and enables them to participate completely as a 'whole person' both intellectually and emotionally. The essence of Rogers' approach is that students should not be receptacles of teacher-transmitted knowledge but should be enabled to 'learn how to learn', an idea he takes from the phenomenological writings of Heidegger:

I would like to underscore some of Heidegger's thoughts because they express some of the central themes of this book. The primary task of the teacher is to *permit* the student to learn, to feed his or her own curiosity. Merely to absorb facts

is only of slight value in the present, and usually of even less value in the future. Learning *how* to learn is the element that that is always of value, now and in the future. (Rogers 1983b:18)

For Rogers the main purpose of education was to enable people to ‘learn how to learn’ and this involved a new interpretation of the teacher’s role. It is totally different interpretation from that of behaviourists and cognitivists in that it sees the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than a director or controller of learning. Carl Rogers (1983b) suggests that students will learn if there is a relationship of mutual trust and respect between them and the teacher. Therefore, teachers should value and respect their learners as individuals. It is the job of teachers to *facilitate* learning by creating a secure learning environment and by providing a wide range of resources. The teacher should also allow themselves to be used as a flexible resource by the learners and be prepared to learn from them. Teachers should also be honest about their own intellectual and emotional limitations as well as those of their learners.

Within adult education the principles of humanistic psychology have been very influential. Influenced by Rogers (b), Knowles (1984:52) developed his notion of ‘andragogy’ which he describes as the “the science and art of teaching adults”. In chapter one I outlined my professional training experiences based on his ideas about the adult as a self-directed learner. Knowles also introduced the idea of ‘learning contracts’ or ‘action plans’ where the tutor negotiates the curriculum with the learner and helps them choose what they want to learn. The tutor then provides materials and uses methods appropriate for the learner’s ability. Petty (2004:17) points out that whilst this may be considered a radical approach in

schools it has been commonplace in adult education (until recently I might add). This is probably because most adults have more maturity and ability to appreciate the approach. Rogers (2003a: 97) reminds us that Maslow's work is useful here because it informs us that in any group of adults there will be individuals with very different needs. These needs keep changing in accordance with the constantly changing lifestyles of learners. In this sense, prescribed learning outcomes are not always appropriate for adult learning programmes because each learner will only take away what they, themselves, require. The dilemma for humanist teachers in schools is to find ways of working in an education system which is based on an imposed, prescribed curriculum. Nonetheless, these teachers, and humanist teachers in other sectors, who do not find it possible to allow learners to be fully self-directed manage to give them some kind of choice in tasks and assignments.

I want to end this section by mentioning some of the objections to humanist learning theory. Maslow has been challenged for a number of reasons. In his work he gave examples of 'optimal persons' such as Jefferson, Thoreau and Einstein. They were characterised as having been able to fully absorb themselves to causes selflessly and with dedication. However, both Curzon (2004:113) and Armitage et al (2003:68) point out that Maslow's idea of 'optimal persons' has been criticised for being based on the values of middle-class Americans in the 1960's. According to Curzon, other criticisms are that his work was "unscientific" and "based on insubstantial speculation". Furthermore, Armitage points out that the experiences of teachers and learners indicates that the motivation to learn is not necessarily based on the fulfilment of interrelated needs. Maslow's assumption that adults are only motivated to undertake self-fulfilling and creative learning when their 'deficiency needs' have been met is cannot always be substantiated. This is also mentioned

in the work of Rogers (2003a:97) who points out that some learners attend adult education classes in order to extend their social networks or gain self-esteem. In these cases, learners are attending classes to have their 'deficiency needs' attended to rather than for the learning experience itself, and teachers may have difficulty in catering for them.

Like Maslow, Rogers(b) has been challenged by some because the value of 'experiential learning' cannot be backed up by 'scientific evidence'. Some of his terms such as 'whole person' and 'fully functioning person' are considered vague and therefore difficult to apply. In this respect Curzon mentions Skinner who argued that Rogers(b) appears to ignore the difference formal education has made in the extent of the skills and knowledge which can be acquired by people in their lives. Skinner contended that Rogers' model is limited only to what the learner finds relevant in the present rather than the future. He also contended that personal and social behaviour influenced by 'social contingencies' can be cold and brutal whereas actions based on the scientific analysis of human behaviour can be much more humane.

#### **4.6 Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy is based on the tenets of Critical Theory which, as I mentioned in chapter three, emerged from the ideas of the Frankfurt School of Social Theory in the 1930's. In chapter three I pointed out that the thinkers in this school wanted to re-think the totalitarianism of Marxism because it "seemed to be making a mockery of Enlightenment ideals" and they sought to develop a different, but still "critical theory of society". Critical pedagogy is not based on *psychological* theoretical approaches to the learning of individuals mentioned previously in this chapter. It is *social* theory which emphasises the

development of critical approaches to the powerful ideologies of society which influence the culture in which learners exist. I have already mentioned the learning tasks perceived as important for critical pedagogy when I talked about the work of Brookfield (2005) but I will repeat them here anyway. They are *challenging ideology, contesting hegemony, unmasking power, overcoming alienation, learning liberation, reclaiming reason, and learning democracy*.

#### **4.6.1 Critical Pedagogy and Education**

Foley (2004:84) points out that with critical pedagogy the mode of teaching is *dialogical*; teachers discuss learners' experiences, encouraging them to critically analyse and rethink them in ways that might change their lives. In the process the teacher both supports and challenges the learner. Learners' experiences are brought to the fore and valued and then used to expose the hidden and dominant ideologies behind their social reality.

#### **4.7 Postmodern Perspectives**

Usher and Edwards (1994:40) are two of the key theorists who concern themselves with postmodern approaches to adult education in the UK. According to them, psychology perceives itself to be a science modelled on the natural sciences and behaviourism is considered to be a prime example of psychology's scientific application. At the same time, however, the idea that psychology is a science is also a prime example of what makes it problematic. In order to be respected as a science, behaviourism regards a subject's thoughts, attitudes and values to be unscientific and therefore unimportant. In this sense, it ignores that which it cannot observe and measure in order to pave the way in establishing itself as an experimental science, like the natural sciences. Usher and Edwards point out

that by leaving out the ‘living’ subject in this way behaviourism turns them into objects who are merely examples of their world rather than living representatives of it. From their postmodern stance they argue that subjects represent their world and the meanings and the interpretations they make of it cannot be ignored. These meanings and interpretations are mediated and expressed through language; a language which not only conveys meaning but constructs it.

In respect of humanism, Usher and Edwards (ibid: 46), point out that the concept of ‘self-actualisation’ actually perceives the individual ‘self’ as something pre-given to a person and unproblematic. Science also views the individual ‘rational self’ in the same way. Therefore, both schools of thought privilege the *individual*. From a postmodernist viewpoint, humanist psychology is simply echoing scientific psychology because it does not challenge this individualistic emphasis.

I shall end this chapter by reminding the reader that all these theoretical narratives about teaching and learning both ‘pre-script’ and ‘inter-script’ with the theoretical narratives about literacy which are discussed in the next chapter, chapter five.

## Chapter Five

### The Scientism of the Meta-Narratives and Literacy Theories

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I said that the two words in the term *adult literacy* indicate that the education of learners and practitioners in the field of adult literacy is influenced by learning theories concerned with the teaching of *adults*, and also theories concerned with the teaching and learning of *literacy* (I now call both types ‘theoretical narratives’). This chapter concentrates on the theoretical narratives to do with the teaching and learning of literacy specifically. As with the previous chapter, it again points out the influence of modernity’s scientism on four key narratives which have different assumptions about literacy such as ‘literacy is skills’, ‘literacy is an experiential process’, ‘literacy is a critical, transformation process’ and ‘literacy is a social practice’. The chapter demonstrates how these narratives are ‘pre-scripted’ and ‘inter-scripted’ with the theoretical narratives which relate to adult learning and teaching, discussed in chapter four, and those of the philosophical narratives; discussed in chapter three.

#### 5.2 Organisation of Chapter

Section 5.3 of the chapter deals with the narrative which assumes that literacy is *skills*; a very influential narrative about literacy and how it is learned which is still very prevalent today.

The next section, 5.4, is concerned with the narrative which assumes literacy to be an

*experiential process* and should be pertinent to learners' lives. Section 5.5 focuses on the narrative which sees literacy as a *critical, transformation* process. Here literacy is seen as a way of transforming peoples' lives in order to liberate and empower them and to critically challenge some of the powerful and dominant organisations of society. The last section, section 5.6, is concerned with literacy as a *social practice* where the various contexts (as well as the school context) in which literacy is learned are a key focus of attention. These narratives have dominated the field of literacy studies for the last 40 years. The influence of scientism has been paramount in the formulation of the theoretical assumptions underpinning many of their ideas especially 'literacy as skills', just as it was with the assumptions of the theoretical narratives underpinning the teaching and learning of adults.

### **5.3 Literacy as Skills**

It is necessary, at this stage, to define what is meant by the term 'skills'. According to Barton (1994) the word 'skill' originates from a word in the Greek language which means 'to separate'. Curzon (2004:291-305) looks at various types of 'skills' and at a number of theories about how they are acquired. What is common to most of them is that once something is defined as a skill (such as reading) it is then broken down (or separated) into its components or 'sub skills'. These are placed in a hierarchical framework and they are learned in the 'correct' order usually through repeated training or teaching, which can then be easily assessed. Each new skill depends on mastering the previous one and preparing for the next. In this way development in skills such as reading is assumed to be a linear process. As mentioned in the last chapter, this analytical break down of a task into its various component skills to be learned in order of complexity is one of the main characteristics of both behaviourism and

cognitivism. Its provenance goes right back to the influence of Descartes, discussed in chapter three, who influenced the scientism of modernity, and applied empiricism and rationalism to his *step-by-step* scientific reconstruction of knowledge so that any doubt about it could be eliminated. Descartes is one of the key links between the scientism of modernity and the meta-narrative of human emancipation; so ‘literacy as skills’ has very long roots to the past which are still thriving.

Barton (1994) points out that the ‘skills’ approach to literacy has been extremely influential in educational practice and has underpinned the design of literacy programmes at all levels of education including adult education. This approach, however, was usually associated with children and was/is embedded in the curriculum of primary schools. As can be seen by the date of the reference to Barton, he was writing about these issues over fifteen years ago. However, as I mentioned earlier, the skills approach has vigorously re-established itself in adult literacy policy as can be seen in the first word in the title of the current *Skills for Life* (2001) policy of the New Labour Government in the UK. According to Barton in this approach:

Literacy is seen as a psychological variable which can be measured and assessed.

Skills are treated as things which people own or possess; some are *transferable* skills, some are not. Learning to read becomes a technical problem and the successful reader is a *skilled* reader. As a school-based definition of literacy, this view is very powerful, and it is one which spills over into the rest of society. (Barton 1994:12)

This narrative also ‘spills over’ into literacy education for adults and does not account for the many types of literacy adults encounter in the many and varied social contexts in which they participate. As Barton (ibid: 162-165) later adds, the literacy as ‘skills’ approach suggests that individuals privately possess some ‘neutral’ techniques which can be accessed and added to. It is assumed that these remain the same in most social situations. He points out that this is such a powerful idea that it has become to be regarded by many as the only way to learn to read. Barton (ibid: 15) also adds that some teachers, even at the time of his writing, regarded the ‘skills’ approach to literacy to be out-of-date. However, they could not escape it because it was so entrenched in wider society. It had such a strong influence that it shaped what the media, parents and politicians thought about literacy. This wide influence still affects teachers today, even if they disagree with the assumptions of this narrative. One reason why they disagree is because it is a *reductionist* view of literacy, where the only important aspects are those which can be technically and ‘objectively’ assessed. The narrative is strongly linked to the *reductionism* of the behaviourist and cognitivist approaches to learning mentioned in chapter three, which didn’t “tell the whole story” about the learning process. In the same way, the ‘skills’ approach to literacy does not ‘tell the whole story’ about learning literacy. There is no doubt that literacy ‘skills’ are important and valued in our culture. However, in the case of many adult literacy learners indigenous to the UK their childhood schooling based on this approach has not worked. Therefore, other issues must be taken into consideration; these will be discussed shortly.

Barton's description of the 'skills' approach, which assumes literacy to be an individualistic, decontextualised, neutral and measurable psychological variable, is just one dominant characteristic of another powerful narrative, or language game, which, according to Street (1984), assumes literacy to be *autonomous*. In other words, it is something which has an independent existence that is not affected by social context and historical time. In this instance, Street was writing in 1984, but he outlines three other far-reaching assumptions of this particular narrative that still have resonance today. These are, that schooled societies with long-established writing systems produce people with superior cognitive development; that there is a 'great-divide' between societies with oral traditions and those with literate traditions; and that Western alphabet literacy with its roots in Greek civilization is superior to other forms of literacy. The next three paragraphs demonstrate that all of these assumptions are underpinned by modernity's scientism.

### 5.3.1 *The Autonomous Model*

Street (ibid) points out that the idea that writing systems in schooled societies improved cognitive development stemmed from the work of influential anthropologists of the 1970s. They claimed that people living in societies with education systems focusing on the importance of literacy were more capable of developing higher levels of *scientific, logical, rational* and *abstract* thought than those who lived in societies without such provision. Street disagrees and claimed that this was simply a judgment based on Western values and assumptions about the 'consequences' of literacy. These anthropologists maintained that

writing systems produced specialised forms of text which brought about changes in language and thought that were not possible in societies with oral traditions; and that these changes in language improved logical and scientific reasoning. This was based on the premise that written language does not involve the 'speakers' modifying or adjusting what they say according to the social demands demanded by a listener in a live situation. In this way writing was thought to become more sophisticated and developed because it was conducted over time and space and not dependent on listener feedback.

Supporters of the 'great divide' theory also claimed that written texts could become extremely specialised resulting in the logical function of language becoming very well developed. For Street (ibid:1), however, their emphasis on this point simply reflected Western cultural assumptions about 'essay-text' writing as being a 'universal' superior form of literacy when it was, in fact, very specific to Western culture. Street (ibid: 24-26) demonstrates how the 'great divide' theory was yet another manifestation of scientism and its overarching influence on literacy. He contends that the anthropologists and developmental psychologists of the 1970s carried out '*scientific*' cognition tests in 'literate', and 'non-literate' societies. They maintained that their work was unbiased and 'objective' and assumed literacy to be a 'neutral,' technology independent from any cultural influences. Therefore, it did not have any racial or ethnocentric overtones. Researchers such as these did not want to be linked to earlier discredited studies which claimed that there was 'great-divide' between various social groups which Street describes as "logical/pre-logical", "primitive/modern" or "concrete/scientific". These classifications had been criticised as being racial and ethnocentric because they were

based on a built-in assumption that 'logical', 'modern' and 'scientific' were superior Western attributes. According to Reder and Devila (2005: 171), they were, in fact, dualities which reflected the influence of Structuralism which prevailed in the social sciences at this time. This again links in to my mention of Descartes in chapter three, who was instrumental in introducing these binary opposites (dualities) into the Western research tradition. Street (1984: 24-26), points out that researchers claiming that literacy was a 'neutral' and culture-free technology thought that their research on 'literate' and 'non-literate' cultures would not be discredited in the same way. However, he argued that they did not have experience of living in the societies they were observing, or knowledge of their languages. Furthermore, they did not "theorise" about the "conceptual basis for understanding in those societies". For Street, "literate/non-literate" was just another ideological criterion (or duality) which supported the 'great- divide' idea.

The final assumption underpinning Streets 'autonomous' model maintained that Western alphabet literacy was superior to other forms of literacy. Other writers such as (Gee 1994), and Barton (1994), have also commented on it. Gee (1994) discusses the ideas of Havelock (1963) who argued that Homeric Greek culture was non-literate and the knowledge, conventions, morality, culture and values of Greek society were passed on through oral epics such as the 'Iliad', and the 'Odyssey'. These were performed publicly and the speaker adjusted the delivery according to the type of audience present. The Greeks used various devices such as recurring themes, rhythm and formulaic phrasing, to appeal to the emotions and senses of the audience in order to help them remember what was being said. Speakers and listeners

achieved a very high degree of sophistication in their expression and retention but, according to Havelock, they still did not reach the level of abstraction engendered by writing. This only happened when the Greeks adopted alphabetic-script literacy. Once the epics had been written down using the Greek alphabet another look could be taken at what was being said. This time, however, they were written down non-poetically and non-rhythmically and without the influence of the listener's emotions and feelings. According to Havelock (1963):

“A concrete language of oral memory” [was replaced by an] “abstract language of descriptive *science*” (Havelock 1963:209, in Gee 1994:53) (my italics).

For Gee (ibid) this stressed that the acquisition of ‘science’ was the “sine qua non” of literacy.

Barton (1994) mentions that Goody and Watt (1963) also based their ideas on Havelock and maintained that Greek civilisation, which Western cultures value highly, would not have happened without the onset of a literate culture. They claimed that features of ‘civilised’, modern, literate societies such as democracy, other political forms, technological and scientific advancement could be related to Greek civilisation as far back as the 6th century BC, and that this would not have happened without the Greeks adopting an alphabetic literacy. Gee (1994:53) also mentions the work of Goody (1977) who related the development of the alphabet to the growth of individualism, bureaucracy, depersonalised, systems of government, and the development of abstract thought and syllogistic reasoning which culminated in modern *science*. However, Barton (1994: 118) points out that other cultures older than that of the

Greeks had writing systems. He also said that he found the claims for alphabetic literacy rather tenuous. He gave the example of the Korean people who were clearly capable of high levels of abstraction, yet their writing system was not an alphabetic one.

Although Barton (1994), Street (1984) and Gee (1994) wrote the cited texts a number of years ago, their work was, and still is, valued for being some of the first *critical* contributions to the literature on adult literacy. This section has focused on these texts in order to identify and demonstrate the *scientism* of modernity inherent in four main assumptions of the ‘autonomous’ model of literacy. However, according to Graff (1979; and Graff and Duffy (2008) the claims that it resulted in ‘civilised’, democratic societies are ‘literacy myths’ based on the ideological conventions and values that Western societies sought to maintain about the consequences of literacy. Collins and Blot (2003: 15); and Reder and Davila (2005:171), point out that all the above ideas are now known as the “Literacy Thesis”.

#### **5.4 Literacy as an Experiential Process**

McCaffery et al (2007:155), who define literacy as narratives about ‘skills, ‘tasks’, ‘social practice’ and ‘critical reflection’, include the experiential approach as part of their ‘critical reflection’ narrative and specifically mention the influence of Dewey (1857-1952) as one of the early pioneers of this approach to learning. In the chapter three, I discussed the ideas of Dewey and pointed out how he was directly influenced by Hegel (1770-1831), the German Idealist, who believed that all knowledge would eventually become a single totality in his concept of the ‘Absolute Mind’. I also mentioned Hegel’s concept of *Bildung*, which according to Wood (1998: 3-4), referred not just to ‘education’ but also ‘formation’,

‘development’ and ‘culture’. Wood went on to say that *Bildung* did not occur through the transmission of information from a teacher but through *experience*, which is a conflict-ridden, dialectical process on the journey to self-actualisation. The crucial point made by Wood was that Hegel considered this process to be fundamentally an inner or *self-directed* activity, not one of *conditioning* through environmental stimuli, or simply the *accumulation of information* presented by experience. In the same chapter, I also went on to mention Hegel’s idea; that objectivity and subjectivity could not be separated and how it influenced the philosophical narrative of Phenomenology, including the Existentialist ideas of Heidegger (1889-1976). In turn, Heidegger influenced the work of Carl Rogers (1902-87) on experiential learning, mentioned in chapter four. Furthermore, in *Freedom to learn for the 80s*, Rogers (1983b) also acknowledged the influence of Dewey. Therefore, the experiential approach is firmly rooted in the philosophical narratives of Idealism and Phenomenology, both of which are connected to the ‘meta-narrative’ of knowledge unity through Hegel.

From a postmodern perspective the fact that Phenomenology was regarded as a reaction to the scientism of Positivism (see end of chapter four) meant that its influence was still apparent in the way phenomenology accepted the separation of objectivity from subjectivity; a dualism based on Cartesian philosophy. By simply reversing the binary and stressing the importance of subjectivity they were still operating within the same scientific, dualistic framework as positivists.

As well as Dewey, McCaffery (et al 2007: 156), also mention Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle which basically has four stages; experience, reflection on experience,

generalising from it, and experimenting by putting new ideas into practice. McCaffery (et al) stress the importance of reflection on experience in Dewey's and Kolb's work because experience alone does not bring about learning.

This leads me back to chapter one where I described how, in my early training for adult literacy teaching, I was introduced to the ideas of Rogers (1983b) and also those of Knowles (1970). I further pointed out how their ideas related to Levine's (1986) example of the humanistic teaching approaches popular in adult literacy in the 1980s and their influence on me. The onus was not on a fixed 'syllabus' but on learners' abilities and needs in determining which literacy 'skills' were taught. Bearing this in mind, I would like to finish this section by referring to an article *Humanism: A Definition of Literacy*, by Gregor (1981: 202-208), who wrote it at the time humanist approaches to education were popular. He was critical of the fact that literacy was defined as the "basic" skills necessary for "functioning effectively" in society, and described the skills defined as "usually being of a trivial nature" deemed necessary for both a budding "Wittgenstein and by his less subtle fellow mortal whose literacy endeavours may find their apex in the interpretation of a stop-sign". Gregor's problem was to do with the "trivial" tasks used to define "basic" literacy because when applied at the level of the individual "the proposition can emerge that the less complex the projected need for such skills is, the less extensive the training in them needs to be". The assumption was that literacy, when defined as 'basic skills', would enable an individual to 'function' in life because they could read things like shop signs and sets of instructions at work; and that this would somehow equip them for citizenship in modern societies. According to Gregor, who links literacy with the acquisition of cultural literacy, these ideas only worked to some extent with

individuals who had active minds. However, it did not work from his perspective of classical humanism which regarded literacy as “something which *is* the mind”. For Gregor, the emphasis on literacy as ‘basic skills’ only succeeded in cutting off the “free” mind’s development to more sophisticated, cultural literacy forms (novels, plays, history books etc) which taught about cultural heritage, ideas, values and morality. Without this type of literacy Gregor claimed that literacy learners could never really be ‘free’ to make ethical choices. In this sense, many humanist teachers of today might probably agree with Gregor. However, he actually challenged “progressive” humanist teachers who gave literacy learners the right to determine the content of their own curriculum because he believed that learners would not necessarily arrive at the more sophisticated, cultural literacy forms through their own inclinations. His main point was that in order to learn from these more sophisticated forms, learners first had to know about them. I presume he is implying that Wittgenstein would not have achieved his greatness without this knowledge. Therefore, according to Gregor (ibid: 207) “there is a basic humanist irony that true freedom must be preceded by apparent bondage”. Contemplating that ironic ‘twist’ I shall move on to the next section.

**5.5 Literacy as a Critical, Transformation Process** This narrative about literacy relates to Marxism and Critical Theory. Both ways of thinking often refer to Freire’s pedagogical approach to teaching. However, I find him closer to Hegel rather than Marx, because as Freire himself (in Giroux 1985:44) points out, humanity’s orientation in the world is an event in which subjectivity and objectivity are united. This leaning towards Hegel is also reflected in Taylor’s (1993: 48-50) book where he cites Freire’s belief that in order to be ‘free’ humanity

has to be *conscious* it is free. In order to achieve freedom Freire (1970:68-69), believed in teaching the “world” and the “word”:

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist humanly, is to *name* the world... (Freire 1970:69)

Intrinsic to this process is genuine dialogue between teacher and learner. Freire believed in *generative* words which learners themselves used to express their reality rather than words imposed from ‘outside’. By critically discussing these generative words learners learn the situations they really represent. This way they begin to see their world as it truly is and become aware of their oppression. Eventually this leads to “consciencisation” (critical awareness) and ‘praxis’ (action to bring about transformation’ and change).

## **5.6 Literacy as a Social Practice**

Engagingly, the social practice narrative has links with all of the same philosophical and theoretical narratives as the three previous narratives. Baynham and Prinsloo (2001:83-84) describe the social practice narrative as an “inter-connected” approach; “a network of inter-related theoretical interests” engaged in a “research conversation”. Crucially, they point out that the different ideas are “agonistic” in character as they “vie for space in the theoretical landscape” of knowledge production about literacy and can rapidly become argumentative and controversial. Their mention of ‘agonistics’ at the same time as an “inter-connected” approach

immediately brings to mind the ideas of Lyotard (1984), discussed in chapter two, where I referred to his idea that the “social bond” is composed of such agonistic language moves. For me, this ‘inter-connectedness’ is strongly reminiscent of a ‘social bond’ between people from all theoretical backgrounds who wish to paralogically engage in a “research conversation” about literacy. It is why someone like me, with a questioning stance, feels ‘at home’ in this narrative. It is also one of the reasons why the organisation Research and Practice on Adult Literacy (RaPAL) was established. RaPAL (Appendix B) strongly supports this “network of inter-related theoretical ideas”, relating them to practice, and also stressing the importance of practice being used to inform them. This is the reason why I joined the group in the early 1990s and why I used the organisation to access my research participants.

### 5.6.1 *Early Intellectual ‘Building Blocks’*

The ‘literacy as a social practice’ narrative has some of its early intellectual ‘building blocks’ in the ideas of Street (1984), Scribner and Cole (1981), and Heath (1983). Looking at their ideas will throw light on what is meant by the term ‘social practice’ in connection with literacy.

Street argues that the representations of literacy inherent in the ‘autonomous’ model are actually *ideological*. Rather than being autonomous he argues that what counts as literacy and how it is taught is defined by the social context in which it exists and cannot be isolated from that context. In this sense, literacy can only ever be ideological because it always reflects the values of the social context which defines it. Street argues that the autonomous model of

literacy has become so influential, however, that people regard it as the ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ way of looking at literacy. He goes on to say that in effect, it is a very narrow but very influential ideological view of literacy which has achieved a powerful dominance in our society. Instead, Street is concerned with ideas which “have attempted to understand literacy in terms of concrete social *practices* and to theorise it in terms of the ideologies in which different *literacies* are embedded” (1984:95) (my italics). The idea here is that literacy is not something with a separate identity which everyone has the same chance of acquiring. It is an *activity* or a social practice with ideological overtones which vary according to the cultures of the different social contexts in which people participate. Like people, literacy does not exist independently outside of these contexts. Different social groups have different cultural rules to which their members adhere. They also use literacy in culturally different ways as well. Therefore, it can be claimed that there are as many *literacies* as there are social practices.

Another ‘intellectual building block’ for the ‘practice’ approach to literacy is the work of the psychologists Scribner and Cole (1981). Working with the Vai people of Liberia, Scribner and Cole provided a very influential challenge to the ‘great-divide’ theory. They refuted the claims which implied that individuals from literate societies process information about the world differently from individuals in non-literate societies; an idea that is further linked to the view that written language promotes logic and abstraction. For Scribner and Cole (ibid: 7), these claims are unfounded because they are not backed up by direct evidence. This notion, as mentioned previously, is an unfounded Western claim for the consequences of literacy. Scriber and Cole refer to it when they describe the basis of their work:

Instead of focusing exclusively on the technology of a writing system and its reputed consequences (“alphabet literacy fosters abstraction” for example) we approach literacy as a set of socially organized *practices* which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it. Literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. (Scribner and Cole 1981: 236) (My italics)

Reder and Davila (2005:172) describe the work of Scribner and Cole as a move away from the idea of “literacy as a set of portable, decontextualised information processing *skills* which individuals *applied*...[to the idea of]... literacy as a set of socially organized *practices* with which people *engaged*” (Their italics).

The idea of literacy as a social practice also emerges in the early 1980s from the work of Shirley Brice Heath (1983:1-2). Heath carried out ethnographic research in the Piedmont Carolinas in two local communities which were only a few miles apart. One was ‘Roadville’, a white working-class community and the other was ‘Trackton’, a black working-class community. She compared the ways in which children were orientated to the written word in these two communities with those of the middle-class residents of the nearby town (‘Townpeople’), who were a mixture of both ethnicities. Heath’s research was extensive but

if we just take one of the communities, say, 'Trackton', here she found a disjunction between the way children were socialised into the *practice* of language and literacy in their families and local community, and the expectations about language and literacy held by the school and schooled literacy practices. This did not mean that the Trackton children were generally any less able than middle-class children of the main town whose homes reflected the same expectations about literacy and language as did the school. It meant that the 'Trackton' children had simply not experienced or developed the same expectations because they used language and literacy differently in their home and community. Heath uses the term 'literacy events' to describe the way people in the three communities actually use reading and writing in everyday life situations. A 'literacy event' is any social activity where reading and writing of any type plays an important part. Collins and Blot (2003:107 and 178) point out that rather than starting from texts she starts by describing the physical and social environment where the 'events' happen. According to Barton (1994: 26), Heath's ideas, and their focus on the socio-cultural differences in language and education required by school on the one hand and home/community on the other, have been extremely important in both literacy education and education in general. A more recent definition describes the social practice approach as:

...[emphasizing] the uses, meanings and values of reading, writing ... in everyday activities, and the social relationships and institutions within which literacy is embedded...The focus shifts from a deficit or lack, to the many different ways that people engage with literacy ... recognising difference and diversity and challenging how these differences are valued within our society (Hamilton and Hillier (2006: 17)

Shifting 'the focus away from a deficit or lack' is an extremely important issue within the social practice approach. The assumption is that people do not necessarily 'lack' literacy abilities just because they engage with it differently from those who are more proficient in the dominant and universal, skills-based approach. The fact that this one form of literacy is more 'valued' in our society than others means that the autonomous, skills-based approach wields a great deal of *power* because it defines people who do not develop literacy abilities of this type as having some kind of deficit; a definition which can have an extremely negative effect on people's education, work and lives. Children spend a lot of time in the school domain. However, spread this time over an adult life span and attendance at school and other educational institutions is only a small part of many people's lives. Therefore, the wider social and cultural contexts for engaging with literacy are very influential because they are quintessential to the way people develop and use the different literacies in their everyday existence. This is an important aspect of Blackledge's (2000) work which places emphasis on how the UK population is now multi-cultural. He investigates the frustrated attempts of Bangladeshi parents to support their children in UK schools in the Midlands. The parents want to help their children to succeed in English because they see it as a way to success in life. However, they keep encountering language and cultural barriers which disempower them. Teachers can contribute to this by failing to understand how literacy is perceived and used in the Bangladeshi culture. Often they assume that because parents do not speak English well they are not in a position to really help their children; an assumption that is absorbed by the parents. Blackledge suggests there are various ways that this can be overcome. For instance, as well as putting on English classes for parents one direct way would be to invite them to meetings where the school's policy is discussed. In areas with a large ethnic minority, whose

children make up the majority of the school's population, there is no reason why the discussions should be in English. With the aid of interpreters it is feasible to conduct the meetings in the language of the parents whether or not they are literate in it themselves.

Importantly, Hamilton and Hillier (2006:15), point out that the *Skills for Life* (2001) policy established English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as a specialism in its own right. This change occurred mainly because of the intervention of ESOL activists from the London Language and Literacy Unit (LLU).

#### 5.6.2 *The characteristics of 'Literacy as a Social Practice'*

Barton (1994), Barton and Hamilton (1998), Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (2000), Papen (2005) and Appleby and Hamilton (2006) all use the characteristics/assumptions of literacy as a social practice in their work. Baynham and Prinsloo (2001:84) sum up these characteristics as follows:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these are observable in events which are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relations and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others

- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacy is historically situated
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making as well as formal education and training.

### 5.6.3 *'Literacy Events and 'Literacy Practices'*

Using the literacy as social practice approach involves engaging with its two main units of enquiry; 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices'. These can be briefly summed up as follows:

Literacy events are the particular activities where reading and writing have a role; literacy practices are the general cultural ways of reading and writing which people draw upon in a literacy event. (Barton et al 1994: viii)

The idea of 'literacy events' has already been broached in the discussion of Shirley Brice Heath's work. It has also been mentioned more recently by other researchers and scholars such as Barton (1994), Baynham (1994), Holme (2004), Kucer (2001), and Papen (2005). Summarising this literature, a 'literacy event' is where something is always 'happening' because reading and writing cannot be separated from the social and institutional activities in

which people engage and where communication is involved. Therefore, literacy events always include written texts, the actions of people, social activities and often talk. Papen (2005: 25) mentions more recent technological developments which have brought about additions to the kinds of literacy events in which we engage, such as writing an email, sending a text message on a mobile phone and reading a web page. All these literacy events are very different in type. Papen contends that people who support the literacy as skills perspective may still argue that all these events rely on the same ability of coding and decoding but she points out that the activities involve different skills, meanings and purposes depending on the technologies involved, the people using them, the contexts involved and the ends in sight.

The other unit of enquiry, 'literacy practices', are the social and cultural conventions brought into play by people participating in a particular literacy event. Researchers such as Barton and Hamilton (1998), often look at these conventions using an ethnographic approach in their research. Kucer (2001: 172) points out that the way people practice and use literacy in particular social contexts indicates the intrinsic nature of the groups to which they belong and their position in society. In another work, Barton and Hamilton (2000: 7-8) point out how the way of talking about literacy and making sense of it is both a personal process and a social one. It links the individual to the social world. From my perspective the link between the *individual* and the *social* is extremely important because, as mentioned previously, the 'literacy is skills' and the 'literacy as an experiential process' narratives tend to focus on the individual in their own particular ways. On the other hand the 'literacy as critical transformation' narrative focuses on society as a whole and tends to neglect the individual.

These are more reasons why I feel comfortable with the social practice narrative. In contrast to the 'Literacy Thesis', the social practice approach has brought about a shift of thinking about literacy which is now termed 'The New Literacy Studies' or NLS (Gee 1990).

#### 5.6.4 *Some New Concerns*

Some concerns have been voiced about NLS by Brandt and Clinton (2002) who, at the same time, acknowledge and value the insights it has brought to the field. However, they are concerned that it still has theoretical gaps and want to extend it. They point out that research about NLS, emphasising literacy rooted in the context of the local, tends to ignore aspects of literacy which 'infiltrate' from more 'distant', or even 'global' contexts. These aspects of literacy resonate with the work of Martin-Jones (et al 2009) which investigated how the literacy practices of young Welsh farmers were affected by Global changes in agriculture. Martin-Jones (et al: 44-45) did some ethnographic literacy research with bilingual students studying at an agricultural college in North Wales. It demonstrated how agriculture had been changed considerably by increased regulation from afar. The UK's Ministry of Agriculture used to be responsible for agricultural affairs and dealt with farm subsidies and economic aid. However, after Britain became part of the European Economic Commission (EEC) it had to conform to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Farm subsidies and aid were then handled directly by Brussels. More administrative powers have been established since the European Union (EU) was formed in the 1990s. All this development has meant more and more paperwork for farmers from North Wales. It includes correspondence, form-filling,

record keeping, registration of animals' birth and animal health records and so on. In Brandt and Clinton's (2000) view these forms of literacy have 'infiltrated' the local literacies from more 'distant', or even 'global' contexts. They contend that NLS "maintains its own 'great divide' between the local and the global, agency and social structure and literacy and its technology". They go on to say that their aim is to "seek to rehabilitate certain "autonomous" aspects of literacy without appealing to repudiated "autonomous models of literacy" (ibid: 339).

Essentially Street (2003:80) agrees with the importance of the relationship Brandt and Clinton make between the 'distant' and the 'local'. However, he is critical of them describing 'distant' literacies as being in some way 'autonomous'. For Street they are just as ideological as local literacies but more powerful and Street maintains they should only be referred to as 'distant', 'new' or 'hegemonic'.

Brandt and Clinton also argue that the material dimensions of literacy are paramount. They maintain that its objects and artefacts are often ignored by the social practice concept of a 'literacy event'; a term which they describe as 'anthrocentric' because it privileges human actors rather than non-human actors. They prefer the concept 'literacy-in-action' which is inclusive of both and restores a "thing status" to literacy which maintains that what literacy does to people in a context is just as important as what people do with literacy.

Another of Brandt and Clinton's theoretical constructs is 'sponsors of literacy'. It refers to powerful institutions in society (government, employers, banks, educational institutions, and religious organisations) which give or deny access to what they define as 'literacy' - definitions which mainly serve their own interests. Reder and Devila (2005:174) summarise this concept and point out that these forces come into play in local literacy practices. They exert considerable power over what counts as literacy and can control who can have access or not to its provision and materials at both a societal or individual level. It is by employing the materials of literacy that these distant actors influence any literacy event and its related local practices, and there is often conflict and tension when the local and remote clash.

As well as 'literacy-in-action', and 'sponsors of literacy' Brandt and Clinton have devised three more theoretical constructs; 'localising moves', 'global connects' and 'folding-in'. 'Localizing moves' is a term which Brandt and Clinton use to describe the NLS approach to literacy where people are seen as using literacy practices for their own personal or group needs. However, as well as emphasising 'localising moves'; Brandt and Clinton want to include the contribution of 'things' as well, which brings me to 'globalising connects'.

The term 'globalising connects' incorporates non-human (things) as well as human actors in literacy interactions and describes how, when used in local literacy practices, they can often influence or be influenced by more distant contexts. According to Brandt and Clinton individuals using literacy (or being used by literacy), and literacy objects, move in and out of

local contexts in a variety of ways; say, filling in a census form as they cognitively engage with its directions sent from afar. Brandt and Clinton argue that literacy technologies to do with computers and the internet are the best examples of ‘globalising connects’ because they really are global and because they “move reading and writing in and out of local contexts or consolidate them in one place.”

Finally, Brandt and Clinton’s fifth concept, ‘folding in’, is a concept which represents the ontological relationship between people and things. They use the example of a shepherd who uses a fenced compound to contain his sheep:

The fence has a different ontology from the shepherd; it is not, strictly speaking, an extension of the person. But it does extend the relationship that the shepherd has with his sheep - he has folded the act of tending them into the fence. This delegation of shepherding to the fence also changes the social world of the sheep, who now nuzzle against wooden slats instead of human flesh. (Brandt and Clinton 2002:353)

For Brandt and Clinton similar relationships exist between people and literacy objects. They want their concepts – ‘literacy-in-action’, ‘sponsors’, ‘localizing moves’, ‘globalizing connects’, and ‘folding in’ – to start expanding the analytical possibilities of the social-

practice approach to literacy and move it away from the emphasis on literacy as a local practice. They see literacy as a “contributing actor” and that it’s ‘thingness’ has meanings beyond the ‘local’. They point out that although these ideas may not be excluded by the social-practice perspective, the approach has not fully considered them.

In response to Brandt and Clinton, Street (2003:80) agrees that conceptual frameworks for literacy research are needed to characterise the relationship between the ‘distant’ and the ‘local’ but feels that the concepts of ‘literacy practices’ and ‘literacy events’ are adequate. He contends that ‘distant’ literacies do not come to local contexts with their force and meaning intact, they are adapted by people to local conditions resulting in new *hybrid* literacies. These hybrid literacies are what NLS focuses on rather than the ‘local’ or ‘distant’ in isolation. He maintains that the concept of ‘literacy practices’ is inclusive of the influence of ‘distant’ literacies on local literacy events.

Collins and Blot (2003) want to move on from the dichotomy of the “universal” approaches of the autonomous model of literacy and the “particular” approaches of NLS by thinking in terms of “text, power” and “Identity”; words they incorporate into the title of their book. In his foreword to the book Street is supportive of their ideas especially as they extend and complement what has been mainly an Anglo perspective on literacy. They do this by bringing in French philosophers such as Foucault, Bourdieu, de Certeau and Derrida.

## Chapter Six

### Theoretical Narratives about Research

#### 6.1 Introduction

So far my thesis has demonstrated how the scientific meta-narratives, about human progress and knowledge unity, generated the major modernist philosophical narratives of Positivism, phenomenology, Marxism and Critical Theory. These philosophical schools of thought, in turn, have generated another group of narratives which I have called theoretical narratives. The previous two chapters looked at theoretical narratives about both adult education (learning theories) and adult literacy, respectively. This chapter looks at the theoretical narratives about the research process itself. Generally speaking these particular theoretical narratives have three different themes: one theoretical narrative, related to positivism, assumes research is a ‘scientific’ process; another, related to phenomenology, assumes it is an ‘interpretive’ process; and the third, related to Marxism and Critical Theory, assumes it is a critical and ‘emancipatory’ process. All of them impose their own methodologies or ‘formulas’ on the research act. I tend to think of them as ‘scripts’ for doing research. Each one has its own language game which enforces rules about what can be said and done during the research process and this raises some contentious ontological and epistemological issues about research methodologies and data collection methods. These issues are addressed from a postmodern perspective as the chapter progresses, and demonstrate why I have reached my own ‘position’, which is that research is a ‘social practice’.

## **6.2 Organisation of Chapter**

The first section (6.3) foregrounds the ontological and epistemological assumptions, relating to doing research and demonstrates how the three different narrative themes, mentioned above, adopt different approaches to the research process, thus making the concepts of ‘research methodology’ and ‘methods’ extremely problematic. Section 6.4 investigates yet more problematic and related issues about the research process such as the concepts of ‘reliability’, ‘validity’ and ‘generalisation’ and how these also impact on the research process. The next section, section (6.5), illustrates how the issues mentioned in the previous sections have influenced my choice of postmodern approaches to research and illustrates the reasons why I prefer to use the idea of research as ‘social practice’. Lastly, section 6.6 develops the idea of research as a ‘social practice’ and how it is characterised by concepts such as ‘reflexivity’, ‘language’ and ‘textuality’.

## **6.3 Problematising ‘Methodology’ and ‘Methods’: Some Ontological and Epistemological Issues**

Underpinning the rationale for my research design is a postmodern approach that regards research as a ‘social practice’, rather than as the application of ‘neutral’ and ‘universal’ methodologies and methods (Scott and Usher 1999). These are rooted in positivist-empiricism that has strong traditions relating back to the Enlightenment. Avoiding the influences of positivism and empiricism is very difficult. For instance, when new researchers are ‘trained’ by more senior members of a research community they are often taught that every ‘research design’ should include an overarching ‘methodology’ in which to frame the study, whether or not it is an ‘interpretative’ or ‘scientific’ study. This chapter,

however, argues that the concept of ‘methodology’ is part of the ‘scientific’, positivist-empiricist ‘script’ and does not relate to all forms of research. The ideas and traditions about positivist-empiricist approaches to research, however, were once so popular that they were almost completely hegemonic and are still very influential. So much so, that even today, some interpretive researchers who do not adhere to positivist-empiricist approaches to research still use the word ‘methodology’ in order to give their work intellectual justification (Scheurich 1997; Scott 1996). This is why I have chosen *case studies* as an overall research approach because it is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. Other reasons for this decision are given below.

Ontologically, positivist-empiricists believe that ‘truth’ exists as an independent and separate entity from our knowledge of it and *corresponds* with the facts ‘out there’. This is known as the Correspondence Theory of Truth (Honderich 1995). Positivist-empiricists believe that this is the only way of seeing the world and insist that it is self-evidently correct. Therefore, rather than accepting that, ontologically, there are other ways of seeing the world they stress the importance of epistemology, or on what counts as knowledge and how it can be known. Epistemologically they have the belief that ‘truth’ or ‘real’ knowledge will be obtained through *empiricism*, which insists that research should be ‘scientific’, ‘objective’ and ‘value-free’ otherwise its “intellectual warrant” (Phillips 1993a) will be jeopardised. According to Honderich (1995), ideas or concepts are:

... empirical if [they are] ultimately derived from the five senses. All that we can know about the world is what it cares to tell us; we must observe it *neutrally* and

*dispassionately*, and any attempt to mould or interfere with the process of receiving this information can only lead to distortion... (Honderich 1995:226) (My emphasis)

This has led to a technical approach to social research which emphasises 'correct' 'methodological' approaches such as experimental, ex post-facto, correlational, survey and randomised controlled trials. The latter are usually associated with scientific medical research but their influence has spread and they are now valued as the 'sine qua non' of educational research along with 'systematic reviews' of previous research. They are valued by policy-makers as the only way of ensuring such 'neutrality' or 'objectivity'. This is achieved through a methodological disregarding of 'subjective' (or 'polluting') research data, such as human perceptions, assumptions and values, which are isolated and removed from the data. This was the original concept and purpose of 'methodology' and it stems from the epistemological beliefs of positivist-empiricists.

Over the last 40 years or so, in reaction to positivism, the number of researchers who believe in more interpretative approaches to social research has grown considerably. They have developed different kinds of 'methodology' for their various areas of research such as symbolic interactionism, ethnography, ethnomethodology, hermeneutic enquiry, naturalistic research and grounded theory (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:3). Ontologically they believe that 'truth' does not have a separate existence from our knowledge of it. Their epistemological approach is to use methods and approaches such as participant observation and action research to find 'truth' in the multiple, constructed meanings, interpretations and perceptions we have of the social world. As well as positivist and interpretative research there is another type of research: critical or emancipatory research, which finds

fault with the other two. According to Scott and Usher (1999:30), researchers who adopt this approach believe that positivists attempt to ‘explain’ the world and interpretative researchers try to ‘understand’ it but neither does anything about changing it.

Emancipatory researchers are closer to interpretative researchers and often use similar ‘methodologies’, however, their specific purpose is to try and bring about change or ‘social justice’.

Researchers, who are motivated by an interest in understanding how human beings interpret or make sense of experiences in their own particular world, use these interpretations to generate knowledge inductively through the ‘emic’ or insider’s perspective. As stated earlier, however, the notion of ‘methodology’ becomes problematic when qualitative researchers use what is, essentially, a positivistic concept and try to adapt it for their own use. This section goes on to illustrate why this is so.

During the Enlightenment the Correspondence Theory of Truth became so hegemonic that it was rarely questioned. The authority of the medieval church, which had constructed knowledge and ‘truth’ through beliefs and religious texts, was undermined in this period and the growing popularity of the natural sciences resulted in these traditional and religious knowledge sources being replaced by ‘scientific’ knowledge as the only form of ‘true’ knowledge. Consequently, the quest to obtain ‘true’ knowledge became of paramount importance. The hegemony of the Correspondence Theory of Truth meant that the ‘scientific’ way became regarded as the only respected way of doing research. Therefore, the notion of epistemology (the study of knowledge, its acquisition, and how we know that we know it) was only looked at in ‘scientific’ terms and it became *synonymous* with the

new ‘objective’ and ‘scientific’ ways of acquiring ‘true’ knowledge. Therefore, like ‘methodology’ the notion of ‘epistemology’ also became part of the conceptual framework of the then, ‘new,’ ‘scientific’ researchers. In other words, it became their conceptual property.

“Epistemology constituted a different way of grounding knowledge through the emerging natural sciences and its ‘democratization’ of knowers. Experiment and observation replaced tradition and the divine text; validation became a function of measurement and intersubjective testability, and experience mediated by *rationality* (my emphasis), the source of knowledge.”(Usher 1997:2)

At this time the purpose was to ‘free’ ‘true’ knowledge from tradition and belief and to replace these with *rationality*. The notion of rationality meant that there could be only *one* possible way of explaining events and those rational explanations transcended any other explanations based on beliefs and values (which were considered irrational). The way to reach rational explanations was to build knowledge on indisputable facts. This meant that ‘true’ knowledge had to be demonstrated by identifying sound, empirical ways of acquiring it that could not be challenged. In this way its *foundations* would be unquestionable and unshakeable. ‘Foundationalism’:

...treats epistemology – the enquiry into the conditions of the possibility of knowledge – as prior to empirical research...it is common for...epistemological issues to be regarded as the first, preliminary ones that need to be addressed in

order that sound methods for enquiry can be laid down *in advance of* [my emphasis] the empirical research itself.” (Hughes and Sharrock 1980/97:4-5)

Here the traditional Enlightenment approach to epistemology is apparent. The epistemological ‘rules’ for acquiring knowledge must be established *before* any research is carried out. As already stated, due to the, then, contemporary influence of the growth in the natural and physical sciences these ‘rules’ had to be ‘systematic’ and ‘scientific’ and they became what Phillips (1993a) calls “logico-mathematical” in nature in order to eliminate human perception and bias. (Research that is ‘logico-mathematical’ in nature is often described as ‘quantitative’ research because of its emphasis on numbers and measurement). Therefore, deciding the ‘correct’, ‘methodological’ frameworks for acquiring knowledge prior to the commencement of research was regarded as extremely important. Even now, knowledge that does not fit pre-set ‘rules’ for its acquisition is considered unsound by some researchers and, therefore, discarded because it is not ‘true’.

The ‘scientific’ (methodological) way of approaching knowledge acquisition became the ‘correct’ way of doing things and was applied to all forms of research. Its influence was so strong that the ‘scientific way’ became transcendental and it was rarely questioned. In other words, it was assumed that the ‘scientific’ approach to knowledge acquisition was self-evidently correct. Therefore, the idea of ‘methodology’ as something ensuring ‘objectivity’ was assumed to be self-evidently correct too (Scott and Usher 1996). As I showed in Chapter three, this was the prevailing mode of thought when Auguste Comte (1798-1857) introduced his ‘positive method’, or ‘positivism’ which resulted in the ‘objective’ research methodologies used in the natural sciences being applied to research

on human beings in social contexts. However, those who disagree with positivism argue that the *social* world is not the same as the physical world of the natural sciences. This world concerns inanimate objects; therefore, ways of investigating it should be different. According to Bertaux (1981) the application of a research approach intended for the natural sciences and inappropriately used for the social sciences is problematic because:

“...the scientificity of sociology is a myth. If there is such as thing as sociological knowledge, the way to reach it is not through quantitative methodology. And the main obstacle towards it is precisely the belief in sociology as a science. In a word: positivism.” (Bertaux 1981:30)

‘Methodology’, in the positivist sense, makes research into an *individualistic* rather than a *social act*. It does this by insisting that the researcher adopts an independent and ‘neutral’ stance under the assumption that they can be independent from those being researched, and that both can be separated from, and not be influenced by, the social context in which they exist. In other words, ‘methodology’:

...works through decontextualisation where methods separate or distance subject and object, the researcher and the researched. The researcher is taken out of her/his social and cultural context and made into the ‘pure reasoner’; the researched are taken out of their context and made into ‘objects’ with natural rather than social attributes, in other words, constituted as the ‘other’. Through decontextualisation both are taken out of language and the shared socio-cultural context to which they ‘belong’. This process works to maintain the notion (‘fiction’?) of an

independently existing yet independently knowable reality. Thus methodology is taken to be the guarantee that the knowing activities of the researcher will not leave a ‘dirty footprint’ on what is known. Only then can the knowledge claims of the researcher be accepted as an adequate or truthful representation.” (Scott and Usher 1996:40)

The necessity of ‘a methodological framework’ is all pervasive, even in qualitative research. However, as I have argued above, the word ‘methodology’ itself cannot escape its positivist empiricist roots. For instance, the extremely contentious issue of what Scott and Usher describe as methodological “decontextualisation” involves the perceptions and language of the researcher and the researched being ‘removed’ from their social cultural context. Arguing from a post-modern perspective, Scott and Usher believe that these influences cannot be excluded. Human perceptions, language and socio-cultural influences rather than being removed from the research process can be utilised as a rich source of information, evidence and data. All human activity, including research, takes place in a social context. Therefore, all research including educational research takes place in a social context too. According to Kuhn (1962/96), it is located in knowledge producing communities which have their own belief systems or paradigms. This means it has to be social because other social beings or knowledge workers practising in the relevant community legitimate it.

#### **6.4 Validity, Reliability and Generalisation**

Being ‘positioned’ in a paradigm involves a ‘labelling’ process involving a particular set of philosophical assumptions about what is ‘legitimate’ truth and knowledge, which can cause

confusion. For instance, as already mentioned in the case of ‘methodology’, some qualitative researchers in their desire to be legitimate still have a tendency to relate criteria for judging the worth of their research to the same criteria used by positivists (Scheurich 1997; Scott 1996). As well as ‘methodology’, other positivist criteria for judging the intellectual worth of research are also influential and difficult to avoid. These are *validity*, *reliability* and *generalisability*. Some qualitative researchers attempt to accommodate or adapt these concepts to their own research purposes. However, these attempts at intervention have been severely criticised because this creates ontological and epistemological difficulties: In the words of Scott (1996):

Guba and Lincoln (1985) in their advocacy of naturalistic research have sought to substitute different criteria for judging research, which complement but do not replace traditional criteria (internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity). They want to substitute credibility for internal validity, transferability for external validity, dependability for reliability and confirmability for objectivity. *They are attempting to adapt criteria thought appropriate for the study of the social world, as it was conceived within a positivist framework.* As a result, they are implicitly adopting a number of epistemological and ontological positions, the effect of which is to reinforce the idea that research is nomological, objective, capable of replication and directly represents reality. *If it can be shown that it is inappropriate to represent the social world in this way, then it is equally inappropriate to transpose the one set to the other.* (Scott 1996:74) (My emphases).

Guba and Lincoln have since taken on board the above evaluation of their work and they have accepted its inconsistencies. However, I use the quote here to illustrate the confusions which are still with us. This is due to fact that the positivist tradition from which the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisation stem is an extremely dominant one. It is characterised by the:

...belief that phenomena are guided by a *system of universal laws* which can be impartially observed by trained researchers. Implications of this perspective include a belief in the generalisability of research findings across different *contexts*, an emphasis on experimental design and no recognition of the subjectivity of the observer/interpreter. [My emphases] (Edwards and Talbot 1994:158)

The ‘contexts’ as quoted above are, in fact, social contexts with their own socio-cultural *mores*, which help to construct the research in the first place. Interpretative researchers adhere to the assumption that social reality or ‘truth’ is *constructed* by human beings participating in social events (O’Dea 1994) and that they *interpret* events and phenomena as they perceive them at a certain time in a certain place. These temporal and situational features mean that the human actors’ interpretations are usually transitory and contextual. Therefore, it is not possible to generalise research findings across a wider population; an issue that often leads positivists to believe that qualitative results are “suspect” (Gillham 2000:6).

## 6.5 Postmodern Perspectives

In the 1960's, Kuhn argued that all research is based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions about reality, the nature of knowledge, how we know it and its acquisition. According to Kuhn these assumptions are contained in the different *paradigms* or belief systems of knowledge producers/workers. He said that the 'science' of positivism, which denies the importance of socio-cultural influences in research, is not a belief system that transcends all others. Rather, it is a belief system, or *paradigm*, which is, in fact, influenced by its own socio-cultural and historical roots dating back to the Enlightenment. His concept of a *paradigm* challenged the hegemonic importance of positivism.

“Kuhn...established the notion that science should be examined within specific cultural and historical contexts and that its statements were not the universals they were often presented to be.”(Usher, P. 1997:46)

For some Kuhn introduced a 'relativistic position' (Phillips 1993b) whereby it was not possible to say which paradigm is the correct one. Those who try to argue in favour of one paradigm over another can only argue from within the confines of their own paradigm. In other words

“...inquirers are not able to step outside to examine their paradigms etically. In a sense, then, all inquirers are trapped within their own paradigms; they will judge certain things as being true (for them) that other inquirers in other paradigms will judge as being false (for them). To those who have taken such relativism seriously,

there has seemed to be little place in the Kuhnian universe for objectivity.” (Phillips 1993b: 67)

Since Kuhn published his ideas the interpretative paradigm as a belief system in its own right has gained a strong following especially in educational research. Adherents believe that research is *interpretative*, and that the ‘subjective’ values and perceptions of everyone involved in the research process, including the researcher and the researched, plus their socio-cultural influences, cannot be avoided and that these provide relevant and important data. Researchers adhering to this view often maintain that all research data relating to any culture should be described in detail; a process, which is often, called *thick description* (Geertz 1973).

However, as I have mentioned earlier, Usher (1996) believes that by taking a form of oppositional reaction to positivism, interpretative approaches to research are, in fact, part of the same ‘epistemological discourse’ as the former. Usher is critical of traditional epistemological concepts which create binary and hierarchical opposites such as ‘qualitative and quantitative’; ‘positivism and interpretism’; ‘objective and subjective’; ‘structure and agency’ ‘real and representation’. He considers (1996:30) that within these dualisms the first part is privileged over the other, which is marginalised and that this creates a false view of the world. In the case of social science research the ‘real’ is privileged over its representation (the research text) and this, in turn has repressed the “fictionality and textuality” used in the construction of the social world. These binary and hierarchical opposites are about ‘legitimizing’ one form of knowledge over another. Scott and Usher (1999) point out that it is this desire for ‘legitimacy’, which forces researchers to

adopt the belief system of a particular paradigm. Instead, they suggest that what is needed “is a space for scrutinising the assumptions that shape the meaning of research itself, whether it be quantitative or qualitative” (Scott and Usher 1999:22).

If all knowledge workers carry out their activities in knowledge producing communities - which have their own belief systems or paradigms - it follows that they will want their fellow knowledge workers to ‘legitimate’ what they are doing. The Kuhnian view is that what is important is not just ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ themselves but ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ *as they are produced by knowledge workers*. In order to achieve ‘legitimacy’ they will do what is acceptable to others in their community in order to ‘belong’. Therefore, being ‘legitimate’ is as much about wanting to be accepted as it is about ontology and epistemology.

#### 6.5.1 *Problematizing ‘Methods’*

The two main approaches to the research process discussed above are often thought to be extremely polarised and that ‘never the twain shall meet’. In order to overcome the fact that the two approaches cannot be reconciled, Scott & Usher (1996) point out that some researchers propose that the nature of the research topic itself should be the prime influence why a particular research method is chosen. However, they argue that this is too simplistic because this view regards any method as ‘neutral’. This can never be the case because the ontological leanings of the researcher will determine how, in fact, a particular research method is used. Therefore, according to Scheurich (1997:29) ontology cannot be avoided and should be addressed before epistemological issues in any research endeavour because “*how [you] see... determines... what [you] see*”. From my point of view this is

important because ‘how we see’, or our view of reality, influences not only how we carry out research but how we ‘see’ what needs investigating in the first place. In chapter one I said that I now ‘see’ the world narratively so, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000:17) point out, it makes sense to study it narratively as well. This is why I have chosen to use ‘professional narratives’ as data.

### **6.6 The other things I ‘see’**

The purpose of my research, as already stated, is to identify and investigate philosophical assumptions about the purpose and practice of literacy and literacy teaching which adult basic skills practitioners value in relation to their work and training. This shows that I am already thinking in terms of practitioner’s ‘values’ and ‘assumptions’. My choice of research topic demands that my research should be interpretative in nature. The positivist stance, which demands the researcher remain impartial so that their views and the views of the participants do not ‘contaminate’ the research findings, is an unsuitable approach for my research. I am exploring ‘subjective’ human interpretations of events and phenomena, and actually foreground participant’s values and assumptions, the very things positivist, quantitative researchers regard as ‘contaminatory’.

All my participants will be constructing and sharing their personal realities with me, and through me when they articulate their ‘professional narratives’ so my research is definitely social, and my investigation ‘interpretative’. However, even if the participants have experiences, values and perceptions which are similar, they could never be exactly the same. Nevertheless, every individual participant’s experiences and perceptions will be

‘true’ for them (O’Dea 1994). Consequently, as different participants will be involved, there will be different ‘truths’ or ‘realities’ to consider.

### 6.6.1 *Characteristics of Research as Social Practice*

The main characteristics of research as a social practice are ‘textuality’, ‘reflexivity’ and ‘language’. The participants, although using the same language, may use different registers and discourses to construct their ‘reality’ or version of the world, through their ‘professional narratives’. It is through texts (spoken or written) that their professional worlds are ‘language’d or ‘knowledged’ ‘into being’ (Usher 1997:3). Therefore, my research will be concerned with their interpretation. According to Usher (1996):

if research is a social practice, a practice of producing certain kinds of knowledge that are socially validated, then as such, it is a set of activities that constructs a world to be researched. When we delineate what we intend to study, when we adopt a particular theoretical position, when we ask certain kinds of questions rather than others, when we analyse and make sense of findings in one way rather than another, when we present our findings in a particular kind of text; all this is part of constructing a researchable world. (Usher 1996 p 34)

This brings me to ‘reflexivity’. The social world is not static and people do not live in isolation. They interact, construct, and constantly reconstruct, the meaning and ‘truth’ (or ‘reality’) of their lives through their own actions, conceptions, perceptions and assumptions. This must also apply to everyone engaged in the practice of research

including the researcher because his or her social world is not static or isolated either. They have an effect on and are affected by the social context in which they have a shared existence. Therefore:

“Qualitative research should involve critical self-scrutiny by the researcher, or active *reflexivity*. This means that the researcher should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process, and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their ‘data’. This is based on the belief that a researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached, from the knowledge and evidence they are generating. Instead, they should seek to understand their role in that process. Indeed, the very act of posing difficult questions to oneself in the research process is part of the activity of reflexivity.” (Mason 1996 p5-6)

In other words, if I believe that research is a social practice it means I cannot be a neutral or ‘objective’ researcher because I am participating in the interactive social process that is my research. By definition this means that I will be constantly interacting with other adult literacy and basic skills practitioners (my research participants), our shared socio cultural context and its related language in order to bring participants’ professional knowledge into being. However, language and actions relate to the social context in which they are produced and their meanings are sometimes shared but they are not always explicit. This *indexicality* (Cohen & Manion 1997 p31) must be carefully scrutinised to ensure that any ‘taken for granted’ assumptions are identified and investigated. Therefore, it follows that I, as a researcher, will be reflexive on all fronts; my research will be as well. It will be

*emergent*, and, as more data is generated, it will be open to *change* or “progressive focusing” (Stake 1994).

It will be necessary to be aware of the fact that my experiences in adult literacy, whilst allowing me to empathise with the rest of the participants, do not necessarily give me any special or superior “insider knowledge”. Even though I have the same professional background as the other participants and they may have had to deal with the similar issues I have had to deal with; their experiences of such issues will still be different (Mason 1996 p151).

The third characteristic of research as a social practice is language. Language is the principal medium through which human beings express, construct and understand social phenomena and events and, as such, it should be regarded as a ‘major characteristic’ (Hitchcock & Hughes 1989/93:29) of any interpretative approach. It is not, as positivists believe, a ‘neutral’ vehicle for conveying research explanations with words which will have the same transparent meaning for everyone who reads them. Instead, as someone who believes that research is a social practice I think the meanings conveyed by language are encased in the dominant discourses which prevail in particular social contexts. As people are influenced by different discourses then the language and words used to convey meaning in one discourse will not have the same precise meaning if used in another. Discourses not only inform our way of thinking but also the way we act. As part of the reflexive process it has been my job to identify those discourses which affect me and those which affect the research participants. For instance, throughout this research text I have categorically stated that I adhere to the narrative discourses which assume both literacy

*and* research to be social practices. This, in turn, has affected how my role as a researcher has influenced how I have proceeded with my research. In this sense, language and discourses are inextricably linked to reflexivity because:

Reflexivity is not just a matter of being aware of one's prejudices and standpoints but of recognising through language, discourse and text, worlds are created and recreated in ways of which we are rarely aware. We cannot always recognise that we are subjects within language and within particular historical, cultural and social frameworks. The key questions then become how we both constitute and are constituted by language, and where lies the power to interpret and control meaning. (Usher and Edwards 1994:16)

Meaning is not just about the meaning of words but also the meaning of the way social actors express themselves in what they say and do (Hughes & Sharrock1990)

Our activities and relationships are carried out in relation to the language we have; that is, we relate to others in greatest part through talking to them or employing other forms of language-mediated exchange. So, while we might happily concur that the natural world exists independently of language – though not independently of the ways in which we know it – this cannot be the case with the social world. The relationships we have with others are not independent of the language we use to describe and perform them. (Hughes & Sharrock1990: 124-5)

As mentioned previously, this research will be concerned with various types of constructed texts which I have termed 'professional narratives'. I will be helping to construct the spoken field texts given by my participants when we talk, and also through my written research account. We will be creating meaning and knowledge of our worlds by 'linguaging' them into existence, an existence which is social. This is what the term 'research as a social practice' means.

This chapter has given the reasons for my decisions to use case studies and 'professional narratives', for my research. The next chapter outlines a debate by two scholars engaging specifically with the issues relating to narrative research. One thinks it is 'epistemically respectable' and the other does not. Their arguments apply to the issues of epistemology, methodology, reliability, validity and generalisation, which have been discussed generally in this chapter. As the scholars relate these concepts specifically to narrative research I thought their arguments particularly relevant to my project.

## Chapter Seven

### Narrative Research versus Positivist Research

#### 7.1 Introduction

Phillips (1993) in his conference paper, *Gone with the wind? Evidence, Rigor and Warrants in Educational Research* and O’Dea (1994) in her article, *Pursuing Truth in Narrative Research*, argue from two different positions about the criteria which should be used as yardsticks to measure the quality of scholarship, authority and rigor in educational research, particularly narrative research. Phillips believes “epistemic relevance” depends on “quantitative, empirical truth” made authoritative by “reliability”, “validity” and “generalisation”. O’Dea, however, believes “epistemic respectability” depends on “artistic, literary truth” made authoritative by “authenticity”. Her criticism of Phillips’s positivist approach raises some extremely important issues about narrative research which I find interesting and relevant to my own project. And, at this point, I have to say that I have more affinity with O’Dea’s views than I do with those of Phillips.

#### 7.2 Organisation of Chapter

Section 7.3 focuses on the two concepts of ‘truth’ in narrative research advocated by Phillips and O’Dea, which are “quantitative, empirical ‘truth’” and “artistic, literary truth”, respectively. Section 7.4 then looks at the two sets of criteria these scholars use to demonstrate

the epistemic legitimacy of their approach. For Phillips “quantitative, empirical truth” is made authoritative by the criteria of “reliability”, “validity” and “generalisation”. For O’Dea, however, “artistic, literary truth” is made authoritative by the criteria of “authenticity”. The final section, 7.5, is an evaluation of both approaches from a postmodern perspective.

### **7.3 Quantitative, Empirical Truth versus Artistic, Literary Truth**

Phillips, a believer in “quantitative, empirical ‘truth’” with its respectability judged by the yardsticks of “validity”, “reliability” and “generalisation”, argues that qualitative, narrative research does not measure up to these criteria and therefore lacks authority. On the other hand, O’Dea argues that qualitative, narrative research based on ‘artistic, literary ‘truth’’ judged by ‘authenticity’ *is* authoritative and that Phillips’s criteria for judging it are not relevant to this research method. O’Dea contends that Phillips’s “hallmarks [validity, reliability and generalisation] of epistemic respectability” simply do not apply to a method (narrative) which was designed to endorse the ‘subjective’ ‘voices’ of the researched rather than the ‘objective’ findings of quantitative researchers. She regards the ‘voices’ of the former to be just as authoritative as the latter and takes exception to Phillips and his supporters who insist that their approaches and methods are superior. Phillips argues his case in a conference paper and criticises qualitative, narrative methods in educational research in order to make his points. O’Dea’s article is a critique of Phillips’s paper.

### 7.3.1 *Quantitative, Empirical Truth*

For Phillips (1993:1) 'objectivity' is a key issue in research. He regards it as a fundamental requirement for establishing empirical 'truth'. He expresses concern that some philosophers do not seem to care that "objectivity" is no longer respected as the authoritative "ideal" for researchers and that terms like 'positivist' and 'realist' have become forms of abuse. This state of affairs he blames on political as well as intellectual forces and he vows resistance to the influences of the former. The key 'political' players are action researchers, feminist philosophers, ethnographers, some of those engaged in hermeneutics and others concerned with the influence of culture on human action which Bruner (1990) calls "folk psychology". These are the ones responsible for the situation where "epistemology is being blown away and replaced by politics". Therefore, for Phillips, political rather than epistemic beliefs are the main motivations for pro-narrative researchers. According to Phillips they mask this 'politicisation' by stressing:

... that narrative is a basic human cognitive style or mode of thought or inquiry; or they give the impression that they support narrative in order to break the illiberal hegemony of positivism (and its descendents) in the research community; or they have argued that by making narratives more central in research, the barriers (including status differentials) between university researchers and school people will diminish, and the resulting work will be of more direct relevance to practitioners so that the perennial problem of linking research and practice will disappear; or they stress that professional university researchers have much to learn from the insights and stories of teachers.

(Phillips 1993:7)

According to Phillips (ibid: 2) this state of affairs in the growth of the narrative method is more easily traced in the work of educational researchers and he provides a brief history of developments in this area during in the last part of the twentieth century. These developments he sums up as the “struggle” to replace the “*positivist* model of man” with one that is more concerned with man as a thinking rational being searching for meaning in human action.

Until the latter part of the 1970s education programmes were usually evaluated using positivist approaches. However, qualitative approaches both in the USA and Britain gained a hold at this time and case studies grew in popularity. According to Phillips, in an attempt to “provide intellectual warrant” for the new qualitative approaches, terms such as “hermeneutics” and “interpretative” started to appear in theoretical discussions. By the early twentieth century hermeneutics, which originally referred to the interpretation of texts, had had its meaning extended to cover human voluntary action. According to Phillips it was now an easy move from hermeneutics to narrative:

For it has been argued in recent years that one reason human activities are meaningful is that they can be seen in narrative terms; we make our own actions, and the actions of others meaningful by presenting a descriptive paragraph. (Phillips 1993:2)

Having summed up the situation thus, Phillips expresses his concern about the way “epistemological warrant” is handled by supporters of the narrative method and uses the ideas of Bruner (1986)(*which he places in italics*) as an example:

...narrative is a “*different way of knowing*” than science which prizes “*well-formed argument*”, for in narrative what is valued is not truth but “*verisimilitude*”...A story whether allegedly true or allegedly fiction, “*is judged for its goodness as a story by criteria that are of a different kind from those used to judge a logical argument as adequate or correct*”. [Good narrative leads to] “*good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily ‘true’) historical accounts*”. (Phillips 1993:3)

Whilst accepting the scholarship of Bruner, Phillips still has problems with the concept of “verisimilitude” and other terms narrative researchers use for ‘truth’ such as “apparency”, “transferability”, “adequacy”, “plausibility”, “continuity”, “closure”, “aesthetic finality”, “conviction”, “accessibility”, “compellingness”, “moral persuasiveness” and “animating, evocative description”. For him, these terms have no actual “epistemological warrant” because they do not define ‘truth’ in a positivist way. They are only ‘perceptions’ of truth and, therefore, cannot be measured by the authoritative yardsticks of validity (when the research measures what it is supposed to measure), reliability (when another researcher would produce similar results) and generalisation (when the research is applied to a variety of contexts). Also, in this ‘language game’ triangulation within and between methods is used to measure quality and validity. ‘Within methods’ refers to when several *participants* are asked to provide their own accounts of the same situation. ‘Between methods’ refers to when more than one method is used to research the same situation. According to Phillips (*ibid*: 7) such things as ‘perceptions’ do not fit into this methodical pattern and are therefore sometimes no more than subjective justifications and rationalisations often open to misinterpretation and falsehood.

### 7.3.2 *Artistic, Literary Truth*

O'Dea's (1994:1-3) response to the accusation that much of the interest in qualitative, narrative research is political is to present an epistemological base for it. She takes exception to the impression sometimes created by Phillips which is that narrative researchers have a complete disregard for 'truth'. O'Dea accepts that some of the criticisms of Phillips are not without foundation but she accuses him of "play[ing] up" the idea too much and stresses that he chooses to ignore the fact that good narrative researchers are well aware of the pitfalls of falsehood and misinterpretation caused by poor scholarship and the lack of recognition of both explicit and implicit agendas, values and ideologies in some studies. However, she thinks he is justified in arguing that sometimes narrative researchers avoid direct reference to the "truth" and use "vague if edifying aesthetic-type justifications in endorsing their softer, sensitive, subtle criteria". She points out, however, that the very same "aesthetic-type justifications" used by narrative researchers such as "verisimilitude" and "apparency" etc listed above, relate to the 'truth' far more than some narrative researchers themselves are prepared to actually acknowledge. Thus, when they fail to allude to these criteria directly as 'truths' they leave themselves open to criticism. Narrative researchers owe it to themselves to refer to the 'truth' directly rather than hover around it.

O'Dea goes on to challenge Phillips's accusation that a piece of narrative research is simply a 'good story' without any epistemic authority by quoting some well-known, respected novelists such as Doris Lessing who have said that they want their writing; literary narrative writing (or art) to speak the 'truth'. For O'Dea (163), this adds another dimension to the writing of qualitative, narrative researchers and she feels that quantitative researchers should not be so

dismissive of this type of writing, nor should qualitative researchers, themselves, be too hesitant in using it because its ‘truth’ is more relevant than is first apparent. For instance, readers of novels know that the characters, plot and settings are not ‘true’ in the sense that they do not physically exist in the everyday lived, ‘real’ world of the readers’ lives. O’Dea points out, however, that the truth or falsity of the elements of a novel, or any other artistic literary work is, in fact, irrelevant. Believability or non-believability is replaced by “make-believe”; a convention adopted by readers when they read works of fiction. Once readers of fiction become involved in this ‘pretend’ world of literary works they often find that it has affinity with their ‘real’ existences. Reflecting on the thoughts, views and experiences of the characters, relevant intricacies of plot and familiarity of setting, readers can make strong meaningful connections with similar events, people and places in their own lives, cultures and beliefs. It is this aspect of ‘truth’ in literary works which O’Dea identifies as “artistic literary truth”.

#### **7.4 Validity, Reliability and Generalisation versus Authenticity**

This section discusses the yardsticks of “epistemic respectability” both writers bring to their versions of truth. Phillips believes the yardsticks to be validity, reliability and generalisation. O’Dea believes it to be authenticity.

##### **7.4.1 *Validity, Reliability and Generalisation***

For supporters of quantitative research like Phillips, validity concerns whether or not their research measures what it is supposed to measure. Reliability is mainly concerned with whether the data are free from error, whether another researcher would produce the same

results or whether the actual method chosen produced the results. There are various types of validity used in quantitative research. Three of the main ones are internal validity, external validity and convergent validity. Actions to ensure internal validity are taken early in the research design stage. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:16-24) quantitative researchers work in a linear, sequential or step-by-step way. Starting with a hunch about a possible connection between events they will formulate new hypotheses and check them against the existing theoretical base. After choosing a representative sample to work on the researcher will subject the hypotheses to a series of validation procedures or tests in order to confirm or reject them. *Only one hypothesis can be true.* The tests (such as experiments) uncover the main variables which appear to be influencing events thus establishing causality. The key influential variables are then isolated and any *patterns* are identified. Sometimes data from one method is compared with data derived from another method already shown to be valid. This is called convergent validity and is carried out to reinforce the research. If the hypothesis is confirmed the research can be generalised (external validity) across a variety of contexts which might result in new theories. The use of mathematical models and 'correlation' (degree of 'fit' between variables) works better when large samples are involved. There is no recognition of the subjectivity of the researcher in this approach and only knowledge which fits the prescribed, methodological rules is valid.

Coming from the 'quantitative' research tradition described above, Phillips has difficulty with narrative research. It becomes problematic for him in a variety of ways. For instance, rather than a single 'true' hypothesis about an event there can be a number of narratives about it which are all considered true. Also, narrators could provide a variety of narratives for an

event but usually only provide one; the one they perceive to be true at that particular moment in time. Furthermore, different narrators may concentrate on different aspects of the same event. Therefore, they could all construct different stories they perceive to be true.

Phillips thinks that by saying the narrative-teller believes the story they are telling is acceptable is both right and wrong. i.e. people do not act on the basis of what is true, they act according to what they believe to be true. He points out that in the natural sciences many hypotheses can be made about forms of data. However, in the natural sciences only *one* hypothesis can be true. Therefore, there must be times when it is important to decide which narrative is true. This is especially the case when further action, intervention and policy decisions have to be made. If this does not happen then unwanted consequences could result. Successful action depends on correct information.

Phillips accepts Bruner's idea of "folk psychology" mentioned earlier, in which individuals compose narratives based on the beliefs and values of their culture in order to understand their own actions and the actions of others. However, he questions whether concepts such as "adequacy", "plausibility" and "engaging plot" are sufficient criteria for judging the quality of these explanations and asks, "what role is left for scientific enquiry here?" The ensuing stories may have such features as "adequacy" and "plausibility" but according to Phillips (6-7) they make stories credible but they do not make them 'true'.

For a true story might be credible, or it might be incredible; and similarly for a false story...credibility, or lack of it, is not an *epistemically relevant* criterion.

Likewise, for a story to have “verisimilitude” or the appearance of truth is not good enough for Phillips because a false story can appear to be true.

If the aim of narrative researchers is to understand conscious human voluntary action then they must discover the “real” beliefs that actor truly holds (but they need not be beliefs that are true). According to Phillips we do not always know or understand why we act the way we do, although we may have strongly held beliefs about why we are acting that way. In this sense, narratives are not always *explanatory*; instead they become rationalisations or justifications. Therefore, the narrators may not realise they are “deluding” themselves.

#### **7.4.2 Authenticity**

As mentioned earlier, O’Dea insists that Phillips’s criteria (validity, reliability and generalisation) of scholarship do not apply when judging the quality of narrative research. For her narratives should be judged on their “authenticity”. According to O’Dea (1994:164), ‘authenticity’ is connected to “honesty and truthfulness” and she asks the question, “honest and truthful to what?” In order to answer she uses concepts which I can only describe as Existentialist; something I will clarify in the next section. From her stance O’Dea argues that control of one’s own destiny is not pre-determined. Human beings are ‘free’ to develop their own lifestyles, goals and values. However, choices are circumscribed according to a human being’s personal attributes and the influences of the time and world into which they have been “thrown”. Nevertheless, in spite of these restrictions, which affect choice, human beings are still able to choose and be held responsible for the decisions they make about the way they live

their lives. On the one hand, they are capable, to a degree, of freeing themselves from the thoughts and values of everyone else; the “they”. On the other hand, they are never completely free of the limitations imposed by their “thrownness”. In order to live their lives ‘authentically’ human beings must try and be true to themselves by acknowledging the difference between their own decisions and those they have made under the influence of the “they” and the world into which they have been “thrown”.

O’Dea (1994 p165), points out that people can become inauthentic or untrue to themselves in two ways. Firstly, they can ignore the “limitations of their thrownness”, deceive themselves and become unrealistic in their goals, values and choices. Here she gives an example of an academic who might delude herself that her research is still at the forefront in terms of scholarship when, in fact, her work is outdated because she has not kept in touch with the latest research trends. By behaving in this way the academic becomes ‘dishonest’ and her claim to be carrying out innovative research could be called into question. Likewise, literary writers must accept the restrictions on their work. Novelists who choose historical or geographical settings for their characters must acknowledge the “*mores*” of that setting or they will fail to achieve the “verisimilitude” which contributes to their worth as a writer. In the same way writers of narrative research must acknowledge the settings in which their ‘stories’ take place. O’Dea (1994:165) stresses that acknowledging the settings in which “stories” take place is especially important because the word ‘research’ has “connotations of systematic, careful study of some area of knowledge”. Furthermore, writers of narrative research are not writers of fiction so they *must*, even more than literary writers; accurately acknowledge the settings in which they work. If they ignore certain things in order to produce a better story or

image of themselves then they are being dishonest or inauthentic. Dishonesty, however, can be found in both qualitative, narrative research *and* quantitative research. O'Dea says that Phillips may be right when he says that a good plot and credibility in narrative research is not indicative of its truth or falsity. However, she also says:

...the fact that we are speaking here of 'research' stories does tell us something. They tell us that the incidents described actually occurred. And while we have all heard of researchers faking the data in order to get a better, more desired, result, it is not their choice of research method that brings this about but the fact that they are dishonest researchers. One can 'cook the data' in both quantitative and qualitative studies – the fact that a research study uses numbers of itself does not tell us whether the study is true or false. In both styles of research, one ultimately has to trust in the integrity of the scholar. (O'Dea 1994:166)

The second way people can be dishonest or inauthentic is to deny responsibility for their actions and decisions. They blame the pressures of 'outside' society for dictating what they do. Thus, some people adopt the values, beliefs and attitudes of the 'they' without questioning them. On the one hand, the 'they' is necessary for our historical traditions, languages and modes of thought and provides a stabilising anchor in the cultural background of our existence that is needed. On the other hand, it is still necessary to confront established and sometimes sedimented ways of thinking and acting in order to produce new meaning. This is especially the case if we disagree with the 'established ways'. Confrontation of this type can be extremely difficult and painful. Failure to do so, however, can leave people open to

accusations of dishonesty and lack of authenticity. People who are committed to strongly - held ideological views sometimes let their ideals have too much influence over what they write. Instead of writing about both the good *and* bad sides of their beliefs they tend to concentrate on the 'good'. As a result the 'they' takes over and what is produced is similar to propaganda. O'Dea (1994) points out that some teachers are also influenced by various 'theys' as they carry out their work. Teachers may conform to a particular teaching method because external, official forces sanction it. If the method does not work, however, teachers sometimes 'blame' the 'official' method. This is easier than blaming themselves for failing to question it in a confrontational way.

O'Dea thinks it is the job of narrative researchers in an educational context to help practitioners probe and question their actions. To do this, they must go beyond the practitioners' first- hand accounts. Adopting a collaborative and co-operative stance in which all participants feel equal does this. They can then tell and analyse - and retell and reanalyse their accounts without feeling threatened. According to O'Dea the point of the process is:

“...to encourage practitioners to reflect deeply and discerningly on their teaching practice, to see it from a variety of perspectives, to uncover and bring to conscious awareness the multiple levels of presuppositions that inform their perceptions and which determine (often unconsciously) their interpretation of particular situations. Most of all the point of the process is to empower teachers to step outside of societal norms and expectations and to find themselves in the crucible of daily pedagogical practice. The point of the process is, in short, 'authenticity'.” (O'Dea 1994:167)

## 7.5 Evaluation

In this section I concentrate on some of main issues raised by Phillips and O'Dea in relation to narrative research. These have a bearing on my own research project. The issues are: 1) the provenance of the two versions of 'truth' advocated by Phillips and O'Dea which are 'quantitative, empirical truth' and 'artistic, literary truth' respectively; 2) the 'dualistic partnership' between Phillips and O'Dea; 3) the relationship between research and politics; 4) the contest of 'explanation' versus 'interpretation'; and 5) the problem of 'legitimacy'.

### 7.5.1 'Truth'

As I evaluate the positions of Phillips on 'quantitative empirical truth' and O'Dea on 'artistic literary truth' it becomes apparent that the critical 'difference' between the two authors is that *Phillips believes fiction is the opposite of truth whereas O'Dea believes there is truth in fiction*. The tenets of both versions of 'truth' are strongly rooted in Lyotard's (1984) 'meta narratives' or 'grand discourses' of modernity. For instance, in chapter three I explored how the philosophical school of 'positivism' which emphasises 'objectivity' and which Phillips openly supports, stems from the emancipatory 'meta narrative'. However, I have deduced that O'Dea's emphasis on 'subjectivity' belongs to the 'phenomenological' school of philosophical thought (also outlined in chapter three) which stems from the 'grand narrative' of knowledge unity. My reasons for deducing this are her emphasis on 'subjectivity, and her use of Heidegger's phenomenological, existentialist criteria such as 'authenticity', 'thrownness' and the 'they' as yardsticks for legitimising narrative research.

In chapter six I demonstrated how positivist-empiricists have a specific ontological view (way of seeing the world) and believe that ‘truth’ exists as an independent and separate entity from our knowledge of it. Positivist-empiricists such as Phillips believe that this is the only way of seeing the world and insist that it is self-evidently correct. They do not question their ontological perspective and insist that an epistemology based on strict, ‘objective’, methodological procedures is more important. The concept of ‘methodology’ has never really escaped from these roots so, in this sense, it is a positivist concept. On the other hand O’Dea has a different ontological belief from Phillips and thinks that ‘truth’ does not have a separate existence from our knowledge of it. Her epistemological approach is to use methods such as narrative to find ‘truth’ in the many ‘subjective’ constructions, interpretations and perceptions we have of the social world. From O’Dea’s point of view plays, novels and poems are often highly thought of for their accurate portrayal of, or comment on, ‘real’ life. She points out:

...such partial claims leave room for the irreducible complexity of the world while yet offering penetrating insights as to our experience of it. (O’Dea 1993:163)

She also stresses that, unlike writers of fiction, narrative researchers do not invent imaginary settings, plots and characters. They might use the same kind of language as, say, novelists but *the events they write about have actually happened*. On the other hand, *just like* novelists they do believe that life is too complex to be “reduced to a single pattern” especially in the world of education and the classroom. There is a case to be put for the authority and “uniqueness” of particular events, in particular settings with a particular teacher interacting with particular learners and/or other teachers at a particular time. She quotes Jardine (1992:54-55) who says:

“There is a ‘truth’ to be had, an understanding to be reached in the unmethodical incidents in our lives...a truth which is bespoiled and thus left out of consideration by the methodical severances requisite of empirical work.”

### *7.5.2 Dualistic partners*

Although Phillips and O’Dea appear to have conflicting viewpoints there is, in effect, a ‘dualistic partnership’ between them. For instance, Phillips says that he favours ‘quantitative’ research whereas O’Dea says she favours ‘qualitative’ research. Phillips also acknowledges his ‘positivist’ leanings and O’Dea her ‘phenomenological’ ones. Phillips also stresses the importance of ‘objectivity’ whereas O’Dea stresses the importance of ‘subjectivity’. The point is that ‘quantitative –qualitative’ and ‘objectivity-subjectivity’ are ‘polar opposites’. They are examples of the dualisms characteristic of modernity which I mentioned in chapter six. From a postmodern perspective Phillips’s scientific, positivist, ‘objective’ viewpoint and O’Dea’s phenomenological, interpretative, ‘subjective’ viewpoint are, in fact, part of the same ‘epistemological discourse’. For instance, the dualism objective/subjective stresses the dominance of objectivity because it appears first. By altering the position of these ‘polar opposites’ to subjectivity/objectivity O’Dea is simply making a reversal but is still within the same epistemological framework of Phillips, which is objective-subjective. She does not remove the epistemological framework.

### **7.5.3 *Politics and Research***

Phillips makes the accusation that qualitative, narrative research is a political development that should be resisted. I find myself in part - agreement with Phillips about this but, unlike him, I do not think that this is wrong, just inescapable. I also think that it applies to *all* research, not just that which is 'qualitative' or 'interpretative' as does Phillips. For Phillips to say that politics should be resisted is, in itself, a powerful, political statement. He is concerned that the dominance of positivism is being seriously challenged; a challenge Phillips dismisses as 'political'. However, if something 'dominates', like positivism, it has 'power' although Phillips believes his kind of 'truth' is 'neutral' and distinct from power (and politics) which can corrupt. The ideas of Foucault (1972:117), demonstrate Phillips's position to be untenable when he informs us that dominant discourses such as these are, in fact, not 'neutral' - they have been influenced by the historical, cultural and social mores of the period from which they originated. Foucault believes that the major discourses of history, such as the 'grand narratives' of the Enlightenment, are "regimes of truth" which we have inherited and people who belong to influential groups in society wishing to retain their power, continually "reinscribe" them.

### **7.5.4 *Explanations versus Interpretations***

According to O'Dea, Phillips's accusations that narrators may be unaware that their narrative interpretations are not explanations but rationalisations and justifications leading to self-delusions, are highly questionable and I tend to agree. The narrative of one participant can be compared to the narratives of other participants. If common themes or perceptions emerge in participants' narratives then it is hardly fair to say that all the participants referring to the same

themes or perceptions are ‘deluded’. O’Dea points out that good narrative research enables the participants to reflect on their perceptions from a variety of perspectives. This helps them to understand the assumptions and presuppositions which underpin their interpretation of events. For me, this can be the opposite of delusion; it is the promotion of clarity. However, Phillips contends that in the natural sciences only *one* hypothesis (or explanation) can be true. Therefore, there must be times when it is important to decide which *narrative* is true especially when further action, intervention and policy decisions have to be made. Here he seems to be restricted by the confines of his own belief system which is extremely dominant in Western education systems. As Lyotard (1984) points out, our education systems make policy interventions which are didactic in their promotion of ‘science’. However, this does not mean it is self-evidently ‘correct’ for them to be this way.

#### **7.5.5 Legitimacy**

Both scholars claim their stance to be epistemically ‘legitimate’ according to their own belief systems. However, in chapter six I also mentioned the issue raised by Scott and Usher (1999:11) that it is this desire for ‘legitimacy’ which should actually be problematised, not whether research should be ‘quantitative’ or ‘qualitative’. Scott and Usher (1996) cite the work of Kuhn who points out that people’s belief systems or “paradigms” are embedded in *communities* of knowledge workers. Phillips’s and O’Dea’s ideas are therefore reinforced by fellow knowledge workers in their respective belief communities.

The next chapter looks at the wider literature on narrative research.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Human Experience and Narrative**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The last chapter, chapter seven, dealt with a conflict between two scholars. The first one attacked the intellectual ‘respectability’ of interpretive, narrative research in favour of scientific, positive research. The other one did the opposite. However, as this thesis is in favour of narrative research, it is important it look at the ideas of more than one scholar. Therefore this chapter looks at the wider body of literature in the field in order to explore the importance of narratives to humanity, their relevance in a postmodern research approach and their relationship with ‘time’ , ‘place’ and ‘context’ . It also introduces the concept of ‘grounded conversations’ as a strategy for collecting ‘professional narratives’ as a form of data.

#### **8.2 Organisation of chapter**

Section 8.3 looks at the importance of narrative to human existence generally and contends that it is a fundamental way in which we define, organise and express our knowledge of the world to others. Section 8.4 moves on to discuss narrative knowledge in a research context and demonstrates why I perceive narratives and postmodern approaches to research to be inextricably linked. Following on from this, section 8.5 investigates the terminology used to describe the narrative forms used by researchers engaged in this field in order to facilitate a definition of the term ‘professional narratives’; the narrative form I devised to inform my research. The next section, section 8.6, introduces the concept of a ‘grounded

conversation’; the strategy I have used to gather my ‘professional narratives’. Finally, section 8.7 looks at the frameworks of time, context and place in which narrative research, and those involved in its production, such as the researcher and the research participant, are always embedded.

### **8.3 Narratives and Human Experience**

People have always used narrative forms to express their knowledge and how they know it. For Lyotard (1984:19) narrative is the “quintessential form of customary knowledge”. Throughout time, humanity has always defined how it knows itself and its existence by the stories or narratives people tell about their lives and worlds. According to Gee (2003) narrative is:

...the primary form of human understanding... people make sense of their experiences of other people and the world by emplotting them in terms of socially and culturally specific stories, stories which are supported by the social practices, rituals, texts and other media representations of specific social groups and cultures. (Gee 2003:2)

Barthes (1966:1) points out that human beings have never existed without narratives and that “the narratives of the world are without number”. He contends that where there is life there is narrative. Almost all human discourse is expressed as narrative and it has been argued that this capacity for narrative, alongside the capacity for language itself, is what makes us distinctively human (Porter - Abbott 2002). Human knowledge is brought into

existence by the language we use to express our interpretations (narratives) of experience and, in this sense, if our language is limited then so is our world (Wittgenstein 1953).

For most people, 'narrative' is, in fact, simply another term for 'story'. However, it is useful to have a closer look at some definitions of the term for more clarity. In *The Chambers Dictionary* (Ninth Edition 2003) there are a number of definitions some of which are discussed here. The first definition for 'narrative' is that it is something "which is narrated, a story"; the second definition expands on this and describes narrative as "a written or spoken account of a series of events in the order of which they occur"; and the third definition describes narrative as "that part of a literary work which relates events and action..." As these last two definitions demonstrate, narrative is usually thought of as an ordered account of events or actions which can be 'written or spoken' and is often associated with 'literary works' such as novels, short stories and anecdotes and the like. Barthes (1966) and Porter - Abbot (2002) list other genres such as sagas, folk tales, history, myths, legends and so on. However, as well as being present in the ordered arrangement of language (spoken or written) they point out that it is also present in pictures, photographs, conversations, film, news, journalism and in many other forms. According to Barthes these are infinite in number and relate to every walk of life. Porter Abbott (2002:6) gives a very good example (a photograph of a shipwreck) of how we bring our narrative perceptions to bear when we look at pictures, and how we automatically construct stories about what is happening, why it is happening, what might have happened before, and what is going to happen in the future. Sometimes a picture or work of art does not satisfy our narrative perceptions and it frustrates us because we fail to understand it or cannot engage with it; Porter Abbott calls this 'narrative jamming'. It is a term I find

useful to describe my personal experiences when I found it difficult to engage with the 'Skills for Life' policy narrative which I thought regarded adult literacy practitioners as curriculum 'technicians' working to someone else's 'design'. This 'jammed' with my, then, idea of practitioners and learners being the creative 'architects' of the curriculum. In other words, the term 'narrative jamming' can apply not only to looking at pictures but to all human contexts where differences in the narrative perceptions of people arises because of their different narrative interpretations of the world. When we encounter these contending narrative perceptions confusion, disagreement, and problems can occur.

Having started with the concept of narrative in a general sense this chapter goes on to demonstrate the reasons why I am using narrative in the research process incorporating postmodern perspectives.

#### **8.4 Postmodernism and Narrative Research**

Firstly, my main reason for using narrative research is stated succinctly by the following quote:

if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively. (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:17)

The second reason is related to my reasons for adopting a postmodern stance. I have chosen the 'stance' because I agree with Lyotard (1984) who maintains that it is only through narratives (and this includes research narratives) that we express our knowledge of the world according to where we are positioned, socially and culturally, within it. Central

to his argument is his belief that modernity's claim that only science, rather than narrative, can legitimate knowledge is based on an assumption of the existence of a set of universal, scientific, laws which transcend historical and socio-cultural influences. Modernity dismisses knowledge based on the latter influences as 'anecdotal'. However, as Lyotard has informed us, the rules of the language game which insist that only scientific knowledge is legitimate were themselves generated in a particular socio-cultural context at a particular time; something which science denies. To accept it would mean admitting to the influence of these social-cultural contexts and this would destroy the myth that modernity's universal knowledge claims are based on neutrality and objectivity. For Lyotard, modernity's rules for legitimating knowledge claims are anecdotes or narratives like all other knowledge claims. However, they are so powerful and dominant that he calls them 'meta narratives' and these subsume the 'little' narratives of individuals, small groups and communities. The point is to stress is that I agree with Lyotard's argument that all knowledge claims are narratives whether they be 'grand' or 'little'.

Thirdly, Lyotard's lack of faith in, or 'incredulity' towards, the legitimacy of the knowledge generated by modernity's 'meta narratives' has resulted in the postmodern emphasis on the importance of 'little' narratives, and I regard the professional knowledge about adult literacy contained in my 'little' narrative and the 'little' narratives of my research participants to be just as legitimate and important as that contained in the 'meta narratives'. Therefore, I consider this "narrative and auto/biographical turn in the social sciences" (Sikes 2006:2) to be a suitable research approach to use in conjunction with my postmodern train of thought. In the case of this doctorate not only are the 'professional

narratives' of research participants used to inform the research but I regard the final account of this research topic, written by me as the researcher, to be a narrative as well.

Fourthly, as a postmodern researcher my purpose is to critically question the efficacy of the metanarratives via the 'little' narratives of my research participants, including my own. I am using our 'professional narratives' to:

... to break the stranglehold of metanarratives that [establish] rules of truth, legitimacy, and identity. The work of [postmodern narrative research] becomes the investigation of the mediating aspects of culture, the interrogation of its grammar and the decentering of its norms. (Tierney 2000: 546 in Chase 2005: 668)

Fifthly, in the previous chapters I have discussed a number of narrative discourses, influenced by science and philosophy, which concern adult literacy and adult education; some being more powerful than others. These affect the professional lives of all adult literacy practitioners. Asking practitioners/participants to provide their 'professional narratives', and engage with them by checking the transcriptions, is an opportunity to express and 'give life' (Sikes 2006) to these discourses. In fact, Wittgenstein (1953: #23) actually refers to language used in social discourses as "forms of life". His term 'language-game' is meant to convey the idea that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or, to repeat, a "form of life".

Lastly, I agree with the postmodern emphasis on the importance of language. It is through language, contained as it is in narrative discourses, that knowledge is 'language'd' into

existence. Using ‘professional narratives’ to gather information about participants’ working lives gives them the opportunity to use their language in their own way in order to ‘knowledge’ their experiences into being in the form of meaningful ‘stories’. By ‘linguaging’ this knowledge into existence from their own professional perspectives they will reveal, explicitly or implicitly, through the discourses they use, the values they bring to the teaching of adult literacy and to the philosophical assumptions underpinning those values. As Clifford (1994:34) says, “...people’s values are revealed in the...stories they tell about their lives.”

My term, ‘professional narratives’, is defined in the following section.

### **8.5 The Terminology of Narrative Research**

The term ‘narrative’ has a variety of meanings when it is used by researchers and confusion can arise. This is especially so when the term used by one researcher to describe a particular form of narrative can be used by a different researcher to describe another narrative form. In this section I look carefully at the terminology researchers use to describe different types of narrative in order to lead up to a clear and precise definition of what I mean by my own term, ‘professional narratives’.

In the world of narrative research there are a number of narrative forms used to give an account of someone’s life or aspects of it. When current researchers in the field, such as Chase (2005), are describing their work they often refer to, and use, the interpretations of narrative types provided by Denzin (1989) and/or Bertaux (1981).

Denzin (ibid: 7) identifies these as autobiographies, biographies, diaries, letters, obituaries, life histories, life stories, personal experience stories, oral histories and personal histories. Both Denzin and Bertaux investigate these terms in depth and, those which have a bearing on what I am doing are briefly outlined here. Diaries, letters and obituaries are not used in my research so I will concentrate on the others.

An autobiography is written by the person whose life is the focus of attention whereas a biography, which also focuses on a person's life, is written by someone else. Bertaux (ibid: 7-9) points out that these are well-established, *written* literary forms. However, when someone gives an *oral* rather than a written account of their life it is referred to as a *life story*. Nowadays these are usually recorded on tape by the researcher who is present whilst the story is being told. This changes the nature of the story because, as Bertaux points out, an autobiography only has one author whereas a recorded 'life story' is produced by two people, the teller and the listener/researcher who is doing the recording.

When a 'life story' is processed by a researcher, who might compare it with other oral life accounts and/or supplement it with other material, it is referred to as a *life history*. The different terminology is used in order to distinguish between the two. In this context, then, a 'life story' is a spoken account of a life as told by the person whose life is the one under scrutiny. A 'life history' is what a researcher produces when they process these stories. According to Denzin (ibid: 41) *personal history* is another way of referring to a 'life history' and he uses the terms interchangeably. Chase (2005: 652) reflects the confusion I mentioned earlier when she further informs us that some researchers also regard the terms

‘life story’ and ‘life history’ as interchangeable definitions when they are describing any “birth-to-present” narratives.

Denzin (ibid: 42-44), also mentions *personal experience stories* and clarifies how these differ from ‘life stories’. The latter focus on a life, or a segment of a life, as reported by the person in question. The individual telling the story is the subject of the story and has authority as its author. ‘Personal experience stories’ are different because they focus on a specific set of experiences which a person usually expresses orally in a group of people with similar experiences, such as members of Alcoholics Anonymous. ‘Personal experience stories’ do not always put the narrator at the centre of the story. Instead they share their experiences with others.

This brings me to *oral histories*, the only narrative form left on Denzin’s list. It is important to distinguish them from ‘life histories’. I have already described ‘life histories’ as ‘life stories’ after they have been processed by a researcher. ‘Oral histories’ are different because researchers focus on “events, processes, causes and effects” (Denzin ibid: 41) for those who have lived through them rather than the ‘life history’ of an individual. Chase (ibid: 652) also informs us that ‘oral histories’ refer to the meanings events hold for people, and that these take priority over the events themselves.

I have briefly described these narrative forms so that I can use them to clarify what is meant by the term, *professional narratives*, which I have devised for use in my research. First of all these will be *oral* not written narratives because I am concerned with tape recording ‘stories’ about my research participants’ professional, working lives. Therefore,

the focus is on one segment of their lives rather than their full 'life stories'. These professional 'stories', which span over the last 40 years or so, will be 'individual oral histories' because rather than focusing on events in a participant's life, I will be concentrating on what the events *mean* for all my participants in order to look at the impact they have had on the values they bring to their work. I will also be looking at the interaction of different philosophical assumptions behind these values, and how this interaction affects participants, perceptions of what their working lives should entail. This means that, in effect, my 'professional narratives' can be defined as individual or '*small oral histories*' focusing on how the interaction between the different philosophical assumptions in discourses about adult literacy impact on the professional values adult literacy practitioners bring to their working lives. As a single researcher I am limited as to how many narratives I can handle within the time available. In comparison, a very large 'oral history' about the effects of the way adult literacy in the UK is organised over the last thirty years has been carried out by Hamilton and Hillier (2006). They had funding for a team of researchers to conduct narrative interviews not only with many practitioners but also with policymakers and learners, and covered a vast array of issues. However, they did not concentrate on the links between philosophy and literacy as this research does.

My 'professional narratives' are therefore best described as *small oral histories* focusing on how the interaction between the different philosophical assumptions in discourses about adult literacy impacts on the professional values adult literacy practitioners bring to their working lives. This clarifies what 'professional narratives' are and, importantly, their purpose. However, rather than referring to my research as 'small oral histories' I shall go on using the term 'professional narratives' when describing my narrative form.

## 8.6 Strategies for Collecting Professional Narratives

My main strategy for collecting ‘professional narratives’ was to conduct them as one-to-one “interview-conversations” or “grounded-conversations” (Goodson 2001 in Goodson and Sikes 2001:28). Goodson and Sikes prefer these “relatively unstructured, conversation-type encounters”. This overall strategy is best deployed in particular conditions. They include establishing trust, shared experience, a common ground, and a common language between the participants and the researcher.

With regard to ‘trust’, my connection with the national UK network Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) was beneficial because I used the organisation to access participants. Many of them knew me, some better than others. Friendly supportive relationships with them were already established in some cases, and, in others, the RaPAL ethos (Appendix B) meant that we were well-primed to establish them. Most participants had met me at conferences and RaPAL meetings which meant they were aware that I had a genuine and active interest in adult literacy. In respect of ‘shared experience’ we were all engaged in adult literacy in the UK although in different contexts and places. On the one hand, most of us had been affected by the same policy developments, and, on the other, we had often shared our different experiences of learners, educational institutions and ideas about literacy either through friendly chatting when we met, through articles in the RaPAL journal, or through presentations at the annual conference. ‘Common ground’ is established in a variety of ways when participant and researcher meet. This is done by establishing that they know the same people and, by expressing shared interest. As I knew many of the people my participants referred to, either personally or through their published

writing, 'common ground' did not present a major problem. Finally, having been involved in adult literacy since the early 1980s and having engaged with all the four main adult literacy discourses I found this helped with the last condition, that of establishing 'a common language'. This was because, in the main, I could 'talk the talk' used by my participants.

### **8.7 Narratives in Time, context and place**

All narratives of events are mediated in some way by the three frameworks of time, context and place. 'Time' principally involves the past, present and future. In other words, when events occurred, their later reinterpretation in the here and now, and speculation about their implications for the future. 'Context' is concerned with people's experience of events and how this is mediated by their socio-cultural environments. The focus is on the interaction between the personal and the social. 'Place' not only refers to where narratives occurred but also to where they are told, and the effects this can have on the story the narrator tells. Clandinin and Connelly (2000:50) point out that these frameworks of narrative research form a "three-dimensional space" and both the researcher and the researched are embedded within it. This section deals with the three frameworks in turn, starting with time.

#### **8.7.1 *Time***

According to Clandinin and Connelly (ibid:29) any event, or thing, has a past, a present, and an implied future and they consider time to be a central feature of narrative. The work of other scholars such as Polkinghorne (1995), Chase (2005), Goodson and Sikes (2001), Erben (1996), Porter-Abbot (2002), and Riessman (2002), also show how narrative and

time are inextricably linked. For instance we cannot escape the understanding that “lives are lived within time” and that lives are “composed of the narratives by which time is experienced” (Erben 1996:172). In other words, our sense of time is understood and expressed through narratives of past events and actions. Similarly, Porter - Abbott (2002: 3-4) contends that “narrative is the principal way in which our species organises its understanding of time.” He describes how time is usually thought of as being regulated and organised in non-narrative ways. These are abstract divisions of time such as the progression of years, the division of years into seasons, months and weeks, the weeks into days, and the division of days into hours, minutes and seconds as recorded on clocks. These divisions form an ordered framework in which to locate events. For Porter Abbott, however, narrative “turns this process inside out, allowing events themselves to create the order of time”. He goes on to say (ibid:5) that awareness of the recurring cycles of the moon, sun and seasons has always been with us. However, simultaneously we have always shaped and reshaped time as a succession of events (or as narrative).

Expanding on Porter Abbott’s view, Reissman (2002: 230) contends that Western, white, middleclass interviewers often see narratives as having a “chronological sequence” as moving in a linear way through time as it marches on. However, she maintains that there are other ways of seeing time. One way is to see it as a form of “consequential sequencing” where one event causes another although the links might not be chronological. She also mentions “thematic sequencing” where an episodic narrative is linked by theme rather than by time.

In relation to these ideas Goodson and Sikes (2001:46) also say that the commonest form of narrative structure usually has a beginning, middle, and end with events occurring consecutively and logically but they point out that this is not always as straightforward as it seems. For instance, many things happen to us during our lives which have resulted from “complex interrelationships and serendipitous occurrences” and, by choosing one storyline we close off another. Importantly, this prioritising can be used for political ends and it also happens on a personal level when people choose to emphasise certain experiences in order to project a particular impression of themselves.

When people choose their ‘storylines’ they construct and configure their narratives by means of a “plot” which marks off “a segment of time in which events are linked together as contributors to a particular outcome” (Polkinghorne 1995: 7-8). In this sense, narrative data and its processing involves the use of diachronic time rather than synchronic time (Polkinghorne *ibid*:12). Diachronic data gives us “temporal information” about when events happened and their later effects. Synchronic data does not have these historical or development features. It usually refers to the ‘here and now’ where, say, categorical answers are given to questions put by an interviewer. At this point I want to include something which may seem like a digression. With the mention of ‘categorical answers’, it seems relevant to say that I had considered using semi-structured interviews to inform my research. This meant that I would have had to formulate interview questions (which I actually started to do) and I realised that no matter how openly structured these might have been they would have defined and categorised, from my point of view only (probably with the aid of prompts to bring participants back to the point), what the research participants were to talk about. Admittedly, I defined the wider research area which might be regarded

as an imposition on my participants. However, this has been tempered by the fact that participants did volunteer to be involved and they talked about issues in their own way. There were issues that I considered important but I also wanted participants to identify and talk about the issues which concerned them. In other words, although my own questions and issues were important I did not regard them to be the only ones worthy of researching. Therefore, for practical purposes as well as ideological purposes I decided it was more appropriate to collect 'professional narratives' rather than answers to interview questions.

Although the above account of my actions may seem like a digression I have, in fact, given an example of my own diachronic 'plotting'. I have taken the events occurring early (time) in my research, unified them, and demonstrated how they led to a particular outcome in connection with it; which brings me back to Polkinghorne. He informs us that "emplotment", or the process of configuring a "plot" is a narrative structure used by people to describe and understand the relationship between the events and choices they have made in their lives. It configures events into a story in four ways by:

- a) delimiting a temporal range which marks the beginning and end of the story,
- b) providing criteria for a selection of events to be included in the story, c)
- temporally ordering events into an unfolding movement culminating in a conclusion, and d) clarifying or making explicit the meaning events have as contributors to the story as a unified whole. (Polkinghorne *ibid*: 7)

He adds that this is different from "the Humean conception of determinate causality and subsumption under laws in that it recognises the effects of choices and planned actions on

future consequences” (ibid:8). He goes on to say that this causal linkage is usually retrospective because the contributions of certain happenings and actions are not clear until near the end of the episode. An event which might have appeared very insignificant at the time it occurred can, in effect, have had a crucial influence on the outcome. For instance, when, after working in the compulsory school sector, I became a volunteer adult literacy tutor in the early 1980s in order to keep on teaching in some way whilst based at home with small children. I did not know, then, that it would lead to work in the post-compulsory sector and a totally different type of teaching career, or to this thesis for that matter.

In similar vein to Polkinghorne, Chase (2005: 656) informs us that my above interpretations of events, or narrative, is a form of “retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience”, a way of understanding my actions and the actions of others and seeing the consequences of events over time and organising them into a meaningful whole. She points out that a chronology also reports events over time but does not communicate the narrator’s point of view which includes why the narrative is worth telling in the first place.

To sum up this section, then, rather than use chronological time to order or organise events, narratives use events to organise time. All events have a past, present and implied future. When we recall an event from the past we reinterpret it retrospectively from where we are ‘positioned’ in the present and imply, from our point of view, where it might lead in the future. It is important to emphasise that on a ‘meta’ level societies or governments can choose to adopt a particular ‘storyline’ for political purposes, and on the ‘little’ level people often choose storylines to emphasise certain past experiences or actions in order to

project a particular impression of themselves. In both cases this emphasis is achieved by choosing one 'storyline' and closing off others. Storylines are constructed by means of "plots" through which segments of time are described diachronically by the perceived causal link between prior choices or happenings to their later effects. This element of 'prior choice' means that the human action expressed in narrative data cannot be described as a consequence of universal determinate (scientific) laws.

### 8.7.2 *Context*

Having discussed 'time', I come now to 'context' which is concerned with how people interact with the social contexts in which their lives are lived. Whether we are consciously aware of it or not, the different social and cultural environments into which we are born, and those in which we later participate, have their own ideological discourses which underpin the specific language and narratives that we absorb, and through which we think and act. Our interaction with them informs the perspectives and standpoints which we bring to new events and happenings, as well as helping us make sense of previous ones. These social and cultural discourses are revealed in the type of narrative structures and vocabularies we use to tell our stories because the words we use 'position' us. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000:17) "we know what we know because of how we are positioned". According to Sikes (2006:2), this 'positioning' affects how others perceive us. 'Others' can perceive us from social and cultural standpoints that differ from our own. Therefore, although they might have experiences of the same events/actions that we have, their interpretations of them are influenced by narrative discourses which deviate from, or clash with, those in which we believe. In other words, they see the world differently than we do. This happens on both a personal and a societal level and can lead to some

narratives becoming more powerful than others. This, in turn, leads to some individuals and social groups feeling their narratives are being ignored. Lyotard's (1984) concept of 'the differend' where the 'game rules' of one discourse are incommensurate with another, illustrates this issue. Some narratives achieve a dominance and hegemony which marginalises less influential narratives; a situation that applies to the current narratives about adult literacy in the UK. At the moment the current 'Skills for Life' policy supports the dominant narrative discourse that literacy is 'skills'. Consequently, those positioned in other narrative discourses about literacy and see it as an 'experiential process', or as a 'social practice', or as a 'critical transformation process', are experiencing 'the differend' as a form of "terror" (Lyotard *ibid*). In other words 'narrative jamming' has occurred if they consider themselves marginalised.

### 8.7.3 *Place*

Place does not only refer to where participants' stories happened, it also refers to the places where they are told. In a very wide sense I could say that the participants in my research are in the same place because they are, or have been, working in the adult literacy field in the UK (place). However their stories about the events within the UK in the adult literacy field have been mediated by the variety of professional environments, discourses and contexts in which they work. Therefore their storied accounts of the same event, such as the introduction of the *Skills for Life* policy in England, which affects most of my participants, will be different. Moreover, some of them are based in Scotland which will produce more differences because they are not directly influenced by the *Skills for Life* policy. On another level, as well as looking at where events happened, it is also important to look at the place(s) where they are recalled. Chase (2005:657) describes

narrative research accounts as “socially situated interactive performances...produced in a particular setting for a particular audience for a particular purpose”. In this sense, different settings or places can produce different versions of the ‘same’ story. A story told in the familiar and comfortable surroundings of the narrator’s living room to one other person is likely to vary from the version the narrator might give whilst talking to a journalist in the street who is going to disseminate the story to a wider public, or to the version given to a more critical academic audience in the physical environs of a conference hall. For instance, the speaker in the conference hall, in order to promote their credibility, might want to substantiate what they are saying with references and quotes whereas this will not be necessary in the other two situations described. One key issue is that the different places I have mentioned have different audiences associated with them. That means as well as the socio-cultural influences on a narrative, and the influence of the physical surroundings where it is told, narrators’ stories are also shaped by who is listening. In this sense, my ‘professional narratives’ will always be joint productions between me and the narrator.

This chapter has looked at the literature about narrative research and has introduced my strategy for collecting ‘professional narratives’. Many of the issues raised have epistemological and methodological implications for the relationship between the researcher and the participant, which are discussed from an *ethical* point of view in the next chapter on data collection.

## Chapter Nine

### Data Collection

#### 9.1 Introduction: Ethics and Data Collection

In chapter seven I described how research, including educational research, and narrative research, always involves power relationships, not only between researcher and participant but also between the ontological and epistemological *assumptions* underpinning different research methodologies, some of which have more influence than others because they are constantly re-inscribed by those who hold dominant values in society and wish to maintain them. These assumptions, then, are not neutral; they are always ideological. In this sense, all research, including educational research, is a political act (Goodson and Sikes 2001:89) because its outcomes reflect the influence of wider society on people's lives. Therefore ethical issues are always of paramount importance in any type of research process; collecting biographical data can be, and usually is, a particularly sensitive process. How people are affected can vary tremendously. For many participants, their involvement may be relatively inconsequential but others might find it a life-changing experience, depending on the research project, this can also be the case for the researcher. Therefore, at this point in my research, before collecting data and involving participants, I carefully looked at the whole research process starting with the ethical issues concerning my choice of research topic. Then, as I went through the data collection procedures, I concentrated on the ethical issues involved at every stage of the research process, including who the participants should be; sampling procedures; data collection issues; and data collection strategies. As a

result of these ethical considerations I made important decisions about the courses of action I should take. These have been emphasised below in italics.

## **9.2 Ethics involved in choice of research topic**

This research set out to investigate the philosophical assumptions underpinning different discourses about literacy and their impact on the professional values adult literacy participants bring to their work. However, 'professional values' vary considerably; one set of values can be in contention with another and, according to the political climate of the day, education policy-makers can favour certain values at the expense of others. In this sense, it was important not to do anything covertly that may cause participants to think their values were to be exposed to those in powerful positions who could use the information to detrimental effect on their professional lives. However, according to Goodson and Sikes (2001:90) this would be rather difficult to do in most cases of life history research because participants are usually actively and consciously collaborating in the research process and know exactly what it is about and how it will be used. Nonetheless, the usual ethical promises of confidentiality and anonymity given to participants of any research project are not as straightforward as they might seem when it concerns personal biographical data, which is often taped, taken away, reinterpreted by the researcher, and then re-presented in some way. *Therefore, my first decision was that I must be completely 'open' about the purpose of my research and what it might involve when asking for participants.*

## **9.3 Ethics involved in accessing participants**

Having decided on the first course of action the next decision concerned the question of who to involve. As I briefly indicated in chapter eight, *I chose to access participants*

*through RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy)*; an organisation with which I had been involved for many years. Having spoken with members at RaPAL annual conferences and read their articles in the thrice-yearly RaPAL journal I knew that many of them thought deeply about the various assumptions and values concerning adult literacy and should be able to provide the information I needed for my research. However, this choice, in itself, gave rise to a number of ethical issues about the constitution of RaPAL; its aims and its biases. I discuss these issues fully in Appendix B along with the extent of my involvement with the organisation. However, part of the Appendix is summarised here because it is ethically important to reveal any influences on, and biases of, participants. In Appendix B, I describe how I volunteered to write, design, and produce a RaPAL leaflet, which advertises the organisation and explains its aims and purposes. I put the leaflet and its text before other officers and members who made further comments and adjustments until a final version was arrived at. The wording on the leaflet demonstrates the essential assumptions of RaPAL which can be summarised as:

- literacy acquisition is a social practice and not a set of discrete skills
- research and practice in adult literacy are inextricably linked
- reflective collaboration in all practices of learning, teaching and research in adult literacy should be encouraged
- learners are central to a learning democracy and should participate in all decision-making processes if they wish.

From this summary it is apparent that RaPAL is explicit in its support of ‘literacy as a social practice’; that learners should be part of a ‘learning democracy’; that learning,

research and teaching should be ‘collaborative; and that research cannot be separated from practice. It is ethically important to be reflexive and acknowledge these biases and assumptions; they cannot be wished away because participants, and myself, have absorbed them in varying degrees and cannot avoid their influences on our actions. However, it is also important to say that RaPAL has always been open to alternative views. It does not restrict membership to people who take the ‘social practice’ stance. Many people join because they are interested in research and practice generally. Sometimes articles are published in the RaPAL journal which conflict with the ‘social practice’ approach. However, there is a note printed in the journal which informs readers that the management team do not necessarily hold the same views as expressed in the articles.

#### **9.4 Ethics involved in sampling**

Having acknowledged and taken on board any biases involving RaPAL *my next course of action was to think carefully about the ethics in choosing what type of sample was required.* Before talking about ethics, however, it is helpful to describe the sort of sample I wanted. To ensure as wide a coverage as possible the sample had to include participants from each of the key educational sectors involved with adult literacy including Higher Education (HE), Adult Education (AE), Further Education (FE), Community Education and also the training sector. Crucially, I also wanted to ensure that I had included at least one strongly orientated participant for each the four main discourses about literacy. Next, I thought it would be useful to include some RaPAL members from Scotland in order to compare and contrast Scotland’s literacy developments with those in England. There are some connections between adult literacy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) so I decided that the sample should include participants from this sector as

well. Lastly, one participant, who was not a RaPAL member, was included to see if their values and assumptions, which were not specifically influenced by the organisation's orientations (Appendix B), differed in any way from those of the other participants. Another major consideration was my engagement with interpretive research using personal, professional narratives as a means of collecting data. This meant that there would be an enormous amount of information generated. As a lone researcher, I could only practically work with a few participants. *It seemed clear, following these considerations, that building a combined purposive/snowball sample should be my next course of action.* These are forms of non-probability sampling which, like much qualitative sampling strategies are non-representative but very appropriate as I had no intention of generalising the results across a wider population. According to Cohen and Manion (1994/97:89), purposive sampling involves researchers handpicking participants to include in the sample according to their typicality; developing the sample for their specific needs. Snowball sampling builds on this approach by starting with a small number of individuals who have the characteristics required and then using them as informants to identify others who also qualify for inclusion. The process 'snowballs' when these, in turn, identify yet others.

In order to start the sampling process I asked for voluntary research participants in three ways: Firstly, by placing a flyer in the RaPAL Journal (Appendix B); secondly, by making a request for participants at the RaPAL conference of 2001; and thirdly, by putting a message on the RaPAL website. In the case of the last two actions the wording of the request was the same as that on the flyer. How the sample materialised and developed is shown in Appendix D.

At this point, it is time to turn to the ethical implications of my decision to build a purposive/snowball sample made up of RaPAL members; they had the potential to be considerable. As Goodson and Sikes (2001:92) point out, I would be working with people from “my own backyard”; with colleagues, some of whom were professional acquaintances and others who were professional friends. This could cause unanticipated ethical dilemmas in respect of what I might find out, and what it might imply for my relationship with the participant, the participant’s professional reputation or the professional reputations of others they might mention. Furthermore, if any participants were well known through their work or publications in the adult literacy field, then others practitioners might easily guess who I was talking about. This could be very tricky especially if I wanted to publish anything based on my research. Therefore, *I decided that it was extremely important, not only for participation to be completely voluntary, but also to be doubly sure that I had a participant’s informed consent once they had further grasped what might be involved.* The BAAL (British Association of Applied Linguistics) website (accessed in November 2009) has a section entitled “Recommendations on Good Practice in Applied Linguistics” which stresses (page 4) relationships with informants should be based on openness and trust. However, ‘informed consent’ can become problematical if informants are not fully aware that future activities of researchers might involve presenting data at conferences or having it published so *I made two more decisions. The first one was that participants in my research project should have the option to ‘pull out’ at any time. The second was to reassure them that the information they gave would not be published, or made public at conferences, without consulting them further to see if they agreed or not.*

## 9.5 Ethics involved in data collection

Just as there is bias in using RaPAL to access participants there will also be bias in the narratives of participants. I knew that when they talked about their work in adult literacy they would have different views about what it should involve. Their narrative accounts would be biased according to the discourses about adult literacy to which they orientated. The same would go for my interpretation of their accounts. Goodson and Sikes (2001: 25) contend that all verbal accounts of human knowledge based on experience are biased in this way and the only way forward is for researchers to acknowledge this by reflexively accounting for their own biases and, as far as possible, identifying biases in their informant's narratives.

When someone is giving an account of their life, or a particular segment of it (in my case this is the participant's professional or working life in adult literacy), I have previously mentioned that they will be telling it in a particular way, to a particular person (me), for a particular purpose (my PhD research), in a particular place and at a certain time. All these aspects will all have an influence on how their story is told. The importance of time and place in narrative research has already been discussed in the previous chapter and for the reasons given there *I asked my participants to choose the venues in which they would feel most comfortable for us to meet, and also the time when it would be most convenient for them to talk.*

As a narrative researcher I knew that I would have to accept that participants would adapt their stories according to the impression/professional identity they wished to create and to how they thought I wanted to respond. As well as these aspects, further differences in

each story would also be present, even if participants talked about the same events in the adult literacy field, variations would occur according to each participant's unique working context and experiences. These different contexts and experiences would give rise to a variety of political and professional values about adult literacy.

Goodson and Sikes (2001: 43-46) make a number of points about stories, like my professional narratives: First, they can never end because social life is “constantly changing, developing and becoming”. Second, “they can never be definitive because alternative interpretations are always possible according to the values and perspectives of the teller”. Third, “different interpretations over time also occur”. For instance, as the adult literacy practitioners participating in my research had gained more experience and professional knowledge they had used it to inform the sense they made of events. *For this reason the length of time one of my participants had been involved in the adult literacy sector would be noted because it would affect the stories they told.* Fourth, sometimes stories might be reaffirmed, modified or new ones created. In this sense, participant's accounts could only ever be provisional and partial. However, Goodson and Sikes maintain that no matter how partial participant's professional narratives are, unless they are deliberately telling lies, their stories are still authentic accounts of experience, no matter how long the person has been involved with adult literacy. Fifth, what my participants and I would remember and what we forgot depended on how it fitted into one of our professional stories. According to Goodson and Sikes what ‘fits’ becomes what we value, which is partly based on what we think others value. Sixth, people have particular ideas about research and what it means to be involved in it which influences what they tell, and how it is told. No matter how open or relaxed narrative researchers are they cannot escape

the fact that participants will, in some way reflect these existing ideas about research into their stories and they will become part of the joint production of the storied account. As some of my participants were actively involved in research themselves this was a particular important point for me to bear in mind because how they thought research should be carried out would influence what they said in their professional narratives. Lastly, narrative researchers often stress to participants that their stories are joint productions and actually invite participants to join them and collaborate in the research process. In the case of this research *I asked participants to read through their narratives after they had been transcribed, giving them the time to reflect on and evaluate anything they had said and the opportunity to remove, elaborate or alter the contents before I analysed them.* Some narrative researchers have gone as far as involving participants in the research analysis. However, this can be fraught with difficulty. For instance, I travelled all over England and Scotland to meet with participants and collect their professional narratives. I was very aware that I had to fit in with their own very busy schedules. Most of the tape recordings were at least an hour in length and a couple were longer. Asking participants to give up more of their time as well as reading and checking through their transcripts seemed too much of an imposition. Furthermore, Goodson and Sikes point out that this is not always a fruitful or useful path to take because sometimes participants do not always understand or grasp what is required.

## **9.6 Plan of Action**

I want to finish this short chapter by summarising all the decisions I made in the text which were italicised for emphasis. I made the decisions after reading and thinking about

narrative research and the ethical issues involved in its collection. The decisions and thoughts formed a plan of action for me to follow in respect of my data collection. I had to:

- *be 'open' and honest about the purpose of my research and what it might involve when asking for participants.*
- *access participants through RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy);*
- *think carefully about the ethics in choosing what type of sample was required.*
- *build a combined purposive/snowball sample*
- *ensure participation was completely voluntary*
- *double-check that I had a participant's informed consent once they had grasped what might be involved*
- *make sure participants were aware that they had the option to 'pull out' at any time.*
- *reassure participants that the information they gave would not be published, or made public at conferences, without consulting them further to see if they agreed or not.*

- *provide my participants with the opportunity to choose the venues in which they would feel most comfortable for us to meet at a time when it would be most convenient for them to talk.*
- *note the length of time a participant had been involved in the adult literacy sector because it would affect the stories they told.*
- *ask participants to read through their narratives after they had been transcribed, giving them the time to reflect on and evaluate anything they had said and the opportunity to remove, elaborate or alter the contents before I analysed them.*

Bearing all these points in mind I composed the flyer (Appendix C) for insertion in the 2001 summer edition of the RaPAL Journal and used the same wording to advertise on the organisation's website. Further advertising was carried out at the RaPAL 2001 summer conference. As soon as people voluntarily agreed to take part I sent them an email (Appendix E) which gave them more detailed information. This was done to double-check that I had a participant's fully informed consent once they had grasped the extent of what being involved would mean. A meeting was then arranged, at a venue and time of the participant's own choosing, for our 'grounded conversations' to take place and be taped. Altogether fifteen participants were involved. After the tapes had been transcribed the transcription was emailed back to the participant so that they could add, remove or alter any of the contents. Each transcript was accompanied by an email (Appendix F) from me explaining how I had edited it. I explained that I had transcribed the text 'as we spoke it',

with all the hesitations and restarts which are characteristic of speech being marked by an ellipsis, which looked strange when written down. I said that my concern, at this stage, was to leave in the hesitations and restarts, in case the participant might remember what they were going to say and decide to fill in some of the gaps. Unfortunately, I lost contact with two participants (Participant One and Participant Six) between collecting their 'professional narratives' and sending back the transcripts. Participant One was not contactable at the address she had given, and, when I tried to ring her, the telephone number had changed. I also sent her emails which, strangely, did not 'bounce back' but were never answered. I later learned that Participant One had been seriously ill and decided that it was inappropriate to persist. As for Participant Six, who was based in Scotland, I was informed by her colleagues that she had left her post and they did not have her forwarding address. However, I decided to use these 'professional narratives' for my thesis, but realised that if I wanted to publish my research at a future date I could not do so without the permission of the two participants. As time was moving on, I decided to use the narratives of Participant One and Participant Six for my thesis only. I would tackle the publication issue, if it arose in the future, by trying to contact them again. The other participants made some, mainly minor adjustments, to their transcripts, or said that they did not want to change them in any way. When the participants returned the final transcripts (Appendix H) I read them through again, noting any ideas and issues arising so that I could cover them as I proceeded with my review of the literature. Once I had reviewed the literature I completed the detailed analysis of the transcripts which is contained in the next two chapters.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **Data Analysis: Part One of the Case Studies**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the first part of my analysis and concentrates on building case studies of four out of the fifteen practitioners who volunteered their ‘professional narratives’, or what Lyotard (1984) calls ‘little’, narratives, for this research. The other eleven narratives are also dealt with as case studies in the next chapter. However, all fifteen case studies are individual ones because each participant has been located in different professional contexts, at times and places which are specific to them. Every case study, in this chapter and the next, is based on the audio-recorded narrative of a research participant talking about their professional experiences to do with adult literacy. The reason for separating out four professional, or ‘little’ narratives, as case studies for this chapter is because each one of them orientated strongly to one of the four ‘wider’ literacy discourses identified by this research. This orientation was stronger and more developed with these four participants than it was with the other eleven. Because of their stronger orientation there was a greater wealth of information about the values and assumptions related to the four ‘wider’ literacy discourses. This is why they have been placed in a chapter of their own. However, they are still ‘little narratives’ because they were influenced by the contexts, times and places, specific to the four participants, when the recalled events occurred. Lyotard (1984) uses the term ‘discourses’, ‘narratives’ and ‘language games’ interchangeably, so from now on I will do the same.

Each of the four ‘wider’ narratives, or discourses, about literacy identified in this research had its own ‘language game’ (Lyotard *ibid*) which expressed different assumptions about literacy. For instance, one assumed that literacy was ‘skills’; the second, that it was an ‘experiential process’; the third, that it was a ‘critical process’; and the fourth, that it was a ‘social practice’. The particular assumptions and values which underpin the ‘language games’ of each of these different narrative discourses were identified through a specific vocabulary the participants used in connection with each of them. The words in these vocabularies had a certain meaning when used in a particular narrative discourse but could mean something different if used in another. The values and assumptions contained in the ‘game rules’ (Lyotard *ibid*) of each ‘language game’ meant that a particular way of speaking, thinking and acting about literacy was favoured by the participant. Having said that, it is important to summarise a number of relevant points in relation to the issues it raised. Firstly, earlier, in chapter one, I mentioned that at various stages in my own professional development I had been influenced by different ‘language games’ about literacy. This is because I had worked or studied in different professional contexts in which I found some of the assumptions of one specific ‘language game’ of value at a particular moment in time. At other times and in other contexts I had been influenced by other ‘language games’; sometimes more than one. Secondly, I now consider myself to be **at what** Lyotard (*ibid*) describes as a ‘nodal point’ where my experiences of the different ‘language games’ about literacy collide and interact. Currently, I still favour the assumptions of the ‘social practice’ ‘language game’ and earlier in my research text I said that this was because it links the individual to the social. However, there are still assumptions in the other narrative discourses which I value but just not as many. This ‘multi-faceted fusion of assumptions’ is, in fact, what Lyotard (*ibid*) would term my

personal ‘little’ narrative; one that influences how I think and act about literacy. This is not something which is part of a constant permanent ‘self’, but something changeable according to the mores of a particular place, time and context.

The four ‘professional narratives’, then, which formed the basis of these case studies were not chosen because they were ‘pure’ examples of the values and assumptions of the ‘wider’ ‘language games’ about literacy to which they show the most orientation. In fact, as I mentioned at the start of this chapter, I still regard each participant’s ‘professional narrative’ as a ‘little’ narrative even though its values and assumptions (expressed at a particular time and place, and in a particular context) strongly relate to one of these wider ‘language games’ about literacy. The purpose was to show how the ‘little’ narratives could ‘bring life’ to the ‘wider’ ‘language games’ about literacy, and also to the theoretical, philosophical and ‘meta’ narratives to which they might be linked. This was done by demonstrating how they all interacted and materialised in a participant’s ‘little’ narrative account of events in their ‘lived’ professional experience.

The ‘language games’, or narratives, about literacy have been ‘pre-scripted’ or ‘inter-scripted’ by other ‘language games’ contained in the meta narratives, philosophical narratives and theoretical narratives. It is important to stress that the boundaries between them are shifting and fluid.

## **10.2 Organisation of chapter**

I have organised the chapter so that each case study forms a section of it. For instance, the case study for Participant One is in Section 10.3 of the chapter and the case study for

Participant Two is in section 10.4 and so on. Following this, the introduction to each case study describes how I established the ‘trust’ between myself and the participant necessary for our ‘grounded conversations. Next, the first part of each case study (or section) summarises the participant’s overall professional experience and contextualises it in time. The second part investigates the impact experiences and events have had on the participant’s values and assumptions about literacy and vice versa. These values and assumptions are identified by focusing on the language the participant uses to express them and which ‘positions’ them vis-a-vis a particular narrative discourse.

### **10.3 Participant One (London)**

This participant preferred to meet in her own home and invited me to her flat in London where we shared tea and cakes and stroked the cat as we talked. This informality helped to ‘break the ice’ because I had never really spoken with her before. I mentioned in the previous chapter my way of collecting ‘professional narratives’ was through ‘grounded-conversations’. These are characterised by ‘trust’, ‘shared experience’, ‘common ground’ and a ‘common language’. This participant and I had seen each other at RaPAL conferences and this connection was beneficial because Participant One knew I had knowledge of adult literacy and that my interest was genuine. We were able to talk about key figures in the field and we also had mutual colleagues and acquaintances. It was at the RaPAL conference in the summer of 2001 that I asked members if they would like to participate in my research and Participant One volunteered. She is well-known for her radical approach to adult literacy and I was particularly pleased she had volunteered because this approach was one of the four key narratives about literacy identified by my research.

### 10.3.1 *Contextualising experiences and events in time.*

Participant One orientated most strongly to the narrative discourse which assumes literacy is a critical, transformation process and I started with her first because her orientation was the strongest of all. However, the values and assumptions she expressed and which revealed her orientation are discussed in 10.3.2. Here, I have summarised the participant's overall professional experiences and contextualised them in time.

Participant One first became involved with adult literacy in the early 1970s, around 1973. Immediately prior to this she was working as a WEA (Workers Educational Association) Co-ordinator in Liverpool where she met and became involved with staff at Liverpool University who were working on a Home Office Development Project entitled 'The Neighbourhood Workers Course'; the purpose of which was to investigate why inequality existed in inner cities. The course was aimed at people who had jobs in community centres, youth work or who had volunteered for other local projects. It was during this period that Participant one, and others who were involved in adult education and community work in the region, were approached by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Researchers for the network wanted to know if there was enough adult literacy provision available for them to produce a TV programme which would advertise tuition and attract volunteers to act as tutors (I mentioned this development in chapter one). Participant One and the others who were consulted stressed that there was definitely not enough adult literacy provision available but they also emphasised that this would not improve unless the BBC actually produced the programme:

I remember being one of the people who got drawn into consultations when the BBC [was] going around saying, 'Look we want to do this thing. Can we? Will we just create chaos? Is there enough provision to respond to this?' ... Basically what we ... said was 'No, there isn't enough provision but you have to do it anyway because there won't be unless you do'.

The programme, '*On the Move*' was eventually produced starring Bob Hoskins and was broadcast nationally. Participant One and (name removed) from the Liverpool Settlement were also asked by the BBC to draft parts of the BBC Handbook which accompanied the programme. Involvement in these events and activities made Participant One and some of her then colleagues very prominent in the adult literacy field.

...The sheer chance of having been around, and being identified by the BBC as someone who would draft that book put about seven of us into a sort of elite position.

Alongside the creation of '*On the Move*' was another development; the urgent need to train volunteer tutors. Some contentious issues were raised about how to train them as well as serious questions about why it was, after ten years or so of schooling, people still needed literacy tuition. These issues will be expanded upon in section 10.3.2. At this point Participant One was supporting a WEA development in Kirkby, a new town on the edge of Merseyside, and the Local Education Authority was asked to create a part-time post for an adult literacy worker at Kirkby Further Education College. They were given an office to work from and a telephone. Participant One was part of the steering group which

appointed a young woman to the post who, along with another appointee, was asked to run a volunteer training course. Unfortunately the young woman had difficulties partly due to the fact that she ended up running two training courses instead of one. Participant One tried to persuade the WEA to write a retrospective contract for the part-time worker in order to pay her more money for the second course. This was refused which annoyed Participant One who resigned from the WEA and took on the work herself becoming a lone, paid literacy organiser for Kirkby working with unpaid volunteers. This was her first experience of actually working in the adult literacy field itself, and it was a time of very rapid development.

Participant One describes how most of the work was in the evening when she literally went around knocking on doors on poor housing estates in Kirkby because very few people had telephones in those days. This alarmed some of her male FE colleagues who assumed she would encounter dangers to herself; fears which Participant One discovered to be unfounded. However, the fact that she only had an office to work from soon became a handicap because there was not enough room to interview people or train volunteers. At this point she noticed that there was an empty, attractive council building available which was covered in greenery and which had big lawns. After checking with the planning department that the water and electricity were still connected she moved in and squatted:

So I squatted it and set up my stall there. And it was lovely. There were rabbits on the lawn. It was heaven...lovely place to do low key, quiet, gentle community education really...from there we moved into a sensible alliance with the library service. Because actually in the end it didn't last

long... they did knock it down to build...

After the council building was demolished Participant One moved into a room at the local library and there was room to train volunteers and there were plenty of resources as well as those they made for themselves.

Whilst working in Kirkby, Participant One remembers that two other important, key events took place. The first event was a meeting organised by the HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) at what was then Avery Hill College in South London (Participant One is vague about when this conference took place but it could be the British Settlements meeting in 1974 mentioned in Hamilton and Hillier 2006). The Inspectorate was seeking an idea of what was best practice in a rapidly growing adult literacy sector before they actually started to carry out inspecting the service. Whilst attending the meeting Participant One met two people whom she considered to be important in the field. One was [name removed] who came from a schools background but understood the demands of the adult sector extremely well and became an important anchor for the group. The other was [name removed] from the Birmingham Settlement who was to become a key figure in ALBSU (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit).

The second key event was a UKRA (United Kingdom Reading Association) conference where Participant One and her colleagues set up a book and information stall outlining their activities. It was here that she circulated a piece of paper asking about the feasibility of producing a student newsletter for adult literacy. She describes this as the origin of a key journal in the community publishing field produced by literacy learners and which will

be discussed later. By chance Participant One's book stall was right next to the Centreprise book stall. Centreprise, a bookshop in Hackney, was publishing the writing of disaffected school pupils and was also interested in issues about race and learning especially those relating to African-Caribbean males. Participant One immediately saw connections between her literacy work and the work of Centreprise:

And they had this stuff and we had the early literacy stuff and I thought 'Ooh, there is a connection here, this is really good'.

The following year (circa 1975) Centreprise obtained some joint funding shared with London Colleges to start a literacy project which created a post for a literacy worker. Participant One made an application for the Centreprise post and was successful and she moved to London and worked for them for six years, till 1981. Whilst there, she devised volunteer training programmes and brought in paid group co-ordinators for any sessions where learners and volunteers were present. This provided more direction for the volunteers and they did not feel they were working alone. She also developed further her interest in publishing the writing of literacy learners.

In 1981 Participant One changed jobs and took charge of a Writing Development Project funded by ALBSU (The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit). She describes the job as working with local and college literacy schemes for about a term and involving learners in the writing process in order to see how they benefited from it. This involved publishing learners' writing in a quarterly journal which became very well-known and popular in the adult literacy sector. Participant One also helped to produce a catalogue of published

learner writing consisting of around 200 titles. Soon, however, this period became a very contentious and troubled time for Participant One and a string of controversial events occurred which resulted in the Writing Development Project being closed down in 1985 (see part two of this section). Participant One describes her experiences in this period as:

...professionally formative in the most destructive way [and a] dramatisation of what's at stake...

The events up to 1985 affected Participant One tremendously and, understandably, her professional narrative focuses on them. Between 1985 and 2003 there were breaks in her working life. However, she did work for the Urban Learning Foundation but the information she gives about this period is rather sketchy. The Urban Learning Foundation website (accessed in July 2009) informs me that it was an organisation introduced to promote the advancement of education and learning in the sphere of higher and further education by maintaining Urban Learning Centres and to promote research and to publish the useful results of such research. It also offered teacher training courses and became part of the University of Gloucester in 2003. During this period Participant One also worked on projects for NIACE.

When the Moser Report and the current Skills for Life policy (published in 1999 and 2001 respectively) were introduced Participant One did have some input with regard to the new national curricula for students and teacher training:

...there was a little kind of focus group of us in a way that were responding to the early drafts of the standards but I did not feel particularly on the case about that, and by that that stage I was being drawn back into it after a long break.

I recorded this participant's narrative in 2002 so it was at this point that the coverage of her professional narrative ended. However, in the case of adult literacy, her narrative focused on the events she experienced between 1973 and 1985 because they had such a huge effect on her. Her narrative about this period gives a tremendous insight to her values and assumptions (the key focus of my research) which are discussed below.

### ***10.3.2 Literacy as a Critical Transformation Process: Participant One's values and key professional experiences and how these impacted on each other.***

Participant One's values orientate her strongly to the narrative discourse which assumes literacy is a critical, transformation process which is further linked to the theoretical narrative of praxis and the philosophical narrative of Marxism. Many of her comments about her experiences are politically explicit and I have italicised these for emphasis and illustration. For instance, in her WEA role in the early 1970s when she was involved with staff at Liverpool University working on the Neighbourhood Workers Course, she describes the community workers for whom the course was designed as "*working class activists*". This reference to the 'working class' is rooted in the philosophical narrative of Marxism which contends that society is divided; an issue discussed in Chapter three. Marxists do not see society as a complete whole but as dualistic. For them Capitalism has created two groups, or classes of people, the owners of the means of production (usually represented by the state) and a poorer, working class that provides the labour to produce

the 'goods'. They also believe that the pre 1980s liberal humanist education systems of Western governments did not question this issue of social stratification and argue that simply educating working class people to join the middle classes does not achieve social justice. For Marxists, working class people who actually believe this to be the case are unknowingly supporting the status quo. Therefore, Marxists believe in praxis, a form of critical action that aims to educate the working class out of its 'false consciousness' in order that they become radically enlightened enough to understand why they exist in the state they are in and find collective ways to control the economic system, and their lives, for themselves.

Participant One categorically states that she believes class and education, including literacy education, to be inextricably linked:

*I never ran the risk, as I think a lot of people did, of separating adult basic skills and literacy issues from general issues of class and education... It was where I was at the time, it was who I was listening to, it was the analyses I was being brought into touch with. And the application of them to ABE [Adult Basic Education] seemed self evident to me and that was where I started trying to work from. So that's very important. (My italics)*

Participant One goes on to specifically refer to the Marxist orientation of the 'Neighbourhood Workers Course', mentioning the fact that it took place before Mrs Thatcher became Prime Minister; a time when the Home Office was very relaxed about the Marxist approach she, and the others involved, were taking:

It was at the time when...the Home Office Community Development Projects were going on and [university staff] negotiated very directly with the Home Office [and] they were allowed, as it were, to take basically a *Marxist approach* to this training...Before the Thatcher years everything was in a sense much more relaxed. I mean the Home Office's behaviour about this, as I recall it being told to me, was that we don't have to agree with you but we can see it's a valid way of approaching this and some interesting things may come of it. And you are not going to *overthrow the state* by doing this [laughs]. But you know what I mean, when you got into the Thatcher period ... you only had to cough and you were likely to overthrow the state. (My italics)

Participant One's orientation towards a critical approach to literacy met with resistance early on in her association with the field. For instance, when she became involved in writing the handbook for the BBC programme '*On the Move*' she experienced censorship for the first time:

... this is actually my first experience of censorship in this field, now I think about it...we were saying 'in the end you will run the literacy scheme that fits with your analysis needs and values, around the situation'. There was a reference to *Freire* and...that was 'the presence' as it were... the representation of that...But we had editorial trouble... The result was... that we fought and we lost. So like from day one *I knew this was a contested space and not just a space of liberal good will.* (My italics)

In the above quote Participant One makes specific reference to Freire whose ideas and teaching approaches are strongly associated with the critical literacy discourse. She recalls that around this time Freire came to do a seminar at Keele University which she attended:

And the thing that is memorable about it was that A. H. Halsey who was also part of the meeting walked out in a snit, not really because of what Freire was saying but because he saw us as all doing, kind of, guru worship and he wasn't having it... very interesting. But it was very difficult to decode the content of that. Freire sat there after he'd walked out...I do remember this...there's this very small, very quiet... man... with that sort of yogic stillness, as it were, and he just sat there ... and said to the chair, whoever it was, "Excuse me I am suffering from culture shock [laughs]."

When Participant One first became involved with adult literacy in Kirkby her critical values became more entrenched as a result of her experiences. She recalls an event when the BBC came to Kirkby after the literacy scheme had been set up and interviewed a learner outside the secondary school he had attended, asking him why his education had not "worked". It was before term had started but the headmaster and teachers were meeting in the school and saw them. According to Participant One:

And the head teacher saw the BBC van outside and said 'what's all this about?'

And he came out, did his piece... and turned on this lad, who by then was 23, 24.

"As for you Parkes," he said, "As for you, I remember you at school"...a total

‘throw the blame back’ job... So it was *literacy for adults* for me, *sat inside radical education*. (My italics)

For participant One *literacy for adults* means that different approaches are needed for teaching literacy to adults than those used for teaching literacy to children. For her this also has strong implications for the training of adult literacy volunteers and tutors and it resulted in the tendency to “drive away” school reading specialists:

...what we had to do in a sense was to drive away the school’s reading specialists from occupying the patch. Not drive away entirely. Not that there was nothing to learn. I think quite possibly we were a bit brutal about it, we didn’t know as much as we could have. But we had to say, “No you just can’t just carry over reading within the ordinary developmental cycle, or even secondary remedial reading, into adult life. It won’t do as a sufficient set of descriptions and explanations”. [name removed] is a name I remember. She was at Edge Hill College which of course, was in Lancashire...sort of in a way offered herself as the obvious expert. And in one sense she was. But... we were stroppy and we weren’t having it. And they sort of faded away. *There weren’t very many people with that background who then continued and continued to contribute to adult literacy because in a sense they hadn’t time to prepare to take on the position that they needed to learn about it.* (My italics)

The first ten lines of the above quote gives an insight to Participant One’s values as to how volunteers and tutors should be trained. She points out that one of the purposes

of *'On The Move'* was to “mobilise the good will of the population” to become volunteer tutors and serious questions were raised about how to train them and what values the training should adopt. This resulted in what she terms “training wars”. Her orientation to the radical assumptions of ‘critical, transformative literacy’ is further apparent when she talks about her “favourite” volunteer:

And this guy came in and said, “Just send me out there and I will take the King James Bible and I will take *Karl Marx's 'Das Capital'* ...*no the communist manifesto*, and I will be able to teach anyone to read.” (My italics)

One of her main concerns was that something was amiss because after ten years of compulsory schooling people were still needing literacy education. For her, it was important that the school approaches to literacy were not replicated. This stance plus her radical activism resulted in the following response to the above volunteer:

And I thought well have a go...it certainly beats the sort of Janet and John type stuff that we were having.

She stressed that the focus on training had to be both practical and ideological because practical decisions could not be made without deciding exactly what the problem was before solving it. Her solution to this issue was to apply the radical activist values in which she firmly believed.

One of the things I have tried to struggle with all the time I have been in this work is that it isn't just happening in a separate space. You have got to maintain the connections to ... the province of initial education. You have got to maintain the connections to *social inequality* and the lives that people lead. *You have got to maintain connections to the other ways adults learn in relation to their social and economic lives and activism.* (My italics)

Participant One's mention of *social inequality* was indicative of the Marxist idea that Western societies have 'built-in' inequality. In other words, a working class that does not have its fair share of power and economic independence, and Western education systems perpetuate this inequality. This is why Participant One believed that education, including literacy education, should 'connect' to people's 'social and economic lives' in order to make them critically aware of their situation and act upon it. However, she pointed out that this 'activism' in which she strongly believed, and which was an integral part of the 'Neighbourhood Workers Course' had been difficult to maintain. Further examples of this difficulty are apparent when she talks about her professional experiences in London. For instance, in 1975, Participant One left the Liverpool area to work for Centerprise in Hackney where she developed her strong interest in publishing the writing of adult literacy learners. In 1981 this interest led her to successfully apply for a job managing a Writing Development Project for ALBSU which involved publishing the writing of learners in a quarterly journal. It became very well known for its satirical and critical content. At this point her activism, and that of her then colleagues, was seriously challenged and came under close scrutiny because of a poem published in the journal. This was what she termed "the great Mrs Thatcher poem scandal":

One of the things we learnt ...was learning to use press agencies, so we always had very good quality photos. And so they had found a Mrs Thatcher in mode, the pointing finger and the shouting face, and trimmed it as a silhouette and there it was with this poem. And we are talking now, we are talking Falklands War year, just before the Miners strike. So *Liberal politics was taking a bashing, and we got bashed along with it really.* (My italics)

The poem was very critical of Mrs Thatcher and a volunteer tutor who lived in Norfolk saw the poem and took offence. According to Participant One, the volunteer complained to her MP that the poem was “disgraceful” especially as public money was paying for the Writing Development Project. This created a great deal of trouble for ALBSU, who, in turn, created further trouble for Participant One, her colleagues and the project itself. At this stage they managed to survive but had to accept a number of restrictions including a management committee being put into the project, an insistence that the editorial space and other contents in each issue were written by learners and no-one else to ensure the publication could not be used for indoctrination, and that a final report had to be produced about the Writing Development Project which ALBSU would publish. However, there was further acrimony, between the workers on the writing project and ALBSU, about what form the report should take and whether it would be even published or not. In the end ALBSU closed down the project in 1985. Here we see what Lyotard (1984) calls the “differend” being used as a form of “terror”. Participant One was, in effect, ‘stifled’ by the government and her employers because she saw the world differently than they did and was not afraid to challenge them.

#### 10.4 Participant Two (Sheffield)

I had never met Participant Two before our meeting in connection with my research. He only joined RaPAL after taking up his Sheffield University post for the NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy) in 2001. Therefore, Participant Two was, for me, a ‘new face on the adult literacy scene. However, I had heard via the RaPAL network that he was strongly orientated towards the ‘literacy as skills’ approach and when three other research participants in my purposive/snowball sample recommended that I talk to him I emailed him and asked him to participate. I was particularly interested in having a participant who adhered to the ‘skills’ approach as this was one of the key narratives about literacy I had identified in my research. He volunteered to take part and requested that we meet in his office at Sheffield University in the summer of 2002. We had ‘common ground’, (an important feature of my ‘grounded conversation’ approach to gathering my professional narratives) in that he also was interested in research, wanted to meet people in the field and was also a new member of RaPAL.

##### 10.4.1 *Contextualising Experiences and Events over Time.*

During the 1960s and early 1970s Participant Two had completed a first degree in Classics and Philosophy which he followed with a PGCE. Afterwards he taught English (with some Education) in Kenya for five years. He then came back to the UK and did an MA in Applied Linguistics and taught for four years in a secondary school. He followed this with a PhD on Phonological Coding in Silent Reading at Leeds University after which he worked for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) for twenty years. Participant Two remained there until he became a Director of the NRDC when it was first

set up in 2001. As well as this, between 1975 and 2002, he worked as a part-time tutor for the Open University (OU) and had just finished working with his last Open University PhD student when we met in 2002 at Sheffield University where his NRDC directorship was based. This was his first full-time post in the Higher Education sector.

During his twenty years with the NFER Participant Two was mainly involved with language-related research projects. For nine years he worked on a language monitoring project for the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) which had been set up by the, then, Department of Education and Science (DES) to monitor attainment in school subjects over time. The APU Language monitoring project was based at the NFER in Slough and Participant 2 was involved with research on oracy assessment. The APU was abolished in 1990 by which time Participant Two had reached the stage where he was directing research projects himself. The first major project he directed was the evaluation of the Basic Skills Agency's Family Literacy demonstration programmes, which was when Participant Two first began his involvement with literacy. As well as evaluations, he became involved with publishing studies about learners' progress in adult literacy. He also published wide-ranging research reviews about the adult literacy field. These included a survey of adult literacy research in the UK, and another survey about trends in literacy over time.

When Participant Two arrived at Sheffield University as an NRDC Director in 2001 he brought an NFER project with him: an evaluation of a pre-school initiative in Oxford. Since then he has directed the National Evaluation of the '*Keeping up with the Children*' initiative of the Basic Skills Agency. At the time we met in mid 2002, in connection with

my PhD research, he was just finishing off a local evaluation of a 'Sure Start' programme in Rotherham. Participant Two describes himself as:

... still heavily involved with pre-school and adult and with family literacy, sort of linking the two. Recently, in the last several years, I have done almost no research at school level oddly enough. It has just developed that way. You go where the research is and not for the projects that are advertised... the heart it seems... was knocked out of school level research and the sort of stuff that I had been doing when the APU was abolished in 1990. So that's the way it goes.

Since the 'Skills for Life' policy was established in 2001 Adult Literacy, which now comes under the banner of ALLN (Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy), has become a major part of the mainstream Further Education sector in the UK. However, for Participant Two, whose professional background was mostly one of educational research:

FE has always been a complete mystery to me, almost a complete mystery. I think I more or less understand the school system and just about the higher education system but FE is so diverse and complicated.

At this point in time, as well as being in the process of appointing an overall director, the NRDC had four associate directors based in four different universities and in charge of four different strands (A, B, C and D) of research. Participant 2 was the director of strand B, which was about pedagogy, and he said:

Well I ought to start with a bit of a disclaimer which is that I have never been a practitioner, a front line practitioner in the adult basic skills field... ever, because that is not the way my career developed at all. The reason why I am now doing research in the field is because I was doing educational research anyway and then the opportunity arose to do research on family literacy, which then broadened out into adult literacy and adult basic skills more generally.

***10.4.2 Literacy as Skills: Participant Two's values and key professional experiences and how these impacted on each other.***

Firstly, Participant 2 talked a great deal about his approach to research, which is understandable because it was his main interest, and a close scrutiny of his comments reveals that he was more orientated towards the narrative discourse or language game which assumes that research should be positivist in nature. In other words, it should be quantitative and 'scientific'. Secondly, when he talked about literacy he was orientated towards the narrative discourse or language game that assumes literacy is 'skills'. Thirdly, when talking about ways of teaching literacy he was orientated to a behaviourist approach. The links between the language games of literacy as skills, behaviourism and positivism were expressed by the words and phrases Participant Two used in his vocabulary. Starting with his comments relating to research, the key words and phrases are italicised. Right at the beginning of his narrative Participant Two maintained that:

*The main principle is that the research question should determine the method and not the other way round.* So the fact that I may be more associated with quantitative research is an outcome of the sorts of questions I have been asked to

investigate more than... I was going to say more than personal preference... But actually the more I have done it the more it has developed into to personal preference... for trying to get *strong quantitative evidence* on the sorts of questions to which that is an appropriate approach like ‘How much progress do adult literacy learners make?’ ‘In how much time?’ and ‘What are the factors associated with that?’... Rather than trying to answer that from what would seem to me like...to be less strong evidence like learners’ or tutors’ opinions or whatever (My italics).

In the above quote, as well as categorically stating his belief in *strong quantitative evidence*, Participant 2 also maintained that the *main principle* in the research process is *that the research question should determine the method and not the other way round*. This is a powerful ontological position mentioned in Chapter Six. The main focus here is to simply identify the words and phrases which reflect the participant’s main orientation and clarify them.

As well as his overall, general approach to research, Participant 2 talked about specific NRDC research projects in which he had already organised or was about to organise. For instance:

We have also finished a *systematic review* and partial meta-analysis of *randomised controlled trials* in adult literacy and numeracy. Only found 9, very few. The quality of the research is very poor. There is a bunch of, a much larger bunch of controlled trials with matched samples rather than randomised ones, that are waiting to be analysed and we have got a proposal in to do that. (My italics)

In Chapter Six, I demonstrated how *randomised controlled trials* are the ‘sine qua non’ of positivist, quantitative research. I also mentioned that the idea of using of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews (SRs) in educational research has become very influential in recent years. This is partly because of the growing importance of evidence-based practice from medicine (one of the most ‘scientific’ of disciplines) in other fields such as education. The New Labour Government, in power in the UK at the time of writing, perceives RCT’s and SR’s as enabling them to base the management and funding of public services like education on the evidence-based outcomes of this type of research.

Later in his narrative Participant Two mentioned that one of the commitments of the NRDC was to carry out research on marginalised and difficult-to-reach groups, specifically young offenders on probation and young people in care. With regard to young offenders he maintained that the research should be:

...a *very structured tightly designed experiment* on what works for them... in doing it in a proper *control group* manner. But that is very difficult because they are very difficult people to keep in any sort of programme let alone an experiment. (My italics)

Here, Participant Two mentioned two more terms, a *very structured tightly designed experiment* and a *control group*, which are, again, part of the strategic language game of positivist, quantitative researchers. Experimental researchers seek out causal relationships between phenomena through intervening in the natural setting and controlling variables

(see Chapter Six). In the case of a research project about, say, the most effective ways of teaching literacy skills to young offenders (or young people in care), this might involve a single group of participants being tested before and after a programme of intervention to determine whether or not the programme has been successful. A variation on this, which is what Participant 2 referred to here, is to add a control group. This enables comparisons to be made between the control group and the experimental group.

As well as his overall approach to research, Participant Two mentioned two areas which he thought were important for the underpinning ethos relating to the education, training and professional development of tutors and tutor educators in the ALLN sector. They were: 1) 'student voices', 2) 'self-esteem and progress in literacy'. A close scrutiny of the values and assumptions Participant Two made about these two areas further revealed his orientation to the narrative discourses or language games that assume literacy is 'skills' and that research should be quantitative and scientific.

#### 10.4. 2.1 *Student voices*

With regard for the first area, 'student voices' in adult basic skills, Participant Two thought that these had been neglected:

When we were doing...a big review of research, we could find very, very little account in the literature of what students' opinions were, on the teaching they received, whether they thought it was effective and what progress they thought they

were making in particular, just to give those three. If the field was to take seriously its commitment to basing teaching provision generally on what learners need, or think they need, then they have to be listened to.

For Participant Two this meant an emphasis on listening to a learner's account of specific literacy skills they had mastered or wanted to master rather than eliciting their general opinions about how they have been taught. He was sceptical about the latter and felt that learners:

... tend to be prone, like all students, to *generosity error*... If asked by an outsider "what do you think of the teaching you are receiving, are you making progress?" ...they tend to say on the whole the teaching is good, "yes I am making progress"... because they don't want to let down their tutor. But there are ways of getting behind that a bit particularly if you use *structured questionnaire methods* (My italics).

Participant Two may have had a fair point when he said that learners often say they have experienced "good" teaching and that they are making "progress" because they do not want to let down their tutor. However, his way of describing this as the *generosity error* further revealed that he was 'talking the talk' of a quantitative researcher with positivist tendencies. The term takes on a technical 'air' which is reminiscent of the language used by such researchers. Furthermore, the word *error* implies there is something wrong with it; something, perhaps, which must be 'removed' or 'eliminated' from the data generated by the research process; a procedure of methodological severance which often occurs in

scientific, quantitative research. Next, Participant Two's mention of *structured questionnaire methods* was also part of the language game of scientific, quantitative research approach. Structured questions are devised by quantitative researchers and place limits on the responses research participants can make because the questions demand more categorical answers. This means the participant does not have much say on what the research should be about or what data is collected. Participant Two considered the 'yes, I have made progress' statement to be a "bland first stage response" from learners which he felt needed "to be pushed further in terms of specifics". For him these specifics were to do with literacy skills and were:

something like 'I used to use full stops and capital letters very inaccurately. Now I am much better with them. I know where to put them 90% of the time... according to my tutor' or 'I know that I know that.' And that would be a much more specific statement.

Throughout his narrative Participant Two specifically concentrated on literacy skills. As well as punctuation, he talked about alphabetical order, sentence structure, phonic awareness, vocabulary, and word attack ability. For him the larger research concern was about:

...can we actually discover or deduce sensible *progression routes* in achievement in [these] area[s]. I think it's been done for *initial literacy teaching with children*. Now, can we lift that or *have some adults at least failed* in ways which... put them off trying to learn... [Can we] *build on things* and the *sequence* that successful or

moderately *successful learners in childhood* do. We don't know the answer to that.

(My italics)

Firstly, the stress on *progression routes* and the importance given to *build on things in sequence* indicates that Participant 2 saw literacy as a 'step-by-step' process which is reminiscent of the behaviourist approach to teaching. This approach emphasises breaking down the literacy tasks into component skills in order of difficulty and starting the learner working on the easiest component first (In chapter five I traced this idea right back to Descartes; one of the earliest influences on modernist science). Secondly, the breakdown of literacy into skills and sub-skills is dominant in the primary school sector and Participant Two definitely made links between childhood literacy skills and adult literacy skills when he talked about building 'progression routes' for adults similar to those in *initial literacy teaching with children* and *successful learners in childhood*. This link between childhood literacy and adult literacy is problematical for some practitioners as demonstrated by Participant One (London). Thirdly, his idea that some adults have *failed* in the literacy demands made by the education system is a powerful and contentious statement. For instance, it could be argued that the system has failed the learner.

In summing up the parts of his professional narrative to do with 'student voices'

Participant Two said the following:

...But coming back to the appointed issues... assumptions, perceptions and values.

So I have already talked about valuing the students. Trying to base what we can as much as possible on the *strongest evidence* we can find... but according to where

evidence from *controlled experiments* is missing then you have to rely on *less rigorous research designs and then on professional wisdom...* which I will value until somebody produces an *experiment* that says ‘sorry it may seem plausible but it’s wrong’, because here is *evidence* that shows it isn’t quite like the way the collective wisdom that the profession thinks it is. (My italics)

Again the references to *evidence* and *strongest evidence; experiments and controlled experiments* revealed that Participant Two’s values and assumptions strongly orientated him towards the language game of scientific, quantitative research. He assumed other types of research were *less rigorous*. He would only value the *professional wisdom* of literacy practitioners when evidence from controlled experiments was missing. However, he would abandon professional wisdom as soon as *evidence* is produced to the contrary.

#### 10.4.2.2 *Self-esteem and progress*

With regard to the second area, ‘self-esteem and progress’, Participant Two described this as one of his “hobby horses”. He was sceptical of tutors who stress the importance of building up an adult literacy learner’s confidence and self-esteem *before* concentrating on teaching them and then focusing on “progress” in their learning. For him self-esteem and “progress” move together in tandem:

It does seem to me that there have been some practitioners in the field who have said “well first of all we have to gain the learner’s confidence and help to build up their self confidence and self esteem and then they will learn”. And I think in a

sense that is either putting the cart before the horse or it's putting two things in a sequence that ought to go together all the time.

For Participant Two 'progress' depended on actually teaching a learner a literacy skill so that they would see their own progress. He did, however, accept that that he may be overstating the issue:

...because, there might be *an element of caricature* in imagining that there are any great number of tutors out there who say, "Ah let me learn about you first and you tell me and I will value you as a person and I will build up your self-esteem and then we will start on you learning and me teaching literacy." I don't think it's ever quite as crude as that but to hear some of the rhetoric you would almost think it was. (My italics)

Participant Two thought that claims about the importance of self-esteem had not been substantiated by *evidence* and was concerned with how it would be *measured*. Of course, these are two terms which are, again, strongly associated with the language game of scientific, quantitative research:

But again you see... *what is the evidence?* I have always wanted to know that... I don't think there is any good evidence [in] the adult field at all about it. It seems to be part of the 'air' in the field that you do this and yet does anybody actually have a notion or a structured way of building up people's self esteem, or do they think it should be all down to the personal relationship of the tutor and the student? Are

there ways that you could actually speed the process up?...But what we don't know in the adult basic skills field, in any structured way with strong *evidence*, is whether working on the two things in parallel works better and if so, how you would work on self esteem and how you would *measure* it. (My italics)

The word *measure* reflects the “logico-mathematical” approach to positivist research mentioned in Chapter 6 and, in respect of Descartes, in chapter three. In these chapters I raised the issue of the influence of the natural and physical sciences generating ‘rules’ which stipulated that all research had to be ‘systematic’, ‘scientific’ and “logico-mathematical” in nature in order to eliminate human perception and bias.

### 10.5 Participant Three (Blackburn)

Participant three and I did not know each other until we met in June 2002 in connection with my research. After seeing my flier in the RaPAL journal asking for research participants she emailed me volunteering to participate, preferring to meet at Blackburn College, her place of work. Her ‘professional narrative’ is shorter than the others because she was a relative newcomer to teaching in the adult literacy field having just qualified the previous year and she had not been a member of RaPAL for very long. I was particularly interested in this participant because she had recently completed an MA in Language Studies (Literacy) at Lancaster University; one of the key centres in the UK where researchers strongly orientate to the ‘literacy is a social practice’ narrative. I actually did my own MA at Lancaster in the mid 1990s and it also orientated me to the social practice stance. The following case study demonstrates that this narrative has strongly influenced Participant Three as well. Our MA’s are different in that mine was in the Education and

Training of Adults. I had been based in the Education Department and Participant Three had been in the Department of Linguistics and English Language. However, some of my MA modules were specifically related to adult literacy and both of us had attended meetings of the Literacy Research Group at Lancaster which included members from both departments. Therefore we knew some of the same names and faces. Being able to talk about this 'common ground' and experience helped to dissipate any initial awkwardness we felt at meeting for the first time. 'Common experiences' is a key way of creating 'trust' which is an important feature of my 'grounded conversation' approach to collecting data.

#### 10.5.1 *Contextualising experiences and events in time.*

When I met Participant Three in June 2002 she had been teaching adult literacy at Blackburn College for 13 months. From May 2001 until November 2001, she had taught for six months on a part-time basis. From November 2001 until we met the following June 2002 she had been working full-time for seven months. Immediately before starting teaching she had completed a PGCE in Adult and Further Education (with the basic skills option) at Bolton Institute (now a University). Prior to this she had completed a first degree in Linguistics (1997) and an MA in Language Studies (Literacy) (2000) at Lancaster University. When talking about her time at Lancaster Participant Three says:

I really enjoyed it and that's where I got my motivation from, from doing my first degree there and I was interested in the adult literacy side of it. Then I did the MA there, and got even more interested, so I decided to go into teaching.

As part of her in-service training she had also completed three of the City and Guilds competency-based, initial accreditation schemes for new tutors, the 9282/3/4. These were for literacy, numeracy and ESOL respectively. However, when we met the New Labour Government's 'Skills for Life' policy (2001) had just been established and was beginning to be applied nationally. It was bringing in new compulsory training programmes for tutors and the City and Guild's 928 series accreditation schemes for tutors were now phased out. 'Skills for Life' was also bringing in a compulsory curriculum for learners and in November 2001 Participant Three had attended a three day in-service course about it. In 2003, the year after this meeting, Participant Three expected to be involved in delivering tutor training herself:

I've been looking at Bolton Institute [now a university] again. I'm on the PGCE, actually delivering the tuition on basic skills to the students [student teachers]. And I'm doing... I don't know if you've heard of it... the City and Guilds qualification 7324, 'Basic Skills Support in Further Education'. That will be delivering to tutors here, vocational tutors, delivering then imputing basic skills... the vocational tutors are meant to work together [with the Basic Skills tutors]...

The City and Guilds 7342 mentioned in the above quote involves teaching vocational tutors how to embed basic skills into their courses. It is part of the '*Skills for Life*' policy that this should now happen. Vocational tutors who do not have a background in basic skills are often unaware that some of their learners might need some extra input in this area. This means that it becomes hard for the learner with basic skills issues to cope with the demands of the vocational course. Sometimes vocational tutors may be aware that

some learners need basic skills tuition but do nothing about it with respect to adapting their own teaching. The usual practice is to refer learners to discrete basic skills classes instead. However, nowadays, the idea is that basic skills tutors should work with vocational tutors so that the latter can adapt the content and presentation of their course so that learners with basic skills issues will be able to cope with its demands better.

At the time when I met Participant Three, she was teaching a course aimed directly at the unemployed which involved teaching literacy as part of a 'job skills' programme.

#### ***10.5.2 Literacy as a Social Practice: Participant Three's values and key professional experiences and how these impacted on each other.***

Participant Three's comments reveal that she is more orientated towards the language game of the narrative discourse which assumes literacy is a 'social practice'.

Participant Three spent a great deal of time talking about her own professional education and training in the adult literacy field. This was understandable because her personal education and training were very recent. Her account concentrated on four main areas; her MA, her PGCE (and other in-service training), her current practice in teaching, and her work in the future. Her comments about all four areas were scattered throughout the transcribed text so I collated them under the following sub-headings; 'MA'; 'Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (and in-service training)'; 'Current teaching experiences'; and 'Future work'. Again I have italicised the words she used which indicated her orientation to the 'literacy as a social practice' narrative.

### 10.5.2.1 MA

Participant Three stressed that she enjoyed doing her MA and felt that it gave her an overview of literacy which she valued:

I feel my MA gave me the expertise in my view of literacy which I think is important in this job... *to have a view of what literacy is and not just think it's reading and writing...* to have a view of that.

The comment '*to have a view of what literacy is and not just think it's reading and writing*' indicates Participant Three's orientation to the social practice view of literacy. In the 'language game' of this literacy narrative discourse the assumption is that people do not just 'read and write'; they always read and write *something*. That 'something' is a text of some sort, and all texts are inextricable from the ideological influences of the socio-cultural contexts which create them. Participant Three goes on to say that her MA taught her that the approach was:

...not [just] teaching adults the skills that they need, the literacy skills...it's teaching them the whole *practices* behind that, and the *social underpinning* behind these *practices*. You know, like *writing a formal letter* is so important, where it's got its status from... why people have such high regard for things that have to be spelt correctly. (My italics)

Here, Participant Three's use of the word 'practices' and their 'social underpinnings' indicated her 'social practice' orientation. In Chapter five I pointed out that people who orientate to this 'language game' talk about 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices'. A 'practice' implies an activity, and literacy is an activity because people *do* things with it. 'Literacy practices' are social activities of which reading and writing activities, or 'literacy events' (like the formal letter mentioned in Participant Three's quote), are part. People bring meanings to these activities because they take place in a variety of cultural, social and institutional contexts which impose rules and conventions on the way they behave when engaging in them.

#### 10.5.2.2 *Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)*

Participant Three was very appreciative and supportive of the 'social practice' view of literacy provided by the MA at Lancaster but has found difficulty in 'marrying' this with the teacher training she received on the PGCE and other in-service courses provided by City and Guilds, and also the three day training for the 'new' curriculum (based on the Moser Report and the '*Skills for Life*' policy).

In all the training that I've had from my PGCE, the City and Guilds 9282, 3 and 4... and then we just had the three day curriculum training... in November last year. *It is just the general definition of literacy that we use, this government definition, that's in the Moser report, which is in the new curriculum document as well. It's always quoted and they always use it in the training, as having the 'ability to function' in society... this view of literacy... just seems to completely contradict with my own view that I've got from being at Lancaster. (My italics)*

Participant three describes how right from the very first lesson of each of these training courses the ‘functional skills’ definition of literacy that the government had produced was always on an OHP for everyone to see, as well as quotes about 7.5 million adults being “illiterate”; a term for which she expresses extreme dislike because:

There isn’t such a thing as ‘illiterate’ because everybody has some ability to read and write. Even if they do recognise symbols or can read a bus timetable ... still they’re branded as being illiterate and it’s just not right.

This participant also had other criticisms of the PGCE because she and the other course members were not given the time or opportunity to expand on the assumptions about literacy which underpin the Moser Report and the ‘*Skills for Life*’ policy.

They introduced The Moser Report which I’d already done from my MA, but it was just facts, this is it, this is the Moser Report, it this what they found and they didn’t question those facts, you know they didn’t question anything to do with it.

### 10.5.2.3 *Current teaching experiences*

Although Participant Three felt that the PGCE and some of the other in-service training courses gave her some help with the practicalities of teaching, she was frustrated by her tutors’ lack of criticality about the ‘functional’ approach advocated by the Moser Report and ‘*Skills for Life*’ policy document. This frustration also carried over into her teaching. Part of her job was teaching literacy and relating it to ‘job skills’ but she felt that what she

was teaching was “fake and false” and would not work. For her the learners on her course “need to know why they are unemployed” and be aware of the “political side of it”. She had tried to introduce her learners to some “critical language awareness” but without much success. Participant Three thought that it was important that learners know:

How people are shaped and moulded by the government and society that they’re just not aware of. Then again I don’t know how easy it would be to get that across to them. I don’t know because I’ve tried that in the past... putting [on] *critical language awareness*

Participant Three was concerned that her learners were not motivated enough, aware enough or powerful enough to do anything constructive about their unemployment. She pointed out that many of her learners react badly to her course because they have been on the job skills ‘merry-go-round’ provided by private training organisations and job clubs for too long:

They’ve had so much tuition they’ve been to job search clubs, and all sorts of things. I’d like to [be] more subtle I think... and get it in different ways... the skills that they need for jobs. Perhaps in more subtle ways that they don’t realise as being job related, but it’s a new course and we still need to get under it.

She said she thought that that if she engaged learners in a more ‘critical’ stance, such as that embedded in the social practice approach, it might help encourage them to learn.

However, she felt constrained by time because her course is 26 weeks long and it takes all

that time just to cover the prescribed syllabus with them. Participant Three also had issues with the Word Power and Number Power Certificates (only just phased out at this time) that the learners on her course had gained in private training organisations. However, they did not have the literacy competences she expected that they should have from achieving those certificates. She was concerned that this issue might arise at the college in which she currently works because of the college's policy of enrolling large numbers of learners for funding purposes. She put this as follows:

For every student that comes here they get money which means that we've got so many students... So the students aren't getting the tuition that they need especially when a lot of them are pre entry or entry 1 and they are not allowed support workers because there is no money in the budget for that... A lot of students will get here and they are like pre entry and entry 1 students and it's just impossible. I think they find it hard to comprehend that you do get some students that can't read their name and address and are at that level.

Participant Three indicated that she and her colleagues were trying to manage the situation but were encountering many difficulties:

I'm still working through it and I find it really frustrating because we keep asking... at every team meeting we keep asking for even more tutors or less students. But it's like falling on deaf ears. It's like banging your head against a brick wall. We're just trying different ways in the class to manage the conflict. That there are too many students, there are different ways of teaching... going

towards group teaching really, which isn't very good when you've got such major levels in the class. There is always somebody who isn't getting the tuition that they deserve.

Because she is new to the job Participant Three said that she had a lot to learn when compared with colleagues who have many years of experience.

As part of our 'grounded conversation' we talked about Malcolm Knowles' idea of 'andragogy' and whether there were any differences between teaching adults and teaching children. Participant Three made immediate connections between it and her work. She did not categorically say that she supported andragogy as a theory but did think that adults were not as much of a "blank slate" as children because they had a lot to bring to her course in the form of their experiences:

#### 10.5.2.4 *Future work*

Participant Three had some concerns about her future teaching on the City and Guilds 7342, which involves teaching vocational tutors how to embed basic skills into their courses.

...so I'll be doing that. And basically it's like how to do initial assessment, how to use the results [of] them to do an individual learning plan, how to simplify text. Things like that and just making them aware of basic skills and some of their students will have basic skills needs and just making them aware about them so that they can spot it and identify it in the class and help the students.

The issue is, however, causing problems at her college because the vocational tutors are resisting taking on the work:

But there has been some conflict with that where the vocational tutors are just leaving it up to the key/basic skills tutors.

Participant Three feels that it will be difficult introducing the 'literacy as social practice' approach into this particular staff training course. She fears that not only will there be resistance from the vocational tutors but also conflict between her and other tutors with whom she will present the course in a team-teaching approach:

I'm team teaching, and I think it is always difficult when you're teaching with other staff. On this course there are three of us... because you all have conflicting views anyway, and I don't think a lot of tutors are aware of this critical view of literacy [the social practice approach] they just take what the government taught them as gospel and just use that.

However, she has more hope for the possibilities of incorporating the social practice approach when she starts teaching on the PGCE at Bolton:

...on the PGCE I think it is more or less up to me what I deliver, sort of. They give me a bare outline. So in there [I'd] quite like to deliver something on that because I think it's important to them... There are some things that are quite obviously... you

know to do with social awareness apart from...like names, terms not to use for students of ethnic minorities and why not to use those terms, like the background to those terms. So I could easily see it fitting in there and just making people more aware of it, definitely! I don't know how they'd react.

It is 'telling' that Participant Three only feels able to introduce the social practice approach on the PGCE where she will be teaching in a higher education context. Earlier she said that she did not feel it would go down well with her colleagues at the further education college where she is teaching. One reason for this being the fact that some of her FE colleagues had never heard of the approach. She, herself, only heard about it when she did her MA at Lancaster, as did I. This raises questions about whether 'literacy as a social practice' is mainly in the domain of researchers and lecturers in universities and, of course, those practitioners who have had the chance to attend their higher-level courses.

In summarising this section, it is apparent that Participant Three feels the social practice approach, which she learned about when doing her MA has made her aware of things that previously she did not know about such as how government literacy policy reflects the politics and cultural aspects of society, and the effects this has on women, ethnic minorities and people in general. However, she is conscious that her belief in the 'social practice' approach could be pushed to one side in the struggle to master the practicalities of teaching the curriculum insisted upon by the New Labour government's *Skills for Life* policy founded on a 'functional skills' approach to literacy. It is a policy which also places demands on how she teaches.

## 10.6 Participant Four (Glasgow)

I had already met this participant at two or three RaPAL conferences before I audio-recorded her ‘professional narrative’. Therefore, when she was recommended as a possible participant by another person from Scotland, who was also part of my purposive/snowball sample, I had no hesitation in contacting her. We were on friendly terms, having talked and joked not only about our professional experiences but also about ‘everyday issues’ at the RaPAL conferences. This meant we knew that each other could ‘talk-the-talk’ about adult literacy issues because we both had knowledge of the ideas of some of the key thinkers in the field. We also had some of the same colleagues and acquaintances established mainly through the RaPAL network. These connections were very important in creating the ‘trust’ between participant and researcher necessary for my ‘grounded conversation’ to collecting data. I emailed her and she agreed to participate in my research and offered to meet at her place of work in Glasgow.

### 10.6.1 *Contextualising experiences and events in time.*

When I met Participant Four in July 2002 she was on a secondment to the National Training Project for Adult Literacies in Scotland and had been there for about 18 months. She had been seconded from Glasgow City Council where she was a community education worker; a job she had held for eleven years. She pointed out that she was an adult learner herself having done a degree in social science followed by a postgraduate course in community education from the College of Dundee. As part of the latter course she did what she describes as a ‘block placement’ in a community called Haghill in Glasgow. She had been asked to form what she termed a “dampness” group looking at housing issues:

The area had terrible housing problems, there were structural faults with the housing and they were running with dampness. I was asked to put together a kind of action group to combat the current policies of the housing department, basically to pressurise them to do something about the housing.

It was whilst engaged in these issues with the people of Haghill that Participant Four learned about the “relevance of literacy to adult learning and to community development”. She noticed that some of the residents who had become group members could not read the documents she had placed in front of them:

...it was at that moment that the penny dropped. In fact, they weren't able to [read] because they didn't have those capabilities. They would come into me and say to me “I can't actually read and write but I want to be a part of this group because my house is very damp.” It was then I recognised about how inadequate my approach had been... and that was my biggest lesson on my placement as a student.

A short time later after she had finished her post-graduate work she obtained a post managing a community centre on a housing estate in Drumchapel, another area of Glasgow, and whilst there she decided to try and form a literacy group. Participant Four had not had any previous training in adult literacy. It had been briefly mentioned on her community education course but no clear guidelines were given:

We weren't prepared in actual fact to use adult literacy. Most of the adult literacy at that time in Glasgow came from one centre in the middle of the town. It was largely run by volunteers... and generally what happened was if you met someone whose skills... and understanding of literacy was limited then we would refer them to that centre, and that was as much as we did at the time.

It is useful to mention here that throughout the 1980s the Glasgow adult literacy service was run by the local authority who trained volunteers to work with learners in centres in the community. They worked on a one-to-one basis with the learners whether they were in a group or not. There was no tradition of developing the adult literacy service in Further Education colleges as in England. Although some of the volunteer training providers were qualified teachers they did not have any specific adult literacy training.

Participant Four arrived in Drumchapel in the early 1990s just after the adult literacy provision had been devolved to the area teams of the community education service. She tried to find some expert help from her managers in order to learn how to develop and manage some adult literacy provision but did not have much luck:

I rapidly realised that most of the people within the service, who were senior management to me, were bluffing... were bluffing their way through it. They had been pretending for many years that they were very knowledgeable in that area but I rapidly began to realise that it just wasn't the case.

According to Participant Four at this point in time, around the early 1990s, she was a basic grade community education worker and she felt her senior managers had given her the literacy work because they did not want to be bothered with it as they considered it peripheral to their wider remit which was 'adult learning in the community'. Participant Four felt they thought her a nuisance because she was posing a lot of questions and making requests for professional development and training, which seemed to her to be a "big taboo". She tried to find someone within the service who was like-minded and interested but without much success.

Eventually Participant Four was moved to an area of Glasgow called Easterhouse and that is when things started to happen. She became involved in a project called the 'Community Learning Project' and met two workers who were very like her:

They were two workers who were similar to myself...who had a general community education background and who'd started to try and deliver a service. It was largely based on a volunteer model. There was no group work in it at all. It was all one to one. So we would telephone each other and try and get together... there was no official forum for getting together to share the practice or anything like that.

When she started in the post Participant Four realised that she had a great deal of developmental work to do. She managed to find an existing volunteer training pack which had been used to train volunteers when the provision was organised centrally. It was a short course of two hours a week lasting for about six weeks, and sounded very much like

the initial volunteer training I had received in England in the early 1980s which I mentioned earlier in my thesis. Fortunately for Participant Four a new worker arrived who also had an interest in literacy and they set about compiling their own training pack:

A lot of it came from the City and Guilds [9281]... from England and some of it came from what had been the former Scottish Community Education Council's pack as well. Also, some articles and things that we found were useful from Basic Skills Agency's [formerly the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit] magazine... specific articles on handwriting etc.

At this point I asked Participant Four if she had heard of RaPAL in the 1980s because I thought that some of the articles in the RaPAL journal could have helped but at the time she was compiling the pack she had never heard of RaPAL. She went on to say that the pack was designed for both volunteers and tutors:

But to be quite honest the tutors didn't really come along. It was rare to get somebody to come in for the tutoring...because most of them were established tutors and felt that they knew it... and that they were above that level of training... and so I think they felt like... that was a bit condescending.

According to Participant Four, as well as thinking that the training course was 'condescending' the professional tutors were working on a part-time basis and only being paid for their actual teaching so they did not want to spend unpaid time in attending a course they felt was beneath their professional level. The course was not compulsory so

Participant Four found herself trying to 'get the message across' about the approach she wanted towards adult literacy whilst visiting tutors in their sessions. This was difficult because some were only visited once a term. More about Participant Four's 'approach' to adult literacy will be discussed in section 10.6.2 below.

Eventually Participant Four and a colleague managed to get the volunteer training under way and built-up a body of thirty eight volunteers. They were doing really well but still had no premises. In the end, they found a community centre with a meeting room dominated by a boxing ring which was only used once a week. However, the local MP thought boxing would help lift some people out of poverty and so the boxing ring had to stay. They finished up grabbing space where they could such as in the dressing room of the ladies toilets, the stage, or a corner of the meeting room containing the boxing ring. Participant Four was really frustrated by this because there was not funding available to rent anywhere else. She then found that she was not allowed to do direct teaching anymore:

Where before... community education workers would deliver the education and training... That was stopped... and we were told we weren't allowed to do any of that kind of teaching any more that we had to commission in all the work because the council had been restructured and the adult learning workers had been severely cut back. So, where there had been 10 workers there was me. So I started managing programmes rather than actually delivering them. So that was quite difficult too.

For clarity it is important to keep stressing that adult literacy in Scotland has developed differently than in England. For instance, in the 1990s England had introduced accreditation courses for learners such as Word Power and Number Power and also professional accreditation for tutors such as the City and Guilds 928 qualifications. Scotland did not have these developments. However, according to Participant Four around 1997 a report was brought out, and other developments took place such as Scotland acquiring its own parliament, which eventually led to the creation of the National Training Project for Adult Literacies in Scotland to which she was seconded, and where she now works:

There was a report brought out, I think it must have been 1997 or something like that, by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors...it talked about "community education approaches to working with adult learners in communities... It was a double-edged sword in a sense... because...it said it was only community education *approaches*, which were the important things...which we all agreed with... but we also realised it meant the end of community education services. So it was kind of a double-edged sword. So that's where the impetus for the project came. Following that the Scottish Executive set up an Adult Literacy 2000 steering group and they brought out the adult Literacy/Numeracy Scotland Report. They commissioned certain pieces of research and... constructed our National Training Project and carried out a training needs analysis with existing adult literacy practitioners in Scotland. So that's how we came about.

The training needs analysis asked people involved with adult literacy in Scotland what their roles involved. The emphasis was on a cross-sectoral analysis. According to Participant Four:

We had an idea before the training analysis that probably much of the training had been done in the community education settings within local authorities. They were the ones who constructed training for volunteers and the tutors... so we knew that was happening. That was confirmed by the training needs analysis. There was very little training in Further Education at all and we didn't record any at all from voluntary organisations or business-type projects and there was [no training] in the prison services either.

Through the training needs analysis Participant Four and her colleagues on the National Training Project discovered that the work force was very fragmented. Tutors were mainly part-time, or adult literacy was part of a larger remit. The work force, however, were interested in further training; not only skills-based training but also training in relation to learners with specific learning difficulties, special educational needs and dyslexia. They were also keen on finding out about current research and underpinning theories of the research. For Participant Four this was not a surprise:

They're making decisions in a vacuum in a sense because they haven't had that training... Some of the training providers didn't have any kind of professional background and they didn't have any qualifications at all. That was another aspect

of it, the qualification level, and the things that people saw as important as underpinning their work.... that was quite interesting too.

Participant four went on to say that that currently some people do a 'tutoring adult' module from the Scottish Qualifications Authority which has not been specifically designed for literacy but has been adapted for use. However, this qualification is not compulsory. Now, as a result of the training needs analysis Participant Four and her colleagues are constructing a training framework which reflects the status, needs and wants of the field as it now exists:

So we've set up this training framework...what would have formerly been volunteer tutor training... we've changed that to reflect new policy... and which is more working to a Level 6... we would call it. It's our higher level; just below an A level. It's mapping it to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework... So it's Level 6 of the qualifications framework and it's an introduction... and we hope that will be used for classroom assistants. Well we call them classroom assistants but in the report we refer to tutor assistants.

Participant Four went on to talk about her future work and said that she and her colleagues were hoping to construct, in conjunction with the higher education institutions, a diploma which would be around Level 8 on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework; just under degree level. Other future plans included providing specialist courses after that to enable practitioners to top up the credits and make the diploma into a degree. She and her colleagues also want to establish research bases in Scotland's universities. She went on to

say that the aim was to encourage reflective practice in the field. Participant Four felt that reflective practice was very important for the professional development of practitioners and felt they should construct their own learning plans just like learners do:

I mean we're asking learners to construct a learning plan and to think about themselves and their own learning and review their own learning and [I] think that practitioners should be doing that too.

This participant sees the system in Scotland as developing very differently than the English system and regards it as beneficial that they are not going to be simply “tagged on” to the latter of which she does not approve. When talking about the English system she said:

Well, I was horrified by the subject specifications...To me there were more competencies that I would expect to find in a Further Education lecturer... When I heard some of the comments from literacy workers at the RaPAL conference ... When I saw the kind of qualities they were looking for and the kind of language that was used within it I thought, “Is that a foreign language?... It just shocks me to see the kind of approach that's happening in England, particularly because it's related to the school system and because most of my students are products...are failures from that kind of system.

This brings me up to date with Participant Four's professional background at the time we met. The next part of this section deals with the values and assumptions she appeared to be bringing to her work.

10.6.2 *Literacy as an Experiential Process: Participant Four's values and key professional experiences and how these impacted on each other.*

This participant's narrative orientates towards the assumption that literacy is an 'experiential process'. She also has strong Marxist values which materialise as well and the two approaches often fuse together in her narrative. However, I will start with the 'experiential' approach first. It links to humanism and phenomenology and the philosophical meta-narrative that science will bring about human progress through the unification of all knowledge.

I mentioned earlier, in part one of this section, that when Participant Four was working in Easterhouse she was keen to put forward her 'approach' to both volunteers and tutors but she found that the paid tutors were not keen to come to any form of training. Instead, she found herself trying to 'get the message across' about the approach she wanted towards adult literacy whilst visiting tutors in their sessions. Many tutors in the work force were primary school teachers and Participant Four said:

I realised that their experience really wasn't what I was looking for in a tutor because they had a different attitude, a different way. The way I would phrase it now is their method would be didactic and mine would be dialogic. They had to be with the student and have a very student-centred approach to learning and that was based on the adult learning theories I suppose that I had come from my community education qualification...*Knowles and andragogical approaches.* (My italics)

This participant brought up ‘Knowles and andragogical approaches’ herself. In chapter four of my research text I discussed how Knowles had developed his ideas from the humanist approaches to teaching advocated by the psychologist Carl Rogers. I also pointed out that Rogers’ humanist psychology was rooted in the philosophy of Heidegger’s phenomenological existentialism and was a reaction against the determinism of behaviourist psychology and, cognitive psychology, which stem from the philosophy of positivism. Whereas positivism concentrates on ‘objective’ knowledge which exists outside the individual, phenomenology focuses on the ‘subjective’ ways of knowing of the individual.

As I indicated in chapter four, Knowles insisted on using the word ‘andragogy’ rather than pedagogy when talking about the underpinning ethos of adult education.

Although Participant Four had never taught children she did believe that that there were definite differences between teaching them and teaching adults:

We’ve referred to it in our present introductory course as ‘Jug and Mug’. Because a teacher in a school ... thinks of a person as an empty vessel and wants to fill up the mug and the teacher, who is the jug, pours the learning into them and that’s how they learn...whereas the andragogy approach is much different from that. *We’re learning with the student. I think that one of the things we try to put over is that ...as well as you, maybe, translating some of your skills knowledge and understanding to your student... you’re going to learn from them too. It is a two*

*way process it is not just about you. So that's the way I've thought about it. (My italics)*

I have emphasised the last part of the above quote, which is about the two-way learning process between tutors and learners, because it relates directly to Carl Rogers' humanistic ideas discussed in chapter four. He saw the teachers as 'facilitating' learning by creating a secure learning environment and by providing a wide range of resources; and that teachers should also allow themselves to be used as a flexible resource by the learners and *be prepared to learn from them*. Participant Four thought that if the primary school teachers who were part of the adult literacy workforce had tried to combine their pedagogical approaches with andragogical or adult learner-centred approaches then things would have been better. She went on to say:

I think we're more interested in the development of the *whole person* rather than just a narrow set of skills.

Participant Four's comment about *the development of the whole person* is directly indicative of the 'literacy as an experiential process narrative discourse' with its andragogical and humanistic approaches to adult education. Rather than just following a curriculum based on the development of logical cognitive learning processes and the acquisition of skills; the 'whole person' concept also values the development of the aesthetic, intuitive, emotional and the experiential aspects of human nature.

I have now nearly finished analysing Participant Four's 'professional narrative'. However, before moving on I wish to add that this participant also saw herself as a socialist and a Marxist; although she mainly talked about andragogy and its humanist leanings which mainly concentrate on the learner as an individual. However, she tried to marry this with collective group action which is a feature of Marxism. She often referred to her concerns about the lack of group work existing in the adult literacy provision when talking about her experiences, and she also referred to the Freirean concept of 'conscientization' which is strongly connected to the Marxist approach. All these themes come up in one part of her narrative which is quoted below.:

I think we should be 'organised' ... because I'm a socialist. Basically I am Marxist. I have a Marxist tradition and that's why I became interested in theory because I was very interested... in...the whole idea of *conscientization*... Because I wanted people to have critical understanding of society... That's why I wanted to *try and put that together in a learning situation*.

Although Participant Four says that she wanted *try and put that together in a learning situation* she feels that she would have had difficulty in doing so because:

I would have been fired. There is no way that you could take these kind of ideas and put them into a learning context because they are too threatening because it is all about powered relationships. So you couldn't do that so you have to find other ways of approaching and using a critical literacy model... a watered down version is

probably what you would want to do which is acceptable within that particular context.

Participant Four went on to describe how she tried to introduce critical literacy into her work with learners:

I tried to do it in very simple ways...laterally through the initial training in the area but really to try and get them to examine power structures within their own community and to think about the literacies that got used within their social inclusion partnerships. "Why was it that within the social inclusion partnerships that the information that was put out was always written in such complicated ways?" So, as an awareness raising exercise, I would pose questions about why we thought that might be. So we did explore those kinds of things with them in a group.

In summarising this section it is obvious that Participant Four had come across many frustrations in her work starting with her battle against the 'skills' approach to literacy in Scotland's adult literacy service which seemed to have many primary school teachers in post who taught like they did in school. She fought to bring in more adult learner-centred approaches and wanted to carry on with this in her current post in Scotland's National Training Project. In her own way she also wanted to marry the learner-centred approach with Marxist collective action in order to transform learner's lives. However, unlike Participant One, she was cautious about openly challenging the powers-that-be for fear of losing her job. She prefers to use what she calls a 'critical literacy model' in order to raise

awareness which is related to learners immediate issues, say about housing, and enable them to act to bring about change in that area rather than being openly explicit about her politics and acting on them, as Participant One did.

## Chapter Eleven

### Data Analysis: Part Two of the Case Studies

#### 11.1 Introduction

The last chapter concentrated on the extended case studies of four participants whose individual professional narratives revealed values and assumptions which strongly orientated each of them to mainly *one* of the four narrative discourses about adult literacy; although the narrative discourse in focus in each case was not necessarily the only one of influence; an issue which is analysed further using the eleven case studies here. This second stage of my data analysis concentrates on how participants' accounts revealed their orientation to not only one narrative discourse but sometimes to two, or even three; demonstrating a fusion of values and assumptions developed as a result of their experiences over time.

#### 11.2 Organisation of Chapter

The case studies in this chapter are shorter than those in chapter 10 for a number of reasons. Firstly, in the introduction to each of the case studies in chapter 10, I described how well I knew the participant and demonstrated how the 'trust' necessary for a 'grounded conversation' between us was based on 'shared experience', 'common ground' and a 'common language', no matter how well we knew each other. However, because of restrictions on the length of this thesis, it is not possible for me to provide these details for all eleven case study participants in this chapter. Nonetheless, I will briefly say how each participant discussed in this chapter became part of my sample, how long I have known

them and where our place of meeting was. Secondly, the case studies are shorter because, unlike the participants in Part One, these participants *did not make as many* comments orientating them to particular narrative discourse(s) about literacy. Thirdly, the values and assumptions identified in the Part One case studies were constantly being revealed *all the way through* each participant's commentary about their professional experiences, from the start to the finish. In Part Two, however, the participants' comments about their values and assumptions did not occur as frequently. Therefore, rather than fully discussing all their experiences from the start of their narrative to its end, I have concentrated instead on identifying the comments which specifically demonstrate an orientation to one or more of the narrative discourses about literacy. These comments have been quoted and placed in a table in each individual case study. The table of quotes reveals, at a glance, how many discourses each participant orientates towards, and what they say about them. Key words and phrases are italicised and comments which need clarification, or reveal *new* insights about the values and assumptions of the narrative discourses under scrutiny will be briefly analysed after the table.

To sum up then, at the beginning of each of the case studies in this second stage of data analysis, I will briefly say how the each participant became part of my sample, how long I have known them, our place of meeting, and give a brief outline of their experience and training. Some were more expansive about the latter than others. This will be followed by the table quoting the participant's comments which demonstrate an orientation to particular narrative discourses about literacy. This will be followed by any clarifications, if necessary, and/or a short analysis, if appropriate, of any new insights concerning the values and assumptions of the narrative discourses about literacy which have been identified.

Participants Five and Six are the first two case studies in this chapter. Like the last participant, Participant Four (in Part One of my analysis), they both worked for the National Training Project in Scotland, therefore I thought it would aid cohesion and clarity if I first discussed Participants Five and Six straight after each other.

### **11.3 Participant Five (Aberdeen)**

Participant Five volunteered to take part in my research at the RaPAL conference in 2001. We knew each other slightly because we had met at the two previous annual conferences and talked about the differences between the types of adult literacy provision in Scotland and England. Our conversation in relation to this research took place in July 2002 at his place of work in Glasgow.

#### **11.3.1 *Experience and Training***

Participant Five trained as a community education worker in Scotland. When his training finished in 1974 he became a youth and community education worker and much of his time was spent working in rural areas. In the early 1980's he gave this up and did some voluntary work for nine years. This involved running a small therapeutic community for people who needed care because they had mental health difficulties and/or learning difficulties; sometimes the clients needed some informal help with literacy. Participant Five claims that this experience helped him a great deal with his later literacy work because, unlike community work, which focused on the group, the focus was on the individual. Eventually, however, the work became too exhausting and he and his wife gave it up. In 1992 he became really involved with literacy for the first time when he obtained

an eight hours a week job in Montrose as a literacy coordinator, supporting the work of volunteers and identifying and interviewing new learners; a job he really enjoyed and which inspired him to study further. However, unlike England which introduced the City and Guilds 9281 and 9285 forms of accreditation for tutors in the early 1990s, and the 'Skills for Life' tutor qualifications in 2001, Scotland did not have any specialist qualifications for adult literacy; nor had it developed a research base in Higher Education. Therefore, Participant Five, who had a first degree in community education, went to study for an MEd at Sheffield University. The emphasis of the MEd was on 'literacy' but within that, he focused on adult literacy.

Participant Five's work in Montrose mainly involved organising home tuition where volunteers worked with learners one a one-to-one basis. There were very few learners when he first started but over the years the numbers built up. The volunteers usually did a volunteer training course for two hours a week for about eight weeks. Participant Five describes this as the "pattern all over Scotland", and said that it was still the case when he and I met in 2002. Eighteen months earlier he had been appointed to Scotland's 'National Training Project in Adult Literacy'. The project has been developed by the Scottish Executive, to establish a framework for the training of tutors and managers in adult literacy and its provision. For the previous five months Participant Five had held the role of Acting Manager for the project. He welcomed the chance to talk:

... the fact that I have sat here gabbing for an hour is very useful for me because to explain yourself to others is to develop your own thinking. You never end up an interview at the same point you started as an interviewee.

### 11.3.2 Participant Five's orientation to literacy

Over the years Participant Five had developed a strong learner-centred approach and the table below demonstrates how his comments orientated him to the 'Literacy as an experiential process' approach and also to 'Literacy as a Social Practice'.

**Table 1: Two Orientations to Literacy (Participant Five)**

<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote One <i>to focus on the individual and the commitment to the individual.</i></p> <p>Quote Two <i>...they come to a literacy programme with a lot of knowledge, a lot of skills, levels of experience. And learning is best developed by using what they can do... that the basis of working with people is that you believe what people tell you. You don't test people. You find out what they can do and build on it. If you test pupils, you find out what people can't do, and fill gaps. So rather than follow that deficit approach the attempt is always that we can build on a positive view of what we can do</i></p> <p>Quote Three That report is quite crucial. It made a number... I think 24 recommendations... <i>In amongst them are really important and really good stuff...like that it will be based on a learner centred approach, that it would measure a learner's progress by the distance they have travelled and not by any hysteria criteria. So there is no test imposed</i></p>
<p><b>Quotes four and five also fit the 'Literacy is a social practice' discourse.</b></p>	<p>Quote Four <i>I've talked about it [literacy education] in terms of learner centred [perspectives], of respecting learners and building on what they know, rather than the deficit model; the actual participant model that focuses from the point of what people know now towards what they need to know, what they want to know. What their learning is based on, is real issues, and real concerns that they are facing in daily life</i></p> <p>Quote Five <i>What I am very wary of is any pre-set curriculum for adults for literacy.</i></p>

In the above table of quotes, we see that Participant Five mentioned a number of values which orientated him to the ‘literacy is an experiential process’ narrative discourse. For instance, he stated that literacy teaching should focus on the *individual* (quote one). He also said he believe that adult literacy learners bring *a lot of knowledge, a lot of skills, levels of experience* (quote two) to the learning process and that their *learning is best developed by using what they can do, rather than using a deficit* approach which emphasises what they can’t do (quote two). In quote three, when talking about literacy initiatives in Scotland he indicated that he was pleased that they contain *really good stuff* based on a learner-centred approach *that would measure a learner’s progress by the distance they have travelled and not by any hysteria criteria*. He said he was wary of *any pre-set curriculum for adults for literacy* (quote five) and thought that *their learning should be based on real issues and real concerns that they are facing in daily life* (quote four). These last two quotes could also fit into the ‘Literacy is a social practice narrative discourse. Many of the features of both approaches were discussed in Chapter Four. Participant Five’s comments concerning ‘literacy as an experiential process’ resonated with the case study for Participant Four discussed at length in the previous chapter.

#### **11.4 Participant Six (Scotland)**

I did not know Participant Six before we met with regard to my research. Participant Five recommended that I speak to her when I had my interview/conversation with him. As she worked in the next office it was easy to ask her and she agreed to participate, on the same day, at her place of work.

##### **11.4.1 *Experience and Training***

Participant Six also worked on the National Training Project in Scotland. However, her background is different from those of Participants Four and Five. Participant Six started off as an English teacher whereas Participants Four and Five were community education workers. Participant Six did not say much about her training but she began her teaching experience as an English teacher in Shetland where she taught in secondary schools and also did supply work. In 1988, she moved down to the south of Scotland but did not want to work in a big, urban secondary school. At that point a newly created Youth Training and Support (YTS) post for a literacy and numeracy tutor appeared and Participant Six was successful in her application for the post. She really enjoyed working with the teenagers and describes her job as producing videos, dramas and teaching functional skills, working closely with the trainers from different vocational areas. She then went on to work in the community where she used to train volunteers to work on a one-to-one basis with learners. When we met in 2002, she had just finished doing some work with volunteer tutors who had been trained to become group tutors and who were then able to be employed on a professional basis. In respect of volunteers Participant Six said:

... it's just a substantial fact with the service at the moment; we can't do anything without them. The difficulty is that most don't perceive themselves as 'development group tutors' and in some kind of way, the system that exists at the moment can be seen to be self limiting... because people are most comfortable on a one to one set-up than thinking of progressing in their own practice and different ways of working.

#### 11.4.2 *Participant Six's orientations to literacy*

Participant Six's comments orientate her towards two narrative discourses about adult Literacy: 'literacy as a social practice' and 'literacy as an experiential process'.

**Table 2: Two orientations towards literacy (Participant Six)**

<p><b>Literacy as a Social Practice</b></p>	<p>Quote One  <i>The emphasis was on a move away from traditional models of education towards self directed learning from the learners' point of view... Those concepts that underpin this approach to adult literacies.</i></p> <p>Quote Two  <i>... I suppose you could determine literacy as plural... like having an awareness and an understanding of a context genre and the relationships and the values that are attached to different literacies by society.</i></p>
<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote Three  <i>Well, largely... One of my great concerns was the democratisation of the relationship... in a sense... between the learner and the tutor... You have to be willing to be open to criticism and take part in the full reflective process and all that that entails.</i></p> <p>Quote Four  <i>And I think that's why the idea of democratised relationships has to be underpinned again... at another level, by solid teacher skills; solid pedagogical skills. And thinking about the development of a kind of sensitivity of what would be best, of what opportunities to provide in a class in a learning situation.</i></p> <p>Quote Five  <i>In good practice, I have to go back to what I was saying about learner centred [perspectives], the democratisation, a responsive curriculum. A curriculum that challenges as well... A curriculum that encourages and gives opportunities for development of critical strategies as well as skills based... and I think at the end of the day empowerment in as much as the student is having a greater sense of control and choice.</i></p>

In quotes one and two Participant Six refers to *literacies* in the plural which is a characteristic stance of those who orientate to the ‘literacy as a social practice’ approach. In the ‘game rules’ (Lyotard 1984) of this narrative discourse what counts as literacy in one social context is different to what counts as literacy in another. This is why people who orientate to this narrative discourse think in terms of many ‘literacies’ rather than just one type of literacy. Quotes three, four and five emphasise the *democratisation* of the curriculum and the relationship between learner and tutor, giving the *student a greater sense of control and choice* (quote five). I have placed these quotes in the ‘Literacy as an experiential process’ section of the table. However, I made this analytic move with some hesitation since the values expressed could be just ‘as at home’ in the ‘literacy as a social practice’ section. The boundaries between these types of narrative discourse are fluid in nature and a mixing of discourses is common.

### **11.5 Participant Seven (Somerset)**

This participant saw my flier in the RaPAL Journal and volunteered to participate and chose her home as the meeting place for our ‘grounded conversation’. I had already met Participant Seven through the RaPAL network/conferences and had been on friendly terms with her for a couple of years.

When we met in June 2002, Participant Seven had been involved with adult literacy for nine years. She had previously taught English in a secondary school before having her own children but did not want to go back to it. After attending a “women returners” course at a local college in Bristol, where she then lived, the course tutors, who also organised the college’s adult literacy provision, offered Participant Seven a part-time job teaching an

adult literacy class for one night a week. Participant Seven accepted the post because she found it fitted ideally with having to look after her young children during the day. She did not have any previous experience or training for teaching adults. The college thought that her experience of teaching English in a secondary school was sufficient.

#### 11.5.1 *Experience and Training*

Starting from these beginnings, Participant Seven completed the City and Guilds 9281 ‘Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills’ and the City and Guilds 730, ‘Further and Adult Education Teaching Certificate (Part One)’. She followed these with the City and Guilds 9285, ‘The Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills’ (the ‘advanced’ version of the 9281). She also completed the training course for the adult literacy core curriculum introduced by the *Skills for Life* policy in 2001. When we met she was in the process of doing her M.Ed, focusing on modules to do with adult education and literacy. She has since gone on to do a PhD.

Over the eight years prior to my interview with her, Participant Seven had taught adult literacy, family literacy, ESOL and had gained management experience as a co-ordinator for adult literacy in the community education sector in Somerset. However, the latter post was dissolved when the local authority’s community provision was taken over by a local college in 2000. Her eighteen hours per week workload had been reduced to six hours teaching; two two-hour literacy classes and one two-hour ESOL class, which is why she had time to do the MEd. According to Participant Seven:

I would say [the MEd has] transformed the way I think about what I do. Because I think when I first started, maybe that first year or two, all I had to go on was this kind of *deficit model* because that's all there was. I didn't know about RaPAL or anything else and then I think, gradually, I started to change the way I think probably largely as a result of having contact with RaPAL and reading the RaPAL bulletin... Now I've been on the MEd I feel like it's forced me to think about things in a much more systematic way. Before I had vague ideas about *student-centred* education and all that kind of thing but I hadn't really thought them out. (My italics)

The *deficit model* mentioned by Participant Seven was also raised by Participant Five. I discussed this issue in chapter Five where I described how the dominance of the 'skills' narrative about literacy made it more 'valued' in our society than any other form of literacy. Therefore, it wields a great deal of *power* because it defines people who do not develop literacy abilities of this type as having some kind of deficit or a 'lack'; definitions which can have an extremely negative effect on people's education, work and lives.

#### 11.5.2 *Participant Seven's orientation to literacy*

Participant Seven developed her strong *student-centred* approach over the years and some of her comments orientated towards both the 'Literacy as a Social Practice' and 'Literacy as an Experiential process' narrative discourses. The comments have been quoted and placed in the appropriate cells in the following table.

**Table: 3 Two orientations towards literacy (Participant Seven)**

<p><b>Literacy as a Social Practice</b></p>	<p>Quote One: <i>Things like the idea that you could view literacy as a social practice rather than a set of technical skills.</i></p>
<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote Two: If you're teaching seven-year-olds say... they all have seven years' experience of life. <i>Whereas with adults they are all ages, all people come from different backgrounds, they're all there, they've got different goals when they come to classes so it is much more diverse. Therefore [it is] less appropriate to have a standardised curriculum.</i></p> <p>Quote Three: <i>[Andragogy] was the word invented for adult education ...that this was a way to show that... actually adult education is something different.</i></p>

Quote One indicated an orientation towards 'literacy as a social practice' rather than 'literacy as skills'. In this sense, the discourse in her professional narrative resonated with that of previous participants, including Participant Three, in Chapter 10 and Participant Six in this chapter.

Quotes two and three demonstrate that Participant Seven also had an orientation towards 'literacy as an experiential process'. In quote two, she indicated that she thought that the *diverse ages, experiences and goals* of adult learners are not catered for in the *Skills for Life* adult literacy core curriculum and that its *standardised curriculum* is *less appropriate*. In quote three, she talked about 'andragogy' and the idea that *adult education is something different*; this point was raised by Participant Four in the case study presented in Chapter 10.

## 11.6 Participant Eight (Birmingham)

This participant saw the flier in the RaPAL Journal and volunteered to participate and we met in November 2002. Participant Eight is a full-time administrator in a university and chose to meet in her office at her place of work. We have got to know each other well from attending RaPAL conferences over a number of years, often making a point of meeting-up at them.

### 11.6.1 *Experience and Training*

Participant Eight had a degree and qualifications in nursing before starting as an adult literacy volunteer in 1989. The training involved meeting for once-a-week sessions, some longer than others, for six weeks. In 1991 she became a paid tutor and went on to complete the City and Guilds 9285 and also attended some in-service training sessions in the evenings and weekends concerning the teaching of adults. Participant Eight also completed training for the *Skills for Life* adult literacy core curriculum in 2001, and when we met she was studying for her PhD, which is based on her adult literacy work. This has now been successfully completed.

For twelve years Participant Eight worked mainly as a part-time adult literacy tutor with some basic numeracy teaching at odd times. When we met she also had a full-time job as an administrator in a university. Although she was still studying for her PhD based on her adult literacy work, Participant Eight had just given up her part-time adult literacy job because she did not like the prescription of the *Skills for Life* adult literacy core curriculum. In particular she did not like the *Skills for Life* demands **that learners** are now told at the beginning of a session what the learning outcome will be:

...why should I tell them in advance what I am going to teach them. Because if you tell them what you are going to teach them...they don't actually come out with...you want them to come out and talk.

Participant Eight also said that she “actively disliked” the reading tests introduced by *Skills for Life* because “they only test reading and not writing”. In the end, the introduction of the ‘new’ core curriculum was the “catalyst” for her leaving.

#### 11.6.2 *Participant Eight’s orientation to literacy*

Participant Eight orientated towards the ‘Literacy as an experiential process’ narrative.

**Table 4: An orientation to literacy as an experiential process (Participant Eight)**

<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote One: I went round everywhere saying ‘what does ‘<i>andragogy</i>’ mean?’ ... I came across it in somebody’s MA, through RaPAL, actually...1992 maybe or even earlier.</p> <p>Quote Two: But I do feel that <i>it’s got its limitations</i> and I’ve moved on from there now. So although I am aware of it...and <i>I think it was really good work because it highlighted that there were big differences between adults and children and their ways, their styles of learning</i> and the fact that they want different things from it often. But <i>I really like his idea of helping them become independent learners by facilitating...rather than doing this [the prescriptive teaching introduced by ‘Skills for Life’]...a feeding model.</i></p> <p>Quote Three: <i>I’m actually not sure now that the way it’s [andragogy] described matters that much... I think that with children we are also trying to make them independent learners; to carry on learning throughout their lives. So I think the whole terminology has got problems and I’m not using them now.</i></p>
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	<p>Quote Four:  <i>To value each individual person is the key thing with any work I think with basic skills. The wonderful thing about working with adults is that they do have this wealth of experience and usually they are quite happy to share it.</i></p> <p>Quote Five  <i>...although I'm the teacher and supposedly I have more knowledge /expertise in this area than you [the learners] do... there will be times when you've actually got the expertise and I am learning from you...</i></p>
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In the first quote above, Participant Eight revealed that she had come across the term ‘andragogy’ through the RaPAL network and that she had been intrigued by it. In the second quote, she also showed familiarity with the work of Knowles. However, in quote two, she also indicated that she felt that andragogy and the work of Knowles had *got its limitations* but she felt it had value because it emphasised the *differences between adults and children and their ways, their styles of learning*. She really liked the idea of helping adults to become independent learners *by facilitating* and thought that this is preferable to the prescriptive teaching introduced by *Skills for Life*, which she described as *a feeding model*. In quote three Participant Eight gave an example of one of her perceived limitations of andragogy when she mentioned that the idea of *independent learners* applies not specifically to adults but to children as well. The points emphasised in quotes four and five; about adults willingly sharing their experiences, and the teacher learning from the learners, also indicate her orientation towards ‘Literacy as an experiential process’. Most of the points made by Participant Eight in her account resonate with those made by Participant Four in Chapter 10.

## 11.7 Participant Nine (Manchester)

This participant volunteered to participate and contacted me via email after seeing the flier in RaPAL Journal. I phoned her to give her more details about my research and she chose to meet in her own home. When we met in June 2002 it was the first time time we had seen each other because she had not been a RaPAL member for very long. Participant Nine was very friendly and provided lunch.

### 11.7.1 *Experience and Training*

Participant Nine obtained a first degree in Modern Languages before training as a volunteer tutor in London in the 1970s, when the Cambridge House initiatives were first set-up. She remained a volunteer till 1990 although took some time out to have children and to move house a couple of times. During this time she also completed a Masters degree in Linguistics. In 1990, she obtained her first part-time paid post in the North West where she has since worked in a number of Further Education institutions and attended many in-service training courses. She completed the City and Guilds 9281 (Initial Certificate) and the City and Guilds D32E (Supervisor's Certificate) in the mid 1990's. In the summer of 2001 she also completed the training for the *Skills for Life* adult literacy core curriculum. Participant Nine was just finishing her PhD which she describes as focusing "on the stigma attached to literacy issues".

Participant Nine was an adult literacy volunteer for twenty years and kept on volunteering whenever she moved to a new area and therefore had experience of volunteering for many different institutions. She became a paid part-time tutor in 1990, and worked in more than one Further Education college. Later, in the 1990s, as well as teaching adult literacy on a

part-time basis, she also had another part-time job teaching Linguistics at Manchester University. After completing the training for the *Skills for Life* adult literacy core curriculum she soon found herself out of her adult literacy work through her institution's restructuring. When I interviewed her, Participant Nine was working for the NRDC at Sheffield and collaborated closely with Participant Two (See previous chapter). At Sheffield, she was a researcher involved with the analysis of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) on interventions in adult literacy and numeracy. However, Participant Nine pointed out that she was still orientated more to qualitative than quantitative research. Her work at the time involved the analysis of RCTs and "taking out" the qualitative data on user perspectives about the wider benefits of learning.

Throughout her years of teaching adult literacy learners, Participant Nine stresses that she has always tried to remain *student-centred* in her approach and complained that some of her colleagues relied on pre-published worksheets all the time:

Some tutors certainly pulled them out week after week, this and this, do this, this and this. Other people were, like me, actually giving ourselves a lot more work by gearing everything towards each individual student's interests and needs... I actually, as I say, gave myself a lot of work, but I was determined to be as *student-centred* as I could against increasingly great odds actually.

Although she is not completely against the 'skills' approach to literacy Participant Nine went on to criticise the *Skills for Life* core curriculum training for its "appalling howlers":

I am trained in phonetics and grammar; I deliver these to undergraduates at Manchester University...I mean they want us to go back to the phonemes and the rest [but] at the back of the book; the tutor's little guide to the sounds of English; they were not even correctly identified for any known dialect of England. They were wrong.

### 11.7.2 *Participant Nine's orientations to literacy*

Participant Nine's comments demonstrated the influence of three narrative discourses about literacy; 'Literacy as skills', 'Literacy as a social practice' and 'Literacy as an Experiential process'.

**Table 5: Three orientations to literacy (Participant Nine)**

<p><b>Literacy as skills</b></p>	<p>Quote One  <i>If you are going to insist on an understanding of English phonology, correct grammatical constructions. Water tight punctuation, you are going to have to get it right... You are going to have to give people... the tutors... a much more intensive training in English.</i></p> <p>Quote Two          [The participant is talking about her current work as a researcher] But it's a matter of analysis ...of <i>randomised controlled trials</i> on interventions in adult literacy and numeracy... We have ended up with very few that actually satisfy the condition of being an RCT... <i>I don't really understand exactly what is involved with that but it does appear to be the gold standard.</i></p> <p>Quote Three          Well they are analysing the actual trials and seeing...whether the progress that was recorded was statistically significant or not... <i>Statistics again, it's not my field....</i> Of those that had been analysed <i>only two had actually statistically significant results...</i></p>
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<b>Literacy as a Social Practice</b>	Quote Four Well it [ <i>Skills for Life</i> core curriculum] is back to... school-type literacy, isn't it? I mean, <i>the new literacy looks on 'situated literacies' and literacy in context</i> . Once you have absorbed that idea it's very difficult to go back to the other sort, the older sort.
<b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b>	Quote Five This was really <i>failing</i> on two counts, one, not really being responsive enough to the <i>individual student</i> . And secondly, it was aiming to go back to basics and deliver top notch English <i>skills</i> again.

I take each of these narrative discourses in turn. The first three quotes revealed a 'literacy as skills' discourse. This participant was a trained Linguist and, in quote one, she insisted that if a skills approach is to be used then those who stipulate what goes into the curriculum in the first place must *get it right*, and provide tutors with a more thorough and *intensive training in English*. Quotes two and three were about Participant Nine's research work into RCTs. In Chapter 10, in my discussion of the case study based on Participant Two's narrative, I demonstrated that the 'literacy as skills' approach is linked to quantitative research of the type in which Participant Nine is now involved. This why her comments about it have been identified and listed in the table as 'Literacy as skills'. Her comments about RCTs resonated with those discussed in the case of Participant Two. However, her comment in quote two, that she doesn't *really understand exactly what is involved with that but it* [an RCT] *does appear to be the gold standard*; and her comment in quote three, *statistics again, it's not my field*, indicated that there was some tension for her between the quantitative research she is dealing with now and her qualitative orientation. In the next quote, (quote four) we see a different discourse being articulated: a 'literacy as a social practice' discourse, notably in her comments about *'situated literacies'* and *literacy in context*. She also showed awareness of an alternative intellectual tradition by using the term 'new literacy'. In addition, she commented, as follows, on the impact

that new literacy thinking can have: *Once you have absorbed that idea, it's very difficult to go back.* Finally, in referring to her experience as an adult literacy tutor, she gave voice to a third discourse. In quote five Participant Nine stressed the importance of being responsive to the needs of the *individual student* which is a feature of the 'literacy as an experiential process' approach. She evoked this discourse in her critique of the Skills for Life curriculum. She thought that the *Skills for Life* curriculum was *failing* because it did not take the individual learner into account.

### 11.8 Participant Ten (Nottingham)

This participant volunteered to take part in my research after I asked for people to become involved at the RaPAL conference in 2001. She chose to meet at her place of work at Nottingham University in May 2002. We knew each other well because we had both served together as officers in the RaPAL organisation when I joined in the mid 1990s and we had attended the same meetings of the RaPAL business group and also the journal production group.

Before becoming involved with adult literacy, Participant Ten, had trained in post-16 education. She had then gone on to work at a Polytechnic in Leicester, which is now De Montfort University. There, she taught economics and a number of other subjects. However, after having her third child, in the mid 1970s, she decided to look for part-time work in the Higher Education sector. This was not forthcoming so she moved into the Further Education sector instead. Her work involved teaching English and social studies to craft apprentices such as plumbers, carpenters and bricklayers. She noticed that two of her apprentices were having difficulty with their exam revision because they could not read

their handouts or what they had copied from the board. This was circa 1974 and Participant Ten decided to visit the local adult literacy scheme which was still in the process of being set up. She described it as being very “low key” with one woman in an office with a bookcase full of remedial education books. Participant Ten borrowed some of the books and as a result became very interested in issues related to adult literacy because she realised that the remedial education, received by her apprentices, had not worked. After setting up some cross-college lunchtime classes for learners who wanted help, Participant Ten described how it eventually led to “screening everybody who came into the college using Daniels and Dyak reading tasks”. She remained in contact with the person responsible for the local adult literacy scheme who had recently appointed someone as an adult literacy organiser in the city. This new person visited Participant Ten at home and invited her to tutor a spelling class. When Participant Ten said that she knew nothing about spelling the literacy organiser was not worried about it and described Participant Ten as the “right sort of person for this sort of work”.

She thought people coming back to literacy would fear teachers and would fear failure with teachers again and by having people who weren't professionally trained they would be more accessible for the learners. That was her thinking, quite explicitly.

This was right at the beginning of the first adult literacy appointments in the UK and after Participant Ten had taken on the spelling class she was soon offered work as an organiser in another part of the city. Within a term she had moved from the Further Education college and had become an organiser and tutor for literacy in the community.

### 11.8.1 *Experience and Training*

This participant specialised in post-16 education and had a degree and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and went on to study for a Masters degree in Adult Education. She worked in a polytechnic before moving into teaching English to craft apprentices in a Further Education college in the 1970s. She then moved into community-based adult literacy work. When the City and Guilds 9281 and 9285 were introduced in the 1990s she refused to take them because she thought they did not meet her professional standards:

...the crucial moment came for me with the 9285... I just came to a halt and I thought I am not wasting time filling in a competency based matrix to show that I can do this job when I've been doing it twenty odd years and teaching young people how to do it and run other University courses. I couldn't waste the time... Quite a few people I knew were doing it and were suffering, they were actually very upset, very angry, afraid, crying, they couldn't stand doing it. They would say things to me like, "I like work and I'm a hard worker and I'm out researching and I'm like keeping up with my field, this is a waste of my time, I'm learning nothing new and being asked by somebody who seems to know very little about in-depth thinking about anything and being told how she wants me to fill my boxes in"...I thought I'm just not going to join in and that's when I got myself seconded out to University.

Participant Ten decided to concentrate on working on student support in the university sector and left her job as a literacy organiser. When we met she was studying for her PhD which she hoped to gain through her publications. She has since successfully completed it.

Participant Ten was an experienced adult literacy educator, manager, researcher and author who had had a leading role in the RaPAL network. Since the 1990s, after working for many years as a literacy tutor and organiser in the community, she had worked entirely in the Higher Education sector developing study support centres at the universities of Leicester and Nottingham. She has also managed research and development projects in relation to dyslexia and disability in Higher Education. When the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) was established she was involved in coordinating practitioner research for the Centre, and also contributed to teacher training programmes at the Institute of Education (London) and the University of Wolverhampton.

### 11.8.2 *Participant Ten's orientations to literacy*

The comments of Participant Ten in her professional narrative showed orientation to both the 'Literacy as a social practice' and 'Literacy as an experiential process' narrative discourses.

**Table 6: Two orientations to literacy (Participant Ten)**

<p><b>Literacy as a Social Practice</b></p>	<p>Quote One:  The <i>New Literacy Studies</i> people have gone off on the track of what actually is literacy, <i>how is literacy actually being used</i>, what are we really talking about, what are the <i>practices...</i> [others]...have gone off on the tracks of... how do you actually interest people in what they do in class...? they focus more on</p>
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	the group discussions, the life histories, the narratives, supporting each other through life's problems and so on...but the fundamental question is a research question, 'Why does this situation arise in developed countries with compulsory education? Why do you have a tranche of people who can't use literacy in a way they wish they could?' ... The present policy [Skills for Life] is based on the idea that the answer to this question is known. [Participant Eight does not think it is]
<b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b>	Quote Two I just think that adults have their own lives, <i>they have their own motivation, their own sorts of goals, they have experience that they bring to the learning...</i> So they bring something different to the learning situation really... <i>I think the schoolteachers in the main think it's their job to determine what happens and I think I had a facilitating role rather than a determining role.</i>

Quote one refers explicitly to the *New Literacy Studies* that is why I have selected it here. Participant Ten showed that she had considerable knowledge and understanding of the nature and scope of NLS research and that she had thought critically about it. She also made references to the *uses* of literacy, and to *practices*, articulating clearly the vocabulary associated with the 'literacy as social practice' approach. With regard to quote two, Participant Eight mentions adults having *their own motivation, their own sorts of goals*, and the *experience that they bring to learning*. These comments show an orientation towards 'Literacy as an experiential process'; as does her later comment, in the same quote, about having a *facilitating role* as a tutor. In drawing on both a 'literacy as social practice' and a 'literacy as experiential process' discourse, this participant closely resembled Participant Six. They also had in common the fact that they had worked with young people's literacy at an early Part in their careers.

### 11.9 Participant Eleven (Wiltshire)

This participant volunteered to become part of my research at the 2001 RaPAL Conference. We met in November 2002 in her hotel room near Lancaster. This was a

convenient venue because I live close to Lancaster and both of us were attending an NRDC seminar at the university. Participant Eleven had travelled up from Wiltshire to attend it. We already knew each other because both of us were serving officers of RaPAL at the time and had attended many meetings together.

Participant Eleven became an adult literacy volunteer in 1985 in Uxbridge. Before then she had worked in industry for nine years doing business information and statistics. There was no volunteer training before going into classes because the organisers were desperate for volunteers and, because Participant Eleven had a BA in the Humanities which included linguistics, she was taken on. However, she did manage to attend some inset training days and county/regional events which she enjoyed. In the late 1980's, she and her family moved to Wiltshire and Participant Eleven became an adult literacy volunteer in Cheltenham where she did a volunteer training course. Shortly afterwards, she was offered a part-time post teaching in a combined literacy and numeracy class and also did some learning support at a local agricultural college.

### ***11.9.2 Experience and Training***

From these beginnings, Participant Eleven went on to complete the City and Guilds 730, 'The Further and Adult Education Teaching Certificate'. A year later she did the RSA Diploma in Adult Literacy. Then Participant Eleven and her husband, who had just found work in the USA, moved to New York. Whilst there, she completed an MA in English and Comparative Literature. On her return to the UK in 1993 she started working at Salisbury College, again as an adult literacy tutor, but became more and more involved with tutor training. Around 1994 she became a part-time tutor for the Open University on a BA

course which, she says, involved her learning more about Linguistics and updating her knowledge. In 2001 she went on the *Skills for Life*, 'training the trainers' course. When we met, she had also completed an EdD.

As indicated above, Participant Eleven worked first as a volunteer in Uxbridge, and then as a volunteer and later as a part-time tutor in Cheltenham (from 1985-1989). At the end of the 1980s she went to North America where she studied for an MA in English and Comparative Literature in New Jersey. Once her tutors learned of her background she was given the opportunity to be a graduate assistant and help with the basic writing programmes. The North American state school system is built on multiple-choice testing and Participant Eleven pointed out that she soon learned that many students need help with writing when they start college. In 1993 she came back to England and obtained a full-time job as a Basic Skills Coordinator at Salisbury College. Participant Eleven did not like it there and describes it as "the only college in the land which by then had been failed as a centre for the 9281, the Initial Certificate". One of her jobs was to tell tutors who had already done the 9281 that they had to do it again because their previous training was not up to standard. She stayed at Salisbury for two years and left when her son was born around 1995. Afterwards she went back into part time teaching and continued to be involved with in-service tutor training; although she pointed out that this was dwindling because people's timetables had become so full that they were too busy to attend. From 1997 until I interviewed her in 2002, Participant Eleven had also been a part-time Open University tutor on a level 3 undergraduate BA course, 'English, Language and Literacy'. She had also continued working in part-time adult literacy teaching at a college in Wiltshire where she was also designing distance learning packages for tutors. Although she

had completed the *Skills for Life* ‘training the trainers’ course she had given up this training role because she did not approve of the prescriptive teaching it involved.

### 11.9.2 *Participant Eleven’s orientations to literacy*

Participant Eleven’s comments orientated her mainly to ‘Literacy as an experiential process’ although she also made comments which showed an orientation to the ‘literacy as a social practice’ and ‘literacy as a critical transformation process’ discourses as well

**Table 7: Three orientations to literacy (Participant Eleven)**

<p><b>Literacy as an experiential process</b></p>	<p>Quote One The important thing is that I then went on to the ..... Further and Adult Education Teaching Certificate, City and Guilds 730 which was a godsend because I had a wonderful tutor who <i>facilitated</i>... And I think that has underpinned my own practice for teaching.</p> <p>Quote Two <i>And still the ethos of teacher as facilitator. I can actually remember that term. It was such a key term at this time. I never said that I taught. It’s been really hard with the changes now because I am a teacher at the moment. I am not in a facilitating a role, and that’s the big change with the core curriculum. You are teaching.</i></p>
<p><b>Literacy as a Critical Transformation Process</b></p>	<p>Quote Three And as soon as they knew my background I got a chance to be a graduate assistant and assist in the basic writing programme... <i>But you had to take the teaching basic writing course, and, of course, a key text was Paulo Freire ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’</i>...It was wonderful. It was run by the guy that was running the department, Jim. He was brilliant.</p>
<p><b>Literacy as a Social Practice</b></p>	<p>Quote Four She went through her office and she threw loads of stuff away and threw some of it in my direction including RaPAL bulletins which is how I <i>then got into RaPAL and then started going to conferences, Which again is about getting into the New Literacy studies and a different way of looking at literacy.</i></p>

	<p>Quote Five</p> <p><i>...And then obviously teaching on an OU course which has a section on language and literacy practices... David Barton... section four is mostly ethnographic studies... Shirley Brice Heath, D. Taylor, Brian Street, Barton and Padmore... its an early paper that came out with Barton and Hamilton book. Katherine Rockhill... That's part four of the course and then part five is politics and literacy... critical literacy and the future of English ... and politics of English. It's like a half section, so it's about the critical ways that you can look at language... and then the application of that to the New Literacy Studies.</i></p>
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Quotes one and two show a clear orientation towards the discourse of 'literacy as an experiential process'. In these quotes, Participant Eleven stressed the importance of the teacher as a *facilitator*; a key concept of the 'experiential education' approach proposed by the humanist psychologist Carl Rogers. These ideas are discussed in Chapter Four. This view of teacher as facilitator recurred again and again in the professional narratives in Chapter 10 and 11 and it is referred to explicitly in the accounts of Participant Eight and Ten as well as in this one.

Quote three makes a very positive reference to Freire who was strongly associated with the idea of 'literacy as a critical transformation process'. Participant Eleven mentioned how she enjoyed studying his work. Quotes four and five show an orientation to the 'social practice' approach to literacy and are characterised by the use of the more academic label of 'New Literacy Studies'. In Quote five, she also mentioned the names of leading scholars connected with the social practice approach, whose ideas she used for the Open University course on which she taught..

### 11.10 Participant Twelve (Gloucester)

This participant contacted me via email after seeing my flier in the RaPAL Journal to which she had recently become a subscriber. We arranged to meet at her place of work, a training agency. We had never seen each other before.

#### 11.10.1 *Experience and Training*

Before starting work in the training sector in 1990 Participant Twelve did a degree in Languages: English with French and Italian, at London University. This was followed by a PGCE specialising in Middle School Education. In 1994 she also completed a training course for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). This consisted of evening classes for three hours a week for a year and she described it as “very much linguistically based”, as compared to her first degree which concentrated on literature. She later completed the City and Guilds 9285 and also an MEd. Whilst doing the MEd, Participant Twelve did a module on specific learning difficulties where she was allowed to concentrate on adults with dyslexia. She is now a member of the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) and is qualified to assess people for dyslexia.

After finishing her first degree and PGCE, Participant Twelve taught French and English in a secondary school in Gloucester for seven years. She gave up full-time work to start her family but carried on doing part-time supply work, some at the school where her husband was head teacher. She also went into home tuition working with children who had been excluded, or were school phobic or long-term ill. Around this time, about 1990, she also took her youngest daughter to a playgroup which was situated in an old school. Across the yard was a school building which had been adapted for adult training provision. Rather

than going home for the time her daughter was attending playgroup Participant Twelve asked the people at the adult training facility if she could help out with reading as a volunteer. She was taken on and after a term was offered paid work for one day a week. The trainees she taught were being given work-based training funded by the Riverside Authority. This involved laying paths and canal renovations. Some of the trainees had special needs and Participant Twelve was taken on to give them extra tuition in English and Maths. She was still there when we met in 2002 and she had progressed to the post of Training Manager. As well as being the co-ordinator for Basic Skills she was also overseeing the whole training area and interviewed all the trainees before their placement. About half of her time was spent on teaching and half on administrative work. Participant Twelve had noticed “massive differences” between teaching children and teaching adults, especially in the area of discipline, and said that she found that the work at the training centre had a much “nicer atmosphere” about it and stressed that she wouldn’t “find it very comfortable going back into schools”.

With regard to the, then, new *Skills for Life* teaching qualifications for Basic Skills tutors, Participant Twelve was concerned that tutors who were more practical than theoretical in their approach would be sidelined or made redundant. She herself had not yet taken the *Skills for Life* curriculum training but found the prospect “scary”:

If you are going to teach adult literacy you need to have a level 4 language qualification. And they are talking about linguistics, they are talking about language acquisition and it looks very scary, level 4. If you are going to teach adult numeracy you need to have the teaching qualification plus you need to

have a numeracy qualification at level 4 and... its half way through a degree level is what they are talking about: they are talking about HND level. And that is, I think, pretty scary. I know they are trying to upgrade the level of basic skills teachers, but I think that might well put a few people off.

**11.10.2 Participant Twelve’s orientations to literacy**

In her account, Participant Twelve concentrated more on the practicalities of her work rather than on the values and assumptions behind it. However, she did say that the City and Guilds 9285 taught her a lot about adult literacy work which she perceived as being learner centred. She had never heard of Malcolm Knowles and his notion of andragogy but any comments she made about the teaching and learning of literacy reflected her values and assumptions and her orientation towards the narrative discourse of ‘literacy is an experiential process’ which builds on the intellectual foundations laid by writers such as Knowles.

**Table 8: An orientation to literacy as an experiential process (Participant Twelve)**

<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote One  <i>The whole aspect of teaching adults as adults rather than as children. The whole aspect of sharing things rather than just filling up containers.</i></p> <p>Quote Two  <i>a lot of the people who come here and I am teaching, have things that they can teach me, because they have other skills, they have other life experiences that I haven’t had.</i></p>
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Participant Twelve talks about *sharing things* with her trainees in quote one, and about the trainees having *things that they can teach me* in quote two. These were the only two

comments she made which showed any orientation to a particular narrative discourse about literacy: the one which assumes literacy to be an experiential process.

#### 11.11 Participant Thirteen (Lancaster)

This participant contacted me via email after seeing my flier in the RaPAL Journal. We did not know each other and we decided that we should meet in a snack bar on the campus of Lancaster University rather than at her home in the town.

Participant Thirteen started off by talking about her family background; this was important to her because she thought that it had influenced who she was:

...I have to say I was brought up in the lower middle class household. I do not come from the working class, but my mother came from the working class and my father ran a shop. It was an eccentric household in that my father was a member of a Communist Party of Great Britain, probably was until it packed up, or his dying day, whichever came first. Therefore, I was brought up to go to a Methodist Sunday School on Sundays and on Marx's theory of history and class struggle the rest of the week.

However, later in her narrative, she points out that she had a rebellious nature and she strongly resisted her father's political influence. This is apparent all the way through her narrative and in her approach to literacy. She points out that she became an adult literacy volunteer probably as a "middle class do-gooder" wanting to improve the quality of life of literacy learners rather than "go out and train people to change the world or whatever":

... which is a very wholly Liberal thing to say, but I don't have a problem with that really.

#### 11.11.1 *Experience and Training*

Participant Thirteen had a Joint Honours Degree in English and Psychology and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education from Keele University. As part of her degree she had also done a subsidiary course in statistics for social scientists and education. After which she taught in schools. Three years before we met she had become an adult literacy volunteer at an adult college in Lancaster where she went through a volunteer training course and obtained the City and Guilds 9282; an initial certificate for teaching basic skills. She made some very critical comments about this experience:

they said they had got to train me which made me feel that there must be something special about teaching adults that I somehow didn't know. And the training was a bit of anti-racism, a little bit of anti-sexism, but only very little bits. It just struck me as being very, very, very superficial and some of it struck me as being bad, wrong, and not *evidence based*.

Participant Thirteen's reaction to this experience has led to her current PhD studies at Sheffield University which involves looking at different types of learner accreditations in terms of behaviourist influences; something on which I will expand below.

Before going to university Participant Thirteen worked for a year in a primary school; something she feels had given her “experience and knowledge to draw on in numeracy at the very initial levels”. After university she taught in secondary schools. She had only become involved with adult literacy as a volunteer three years before we met in the summer of 2002. She did not mention any experience of paid work in the adult literacy sector. However, whilst doing her volunteer training she became acquainted with FAME (Foundation Accreditation in Maths and English) which was an Open College of the North West accreditation scheme for literacy and numeracy learners. She had the following to say about this:

At that time I had never heard of Open Colleges. And we were told then “it is beginning to be nationally recognised” ..and vague things about how the levels mapped across to Word Power levels, which again made no sense to me at all. I wanted to try and understand it how it might map across to say, GCSE levels. I now understand in quite a lot of detail that this mapping is in fact very, very broad based. But there a lot of things are written as if it’s all very specific and precise and that interests me because it’s not. *It’s spurious precision. But I actually think you have to get into the positivist tradition before you can begin to understand that.*

As we see above, Participant Thirteen pointed out that part of her volunteer course involved being trained in the use of the FAME accreditation schedule. Her disapproval of it has led to a strong interest in accreditation generally which has formed the basis for her PhD.

Around the same time as she was attending the volunteer training course Participant Thirteen applied for a job on a temporary basis at Lancaster University and spent ten weeks marketing and administrating a workplace basic skills programme. It was designed for training tutors “to negotiate and market workplace basic skills products at all level really up to degree level”. According to Participant Thirteen some of the tutors did not like the course for a number of reasons; it did not concentrate enough on numeracy or ESOL; some people thought they had provided evidence but found they had to provide it again. Participant Thirteen felt that this was because the structure of the course was ambiguous due to the difficulty of accurately expressing the outcomes of the course in terms of behaviour and performance criteria, something on which she had based her PhD.

#### 11.11.2 *Her orientations to literacy*

The italicised parts of the quotes from Participant Thirteen show that she strongly orientated to the ‘literacy as skills’ narrative discourse and its links to positive research. Her transcript had a number of comments with this orientation so I have picked the ones showing the strongest orientation. She also referred to ‘literacy as a social practice’ and ‘literacy as an experiential process’ but was not as supportive of these views. (See the table with selected quotes below).

**Table 9: Three orientations to literacy (Participant Thirteen)**

<b>Literacy as skills</b>	Quote one So I try to look at the curriculum in really in terms of is it going to help people to develop <i>and transfer all the skills that they can use?</i> ” <i>But that in itself, seeing literacy as a set of skills, is not always approved of.</i>
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<p><b>Literacy as skills (cont)</b></p>	<p>Quote two I am more interested in literacy, but I have to get interested in numeracy because <i>I am trying to work in a positivist tradition and I have to be able to read statistics.</i></p> <p>Quote Three <i>So I am not opposed to what might be criticised as technician or cognitive psychology approaches because I think people want to come. As I said before they want to learn to read and write and not be lectured on political this, that and the other, do they? This is a very conservative thing to say. But I believe that the communist, Gramsci, spent his time in prison writing letters complaining that his children weren't being taught spelling and punctuation in school.</i></p> <p>Quote Four But I would say if a <i>phonic</i> approach helps somebody, I don't care if it's Right Wing or Left Wing. To me some things it's silly to politicise.</p>
<p><b>Literacy as a Social Practice</b></p>	<p>Quote Five When people start talking about culture and so on, then its, yes it's <i>socially constructive</i>, this, that and the other. But things like pain and hunger aren't. I can see the point of accountability and trying to evaluate and assess by <i>a whole range of techniques including statistical ones.</i></p>
<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote Six The difference I would suppose with adults really is that, <i>one main difference is that you would expect them to be motivated to learn ... So obviously the power situation ought to be different with adults. It should be a partnership.</i></p> <p>Quote Seven Yes I have [come across the term andragogy]. And then there are issues about whether that is teaching men and whether women learn differently from men as opposed to pedagogy which in itself a sexist term because it's about... A pedagogue was a Greek slave I think who looked after the children. So <i>I think it's a big thing but it's over-stated. Because to me it implies that children are passive and I don't think they are. I think children learn actively. I haven't really gone into that in a lot of detail, but I have come across the term.</i></p>

In quote one this participant talks about learners being able to *transfer* their skills. The idea that learners are able to transfer skills from one social context to another is a key assumption of the 'literacy as skills' approach. In Quotes two and three, Participant Thirteen illustrates the links between literacy as skills, the philosophy of positivism (quote two) and the learning theories of cognitive psychologists (quote three). In these quotes she categorically states that she is *trying to work in a positivist tradition and to be able to read statistics* in respect of her research. She makes it quite plain that she is *not opposed to what might be criticised as technicist or cognitive psychology approaches* because she thinks learners prefer these because *they want to learn to read and write and not be lectured on political this, that and the other, do they?* In quote four she supports the use of promoting *phonic* approaches which are often interpreted as having their intellectual foundation in the 'literacy as skills' school of thought.

With regard to the 'literacy as a social practice' discourse (quote five) indicates that Participant Thirteen accepts that literacy might be *socially constructive, this, that and the other* but believes it can be evaluated and assessed *by a whole range of techniques including statistical ones*. Quotes six and seven have been identified as orientating to the 'literacy is an experiential approach'. The idea that there are big *differences* (quotes six and seven) between teaching adults and teaching children is accepted by Participant Thirteen. She thinks, however, that *it's a big thing but it's over-stated* because it *implies that children are passive and I don't think they are. I think children learn actively*.

### 11.12 Participant Fourteen (Non RaPAL member, Lancashire)

I asked this participant to take part in my research because she was a non-member of RaPAL and I wanted to see if her comments differed in any way from those of the rest of my participants. We met in the mid 1980's when we worked together at the same college (see below). We are still on friendly terms although this is now maintained through sending each other Christmas cards. She opted for us to meet in her own home.

#### 11.12.1 *Experience and Training*

Participant Fourteen described her own education, which consisted of going to grammar school and then to university, as being “very standard”. Her degree was in English and she followed this with a PGCE. After her PGCE she taught A levels and GCE English in schools before leaving to start her family. She kept on part-time Teaching, doing A level English at evening classes at a local FE college. The college then introduced her to ESOL teaching and she took an RSA Diploma which was related to teaching English as a Foreign Language. Through this work she was introduced to adult literacy teaching and took the RSA Diploma in teaching Adult Literacy. She was pleased to have done the RSA courses because she felt they “saved” her from having to do the City and Guilds 9285:

My feeling about the 9285 was that it was more or less if you can do it you record it. You get the marks for what you can do rather than actually learning anything new...

When we met, Participant Fourteen had just completed the *Skills for Life* curriculum Training.

After taking her PGCE, Participant Fourteen got a job in a direct grant school where she was 'a second' in an English department teaching A levels and GCE (as it was known in those days). She really enjoyed the work because the children were so well behaved. However, according to Participant Fourteen, she could not obtain qualified teacher status in a direct grant school, only in a state comprehensive school. For that reason she left and went into a comprehensive school as head of English which she described as being part of a humanities faculty covering languages as well as English. After three years she gave up full-time work to start her family. However, Participant Fourteen knew she would miss teaching and took on an evening class teaching A level English which she did for three or four years. When her child was about three, Participant Fourteen was asked to teach on an advanced ESOL class because the college was short staffed. She was reassured that:

all I would have to do was chatter to people and it would be all right. "Keep them talking and would I do an hour's session". So I did this session; really enjoyed it and they took me on and gave me more work. The work wasn't really working towards any accreditation. They were conversation classes and the whole thing was very loose. People came and went and... it was very enjoyable. I might have done about four hours a week maximum.

Her line manager suggested that Participant Fourteen should take a qualification for her work and Participant Fourteen completed the RSA Diploma for teaching English as a Second Language. At this time ESOL work in the area was very patchy and mainly organised from one large FE college in the area. Their remit meant that they could put on

ESOL classes in other districts and this included South Ribble where I was co-ordinator for Adult Basic Education. We often booked the same centres for class venues and Participant Fourteen took on an ESOL class based at one of my centres in South Ribble. Participant Fourteen's line manager then suggested that she should also take the RSA Diploma in teaching literacy to adults, something which Participant Fourteen had not thought about before. However, she decided to try it but needed a class. At the South Ribble centre where she took her ESOL class she heard that I was the South Ribble coordinator for Adult Basic Education and contacted me:

To do that course I had to have a class which brought me into contact with Gaye... and Gaye said she would find me a class so that I would be able to go on this course. I took on a class. I think it was Lostock Hall...wasn't it?

After four years I left my coordinator's post. This was just as the college was introducing FAME (Foundation Accreditation in Maths and English). Unlike the previous participant, Participant Fourteen really enjoyed it because it:

...gave us a format to work to. This was competency-based; this was through the Open College and gave people a structure that they could work through. This worked really well. The FAME system worked very well indeed because it is quite loose, you can adapt it enormously to students' needs and yet it gave them ambition, it gave them a possibility of getting a piece of paper at the end of it ...and gave some structure to the actual lessons.

Participant Fourteen was concerned that the current emphasis on qualifications and accreditation for students was “very restrictive” but acknowledged that learners had to have a sense of moving on. She more or less welcomed the *Skills for Life* curriculum’s emphasis on group work because:

...because analysis has shown that if you work with eight individual people over a two hour period you actually get about... four, five or six minutes direct teaching and the rest of the time you are worrying about pouring coffee and... how are you getting on and how is your Susan doing at school sort of thing. So as far as teaching, the amount of teaching per person goes, students are not getting a good deal, and one way of rectifying this is by doing group work.

#### 11.12.2 *Participant Fourteen’s orientation to literacy*

Participant Fourteen’s comments in the table below reveal that she was orientated towards the ‘Literacy as an Experiential Process’ narrative discourse.

**Table 10: Orientation to literacy as an experiential process (Participant Fourteen)**

<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote One  <i>The general ethos seemed to be one of ...bringing people back into education, not embarrassing them, not exposing them... fostering them.[It] was very student centred ...and people learnt ...at their pace. It was all individual work.</i></p> <p>Quote Two  <i>and it worked very well I think in that we got to know the people, we knew them as human beings, we got to know ... problems... au pairs having difficulties with families, very, very ... socially based, the student was very important... the learning was important but only in a sort of human context ... but it was very important that they were happy and we did as much as we could to help them out.</i></p>
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<b>Literacy as an Experiential Process (cont)</b>	<b>Quote Three</b> <i>she felt very, very much that she was been stifled, that she wasn't... able to progress but at that Part they introduced... when you can work to your own goals. You could specify student's goals and work towards those goals and get something for that and therefore they introduced the ... College Certificates... which meant that [name removed] now can, if she wants, work towards a particular goal.</i>
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In quote one Participant Fourteen talks about the curriculum being *student-centred* and that work was usually *individual work*, with learners learning *at their pace with very little group work*. These are very well-known features of the approach. Quote two, where Participant fourteen talked about the importance of getting *to know the people*, knowing them *as human beings* and ensuring *that they were happy* is a further example of the humanist belief: that learners' social and emotional needs should be met as far as possible before effective learning can take place. Quote three specifies the importance that the humanist experiential approach puts on recognising the learner's own *goals*. This participant was not a member of RaPAL. However, she had experienced the same type of training courses RaPAL members had. This is possibly why her orientations were similar to theirs.

### 11.13 Participant Fifteen (ESOL London)

This participant is a member of RaPAL but we had never really met; just seen each other at conferences. After she had been recommended by Participant One I contacted her and she agreed to be interviewed at her place of work.

Participant Fifteen described herself as primarily a tutor trainer working on accredited basic skills courses from 1990 onwards. She started as an ESOL practitioner in 1979/80,

and started being involved with training around 1985. She states that the value, underpinning what she does:

comes from just the reality of being a teacher and you can see what learners need and what the system is not doing, but also it is definitely influenced by the particular pattern of training that I went through.

### 11.13.1 *Experience and Training*

Participant Fifteen started off doing a four-week crash course in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to help her work with some friends and colleagues who were dealing with Vietnamese refugees. However she had no intention at this point of becoming a fully-fledged EFL teacher. However in 1985 she did the RSA Diploma in TEFL which concerned teaching English as a second language in further and adult community education. She describes this course as “brilliant” and how, right away, as a result of doing it, she became involved in training herself. She later did a Cert Ed course on secondment for one day a week and said that it “bored” her completely because her tutors did not know anything about TEFL or ESOL. Participant Fifteen describes how she “recycled” the assignments from the RSA course and adapted them to fit the Cert Ed; and how the Cert Ed tutors thought her work was “wonderful”.

This participant was a very experienced trainer and over the years had taught on the City and Guilds 9291 and 9285; the City and Guilds 730 and a number of RSA certificate courses but not the RSA Diploma itself. She had become a member of NATECLA (National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults) which

she describes as being “something like RaPAL but it’s for ESOL teachers”. NATECLA was unhappy when, in the 1990s, the RSA Diploma in TESOL (the one that Participant Fifteen had done) was closed down and the City and Guilds 9281 and 9285 were introduced. Participant Fifteen describes how NATECLA created its own teacher-training working party which tried to talk to City and Guilds about the make up of the 9281 and the 9285 but they:

...weren’t listened to; the City and Guilds were very frosty. Who are you... you lot?

When I met her, Participant Fifteen was involved with the *Skills for Life* tutor training schemes where she is working on bringing together specialist basic skills tutors and more generalist teachers who deliver Cert Ed courses. She feels that both look down on each other:

It’s quite remarkable. You talk to people who deliver Cert Eds who think that anybody who is involved in basic skills teacher training are training do-gooders, helping people... You talk to people who come from the specialist tradition and they think “this lot haven’t got a clue about methodology and how to do it”.

### 11.13.2 *Participant Fifteen’s orientation to literacy*

This Participant described some of her own training as “quite radical” but her comments generally orientated her to the narrative discourse that literacy is an experiential process.

**Table 11: Orientation to literacy as experiential process (Participant Fifteen)**

<p><b>Literacy as an Experiential Process</b></p>	<p>Quote One  <i>Yeah well there are major differences. I think it is one of those things where people get very touchy about it. It's the same subject matter sometimes and a very different client group and though, some of the things that's gone on at the moment, some of the cross overs with the literacy and numeric curriculum stuff for schools and adults...stuff like that and with the subject specs and the teaching knowledge and stuff, in the hands of somebody who has only worked in one-sector things can get awry but I think we need to be careful not to say it's all wrong. It's not all wrong it's just that maybe sometimes some of it was written by someone who didn't understand a different learner, client group... and maybe we need to tease out more of differences between pedagogy and andragogy, I don't know.</i></p> <p>Quote Two  <i>I mean there are major differences aren't there. Adult learners come and go as they choose and if they don't like what they get they walk back out the door and kids have to stay and suffer it. Also adult learners, I mean given all their stuff about different learning styles and of course the prevalence of dyslexic features in the adult literacy population is that the kind of methodology used in school clearly failed ...so therefore, methodology speaking I think there is massive differences. Pedagogy gets used as a generic term, isn't it, that's true. I've seen examples of primary school teachers being brilliant as adult literacy teachers and I've seen others where it has been disastrous. I mean, if you can, I think actually if you're a teacher that's really got the skill for being learner-centred then you should be able to shift between one sector and the other.</i></p> <p>Quote three  <i>It's all about learner centred and adults who only learn if they want to learn and stuff like that.</i></p>
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Quotes one and two indicate an orientation towards the experiential approach: Participant Fifteen pointed out that it is important for teaching to be *learner-centred* (quote two). She also pointed out that there were major *differences* (quotes one and two) between teaching children and teaching adults, mentioning that sometimes the same subject matter has to be taught to different client groups. When subject specifications and teaching knowledge have to be combined by someone who has only had the experience of working in one sector *things can get awry*. Participant Fourteen suggested that *maybe we need to tease out more of the differences between pedagogy and andragogy*. However, she did modify this and said that if teachers had the skills for being learner-centred they should be able to move from one sector to the other. With regard to quote three, Participant Fifteen was referring here to a list of assumptions about adults learning which she had compiled with other trainers. It was used to inform their course members that learning should be *learner-centred* and that adults would *only learn if they want to learn*. She indicated that she still used the list a great deal when doing her own training.

## Chapter 12

### Summary and Interpretations

#### 12.1 Introduction

At this stage it is considered standard practice to write a last chapter summarising the research, reaching a set of conclusions, and recommending ideas for future research.

However, as an educational researcher engaged in a postmodern train of thought, I prefer to 'interpret' rather than 'conclude'. As I mentioned earlier in my research text, the act of 'concluding' implies an 'end', or a 'totality'. The research findings then become regarded as a 'fixed' base on which to build actions for future research. This is inappropriate here, in the sense that the findings from the 'professional narratives' cannot be 'totalised' or have an 'end'. They can only ever be partial or provisional because the professional narratives, on which they are based, manifested themselves in particular contexts, times and places chosen individually by each participant. If participants had chosen different contexts, times and places in which to tell their professional narratives, and a person other than me to listen to them, then different *interpretations* would have emerged. Therefore, it is impossible to 'conclude' anything. Furthermore, each participant had values and assumptions about adult literacy and adopted a 'position' about it. Again, these 'positions' were partial and provisional because they were also influenced by the mores of different contexts, times and places in which participants individually experienced adult literacy. Their 'positions' could easily change when they encounter adult literacy according to the mores of different contexts, times and places in which they experience it in the future. This partiality also applies to me as a researcher and to the readers of this research text. When I

analysed the participants' narratives I *re-interpreted* them according to my current 'position' with regard to adult literacy. In turn, readers of this text will *re-interpret* them yet again, according to their 'positions' about it at the time of reading. Therefore, instead of 'conclusions' this chapter offers 'insights' based on the 'interpretations' of the literature and data I researched from my perspective. **Readers are** invited to make 'insights' and 'interpretations' from their own perspectives too.

## 12.2 Organisation of Chapter

The next section, 12.3, introduces my summary of the research process and the insights it threw up. It re-states the questions for which my research was designed to generate insights (not answers). Next, 12.3.1 reminds the reader of the research decisions I made and the actions I took in order to glean those insights. In 12.3.2, I collate the data to illustrate the ways in which participants entered into the adult literacy field, the type of institutional spaces they occupied, and their interest in linking research and practice. My account continues in 12.3.3 which focuses on the participants' orientations towards specific narrative discourses about literacy. It identifies the most common orientations, the most common blends of discourses, and the dominant one. Importantly, it ends by weighing up the impact the narrative discourses have had on practitioners. 12.4 outlines the constraints on this study, and 12.5 suggests possibilities, from my perspective, for future research. The chapter, and the thesis, ends with section 12.6, which makes some points about the value of using a postmodern research approach.

### 12.3 Summary of the research process and insights emerging

This section is a review of the research process and accounts for my actions as the case studies developed. I return briefly to topics such as how I chose the participants and the sampling process, why I followed the procedures mentioned, and I give a summary of the results plus the insights which emerged. These have all been fully discussed in the main text. However, I have recapped on them here as a reminder of all the key decisions taken throughout the research process and why they were made. For clarity I have re-stated here the questions listed at the end of chapter one, which this thesis set out to address. The questions were: *What discourses about adult literacy have emerged in the UK since the mid 1970s? What are their philosophical origins? What impact have they had on the values and assumptions of adult literacy practitioners?* The first question is addressed in chapter five where I discuss the different discourses about adult literacy. The second question, about the philosophical origins of the discourses, has been covered in chapters two and three. As the following sections unfold they refer back to the remaining key question: *What impact have the [discourses had] on the values and assumptions of adult literacy practitioners?* and describe the actions I took to gain some insights into the issues arising from it.

#### 12.3.1 *The research process, the research participants and their professional narratives*

In Chapter One I *narrated* my own experiences in the adult literacy field and said how the experience of writing my own ‘story’, and my early study of the literature on educational philosophy, led me to take a particular interest in Lyotard’s concepts of ‘little narratives’ and ‘meta narratives’. This influenced my inclination to ‘see’ the world, including the world of adult literacy and educational research, as composed of narratives and, therefore,

it made sense to locate the research in the narrative tradition as well; hence my decision to use 'professional narratives' in order to collect data. The next decision was to decide on how the 'professional narratives' would materialise and be collected and I opted to use 'grounded conversations'. This was a way of ensuring that participants could say what they wanted to say without the imposition of an interview schedule. Any comments or questions I asked would arise as a result of what the participants said. Following these decisions, I then had to work out how to access the participants and decided to do this through RaPAL, remembering to take on board its biases (Appendix B). Having spoken with members at RaPAL annual conferences and read their articles in the RaPAL journal I knew that many of them thought deeply about the various assumptions and values concerning adult literacy and should be able to provide the responses I needed.

The next decision concerned what kind of sample to use and I decided that a purposive/snowball sample (Appendix D) was the best way to gather the data for the coverage required. This had to include participants from the main post-compulsory education sectors dealing with adult literacy such as Higher Education (HE), Adult Education (AE), Further Education (FE), Community Education, and also the training sector. Participants who were RaPAL members from Scotland were to be included to compare and contrast provision for adult literacy there with developments in England. I also wanted to ensure that I had included at least one strongly orientated participant for each the four main discourses about literacy. Furthermore, as there are some connections between adult literacy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) the sample had to include participants from this sector as well. Lastly, I wanted to include at least one

participant who was not involved with RaPAL to see if their values and assumptions differed in any way from those of RaPAL members.

As I mentioned in chapter nine, in order to start building my purposive/snowball sample I put a flier (Appendix C) in the RaPAL Journal in the summer of 2001 asking for volunteer participants. I also asked for volunteers at the 2001 RaPAL conference and advertised on the RaPAL website, using the same wording as on the flier. From these beginnings I built-up the sample until I had enough participants to ensure the coverage I wanted. Once the volunteer participants decided to take part and contacted me, I sent them an email (Appendix E) containing more precise information about my research and what it would involve and to ensure their fully informed consent. As soon as this was dealt with I arranged to meet with the participants individually at a venue and time of their own choosing in order to audio-record their professional narratives, produced by the means of 'grounded conversations'. This process was completed early on in my research because I could then start an initial analysis of the ideas in the 'grounded conversations' to inform my further review of the literature, and trace the origin of the ideas back to their philosophical and theoretical roots (see chapters two, three, four, five and six). Decisions about the choice of 'professional narratives', in the form of 'grounded conversations', and the implications for research validity, reliability and generalisation are discussed in chapters seven, eight and nine. I deliberately chose not to use interviews because no matter how open-ended interview questions could be, they would have defined and categorised, from my point of view only, what the research participants were to talk about. As I said in chapter eight, my own questions and issues were important but I did not regard them to be the only ones worthy of researching.

Once the transcripts had been transcribed they were returned to the participant with a covering email (Appendix F) for any additions, alterations and comments they wished to make. The final transcripts are in Appendix H. Once this had been done I proceeded to write up the detailed analyses of the data contained in chapters ten and eleven. Summaries of the results are shown in the tables in Appendix G. It will be useful for readers to look at these before starting the next section. Please note that participants were not formally asked to provide CVs or provide a full account of their qualifications and experience. I was concerned that they might have considered this as too ‘official’ and intrusive. The aim was to give participants the means to tell their professional narratives in their own way. Any information about qualifications and experience is included (in the ‘Professional and educational profiles’ section of the tables in Appendix G) because participants, themselves, saw fit to voluntarily mention it. Therefore, the qualifications, training and experience listed should not be considered a *full* account of *all* the education, training and professional activities of the participants. However, there was enough information proffered to form some insights regarding these areas.

### 12.3.2 *Ways into literacy: the trajectories of the fifteen participants*

Drawing on the tables in Appendix G, this section specifically relates to the data summarised in the columns entitled ‘Education and Training’, ‘Work experience and role’, ‘Types of institutional space’, and ‘Experience of research’.

### 12.3.2.1 *Ways into work on literacy*

The tables in Appendix G summarise the findings of chapter 10 (table 1) and 11 (table 2) and shows that the fifteen participants took different routes into adult literacy work. Six (participants 5, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13) came from grassroots beginnings as adult literacy volunteers. Seven (participants 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 14 and 15) moved straight into posts as part-time tutors. One (participant 1) moved straight into the post of full-time co-ordinator; and one (participant 2) came in from a research background. Two (participants 2 and 5) were men and the rest were women. Before *Skills for Life* there was little funding for the adult literacy sector which is why it depended on volunteers and part-timers who were quite often women with childcare constraints. Six of the thirteen women (participants 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14) in the sample mentioned that childcare constraints meant they only wanted to work, or could only work, part-time.

### 12.3.2.2 *The institutional spaces in which they worked*

My sample was designed to cover the wide range of post-compulsory education sectors (see chapter 9). All but one, participant Three, had worked in more than one sector. All had diverse experiences, working in two or more institutional spaces, encountering different challenges and opportunities. Seven (participants 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 14) had worked in Further Education (FE). They had experienced a variety of roles between them such as adult literacy volunteers, part-time tutors, full-time tutors or co-ordinators. Five (participants 4, 5, 6, 9 and 12) had worked in Local Authority Community Education, and were based in either community centres or Further Education (FE) colleges. Three (participants 1, 13 and 15) had worked as tutors in Adult Education centres, one of them (Participant Thirteen) had worked as a volunteer only. Seven (participants 2, 8, 9, 10, 11,

13 and 15) had worked in Higher Education (HE) and were involved in study support centres, or in externally funded research like National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) projects. One (participant 6) had taught adult literacy in the training sector for a private provider, as well as teaching it in the adult education sector. Another (participant 12) had taught adults in the training sector only. This was for a Local Authority scheme.

Six participants also mentioned their experience in schools. One of them (participant 13) had worked in both primary and secondary schools; Five (participants 2, 6, 7, 12, 14,) had worked in the secondary sector; one of these (participant 14) had also worked in a Direct Grant Grammar School.

The work of some of the participants in the post-compulsory sector included contributing to projects funded by other organisations and agencies. Participant One had worked for the Workers Educational Association (WEA), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Centreprise Bookshop and the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU). Participant Two had carried out ALBSU research projects for the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER). Three participants (2, 10, 15,) had been involved with National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) projects and another three participants (4, 5, 6,) had worked for the Scottish Executive.

Overall, the professional environs of the fifteen participants in the sample provided a wider and richer coverage of the institutional spaces connected with adult literacy than was first anticipated. Some of these institutional spaces were precarious and some participants' involvement was short-lived, making it difficult for them to pursue their ideas about

literacy and development initiatives. For instance, at one point, Participant Nine lost her part-time post due to her college's re-organisation.

### *12.3.2.3 Linking research and practice*

As planned, all the participants in the study, except one (participant 14), were members of RaPAL, the national network devoted to building research and practice links in adult literacy. The majority had higher degrees. Eight participants (2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 - more than half) had Masters Degrees; five of these (participants 2, 3, 9, 10, 11) had MAs and three (participants 5, 7, 12) had MEds. Seven participants (2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13) had PhDs or were working on PhDs which were completed soon after the 'grounded conversations' were conducted. This is an indication that their keen interest in linking research and practice was what motivated them to participate in the research in the first place.

### *12.3.3 Their orientations to literacy*

In their professional narratives, the participants showed that they had encountered ideas about literacy and adult education in all the different institutional spaces they had entered, including Higher Education (HE), Adult Education (AE), Further Education (FE), Community Education, and also the training sector. They had also encountered ideas about adult literacy in different roles such as volunteers, tutors, coordinators, managers, tutor trainers, researchers, RaPAL members, students on Masters Courses, and/or as doctoral researchers. In the case of RaPAL, members had also encountered ideas by attending the organisation's conferences and reading its journal.

This part of the chapter summarises the insights generated by my third research question: *What impact have the [discourses had] on the values and assumptions of adult literacy practitioners?* The fifteen participants orientated, to a greater or lesser extent, to the four narrative discourses I identified in chapter one, and fully discussed in chapter 5. The narratives discourses were ‘literacy as skills’, ‘literacy as an experiential process’, ‘literacy as social practice’ and ‘literacy as a critical, transformation process’.

The purposive /snowball sample was designed to include at least four participants strongly orientated towards one of the narrative discourses (one participant for each narrative discourse). The reason for separating out these four professional narratives, as case studies for analysis in chapter ten, was that their orientations were stronger than those of the other eleven. Therefore, there was a greater wealth of information about the values and assumptions relating to the four narrative discourses. I started the analysis with Participant One because her orientation to the narrative discourse, ‘literacy as a critical, transformation process’, was the strongest orientation of all. As already mentioned, Participant Two was also strongly orientated to the narrative discourse, ‘literacy as skills’, and Participant Three to ‘literacy as a social practice’. However, Participant Four was strongly orientated to both ‘literacy as an experiential process’ and ‘literacy as a critical, transformation process’. The orientation of the four participants was identified through careful scrutiny of vocabularies which indexed their values and assumptions. The data analysed in chapter ten is summarised in table 1 in Appendix G.

The case studies of participants 5-15, in Chapter eleven are also summarised in Appendix G, in a second table, table 2. They demonstrate how participants’ professional narratives

revealed their orientation to not only one narrative discourse but to two, or even three, illustrating the fusion of values and assumptions they had developed as a result of their varied experiences over time. Every participant in chapter 11 demonstrated some orientation towards 'Literacy as an experiential process'. Three participants (8, 14 and 15) did not show an orientation to any other narrative discourse. Eight participants showed some orientation to a second narrative discourse. For instance, one of them (participant 12) also orientated towards 'literacy as skills'. The other seven (participants 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13) also orientated towards 'literacy as a social practice'. In addition, two of these (participants 9 and 13) showed some orientation towards a third narrative discourse, 'literacy as skills'. The orientations of participants in chapter ten, and participants in chapter 11, are brought together in the table below.

#### 12.3.3.1 *Most common orientation*

The orientation to literacy most commonly articulated across all fifteen professional narratives was that of 'literacy as an experiential process'. Altogether twelve participants (4-15) had been influenced by it. The reasons for this could be ideological preference or something else. For instance, looking at the length of time participants had been involved with adult literacy, and when they did their early training gives further indication as to why they had this preference. Apart from Participant Three, whose education and training for adult literacy took place right at the end of the 1990s, all the other participants' education and training took place between the mid 1970s and early 1990s.

**Table 12: All participants' orientations to literacy**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Literacy as skills</b>	<b>Literacy as experiential process</b>	<b>Literacy as social practice</b>	<b>Literacy as critical &amp; transformative</b>
<b>One</b>				✓
<b>Two</b>	✓			
<b>Three</b>			✓	
<b>Four</b>		✓		✓
<b>Five</b>		✓	✓	
<b>Six</b>		✓	✓	
<b>Seven</b>		✓	✓	
<b>Eight</b>		✓		
<b>Nine</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Ten</b>		✓	✓	
<b>Eleven</b>		✓	✓	✓
<b>Twelve</b>	✓	✓		
<b>Thirteen</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Fourteen</b>		✓		
<b>Fifteen</b>		✓		

In this period the ideas of Carl Rogers and Malcolm Knowles, who had both advocated that adult education (and this includes adult literacy education) should be experiential, were very popular (see the account of my personal experience in chapter 1). At this time there was also a strong 'trend' in adult literacy circles towards rejecting the skills-based approaches to literacy, which were perceived to have failed adult literacy learners when they were in school (see chapter 1 also). My interpretation of this is that both the 'trend'

towards rejection of the skills-based approaches to literacy, and the ideas of Rogers and Knowles, interacted to reinforce each other. Furthermore, the fact that these practitioners were exposed to these ideas in their early training implies that the ideas would be deeply influential. In my case, in the early 1980s I was just setting out into the world of adult literacy and finding it new and exciting. Therefore, I was 'honed' and ready to absorb every new idea I came across, and they have still remained with me to some extent.

'Literacy as a social practice' was the next most commonly articulated orientation. Eight participants (3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13) orientated towards it, but in varying degrees of intensity; Participant Three's orientation was very strong but Participant Thirteen's was rather weak. In chapter ten I said it was 'telling' that Participant Three only felt able to introduce the 'social practice' approach on the PGCE where she would be teaching in a higher education context. She did not feel it would go down well at the Further Education College where she was also teaching. One reason for this was that some of her FE colleagues were 'playing safe' and did not want to venture away from the 'Skills' approach prescribed by policy. However, some of them had never heard of other approaches to literacy, including the 'social practice' one. She, herself, had heard about it when she did her MA at Lancaster. In chapter ten I said that this raised questions about whether 'literacy as a social practice' was mainly in the domain of researchers and lecturers in universities and, of course, those practitioners who had had the chance to attend higher-level courses. It is interesting to note that apart from Participant Six, the other seven participants in this group had, indeed, attended such higher level courses. Two of them (participants 3 and 5) had Masters Degrees. One (participant 13) had a PhD. Four (participants 7, 9, 10 and 11) had both a Masters Degree and a PhD.

### 12.3.3.2 *Blending of discourses: the most common pattern*

The most common blend of orientations to literacy in this sample of participants was the one that drew on two narrative discourses about literacy: 'literacy as an experiential process' *and* 'literacy as social practice'. Seven participants (5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13) (7 out of 15) drew on both of these discourses. This explains why I found it difficult in some cases to place their comments in one 'camp' or the other.

### 12.3.3.3 *A dominant discourse?*

The least common pattern of orientation was to the dominant, contemporary discourse about 'literacy as skills'. Only one of the participants discussed in Chapter 10 (Participant 2) articulated this view of literacy. Only two of the participants discussed in Chapter 11 (Participants Nine and Twelve) revealed this kind of orientation to literacy and both of them drew on other discourses about literacy at the same time.

Moreover, two of the participants discussed in Chapter 11 expressed strong resistance to the 'literacy as skills' discourse and had either changed their jobs or abandoned their workplace role (e.g. as teacher trainer) in the wake of the introduction of particular City and Guilds training programmes or the *Skills for Life* course.

It is clear from these findings, that the 'literacy-as-skills' discourse is far from being a dominant one for this group, although it is associated with contemporary institutional power structures.

#### 12.3.3.4 *Weighing up the impact of the four narrative discourses about adult literacy*

The ideas of the participants in the study were clearly shaped by the narrative discourses about adult literacy and also by political conditions, some of which were manifestations of 'a differend' (Lyotard 1984).

The four cases studies in chapter ten demonstrate that the 'impact' was very strong on the participants and had affected their practice. Participant One orientated to the narrative discourse that assumes adult literacy to be a 'critical, transformation' process. Her radical approach manifested itself in a writing project she had managed in the 1980s. Her ideas about literacy were based on the Marxist 'language game' which saw society as split into two classes; those who owned the means of production, and the working class who did not. A 'differend' manifested itself because the UK Tory government of the day adhered to a different 'language game' based on their perception of society as a 'whole' entity. In her view, they, and other UK governments since, were/are against anything which might upset the status quo and the powerful, dominant political and ideological views of the 'establishment'. However, Participant One believed in teaching literacy by political activism, or praxis, whereby literacy learners become critically aware of their material and economic subjugation (if they are 'working class' that is) and act upon it. As part of her activities she became involved with the publication of an irreverent and satirical poem about the, then (circa 1983), Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, which was published in the writing project's quarterly journal. This was noticed by a volunteer tutor in Norfolk who brought it to the attention of her MP because she was annoyed that a major figure in the government, which funded the writing project, was being criticised. Through government channels the MP then complained to Participant One's employer who imposed

restrictions on her activities and eventually decided to 'shut down' the writing project in 1985 in an attempt to 'stifle' her.

'A differend' exists when the 'game rules' of competing 'language games', or narrative discourses are incommensurate (see Chapter Two). In other words the 'rules' of one argument cannot be used to make judgements about the other. If 'a differend' arises, then, according to Lyotard (1984), both parties should paralogically engage with the 'rules' of their own language game as well as that of their opponents. In other words, they should question them, and sometimes be irreverent about them. This can be very creative because new rules of judgment have to be defined. On the other hand, an overarching dominant discourse can emerge that stifles the "differend". This is a form of "terror" (Lyotard 1984:64). This is what happened in the case of Participant One. However, the process of 'stifling' also worked in reverse. Participant One mentioned that she, along with a few others, became a high profile figures in the field in the 1970s because of their involvement with a popular BBC TV programme about adult literacy, and that this resulted in them being in a position to influence other adult literacy practitioners. Participant One firmly believed that the approach to teaching literacy to adults should be different to that used when teaching literacy to children. A 'differend' emerged when she and her colleagues 'saw off' the literacy 'experts' whose 'language game' was based on childhood and school literacy 'skills'. Participant One's notion was that if the ideas of the childhood literacy 'experts' had worked in the past then there would not have been any adult literacy issues in the first place. In the early days of my journey into the adult literacy field I had much empathy with Participant Ones' standpoint. However, my current postmodern, Lyotardian approach leads me to paralogically engage with it, and I now have to admit that Participant

One's 'stifling' of the 'language game' of the childhood literacy 'experts' was, in fact, another example of a 'differend' manifesting itself as a form of 'terror'.

Participant Three, who orientated towards the 'social practice' narrative also found her ideas 'stifled', or severely sidelined, because of the dominance of current New Labour *Skills for Life* policy in the UK, which is prescriptive and insists that all teaching and learning about literacy should be based on the 'literacy as skills' narrative and carried out in the particular ways stipulated by the policy. She was frustrated because, in the main, her colleagues did not question the 'skills' approach, and some of them were also unaware of the 'social practice' view.

Participant Four was based in Scotland and had a strong community education background. She was involved in developing a new national training project for adult literacy tutors which she wanted to be learner-centred and free from the policy 'prescriptions' of the English system. Her training in community education strongly orientated her towards both the 'experiential' and 'critical transformation' narrative discourses. This participant also experienced 'the differend' as a form of 'terror' because the older, established approach to adult literacy in Scotland was, like the English system in the 1970s and early 1980s, dominated by primary school teachers; many of whom adhered to the 'skills' approach. She 'stifled' herself because she was concerned that if her radical ideas became known to her employers she would be fired.

Participant Two - who had never taught adult literacy and came into the field straight from an educational research background and supported the dominant 'skills' narrative - was

met with what he calls the “rhetoric” of the critical and learner-centred assumptions of experienced practitioners who did not adhere to the ‘skills’ approach. In this case, another ‘differend’ appeared to be emerging because, although he was ‘on the side’ of the powerful ‘skills’ narrative driven by policy, Participant Two’s comments implied he was feeling some tension, and detecting barriers, created by the other narrative discourses about literacy that he was encountering.

All Participants (5-15) in chapter 11, apart from Participant Thirteen, expressed some frustration over the dominance of the ‘Literacy as skills’ approach because it was ‘stifling’ the other approaches they preferred. However, they, and their institutions, could not avoid adopting it due to the demands of government policy. Again ‘the differend’ was manifesting itself as a form of ‘terror’. Two of them, participants (8 and 10) were so resistant to the ‘literacy as skills’ discourse they changed their jobs or abandoned their workplace role in the wake of the introduction of particular City and Guilds training programmes or the *Skills for Life* course.

#### **12.4 Constraints on this study**

My research was designed to include participants from all the main post-compulsory education sectors in order to see how far they were influenced by the four narrative discourses about literacy, and to obtain as wide a view as possible. However, this meant that only one ‘grounded conversation’ was held with each participant. The time and cost constraints, travel involved, and the number of participants did not make it possible to do consecutive ‘grounded conversations’. Although the transcripts were returned to the participants for adjustment, not all of them wanted to make changes and, during the

analysis there were still issues and questions I would have liked to have followed up with a second 'grounded conversation' (see next point).

Secondly, participants were not formally asked to provide Curriculum Vitae (CVs) and include a full account of their qualifications and experience. I was concerned that they might have considered this rather officious and intrusive. Any information about qualifications and experience was included if the participants, themselves, brought it up and saw fit to do so. Therefore, the information about qualifications and experience listed in the tables in Appendix H should not be considered a full account of *all* the training and professional activities of participants. However, once trust between me and the participant had been established during our first 'grounded conversation' session, a second meeting would have been useful because the education and training information is patchy in the cases of some participants. Knowing more about their education and training might have provided more insights as to what they thought about the assumptions which underpinned it. Bernstein has emphasised the need to bear in mind the way in which "official pedagogic discourses" circulate (Bernstein 1991).

Thirdly, in the data analysis chapters, my 'reading' (as analyst) of the transcripts of the professional narratives is privileged. I would have liked to have worked more closely with each of the participants at this stage, checking my interpretations with them and bringing their voices more centrally into my account, but again, the time constraints were against me and as a lone researcher I did not have the capacity to follow up on all the conversations. A further constraint lay in the fact that their professional trajectories were quite changeable and I lost touch with a couple of participants in this way.

Fourthly, I was a lone researcher working on this project so it was not possible to combine the gathering of the professional narratives with ethnographic observation. I therefore only have the participants' own accounts and I was not able to explore the ways in which their ideas about literacy guided their professional practice on a daily basis.

Fifthly, having done an MA, and having worked as a research assistant in the past, I had experienced conducting interviews of the more usual type; such as those with open and closed questions. However, 'grounded conversations' were a new experience for me. It meant that there was no formal interview schedule and any questions I did ask, or any comments I made, were based on the issues raised by the participants themselves. Whilst this situation was novel and exciting I was concerned that some of the questions and comments I made might have seemed like interruptions. However, as I did more of the 'grounded conversations', this did improve.

Sixthly, before meeting with participants in order to collect data I asked them to think about how long they had been involved with literacy and what they thought was the ethos underpinning their professional practice at various times. I now wish I had asked them to jot these down, especially the time period, because I found myself often asking participants to pinpoint *when* their experiences actually happened. This would not have been the case if they had made a note.

Lastly, when collecting my data I had to travel a great deal, to different venues up and down the country; sometimes on public transport. Therefore, I only packed a small tape

recorder for the audio recordings. However, using a bigger tape recorder of superior quality would have been better because it probably would have enhanced the sound reproduction. Some of the tapes had to be played repeatedly for clarity and took a long time to transcribe because they picked up background noise which could not be filtered out.

### **12.5 Possibilities for future research**

For future lone researchers interested in doing similar work with ‘grounded conversations’ on the four narrative discourses about literacy, who have the same time and travel constraints as I did, it might be better to have fewer participants, say one for each of the four discourses about literacy, so that follow-up meetings can take place.

Secondly, future researchers in the field, in the UK or elsewhere, might want to consider combining grounded conversations and elicitation of the professional narratives of literacy practitioners with ethnographic observation and/or in-class audio-recording of practitioners ‘at work’. The aim would be to document the ways in which ideas about literacy guide their day to day practices. An extension of this idea might be to focus on those who are involved in the ‘training’ or coordination of volunteers and/or tutors and to explore the ways in which they talk about literacy, and the vocabularies they use.

Thirdly, it would also be useful to look in greater depth at the ways in which adult literacy practitioners encounter ideas and assumptions about literacy and to identify the types of institutional spaces in which these encounters occur. Close critical ethnographic work with about four participants – such as those discussed in the case studies in Chapter 10 – would

provide insights into how and why literacy practitioners accept or challenge dominant discourses and under what conditions.

Fourthly, the professional narratives in this study provide some glimpses into the ways in which ideas about literacy have circulated in the UK over the last three or four decades and into the institutional spaces in which they have circulated. It would also be interesting to conduct comparative studies along similar lines in several different national contexts.

Lastly, it would be interesting to carry out research with new practitioners, those just starting work in the adult literacy field after undertaking their basic training based solely on the *Skills for Life* ethos, but not engaged in research or doing Masters programmes. The purpose would be to see how far their *Skills for Life* training made them aware of the other narrative discourses about literacy, if at all.

## 12.6 Why postmodernism?

Before I finish this thesis, I want to make a final point about the value of using a post-modern research approach. As the writer of this text I have interpreted ideas about literacy from my own 'position'. However, what is more important is that I have learned to question that 'position'. If readers can do the same then this would be regarded by me as a positive way of 'moving on' rather than 'concluding'. Readers might choose to interact with this text; reject it, or even 'bin' it. However, the question as to 'why' they have made a particular choice will arise. In this way they will encounter their own values and assumptions about adult literacy and how it is researched. All I ask is that they

paralogically engage with them as I have with mine. Paralogical engagement is essential for stimulating creativity at all levels of research.

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Appendix A - Timelines adapted from Hamilton & Hillier (2006:164-165) *Changing Faces of Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy*, Trentham Books

	1970	1972	1974	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984
<b>Policy Initiatives</b>	* UNESCO <i>Experimetal Literacy Programme</i>	* Russell Report * BAS <i>Status Illiterate Prospects Zero</i> * Haviland Report		* Bullock Report * MSC funds TOPS and YOPS * Callaghan's Ruskin Speech	* NUPE creates WORKBASE	* Creation of YTS * ACACE Report: <i>A strategy for Adult Basic Education</i>	* Cockcroft Report <i>Mathematics Counts</i>	* Swann Report
<b>Institutions</b>		* MSC Created	* MSC ILTU formed	* LLU set up * ALRA formed	* ALRA becomes ALU	* ALBSU created		* ESOL added to ALBSU's remit
<b>Media Programmes</b>			* <i>On the Move</i>	* <i>Parosi</i>	* <i>Speak For Yourself</i> * <i>Make It Count</i> * <i>Cross Talk</i>			* <i>Switch on to English</i> * <i>Write Now</i>
<b>Professional Development</b>				* BBC Tutor Handbook & Student Workbook * NFVLS started * TESLA formed		* ALBSU Regional Training Programme (until 1993)		* RaPAL formed
<b>Accreditation and Accountability</b>					* Qualifications limited to RSA and City and Guilds, e.g. RSA's CCE			

**Autobiographical Timeline**

<b>Qualifications &amp; Training</b>	* Certificate in Education			* B Ed (Hons) Lancaster University			* Volunteer Training for Adult Literacy (Runshaw College, Leyland) * NWRAC Training for Adult Education	Numerous one-day and weekend training courses for Adult Basic Education
<b>Professional Experience</b>	* Liberal Studies Tutor (FE: Harris College, Preston)	* Primary School Teacher (St Mary's Eccleston, Lancs)	* Hospital Teacher: Preston Royal Infirmary	<i>Started family</i>	← <i>Bringing up family</i> →		* Volunteer Tutor for Adult Literacy * P/T Tutor Organiser for Home Tuition	

## **Appendix B**

### **About RaPAL**

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) is organised by members who form two working groups, a business group and an editorial group. The business group oversees everyday things such as finances, membership fees, arrangements for the annual conference, and maintenance of the RaPAL web site. It also involves itself with activities such as submitting comments on policy documents. In the late 1990s, my comments and those of other RaPAL officers were combined and made into a response to the Moser Report (1999), which lists RaPAL as a contributor. The business group officers, who give their services on a voluntary basis, include the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, and Web Site Manager. They are elected by Members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which takes place during the RaPAL summer conference. The second working group is an editorial group, and it is open for any member to join if they wish. It concentrates on the production of the RaPAL Journal, which comes out three times a year, and works with members who submit articles for publication.

Over the last fourteen years, since 1995, I have been in both the business group and the editorial group. In 1995 I started in the business group as secretary, which I gave up when I was nominated and elected as treasurer in 2001. I stopped being the treasurer in 2005, but still remain connected to the editorial group. When I first joined the latter in 1995, I became the production editor for the journal. At that time, it was a casual, part-time post which was paid at an hourly rate. The post involved managing the whole of the production process including proofreading, copy-editing, typesetting, desktop publishing, design and

liaison with printers. Nowadays, the desktop publishing and design is done by the printer, and the post of production editor is voluntary. However, I still assist the editorial group and occasionally act as an overall editor for an issue of the journal when called upon to do so. The editorial group has a journal coordinator whose job it is to find people to take on the role of editor for each issue. Sometimes other journal editors contact me if they want someone to work with authors who are preparing their articles for publication. The journal also has a refereed section for which I occasionally review articles. Having described RaPAL, and my roles within it, it is also essential to explain the perceptions I have of the organisation and what it stands for. This is important because I used RaPAL as a 'gateway' to access my research participants, some of whom helped to define the ethos of the organisation. Therefore, RaPAL has had an unavoidable influence on my research.

RaPAL is a professional group that was formed in 1985 to break down barriers between research and practice in the ALLN sector. The group welcomes ALLN learners, as well as tutors, managers and researchers, to participate in its activities. A few years ago I volunteered to write, design, and produce a RaPAL leaflet, which advertised the organisation and explained its aims and purposes. To make these explicit I used 'action' words to show that RaPAL was a lively, active group. I interacted with what had been said before about RaPAL by looking through a number of documents and articles about the organisation that the group had previously produced. I then adapted these to fit into one leaflet. Further interaction took place when I put the leaflet and its text before other officers and members, who made further comments and adjustments, until a final version was arrived at. The text of the leaflet reveals the assumptions and purposes of RaPAL and is reproduced on the page 6. They can be summarised as:

- literacy acquisition is a social practice and not a set of discrete skills
- research and practice in adult literacy are inextricably linked
- reflective collaboration in all practices of learning, teaching and research in adult literacy should be encouraged and, finally
- students are central to a learning democracy and should participate in all decision-making processes if they wish.

These assumptions and biases have been brought to the fore to show the influences affecting me and the participants in my research. It also shows that as a reflexive researcher I am fully aware of them

## **RaPAL**

### **Who are we?**

- RaPAL (established 1985) is a national network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacy and basic education [now known as ALLN].
- Our support is generated by membership subscription only so we are completely independent in our views.
- RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in everyday life.

### **What do we do? We...**

- *campaign* for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives.
- *critique* current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill.
- *support* the theories of language learning, known as the New Literacy Studies, which emphasize the importance of social context in literacy acquisition.
- *encourage* collaborative and reflective research between all participants in literacy work and maintain that research and practice are inextricably linked.
- *believe* in democratic practices in adult literacy which can only be achieved if learning, teaching and research remain connected and stay responsive to changing social contexts and practices in society
- *recognise* that students [now known as learners] are central to a learning democracy and their participation in the decision-making processes of practice and research is essential
- *foster* collaborative participation between all educational settings including FE, HE, AE, Workplace Education, Community Education and Prison Education.

### **How do we do it? We...**

- *organise* ourselves as an informal collective and meet six times a year in different locations around the country.
- *create* networks by organising events including an annual conference at which we hold the AGM. We also link up with other sympathetic organisations working in literacy, both nationally and internationally.
- *publish* three journals each year containing articles, book reviews, poems, cartoons, pictures, news of events and ideas for resources. These have been donated by researchers, tutors, managers and students working in the field
- *welcome* contributions from people like you!

RaPAL's current priorities are to take a more active part in national debates about literacy, to develop and publicise alternative views of literacy and to contribute to the professional development of staff in the ALLN sector.

## Appendix C

### Flyer for RaPAL Journal

Dear RaPAL Reader,

I am engaged in research for my Mphil/PhD at the University of Birmingham. I will soon be ready to start collecting data and I am asking you if you would be willing to participate.

**My research explores the philosophical and pedagogical assumptions about literacy and literacy education that Adult literacy practitioners value for their work and training.**

I will be using personal/professional narratives as my method of collecting in-depth data to explore key ideas, events, people, and experiences which have had an influence on you professionally. I am interested in collecting data from participants involved in all parts of the adult education sector including Adult and Continuing Education, Community Education, Higher Education, Prison Education, Further Education. It does not matter whether you are a new tutor, an established tutor or a retired tutor; whether you are a deliverer or receiver of training/professional development or both; all offers to participate will be appreciated.

You do not have to commit yourself at this stage but if you think you might be interested in participating please contact me at the following email address:

I will then contact you with more information.

Best wishes

Gaye Houghton  
Research Student  
University of Birmingham

## Appendix D

### Purposive/Snowball Sample

The ticks in the unshaded columns indicate how the participants became involved with the research. Some learned about it by reading the flyer in the RaPAL journal. Others heard about it at the RaPAL conference. The participants who had been recommended by others were contacted by me personally.

Participants	Flyer in RaPAL Journal Summer 2001	RaPAL Conference 2001	Recommended	Date of Interview/conversation
Participant One (London)		✓		23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2002 at home
Participant Two (Sheffield)			✓ By Participants 4, 9 and 13	28 <sup>th</sup> August 2002 at work
Participant Three (Blackburn)	✓			10 <sup>th</sup> June 2002 at work
Participant Four (Glasgow)			✓ By Participant 5	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2002 at work
Participant Five (Aberdeen)		✓		10 <sup>th</sup> July 2002 at work
Participant Six (Scotland)			✓ By Participant 5	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2002 at work
Participant Seven (Somerset)	✓			7 <sup>th</sup> June 2002 at home
Participant Eight (Birmingham)	✓			1 <sup>st</sup> November 2002 at work
Participant Nine (North West)	✓			5 <sup>th</sup> June 2002 at home
Participant Ten (Nottingham)		✓		17 <sup>th</sup> May 2002 at work
Participant Eleven (Wiltshire)		✓		17 <sup>th</sup> November 2002 at hotel near Lancaster
Participant Twelve (Gloucester)	✓			7 <sup>th</sup> June 2002 at work
Participant Thirteen (Lancaster)	✓			15 <sup>th</sup> July 2002 at Lancaster University
Participant Fourteen (Lancashire)			✓ By me. P14 is not a RaPAL member	Early July 2002 at home
Participant Fifteen (ESOL London)			✓ By Participant 1	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2003 at work

## Appendix E

### Information Email to Prospective Participants

Dear

Thank you for contacting me about my research and your interest. My project is specifically concerned with practitioners (tutors or tutor educators) perceptions of what they think are the key pedagogical issues that have bearing on adult literacy and the education, training and professional development of literacy tutors. I am building a purposive/snowball sample I would very much like you to be involved. If

I am asking voluntary participants to talk to me about the philosophical/pedagogical assumptions they think should underpin teaching and learning in adult literacy; assumptions that they perceive as being necessary and which they, themselves, value.

My research is not about particular training courses as such, but the *values* (based on experience) that participants think should underpin them. As I am talking about 'assumptions', 'perceptions', and 'values' my research is qualitative, interpretative and philosophical in nature. In order to obtain the depth of data required I am using professional/personal narratives in order to collect it.

As my research has progressed some of my personal assumptions, perceptions and values have emerged. However, I do not regard these as definitive and I expect that some perceptions I have not thought of will emerge from the comments of other participants. This is why, if we meet, there will be no pre-planned interview questions imposed on you. Any questions I ask or any comments I make will be based on the issues you mention yourself.

I hope this gives you a clear outline of my research and that you will be prepared to participate. The option to drop out is always there if you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the research process. Initially, I expect to take up no more than an hour of your time if you choose to talk to me. I will record what you say on tape; the transcript of which will be returned to you for your final adjustments or alterations. I wish to emphasise that anything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence, and nothing will be published without further contacting you and specifically seeking your permission to do so.

Best wishes

Gaye Houghton  
Research Student  
University of Birmingham  
B15 2TT

## Appendix F

### Email sent with Transcript

Date

Dear

I hope all is well with you. Many thanks for assisting with my research. I have attached the field text you contributed to my data collection and I would be grateful if you could check it as a true account. If you wish to delete anything or make additions and/or changes then please feel free to do so. Of course you may not wish to change anything at all!

The text is 'as we spoke it', with all the hesitations and restarts which are characteristic of speech. These are marked by an ellipsis and look very strange when written down. Please bear with me on this because my intention is not to be an 'idle' editor. Rather, my concern, at this stage, is not to impose my own interpretation on the meaning of what you say.

I do not wish this to be regarded as a proof-reading exercise but if you find any obvious technical errors (I sincerely hope you do not) such as spelling mistakes then my apologies. Please correct them for me because I assure you they are not through lack of vigilance on my part. They are probably through poor tape quality, or because of our different professional experiences which make me unfamiliar with some of your words.

Your time and efforts on my behalf are really appreciated.

Many thanks

Gaye

Gaye Houghton  
Research Student  
Room G7  
School of Education  
University of Birmingham  
Birmingham B15 2TT

## Appendix G

**Table 1: Profiles of participants in the Chapter 10 case studies and their orientations to literacy**

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
One (NW & SE England)	F	<p>Community Education</p> <p>Did not mention any qualifications or specific training courses</p>	<p>1. Adult and Community Education Coordinator</p> <p>2. Co-author of <i>On the Move</i> TV programme hand book</p> <p>3. Adult Literacy Coordinator</p> <p>4. Literacy worker: involved with volunteer and tutor training and publishing the work of literacy learners</p> <p>5. Project Manager for a writing project involving literacy learners in the publication of their writing</p>	<p>1. Workers Educational Association (WEA)</p> <p>2. BBC</p> <p>3. FE College</p> <p>4. Charity Bookshop specialising in publishing the work of disaffected schoolchildren, and also Adult Literacy provision</p> <p>5. Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU)</p>	Not specifically mentioned				✓

**Table 1: (Continued)**

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
Two (SE & N England)	M	1. Degree in Classics and Philosophy 2. Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) 3. MA: Applied Linguistics 4. PhD: Phonological Coding and Silent Reading	1. Teaching English and Education  2. English Teacher  3. Educational Research: Language projects  4. P/T Open University Tutor  5. Associate Director NRDC responsible for Adult Literacy research projects	1. Schools and colleges in Kenya  2. UK secondary School  3. In Assessment and Performance Unit (APU) of National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)  4. Higher Education  5. Higher Education	As a doctoral researcher  As Full-time educational researcher  As full-time Associate Director of National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy (NRDC)	✓			

**Table 1: (Continued)**

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
<b>Three</b> ( NW England)	F	1.Degree in Linguistics 2.PGCE in Adult and Further Education 3.MA in Language Studies (Literacy) 4. City and Guilds 9282/3/4 initial training for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL 5. <i>Skills for Life</i> curriculum training	1. Part-time adult literacy tutor  2. Full-time adult literacy tutor	1. FE college  2. FE college	-			✓	
<b>Four</b> (Glasgow, Scotland)	F	Degree in Social Science  Post-graduate course in Community Education	1. Community Education Worker  2. Community Education Manager  3. National Training Project for Adult Literacy	1. Local Authority  2. Local Authority  3.. Scottish government	-		✓		✓

**Table 2: Profiles of participants in the Chapter 11 case studies and their orientations to literacy**

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
Five (Scotland)	M	1. Degree in Community education 2. Community Education training 3. M.Ed. Literacy	1. Community Education worker 2. Volunteer, then literacy coordinator 3. Acting manager, National Training Project in Adult Literacy (Scotland)	1. Local authority (rural areas) 2. Local Authority 3. Scottish government	-		✓	✓	
Six (Scotland)	F	Trained as an English teacher	1. English teacher 2. Literacy/numeracy tutor 3. Trainer of volunteers 4. National Training Project in Adult Literacy (Scotland)	1. Secondary school 2. YTS 3. Community Centre 4. Scottish government	-		✓	✓	
Seven (SW England)	F	1. Trained as an English Teacher 2. Women returners' course 3. City & Guilds (9281; 730 & 9285) 4. <i>Skills for Life</i> course 5. M.Ed. 6. Ph.D.	1. English teacher 2. P/t adult literacy tutor (family literacy, ESOL) 3. Coordinator for adult literacy	1. Secondary school 2. FE college 3. Local authority	As a doctoral researcher		✓	✓	

Table 2: (Continued)

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
Eight (West Midlands)	F	1. Nursing 2. City & Guilds 9285 3. In-service training on adult ed. 4. <i>Skills for Life</i> course 5. Ph.D.	1. Adult literacy volunteer 2. P/t literacy tutor 3. University administrator	1. Local authority 2. University	As a doctoral researcher		✓		
Nine (NW England)	F	1. BA Modern Languages 2. MA Linguistics 3. City & Guilds 9281; D32E (Supervisor's certificate) 4. <i>Skills for Life</i> course 5. PhD	1. Volunteer tutor 2. P/t FE tutor (several colleges) 3. P/t HE tutor (Linguistics) 4. Researcher (NRDC project)	1. Local authority (Cambridge House Initiatives) 2. FE college 3. University	1. As a doctoral researcher; 2. With a funded research project e.g. .NRDC	✓	✓	✓	

Table 2: (Continued)

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
<b>Ten</b> (East Midlands)	F	1. Post-16 education (first degree then PGCE) 2. MA in Adult Education 3. Ph.D.	1. HE tutor 2. FE tutor + organiser and adult literacy tutor 3. HE tutor, managing study support centres 4. Teacher trainer 5. Research coordinator	1. HE tutor 2. FE tutor + organiser – adult literacy 3. HE tutor – managing study support 4. Teacher trainer 5. Research coordinator	1. As a doctoral researcher; 2. With a funded research project e.g. NRDC		✓	✓	
<b>Eleven</b> (Southern England)	F	1. Humanities degree, with Linguistics 2. In-service training 3. City & Guilds: 730 4. RSA Dip in Adult Literacy 5. MA English & Literature 6. <i>Skills for Life</i> course 7. EdD	1. A post in industry (information & statistics) 2. Volunteer, then p/t tutor for literacy 3. P/t learning support teacher 4. Graduate assistant (writing programmes – USA) 5. Basic skills coordinator 6. P/t university tutor 7. P/t adult literacy teacher	1. Private sector 2. FE college 3. Agriculture College 4. University 5. FE college 6. OU 7. FE college	-		✓	✓	✓

**Table 2: (Continued)**

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
<b>Twelve</b> (SW England)	F	1. Modern languages degree 2. PGCE 3. TEFL training course 4. City & Guilds: 9285 5. M.Ed. (w/ dyslexia specialism)	1. Teacher of English & French  2. Home tuition  3. Work-based training: volunteer, then p/t worker and, finally, training manager	1. Middle school  2. Learners' homes  3. Local authority training centre	-	✓	✓		
<b>Thirteen</b> (NW England)	F	1. Joint Hons Degree in English and Psychology (subsidiary course in statistics) 2. PGCE 3. Volunteer training (did the City and Guilds 9282: Initial Certificate for Teaching Adult Literacy 4.PhD	1. primary school teacher  2.English teacher  3.Adult Literacy volunteer  4. P/T administrator for work-based basic skills programme	1.English primary school  2. Secondary/ Comprehensive school  3. Adult education College  4. Higher Education	As a doctoral researcher	✓	✓	✓	

Table 2: (Continued)

Participants & region	Gender	Professional and educational profiles of the participants				Orientations to literacy			
		Education & training	Work experience & role	Types of institutional space	Experience of research	Literacy as skills	Literacy as experiential process	Literacy as social practice	Literacy as critical & transformative
<b>Fourteen</b> (NW England)	F	1. Degree in English PGCE 2. RSA Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language 3. RSA Diploma in Teaching Adult Literacy 4. <i>Skills for Life</i> training	1. English teacher for GCE and A level  2. Head of English  3. P/T A level English tutor  4. P/T ESOL tutor  5. P/T Adult Literacy tutor	1. Direct Grant Grammar School  2. Comprehensive school  3. FE College  4. FE College  5. FE College	-		✓		
<b>Fifteen</b> (London)	F	1. 4 week crash course in English as a Foreign Language 2. RSA Diploma in TEFL 3. Certificate in Education (Cert Ed)	1. EFL tutor 2. Trainer on City and Guilds 9281, 9285, and 730 3. Various RSA Certificate courses 4. <i>Skills for Life</i> tutor training 5. NRDC training courses for ESOL tutors	1. Adult Ed  Not specific but has a great deal of experience in all post-compulsory sectors including HE	-		✓		

## Appendix H

### Transcripts

The italicised words in these transcripts have been used as quotes to illustrate points in chapters 10 and 11.

#### Participant One (London): 23<sup>rd</sup> July at home.

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- Gaye I am just testing to if the tape recorder is working before I go and interview [name removed]. Well okay [name removed] lets starts with saying what you are finding in itself?
- P1 Is that I couldn't separate values from pedagogical content. I couldn't separate values from theory if you like, really... which interested me... assumptions, perceptions and values. Yes, it's about right. Ok... and you want to do this narratively.
- Gaye Yes, what it is I have written my own autobiography, and I have got it in there, and I have got a list of issues that arose from my own values of things, but I don't regard them as definitive because people have been in lots of different experiences and things. So I felt if I did an interview schedule, even if it was semi-structured, I would be imposing [Leo the cat mews and causes diversion]. It's got to be narrative research, and it can be personal experiences as well as professional ones. It's not about particular courses. There's been so much happening now with the training of tutors and things, and I just thought...well...sometimes people don't think of the philosophical issues as well. It's a neglected area I find, and it's something I wanted to... that's how my research is focused actually. Initially it started... my research started to be an enquiry as to whether adult literacy practitioners valued the concept of reflective practice but the way it was worded it was very dry for them and I thought... I want them **to** reflect. You can't ask in that mode [because rather than actually 'reflecting' they talked about the concept of 'reflective practice' itself] ...and so I...this is how it's just emerged and it's really interesting what people are saying. It's going to be a lot of work... This type of research is always back-ended... all the work comes at the end... whereas if you are dealing with a questionnaire or an interview schedule you can partly analysis it when you organise it, but you can't with this. It's called 'thick' description.
- P1 Good, I like 'thick description. Right...

- Gaye It's up to me to read things into it? What I will do... when I type up the transcript, I will send it back to you and you can add, change or alter anything you like, because you might even think of some more things when I have gone, once you've started talking. I know someone who did... I wished I had the tape on because she walked me back to the tube last night and said some wonderful stuff. And then...the thing is I'm I am very conscious of your time, I am very grateful for this time that you have given me. But I would like to show my initial analysis to people and then they can say 'I didn't mean that.'
- P1 Fine, I am perfectly happy with that.
- Gaye That's great. Thanks, wonderful. So you found it...
- P1 ...values and what might be pedagogical and theoretical content. I mean one of things in a way that's going to underline quite a bit of what I may say is that my history of working in adult basic ed has been partly... a feature of it has been almost like a struggle to reclaim theory. Yes. This is... there's a level at which this is a commonsense practical activity and then there's some really important levels at which it isn't [both agree] And I think always... because every wave of project that we've been in has been crisis driven. Then they have gone for the practical and commonsensical. Because it's easier to transmit it and you can get people started up so quickly. I think...I mean I actually think... this is not really were to start, but I think the Moser Report is a classic example of the weaknesses of that approach really [laughs]. Do you know what I mean? It's the plumbers' question.
- Gaye My answering when you are talking is me learning to be a reflexive practitioner, something I have to take on board...that is....carry on
- P1 The plumber question is a classic example. You put something in front of people...some reading test, and what you say is that x percent of people don't know how to find a plumber. Not at all! They just don't know how to find a plumber in the Yellow Pages [laughs], which is not the same thing. Anyway that is a very small, a little thing. I came to literacy... I am going to plunge in the deep end. I came to literacy like everybody else, by mistake, because it wasn't there to choose in a sense. And this was...I'm very bad at decades... this was early 70's and I was working in Liverpool as, originally, a WEA tutor organiser.
- Gaye In Liverpool?
- P1 Oh yes, and I got involved with [name removed] and various other people at the university who were doing fairly radically grounded working class education. Particularly a fantastic thing called the 'Neighbourhood Workers Course'.

- Gaye the 'Neighbourhood Workers Course'...What time was this?
- P1 This is 73, 74ish. Because I moved to London in 75, so it must have been. And the 'Neighbourhood Workers Course' was a course for people of whom there quite a lot in Liverpool. Who were working class activists who'd got jobs... in either sort of like local community centres or voluntary projects or whatever, whatever, whatever...youth work... And who were... they had done enough ground work with them to devise a course which was a very politically explicit course about... about why inequality persists in inner cities. It was at the time when...there was... the Home Office Community Development projects were going on and [name removed] and colleagues negotiated very directly with the Home Office that they *were allowed as it were to take basically a Marxist approach to this training...and you know... It was...Before the Thatcher years everything was in a sense much more relaxed. I mean the Home Office's behaviour about this, as I recall it being told to me, was that we don't have to agree with you but we can see it's a valid way of approaching this and some interesting things may come of it. And you are not going to overthrow the state by doing this [both laugh]. But you know what I mean, when you got into the Thatcher period and you only had to cough and you were likely to over throw the state, as we found out with 'Write first time'. That's a long way down the line. But anyway the point was really that I learnt from working with those students quite a lot about what would have been higher level literacy was used with most of them, although some were struggling at very basic levels... It was a lot of the foundation for the stuff I then did a bit later in the 70's around 'Return to Learn' and Access... no that was 80s I did that. So when the 'On the Move' thing happened, and various things quite...*
- Gaye This was Bob Hoskins. I know Bob Hoskins. I met him when he was an actor at the Bolton Octagon
- P1 It was the Bob Hoskins road show. I remember being, and this is not just nostalgia, I remember being one of the people who got drawn into consultations when *the BBC were going around saying 'look we want to do this thing. Can we? Will we just create chaos? Is there enough provision to respond to this?'* And the answer they were given, this was at a meeting along with a guy called [name removed] who worked for Lancashire...or one of the...He worked in Widnes. I can't quite remember who he worked for. And basically... and I was there staffing the area. *Basically what we both said was no there isn't enough provision but you have to do it anyway because there won't be unless you do.* So I was on two tracks and the important thing for me when I actually then moved in. I won't go into the logistical details of how I moved into doing it myself. *..was that I knew that there were two tracks. So part of my things about values and underpinning of analysis and so on and so on, is that I never ran the risk, as I think a lot of people did, of separating adult basic skills and*

*literacy issues from general issues of class and education. And that's both narrative and theoretical... for me. It was where I was at the time, it was who I was listening to, it was the analyses I was being brought into touch with. And the application of them to ABE [Adult Basic Education] seemed self evident to me and that was where I started trying to work from. So that's very important. The other thing that then happened... I have gone through this very recently with [name removed] for the 'Changing Faces' project... so I may get on the wrong railway lines, but I will try and keep focused. The other thing that happened was this very, very urgent need to train. Yes, okay, 'On the Move' is going to happen. I was one of the people along with [name removed] at Liverpool Settlement who got asked to draft bits of the original BBC Handbook.*

Gaye Right, I have still got that.

P1 So have I. We did the last bit which was indeed about values. Have a read of that. Because we were theoretically writing it about management but in the end we wound up saying... this is actually my first experience of censorship in this field, now I think about it.

Gaye Really... interesting... What was that about?

P1 We were saying 'in the end you will run the literacy scheme that fits with your analysis needs and values, around the situation. There was a reference to Freire and...that was 'the presence' as it were... the representation of that. I will come back to this in a moment. *But we had editorial trouble... The result was... that we fought and we lost. So like from day one I knew this was a contested space and not just a space of liberal good will. And so that underlies a lot of the things I think about how people need...what the professional issues are and how to do training. I think Freire...it wasn't just Freire, it was Freire and Herbert Cole and the publisher who brought us Freire, and Herbert Cole of course was Penguin Education. And so what we were able to see was that there was a continuity again between issues about and schooling and issues about what you did post school when people turned out not to have the maths/literacy to do what they wanted to do. And that was an issue both about origins, and those wars were so interesting and fierce from time to time. I remember, the BBC again, but at a later stage than this, coming to interview one of our students in Kirkby when we got the scheme set up in Kirkby. They wanted to interview him outside the school, the secondary school he'd gone to and ask him questions about why it didn't work. And it was actually before school term but the teachers were in and the head teacher was in. And the head teacher saw the BBC van outside and said 'what's all this about?' And he came out, did his piece... and turned on this lad, who by then was 23, 24 'as for you Parkes' he said 'As for you, I remember you at school.'...a total 'throw the blame back' job... So it was literacy for adults for me, sat inside radical education. And*

then when we got into the initial wars about training. They were quite subdued wars but they were quite vigorous. *I would put them as saying that what we had to do in a sense was to drive away the school's reading specialists from occupying the patch. Not drive away entirely. Not that there was nothing to learn. I think quite possibly we were a bit brutal about it, we didn't know as much as we could have. But we had to say 'no you just can't just carry over reading within the ordinary developmental cycle or even secondary remedial reading into adult life. It won't do as a sufficient set of descriptions and explanations'. And there were moments when... Joyce Morris is a name I remember. She was at Edge Hill College which of course, was in Lancashire...sort of in a way offered herself as the obvious expert. And in one sense she was. But... we were stropic and we weren't having it. And they sort of faded away. There weren't very many people with that background who then continued and continued to contribute to adult literacy because in a sense they hadn't time... weren't prepare to take on the position that they needed to learn about it.* One of the exceptions was [name removed] who wrote some useful little books early on, useful handbooks. And was part of that whole ...ground clearing and redesign about how you might train. Because of course it was volunteer training and that is what we were head-long in. Because how do you take people off the street who have got good will, extraordinarily varied educational and personal background... and bound to be only anecdotal experiences. How do you train them into volunteer tutors? 'Should you be?' ... we. started to think... and we were then, that is what we were doing. That was what 'On the Move' was. It was mobilise the good will of the population. And the professional back up, the professional provision was sort of second wave in a sense... not that there was very much of it about anyway. So that whole issue was very, very important and having Freire around as theoriser of great power and also very... really good exemplary stuff.

Gaye Absolutely! Have you read 'Pedagogy of Hope', his latest one?

P1 I haven't actually. One of the things I lost well I found it and lost it again was my notebook of when Freire came to do a seminar at Keele.

Gaye Carry on with that. When was this?

P1 That's what I can't remember. I did find the notebook and I know I've got it somewhere but I've been moving everything around in the archive... [indistinct]... early 80s, late 70s probably. *And the thing that is memorable about it was that A. H. Halsey who was also part of the meeting walked out in a snit, not really because of what Freire was saying but because he saw us as all doing, kind of, guru worship and he wasn't having it... very interesting. But it was very difficult to decode the content of that. Freire sat there after he'd walked out...I do remember this...there's this very small, very quiet man... with that sort of yogic stillness, as it were, and he just sat there in and said to the*

*chair, whoever it was 'excuse me I am suffering from culture shock.'* [laughs and suggests break] But there was this curious, one of the things that was very interesting about that experience was that in a sense how easy it was to become one of an elite in this field... *The sheer chance of having been around, and being identified by the BBC as someone who would draft that book, put about 7 of us into a sort of elite position.* There was me and [name removed] who did that chapter. There was [name removed], absolutely key person. I can't remember who the others were. [Name removed] might have done a bit. I have forgotten. I will have to look at it again and see. So when I moved to London... what happened then professionally was then in my WEA role was supporting some development in Kirkby which was one of those dratted new towns on the edge of Merseyside. We did a lot of work there, learnt a lot from it. And it was still, it was a small, self contained, local education authority within Lancashire and I can't remember the classifications, the statuses but it had its own Education Officer. We persuaded them to create a part time post which was then based at the FE College in Kirkby just to have an office and a telephone. And the post went to a very young woman. Between us we got into bits of volunteer training ground. [name removed] was another person in that area at the time who was involved in the volunteer training. And we appointed this young woman and to cut a long story short, she found it very hard and she made a bit of a mess of it. And there was a point where I was part of the steering group and I trying to get support for her. She and someone else was being contracted by the WEA to do a training course and was actually running two training courses and I was trying to persuade the boss that he could write a retrospective contract and pay her for the second one as well. Because she was on a piddly, fractional wage, point 4 or something like that. And it was not unknown in the WEA history as we very well knew that contracts got written retrospectively. He refused to do it. I flounced out and resigned and took on the job myself, and that's my first bit of professional working on adult literacy.

Gaye So did you employ yourself then? You were in the steering group....

P1 You were appointed by Kirkby. And it was a very rapid growth period, it was an extremely interesting. One of the things that was interesting about it was when I went to London. Hardly any working class people in Kirkby had telephones so you did it on the knocker, absolutely. And the FE college although centrally placed in this quite, in some ways, very heavy {indistinct}... although there was loads and loads community activity as well. I didn't find it a frightening place. But the standard discourse of the male FE teachers was 'Oh I wouldn't do your job for a million pounds ... driving your car around on those estates. They would nick your mirror and your lights in no time. I wouldn't go out there. I would just drive in from Southport or somewhere and do the job and go home again. It was very like that; which again is part of the deep strategy of the whole thing... of the situation, of working class men at the time. But anyway I did, without any difficulty, do that. But it got to the point

where there was an awful lot of stuff going on about was the college the right place to do it? I didn't do what she does. What she did was going in the day time and sitting in the staff room and moaning discreetly on the phone about how the college treated her, which is one reason why it was clear she couldn't stay. Poor lass! I decided that since most of the work was evening work, that I would go in there... sort of like 5 till 8 in the evening and I worked out - because the college hadn't a programme - I worked out of the office which is always useful. Lesson one for professional life... get the secretarial staff on your side. And I made the phone calls from there and interviewed them and it was all home-based and one to one. There wasn't any group stuff. But this became intolerable and we started needing somewhere where we could train. And I actually squatted at the council building in Harrington, which is where I live [both laugh]. It was this wonderful house overgrown with greenery and it was sort of in transit from this function to that function and I found the right person in the planning department and I so went and said 'is the water on and the electricity', the 'leckie'. *So I squatted it and set up my stall there. And it was lovely. There were rabbits on the lawn. It was heaven... lovely place to do low key, quiet, gentle community education really. And from there we moved into a sensible alliance with the library service. Because actually in the end it didn't last long, they did knock it down to build.*

Gaye So when you say low key community... were you a community education worker when you were... or literacy...?

P1 I was a literacy organiser working with volunteers. No paid tuition at all except what I did really. And when that got knocked down we moved into a room in Kirkby library and stayed there for a very long while and it obviously very helpful from a resource point of view, and so on and so on. And so that is what we were doing. But we were all the time training... we were all the time training volunteers. *My favourite volunteer... and this is relevant to the ethos and values questions, was the one who came along, this bloke. Because there were a lot of intelligent unemployed men about, as well the women volunteers that you get everywhere, and that was distinctive about that particular situation. And a lot of them had a strong political history. And this guy came in and said 'I don't need all this stuff about that.' He said 'just send me out there and I will take the King James Bible and I will Carl Mark's 'Das Capital'... no the Communist Manifesto, and I will be able to teach anyone to read.' And I thought 'well have a go'. And it certainly beat the sort of Janet and John type stuff that we were having. And so this was part of the discussion that we were having. Where does this problem issue from? Which in a sense we have already touched on by saying how we were situated and where the theory was coming from. What is it that people need to be able to do? What will help? What other materials? It was very methods and materials. You did your bit about ideology.*

- Gaye Did you try and teach people to think about why they were in the state they were in?
- P1 Yes, how come, how come - neighbours when you meet them in the street or sitting in a tenant association meeting and you know a person is intelligent - how come this is going on? Which in a sense, felt, for me... In a way that was the question that hooked me instantly in the first place because it is truly baffling. You have sat in compulsory schooling for 10 years at least, probably not a lot more in many people's cases. What was going on? And what's going on now. And given that is what the past is, what is the appropriate thing to do about trying to do something about it now. Not, replicate that. And that in a sense, when I was talking about the training wars earlier on, that was the one that we had to find. We had to say it's got to be different. If it feels like it always was, it will be like it always was. So you have got to find different pathways into people's learning. We did loads about Language Experience which seemed like then the most...
- Gaye I remember when I trained to be a volunteer... we taught a lot about Language Experience.
- P1 ...And in an almost resourceless situation... a situation where the amount of tailored resource was very, very low indeed. There was the 'On the Move' workbook...
- Gaye We used to make for a lot of our own...before Gatehouse...people used to get their own students to write. Blackburn College did a series of books...
- P1 They might have done. Yes, that is right.
- Gaye It was the early 80's I think.
- P1 Yes that was when [name removed] 'what's his name' was there...
- Gaye [Name removed]... was the County Advisor...
- P1 No, no. There was a ... somebody in the college.
- Gaye {name removed}... I was a coordinator with him.
- P1 [Name removed], that's right ... because I went up there to work with him when I was doing my development project. So in a way the focus on the training was in that way both practical and ideological because you couldn't make practical decisions without deciding what exactly was the problem was we were trying to solve. Obviously there were bits about learning and the different things that people bring to reading... and so on. But a lot of the time it was a kind of

‘What shall we do? What can we use?’ stuff, which was very much at the front of their minds. And so yes, we did do Language Experience a lot. And one of the things I found when I was going through my archive was a little folded A4 folded into A5, not even stapled, called The Work Word List. And it came out of group I did, worked with in a school in Kirby, hardly a [indistinct] and they were all either in work, in the engineering industry or out of work, or probably about to be out of work because the industry in Kirby was collapsing. Kirby has a famous city, Bishop [unclear] City. Well that was just before I started working there and they were all turning the stalls around. And so we were working in a kind of small group work, and we made this joint dictionary of hard to spell words. I was so pleased to find it again. So that was the narrative bit of that really. And at the same time things were happening nationally... and two things that might be relevant to this. One was just before I moved to London... I find it very hard to place this one, but if you are tracking the things about training, it was an important event. HMI ran a conference at Avery Hill College as then was... in South London... where they really were trying to pull together everybody who might know something or other about this rapidly evolving field. To try in a way... give themselves a basis for looking at what was going to be best practice for when they started inspecting it. And so obviously all the training, and we had the police wars and this and that. And [name removed] was a really very important link person in that, because he had come from the school’s approach to literacy but was smart enough to realise that it can work... everybody knowing where we were. And he had become our sort of steady man. All these flitty, come from other bits of adult education, ‘don’t really know about it’ people, inventing it as we went along. And [name removed] was a kind of anchor in this group and enjoyed that role I think. And it enabled him to try and move the company on. So he is very valuable. And that is where I first met [name removed] in his days where he wore a brown leather jacket and had little oblong blue glasses and a sort of hard man from Birmingham settlement.

- Gaye Really? I drove past his front door last night. My sister in law knows his next door neighbour. They sing in a choir together.
- P1 So that was... I don’t know whether there are any records of that... that is one reason why I keep saying that to people, whether there is anything in the DfES archives about that particular conference. I did think it was an important event. It would have been about 1984 or early 85.
- Gaye Have you got anything on it?
- P1 No I don’t think so. I think that it has not survived all my moving house or job. That was one of the things that going on. The other thing that was going on was... we went with bits of pieces of what we had done to... What’s the posh reading association called?

Gaye UKRA...United Kingdom Reading Association.

P1 That's right, there was a UKRA conference. Now I am not sure about the time sequence on this, whether it's before or after we started doing 'Write First Time', but anyway, we were certainly doing Language Experience by then, quite a few people were. And some of us decided to go to the UKRA conference... We must have started 'Write First Time' by this time because we were going to do a book stall. And we wound up... the conference in a sense rolled past us and took no notice of us. But one of the key things that happened was the stall wound up next to the Centreprise stall. Centreprise Book Shop in Hackney, which had started taking a similar approach to publishing the work of disaffected school pupils and was connected through... one of the founders of Centreprise was the guy who recently died sadly, [name removed], who was in Majorca, who worked with [name removed]... all of that analysis came seeping in, including the first kind of presence, in my awareness, of the issues about race and learning... particularly young black males is obviously a very prominent issue...and some of the things about that...[name removed] was black himself. And Centreprise had started to publish... [name removed] had been a teacher at Hackney Down School and started to publish the work of school pupils? *And so they had this stuff and we had the early literacy stuff and I thought 'Ooh, there is a correction here, this is really good'.* And the next year Centreprise had got some money from ILEA to have a shared appointment with [indistinct] College as it then was to start a literacy project at Centreprise. And I applied for that job and got it, and that's where I worked for 6 years. So that's another particular sort of grounding. One of the things I think, I probably saying the same thing over and over again in different words... *One of the things I have tried to struggle with all the time I have been in this work is that it isn't just happening in a separate space. You have got to maintain the connections to the province of initial education. You have got to maintain the connections to social inequality and the lives that people lead. You have got to maintain connections to the other ways in which adults learn in relation to their social and economic lives and activism.* The activism bit, which I brought with me very strongly out of that Neighbourhood Workers Course, that Liverpool... I think has always been the most difficult to maintain. And really in a way that whole history of 'Write First Time', was a history of what happened when you try and give due weight to, including literacy students, can be self organising. Because actually what we ran into was...I'm in the wrong decade. I'm taking about the UKRA conference... it was in the 70's, not 80's.

Gaye How did you find the UKRA conference?

P1 I don't know. I suppose... I don't know whether they were, as it were, trawling for the literacy field and seeing if they could establish who the enemy is...I think there was a brief moment when that might have been so. And I think we just sort of didn't play really.

- Gaye Did you do a presentation at the conference?
- P1 I don't think we did, I don't think we did. I think we just did the book stall. I can't really remember. No, no, we might have done a presentation. And I think actually, I think that was the conference at which I circulated a piece of paper which said 'can we produce a teaching newsletter for adult literacy?' which was the origins of 'Write First Time'.
- Gaye Way back in the 70's?
- P1 Yes way back in the 70's. That's how it all started and by the time we had really got passed the first issue... and the fact that we were working somewhere which did community publishing. So that whole thing.
- Gaye When did 'Write First Time' finish?
- P1 ...85.
- Gaye I became a co-ordinator in 1984.
- P1 And then we got mashed by Thatcher basically. It was a nightmare. This may be another conversation. So by the time I got to London, 'On the Move' had started, the handbook was circulated...The other materials started to come on line, was the Spirals books which were... They never felt like a solution to me but they were certainly a contribution, and they were a contribution partly because they presented themselves as stories you wanted to read and not as pedagogy. So there was some work stuff there. So then we had to start devising training courses at Centreprise which was also a volunteer based scheme. We move towards, I think it started as volunteers and then what we started, that there would be a paid group co-ordinator in any session where there was students and volunteers present. So the volunteers weren't answerable...they were directed. So we were training them into that structure.
- Gaye ...Can we talk some more about what you said about volunteers?
- P1 I always felt very ambivalent about it. I think I did. And on the one hand I am going back to the guy in Kirby who wanted to go out with the Communist Manifesto. If you can harness that curriculum, why wouldn't you? And why wouldn't you want to involve people who didn't have the social distance of teachers from the learners. Why wouldn't you want to let it happen in contexts like trade union organisations and tenants associations as a mutually supportive service. But that really wasn't very often the way that it was driven and usually there was a class gap between volunteers and students. Not absolutely always.... And then again as in Hackney there began to be a project... the

majority of these students were African Caribbean and other recent migrants or relatively recent migrants. Being a white volunteer was an issue...by the time that particular scheme folded that was the issue... So there is always that, and what this means is, on the other hand... since that is also who the professional body is, you can't say these people are not to be let near students. Because that would move all of us out of the picture [laughs]. So what you had to do was say if I think that I am capable of conscientiously learning about this, then I have got to think other people are. So you have got to try and structure the learning and partly structure it by always steering... I do think we were badly let down over those years and I would say myself, if I sort in some ways colluded with that....by absence of analysis of what adult cognitive processes are learning to read were. And I am not just talking about the dyslexia issue, although I think it's an important element of that, because I do have to say that the accurate diagnosis in and effective response to that is hugely important, and will unlock the whole thing for quite a lot of people. My experience is that it becomes the stalking horse for why other people haven't learnt. And so it's never sufficient... Its part of what you do, but you do... the abiding explanatory question which professional development has got to address is why does this recurrently and consistently crop up. And then the pedagogic question is going to be that given that is how and why it has happened, what is going to reverse it? What is going to make it possible for people to learn again. And I don't think you can do those things without a sociological grounding and a socio-political grounding I would say. But equally I don't think you can do it - and I think in a way we have doing it for a long while - without an adequate and cognitive and pedagogic position. I think that still to make... I don't know if you think that's true, and I have been out of it for a bit. I still don't think we know off the shelf what that should be.

Gaye When I started basic skills I became a volunteer and that's all really.

P1 Yes, conscientious, word illiterate, some education experience if half a field.

Gaye And it wasn't until I did the post graduate diploma, I studied reading and language that I began.

P1 And that you can tease bits out of that but the body of knowledge in that field still has not been seriously tested against adult learning in my judgement. Do you think that's right?

Gaye Yes I think you're right.

P1 So still you are always making bridges. You are always saying okay we will look at this thing which is interesting and relevant, and that thing which is interesting and relevant. But they surround your patch rather than occupy your patch and that makes it very, very interesting. But why after all this time...

- Gaye So in a sense it's quite good in some way what is happening now isn't it?
- P1 Yes, No I think the research and development centre [NRDC] is the most huge opportunity to try and systematically... In a way I am glad it didn't happen sooner, because if it had happened sooner it would have happened in the [name removed] mould. I think the fact that we have had 20 year's of saying, 'No that is not it.' [laughs]... It means that whatever they do now... Whatever they fill that space with... and that's why it really did matter the research and development centre [NRDC] had the right participants in it, and had all of the right participants in it. So that the ethnographic stuff...and to nationally comparative ethnographic stuff, and the earlier sociological work of people like [name removed] which I have to say I rubbished at the time and then got much more respect for afterwards... and then the situation with literacy work that's been going on at Lancaster. All of those things are really there. I still think there isn't anything as solid as there is with children in the normal development about... Okay, that is how the problem set out. But how does the learning take place? I think that if I went back into it now I would still find that I was drawing on... There would be nothing really to replace the set of personally admitted mixtures of theories and practice that I put together in the time when I was working on it. Do you know what I mean?
- Gaye Yes, I have been looking at the new standards for literacy.
- P1 The curriculum is fine (end of side one)
- Gaye ... I was talking about mixing special needs students with adult literacy students and how it used to cause problems. Yes I had terrible problems.
- P1 It was one of many things as it were that we all of us had to work out for ourselves and that was actually another important characteristic of those early years is that the amount of mutual support and networking was on the whole very small and I was very lucky to move to London because there was ILEA
- Gaye We had an adviser called [name removed] in Lancashire
- P1 Yes I think I did.
- Gaye He is quite good towards adult literacy, he put on lots of training.
- P1 I think he may well have been around in this early period.
- Gaye And he put on lots of training for adult literacy tutors. It was Lancashire. But the whole thing was... in those days when I first started, I had been in schools

but I didn't know a lot about reading. The attitudes in those days were anybody who can read and write, and you could do it.

P1 Not so at all really, and we found that out the hard way.

Gaye It was very political as well. When I was interviewing volunteers if I thought they sounded like Lord and Lady Bountiful... I would much prefer people who got something out of it, if someone's husband had died or they are in the middle of a divorce and some crisis and they wanted something to focus on. I would prefer people like that who would get something out of it.

P1 Some of them lasted 3 weeks because they didn't get what they wanted out of it, but I remember that as well. But there was a splattering of the middle classes around Kirby but we didn't have a lot of Lords and Lady Bountiful there, not in the reading centre really. Although what you did have, then, was the political middle classes... which is all of us anyway. And in any case I still think it's more about perspective and commitment than about origins. If we are going back to what underlies training it is something to do with clarity, back to where we were. Clarity about, and it's the question that the Moser Report never asks... How can this situation come about? And the only seriously worthy explanations are either that its something about intellectual capacity, which I don't believe, or that its something about the working of schooling which in a sense it has to be, but we are still dreadfully inexplicit about it, and about what. I was fairly red hot blaming school in the early days. But even if you are not blaming, there is an issue.

Gaye I was just wondering have you reconciled that with what is going on now in the national curriculum?

P1 Well one of the things that the National Research and Development Centre will have to look at is using the same tests. Do people who have been inducted into reading through the national literacy programme come out with better scores? They will have to, won't they? Have we turned this around? Have we now got the dam in as it were and we can just deal with what's in the lake?

Gaye ...Interesting.

P1 And my hunch would be 'yes' and 'no' actually. I think there are excellent things in that. There are things that... the amount of prescription I would find very intensive if I was a teacher. But on the other hand I have seen such positive things going on. My best knowledge of it in my previous job, I was among other things training learning support assistants, and I would go and observe them at work. So I have been in quite a few classrooms when they have been doing the 'big book' stuff, and the vocabulary building stuff. And in the hands of a good teacher it is good. And I think what I would say about it is

that, why it has a chance of being any use is not because its universal and prescribed, or even because the teachers have been trained, or even because the materials are there, although all of those things will have some value. But because it would be insofar as it's got the linguistics right. And I think that's the big task and that's one of the things. You need to get the politics and the sociology right, but that won't help either until we get the linguistics and the psychology of learning right. And that's one of the things that I do have hopes for about the National Research and Development Centre [NRDC] is that they will be able to as it were, put together a sufficient working analysis of the linguistic processes of adults coping with literacy, so that we can actually, know how to intervene. And one very small thing - I don't know if it will carry over, but it's not small in school - is that one of the things I have done is sit there and watching classroom assistants. One of them was actually being trusted by her school to do the 'big book' session. I love big books. I think they are wonderful. I wouldn't mind some for adults. Because what they restore is the group response. And the other thing which will relate to the linguistics bit... I will give you one little anecdote... I have seen a really, really good teacher working. She was doing 'What's the Time Mr Wolf?', 'big book'. And it has deliberately... when the children are chorusing this...it varies the mode in which the speech is indicated. So it's got speech bubbles with lots of points. And the teacher was drawing their attention to this, as you are indeed supposed to. And she said something like, say it was a speech bubble... 'What does that tell you? What information does it give you? What does it denote?' to this class of 6 year olds. Most of them spoke Bengali at home. And this was not a reckless act. It was a very careful act. And the whole of her practice around the literacy programme, around everything else, was about giving them the English they won't learn at home. Giving them terms of classification, cognitive language. Fantastic! Now something like that going on in an adult class you could really use. Do you see what I am saying now about the analysis? Deciding what the equivalent breakthrough learning points are. And language -about- language seems to me to be one of them. Students need a meta-language. Teachers need a meta-language because we come from a generation that didn't require one. Teachers need a meta-language. They need a reason for consistent meta-language. Again the degree of description in that programme is quite extreme but something slightly - and I do wonder about this necessity for learning some of the more obscure Japanese verse forms [laughs] as part of your core language about language - But things like onset and rhyme. We could have done with onset and rhyme and we could have done with it as a term we use with learners. So something in that space, a bit more open, but the state of the art linguistically... which includes the difficulty of the fact that you are moving from a developmental mental language acquisition to a sort of after the event... I don't know how to describe it... fine! Language acquisition model... because the major difference about teaching 6 year olds to teaching 14 year olds...because they have already got language.

- Gaye So how would you describe the other one? Catch up.
- P1 It's not catch up. I think it's got to be... One of the phrases that stuck in my mind, as it was with everybody, was the 'spiky profile'. I think adults have a 'spiky profile' of language, knowledge and use before they even get the spiky profile in terms of literacy. And in a way it's having a look at what descriptors and what concepts would actually help people change the operations in the way they do operations. I wouldn't have been able to say this 10 years ago, and I think it is something to do with... I think this whole thing about national literacy programmes in school has focused me on that. I have always thought that part of the problem, I have thought this for a long while, part of the problem for adult students is that they have been through an educational process which has left them with no way of looking at language, and the representation of language, accept various forms of folklore on the one hand and various forms of community behaviour from schools on the other hand... deficiency behaviour, deficiency labelling.
- P1 The whole deficiency model...
- P1 ...Yes. So as we know a lot of adult learners have come to classes thinking that they might have to change how they talk in order to be able to read and write.
- Gaye Chuck out the chalk and they have got to learn to stop blaming themselves.
- P1 Yes, but the changing how you talk... I think that fires both ways. On the one hand, one of the points of Language Experience was to show... yes, your language can be written down. I have been in a lot of conversations with people... I have had a sudden flash across to doing some work with [name removed] in Egypt on her adult literacy programme. And then were again trying to teach them Language Experience approach. The interpreter was brilliant. We got people to do this. We said, 'We want you as students to talk and tutors to write it down. And the interpreter picked up on things. One of the people in the class said that the word she was saying cannot be written down... because there is a very strong sense that colloquial Arabic, well it is different grammatically, but it is from official and practical Arabic. But what this exercise uncovered was that part of his categorisation was that it was all language only. The fact that it hadn't historically been written down wasn't what he was addressing. He thought it was a different order of thing, and that you couldn't represent it in writing. I think that's what he was saying.
- Gaye I am at Birmingham as you know... and I am doing some of my teaching now at Birmingham... I am teaching...It's TEFL [Teaching English as a Foreign Language]... It's TFEL work, teaching people coming to the university to do their post graduate courses, either their MA or PhD, and doing the academic

English with them... and I thought I must start re-learning my language myself. It's a good way to get to grips with your own. But the Arabic thing that I find really interesting because as one of the students said, if people are learning Arabic don't be very careful where you learn it. If you think you know the language, and you are going to speak, you just won't know a thing. It's totally and completely different.

P1 Even the evening classes in Hackney, which I did go to briefly before I was on this particular assignment. I left after 2 weeks because it was a group of Quran readers. It was a group in which a significant number of people who... the women were from several communities here... who hadn't done a lot of study in their early lives and who simply wanted to read the Quran. And the other group - mainly the large... apart from the odd person who wanted to travel and so on, and me... with my very particular needs - the other large group was young African Caribbean men who had converted to Islam who also wanted to be able to read the Quran. But this is fine, but it was put forward by Hackney College with the same rubric as the French classes, 'Language for everyday use'...da-de-da... And I just went and asked for my money back, and thought they need to know this anyway. I said look he is perfectly competent in what he is doing, and it suits most of his students, but he is not according to the general description for your language programmes.

Gaye Did you get your money back?

P1 I did get my money back. But... yes... there was a particular thing there. But the whole thing... the core point I think is that a lot of non-standard speakers themselves believe that the language they use in speech cannot be written down. And that the negotiations you're doing around Language Experience are very often about just that. So there is something there about... I don't know how you do it or how you present it... but there is something that is very deeply important in training, and I think important in the research and the application of research. I am not absolutely sure that anyone has researched quite what I am talking about. Which is, 'what are changes in the adult brain has she or he learns literacy?'

Gaye Has that been mapped more in children? It's very hard. You can't map it entirely can you.

P1 You can't map it entirely. And with children its mapped along the developmental curve, and again it rests, as it were, at about 14, accept insofar as very often insufficiently. That is what I am talking about, it's a developmental curve. And then after that, what you do is you learn to adapt your skills for a new context, except that that is also taught quite badly I think. I mean, as part of the adult part of my work has been, like you, teaching academic English. It's obvious that one reason why people can't write essays

is that they don't know what kind of thing an essay is. So that the whole business of adapting perfectly competent every day literacy skills to academic writing is so under taught... and I think it's a major issue... a lot of the universities fail their working class students, to be honest.

- Gaye Oh they never teach it. Kids who do 'A' level before they go to university are not taught academic English. I was never taught it. It's a bit like osmosis. You have just got to pick it up.
- P1 That's right, and I think one of the reasons why it's not taught is because until Halliday and grammar came along there wasn't a satisfactory grammatical basis for saying what was different about it. I think that the fact that the functional grammar stuff has the potential for being enormously valued. People ought to learn it. So I have done. This is not bragging, but I had a go. One of the things we taught in my previous job was self-advocacy. And so we would have classic, bright bilinguals, mainly educated in the UK - struggled along to GCSE, did all right, compliant and dutiful, but not particularly aspiring - dropped off, got married, come back later as powered professionals. And we just did things like... we started to spot what was going on with the self-advocacy course. It was not their learning about advocacy; it was indeed their presentation of assignments basically. And so I started doing ... I started screening better and running a one term booster English course. And we did the complex sentence, the compound sentence. We did how you move from parallel one-clause statements... to the embedding and interlocking that is the typical academic sentence. And then we undid it and did it the other way around. I taught them about noun phrases and just a few very, very basic things like that. And I think it makes a difference.
- Gaye One of the things I found is quite interesting, in some jobs you have to teach academic English, you have got to also talk about Western research culture. Now that is really interesting because some of them are from, say, Islamic countries, and have a different philosophy.
- P1 The ULF summer school we took this one on as well. But they are used to reproducing the authority, and they'd got to be told that the whole point is to question and to stake out new territory. That's what you have got to do.
- Gaye And I have proof-read some PhD students - fellow PhD students like myself - I have proof read some of their... They asked me to proof read the odd chapter for them, and I am amazed at what I read. The indoctrination of children... they are not taught to question. They just learn the Quran... understanding will come later.
- P1 Understanding will come later and originality will come later. I think there are points when I think we go too far the other way, but in the sense that there is

nothing truly original going to happen at various points, and learning where you are doing the gesture of originality as it were. But, yes, it is one of the main things people have to learn, is how to do that. Do you want me to go on with the professional narrative?

Gaye Yes please.

P1 Okay, moved to London in 1979, took up the job in Centreprise that I have described. We went on publishing obviously, and I went on being associated with 'Write First Time'. My dates are hopeless, it wasn't 79 it was 75, because I then stopped doing that in 81 when I went to be the Writing Development Worker for 'Write First Time'. Which was, in itself a training job, I guess... in many ways. The way it worked was it was partly around issues around 'Write First Time'... and working with... trying to find out more about what it did for a student group to be involved in that process and to support it. And then to ground it in a term's work with the local literacy scheme...however it was organised, college or whatever. But it wasn't all around issues with the Paper, there were other sorts of contracts on the go... like in Calderdale where they were very involved with Gatehouse stuff, and doing quite a lot of stuff of their own anyway. We just worked out a programme of weekends and training events and stuff... and some dropping into classes. And that was extremely interesting, I enjoyed it. Again, I am just trying to draw lessons as it were. It would be interesting when people are trained now, what...the sheer volume of the practice around writing that was going on at that time has not been recovered. Just the sort of volume and visibility and obviousness and some of it was. Everybody thought they must do something with this. Writing weekends, self publication. Before the Writing Development project job was cut away, as it were, one of the things we did was a sort of collective catalogue of all the student writing in print at that time. You know the 'Write First Time' archive is at Glaston College, did you know that?

Gaye I didn't know that. That is excellent.

P1 And there will be copies there, and it was pretty bloody good. I think it was nearly 200 titles. So there was a sort of diffusion, and we, in any case, were an amateur diffusion project, and we wrote about what we were doing as we were doing it. And I think it would be a while...I think it would quite interesting thing to try and reconstruct it in current training mode. Not, 'Oh what a good idea', but moving towards, 'Yes of course, and now lets get down to the details'.

Gaye So where are we now in the time line?

- P1 81 to 85 was when I did the Writing Development Project which was on an ALBSU grant, which then ran into trouble and the end of its first 2 years or so, because of the great Mrs Thatcher poem scandal. Did you hear about this?
- Gaye I heard about this, I haven't actually read that particular thing...
- P1 We were... it was a tough poem. I have actually got a Write First Time complete set somewhere in the house and I might be able to find it before you go. And it was illustrated with...One of the things we learnt over early on was, one of the heavenly things was learning to use press agencies So we always had very good quality photos, paid for obviously...And so they had found a Mrs Thatcher in mode, [gesticulates] the pointing finger and the shouting face, and trimmed it as a silhouette, and there it was with this poem. *And we are talking now, we are talking Falklands War year. Just before the Miners strike. So Liberal politics was taking a bashing and we got bashed along with it really.* And what happened about that was very interesting. Going back to volunteers, and who volunteers were, and how they see themselves. It was a volunteer in Norfolk who complained to their MP and said 'this is disgraceful'. There is public money going into this. And that was where [it] hit the fan. We talked ourselves out of it once...not out of it. There were restrictions on what we would put in the paper, editorial judgement, they put in a management committee; various other things. The bits of Write First Time that were not student-written but were pretended to be... which was an editorial space in each issue... You and the law were not to be there. We had to stop including them. Which I think I read that as being, (a) that they were being used for indoctrination and (b), that it introduced an unhelpful uncertainty about whether something was student led or not student led [laughs]. God, they were bad times...really bad times. So we spoke out of it once, and the final condition was... this is where things just got very hairy, and I am not sure what relevance this is to training but I will tell you anyway. The final condition was that there would be a final report on the Writing Development Project which was fine. Yes, no problem. ALBSU would publish it. They weren't thinking publication. They were thinking that this was a period when they found out. This is probably inaccurate historically, but it's what we came to believe was the case. It started as asking a question, which is the sort of thing that teases around in your head anyway... which is, when you report on a funded project and you do your critical analysis...what happens to it? Who learns from it?
- Gaye Were they disseminated?
- P1 They mostly weren't disseminated, and we found out that when we asked somebody. Somebody asked somebody, and they said they are sent down to this warehouse in Greenwich [laughs]. So we thought 'sugar'. And so when I was told I had to write a final report on the Writing Development Project, I thought this means it's not going to go to the warehouse in Greenwich. It's

going to be different from that. And so the project became the pack... 'Conversations to Strangers'... became the final report to the project. And this they sort of agreed to, but there were bust ups all the way about content and presentation and everything and anything... and it, wound it being absolutely.... I won't tell you the detailed story but there was a point where they said... The other thing of course we were doing a residential, and that was relevant to training. And we had a final wonderful residential from the Writing Development Project and 'Write First Time' itself. It was the sort of farewell show... which was a week at Nottingham University, all residential week, absolute bliss... And the relationship of 'residential' to all that liberal stuff is really, really important. I think its one of the major boosts, but it's about the training issue... is the function of groups in adult literacy learning. Hideously under-developed and I think we are going to go back to getting individualised, because we will have individual learning packs. So that's a big one.

Gaye Do you think it's important to the development of tutors as well as students?

P1 Yes of course it is, because actually if you are working with a group it moves you into dialogue. Unless you do it very badly it moves you into rhetoric of democracy... and they are two of the words that I would say are absolutely key values in training. I am not the most democratic teacher I know that by a long chalk. {Name removed} will tell you that. But I know that... and I come from a tradition about adult learning... this is one of the other divisions that I think has always run through the business... those of us who are adult educators who became literacy specialists, and those of us who became adult educators by being a literacy specialist. And I think there has always been a different ethos and a different set of values, and a different set of underlying assumptions about practices. If you are brought up in the WEA you are assume that people are capable of determining their own learning to a very great extent. I don't see why it should be any different when they are literacy students. Alright, they haven't joined something that says we are about... Anyway, there we are in Nottingham having this really good residential and [name removed] who worked for the agency at the time, came with us all week. They were paying for it and so it was partly to keep an eye on it, I am sure. But genuinely to help, she did genuinely help. And on her last day, as she stepped into her taxi she said to me 'oh by the way I am supposed to tell you that the [not clear] is very over budget and you have got to reduce it by a third. And then she got into that taxi and drove away [laughs]. So I was back into head banging mode. I was on the final draft of a really complex project. And I went back it took about 24 hours to recover from this, and then I did recover and I thought this is a pile of old toot. If this has been costed like a glossy publication with all of that six colour stuff and... da - de - da - de - da'. The brief case, the guy who did the design brief brought to the meeting, was rather more expensive than any I have ever owned. It was the mode they were operating. And in some ways they were absolutely right to go for... this is not a hole-in-the-corner operation, I am

not arguing that. But on this one, we could say that on the production values rather than on the text. And because everybody was in the sense... it's paper and it's in a black envelope and it's one colour only except for the front page. And so that was alright and then we got to the point where... but in terms of professional narratives it is very important to me and I can tell you what I learnt from it. It was all going on fine. We actually introduced them to the printer that Write first Time used. They were a very nice crew who started with War on Want and then went independent. And so I was, of course, I will contact the printers, it was all nearly there. And it is true that it was at the last minute or nearly the last minute that we started to raise the issue of whether my name should be on it. So [name removed] and [name removed] who were on my management group raised this with [name removed] and actually said no we don't do individual author stuff. So we sort of accepted it. And then they brought out the numeracy pack which had [name removed] and [indistinct] name on it. So now [name removed] wrote another letter saying... we were about to say 'fine, this is your general practice and there is nothing we can do about it'. And then we saw this. And so we think we have to raise the issue with them again. And they got a letter back saying 'this is it. This is the last straw, I am aborting the project, I have instructed to the printers to stop all work on it and to destroy and plates and the art work'. So we did that... Anger because it didn't happen. We kind of all fell on the floor but recovered and I thought... And he said he sent a copy to the HMI who had been overseeing the whole thing for the department... because the department was very anti about us by then, very, very anti. I think I actually thought why don't I just give Jim a ring, the printer. And so I rang up and I said 'Jim have you had a funny letter from [name removed]?' And he said 'no'. So I read it to him. And he said 'No we have not had a copy of that letter and in any case we are not in the habit of destroying plates and art work before our clients have paid their bills'. So we managed to... and we found out afterwards that he hadn't talked to the HMI either. So we actually managed to reply to the letter by ignoring these two points, if you know what I mean ... and just dealing with the issue about name or names. And we pulled it off clearly, because it was produced. I think he probably... if it were possible, which it is not and I wouldn't attempt it, to have a sober conversation about this now, he would probably say, and there would be some proof in it, you have no idea working for the government in that period. He would probably say that we had begun to feel that we were risking his operation. We had already 'blown out'. This was 'end of' that we are talking about. Clearly, if that was his judgement, it wasn't confirmed, because he changed his mind in the end. But that was, in a way, *professionally formative in the most destructive way*. But also it was the end of my period in adult literacy. *That was the dramatisation of what's at stake* about all this. And so going back to the issue of values and training, I suppose what I learnt very firmly, was never to take this sort of mistake for granted. And that you have to read the general climate. Not in detail but someone heading up an agency like [name removed] has to do. But it's useful to think...

it's useful to remember that, that too, is an arena where key decisions are being made. And that you won't necessarily get what you want because of things that are happening in that space rather than in this space. So that the pedagogy, and all that stuff, and the integrity and what not... The other thing I am saying, that you need to think about, is the days when anywhere in education - when the professionals governed their own profession - is gone, and gone and gone. Yes.

- Gaye You have hit on one of the things that I have talked about in my own learning... is that you have this thing in the early days of being an autonomous professional.
- P1 ...Absolutely, well not since Thatcher. And Blaire won't give it back either. It's gone forever. Well not forever, nothing is forever, but gone.
- Gaye We have talked about the 'professionalisation' of teaching.
- P1 But professionalisation and the nature of professionalists have changed in this country. Professionalisation used to mean, absolutely, that you were allowed... of course you have to interact with other people's priorities and what not, and what not... But you were allowed to have an independent position based on your knowledge and your field. And there is a very serious degree... I am sure doctors say the same thing...they can't get at doctors in quite the same way because they know that doctors can do things that other people can't do. Whereas I think with academics, and with school teachers and with ourselves, the respect is never so great as that. So in a way, if one of the things that comes out of the training, that comes out of the research and development centre, is a hope about reconstituting or constituting a professional position for enabling teachers...then it doesn't take all the positions on board. It's what profession will they allow us to be right now. Because it's clearly not a profession that does... as you know I still stand up in public and critique the basis of the Moser Report.
- Gaye Yes I speak to lots of people who teach English and they say you are just technicians delivering a curriculum.
- P1 But that is one thing, but then who wrote the curriculum and that is exactly where your issues are. And whose purposes it is going to serve? But there is a sense that that is the issue. We are not even just technicians to the curriculum. Someone has got to write the curriculum. What is it going to be in relation to... and how exposed it is... to the political directions that are pouring the money in the whole business. And you can't argue that it shouldn't be. You can't argue that it should be in another space. Or that it should have that ghostly dead notion of academic freedom, which was just that you thought what you bloody well thought; and it was no one's business telling you were wrong. We know

we have left that behind. But what have we left it behind for? What is the relationship?

Gaye I feel myself personally that we haven't had much say in the Report.

P1 No we haven't. And we haven't been - fortunately the curriculum documents come from a better analysis than most of them do - and I hated that.

Gaye Have you read The Reader?

P1 No, I started reading it and I found it very difficult to read, but I know I ought to. It's another book that... If you can't read and write you become a mass murderer. That would be an interesting module in an MA course on 'the metaphors of literacy'.

Gaye I did one. I did my Masters at Lancaster with {names removed} and I attended [name removed] course on Language Issues in Adult Literacy, and I did the whole thing on the metaphors for literacy.

P1 Fine, Yes, put it out there and teach other people to think about it... deconstruct it, if I may use the word.

Gaye There is some incredible stuff.

P1 Oh there is some incredible stuff.

Gaye Princess Anne who was the patron of ALBSU said adult literacy students were lazy [Inaudible]. I couldn't believe it without it being in the papers. She is actually quite an impressive [inaudible]. I have got it at home (inaudible) in the 'Times'... I wonder how [name removed] ...got to grips with it...she's his patron.

P1 We have all done this. If he finds this objectionable, then he has been there for a very long time, he's got a lot of prestige and he could go and get another job. People do collude after a bit.

Gaye I am not sympathising with him at all, I said I wouldn't like to have to work with him.

P1 But what I am saying is that he doesn't have to.

Gaye But what I am saying is that we have to work with it as well. In the general sense I am not sympathising with [name removed] not by any means, but I found was that the whole... if this is the sort [comment on literacy] ... and

adult literacy basic skills... and this is what one of the prominent papers have said. It's awful.

P1

And he ought to have found a way of dissociating himself. So there are things about all that, and there are things about the underlying social perceptions of literacy and how students pick them up, students share them. There is a lot of jumping up and down what I do. The sort of jumping up and down that I am doing, and you are doing, is very hard to do if you are one of the stigmatised minority yourself...and you have always had some people who would be assertive about it. And classically, in my experience, they were people who had experiences of some other form of social and political organisation. So the whole thing about individuals and groups is a thing that runs very crucially at the moment. The social representation is overwhelmingly... It's a problem of silence and concealment and therefore completely individualised. End of tape.

## Participant Two (SE and North England): 28<sup>th</sup> August 2002 at work

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- P2 ...and the main principle is that the research question should determine the method and not the other way round. So the fact that I may be more associated with quantitative research is an outcome of the sorts of questions I have been asked to investigate more than... I was going to say more than personal preference... But actually the more I have done it the more it has developed into to personal preference... for trying to get strong quantitative evidence on the sorts of questions to which that is an appropriate approach like 'How much progress do adult literacy learners make? 'In how much time?' and 'What are the factors associated with that?' ... Rather than trying to answer that from what would seem to me like...to be less strong evidence like learners or tutors opinions or whatever.
- Gaye Yes, I suppose with me it's because I have had more experience in the qualitative sphere. I am looking for ... values, perceptions, pedagogical assumptions, philosophical issues, people's very inner thoughts and thinking. I feel if I use professional narratives it will emerge. I think it's the correct method for what I am investigating.
- P2 Of course [phone rings]... Quantitative projects have always had qualitative aspects to them because the numbers don't mean anything unless you can show people a convincing picture to go with them.
- Gaye When I did my Masters dissertation I combined the two. I got a distinction so it must have worked. But anyway, I am not on anybody's side here. Whatever you say is perfectly confidential, and thank you very much for agreeing to give me your time. Another reason why I came across your name is because I sent off for one of the job applications for the new National Research and Development Centre. I was not going to apply for a job... but I thought if you send off for the application form you know who is involved in it. Your name cropped up as being in charge of one part. Is it the pedagogy strand?
- P2 That's it, Strand B. *Well I ought to start with a bit of a disclaimer which is that I have never been a practitioner, a front line practitioner in the adult basic skills field... ever, because that is not the way my career developed at all. The reason why I am now doing research in the field is because I was doing educational research anyway and then the opportunity arose to do research on family literacy, which then broadened out into adult literacy and adult basic skills more generally.* Do you want to hear a bit more about that?
- Gaye ...Please. But just to add to what you have been saying. What I want to say now is when I talk about practitioners I am talking about anybody who is involved whether they are a tutor educator, a researcher, whatever. That is what I mean by practitioners. It is not just the people in the classroom

P2 In the sort of discourse within the National Centre we tend to use practitioner for basic skills tutors...people who are at the chalk face.

Gaye Well with me it's anyone.

P2 Okay, fine. "What should be the ethos behind the education training and professional development of tutors and tutor educators in the sector?" Fine! Yes. Well at the moment I have got a set of pretty disconnected thoughts that I have jotted down. The first one I jotted down was 'student's voices' because it does seem to me that they are not heard nearly enough. This is true, with most sectors of education, but it seems to be particularly the case in adult basic skills. When we were assembling the fragments of which is a big review of research, we could find very, very little account in the literature of what students' opinions were, on the teaching they received, whether they thought it was effective and what progress they thought they were making in particular, just to give those three. There was a bit more on reasons for attending and reasons for persisting or dropping out. But not a great deal, even then. But virtually nothing on the topics I already mentioned. If the field was to take seriously its commitment to basing teaching provision generally on what learners need, or think they need, then they have to be listened to. It may be that in some cases they don't have very clearly formulated views on what it is they need to know, but...nevertheless, that may be particularly the case when they first enter provision, for some...but I am quite sure they will sharpen up their views on what they need to learn and be taught, very quickly once they are in provision. And I would have thought be able to say, at least in general terms, whether they think they are making the sort of progress they need to be making. *They do tend to be prone, like all students, to 'generosity error'... If asked by an outsider "what do you think of the teaching you are receiving, are you making progress?" And they tend to say on the whole the teaching is good, "yes I am making progress." Because they don't want to let down their tutor. But there are ways of getting behind that a bit particularly if you use structured questionnaire methods.* A very interesting project has been done recently. This is partly background... alright...because partly what I am saying to you about this is not yet public. [name removed], who is another person very much in the field, has been a practitioner in the more limited sense, an adult basic skills tutor in the Manchester area working partly for LASDA and partly NIACE, has recently led a project on learner's views of their own progress. Some quite interesting stuff has come out of that... it's another person who you might think of to talk to. I can give you her contact details later. She is a great friend of [name removed] so it's all little circles.

Gaye ...ever decreasing.

P2 And that seemed to me to be absolutely the right sort of thing to do. To go and ask a bunch of students... several bunches of students in various settings, in basic skills settings in the North West. 'Tell us what you think you have learnt.' Now in order to get behind the 'yes I have made progress.' The sort

of bland, first stage answer you get if you just ask the question straight on... try to ask a sideways question framing it in terms of a learning metaphor, 'Where did you start from?' 'How far have you come?' 'What route did you take?' Using all the metaphor like that. Some quite interesting stuff has come out of that. I think what they have shown in particular is that a methodology works for actually eliciting students' opinions. It needs to be pushed further now in my view, in terms of specifics. In other words, trying to get students not just to say where they started from, what route they followed... But what markers, signposts... hurdles they passed.

Gaye They have seen in front of them.

P2 Yes! What specific things they have learnt like, I don't know, something like *'I used to use full stops and capital letters very inaccurately. Now I am much better with them. I know where to put them 90% of the time... according to my tutor' or 'I know that I know that.'* And that would be a much more specific statement. There were... again last night I was reading another unpublished report and... again this is also deep background, not for quotation unless it can be anonymised or generalised in some way. It's a Home Office report on the evaluation of the Probation Service Pathfinder...Basic skills Pathfinder. It was in a number of areas, Cumbria, Devon, Sussex, Thames Valley, Nottinghamshire and various others.

Gaye ...All the probation service?

P2 All in the probation service yes. And it suddenly came across... in a whole listing of things that students and/or their tutors said they had learnt or might have learnt in good, effective provision. And I thought 'Yes that is the sort of thing we need to hear from students'. We need to hear much more about what they think they want to do. What progress they are making. If they change their minds ...and/or come in thinking that what they want to learn is how to spell accurately...just that, nothing else. Can that actually be delivered to them just like that? I think the consensus of most front line tutors would be 'no you can't.' Nobody is 100% accurate in all their spelling because there are so many odd words in English that nobody knows all of them. Only the dictionary contains them all.

Gaye Tell me about it. I am teaching English to foreign students at the moment at Birmingham.

P2 Right, well, that's a challenge too. So they need to know which words. For what purposes are you writing? What are the sort of systematic errors you make, and can we work on those where you can see a pattern and maybe learn a rule. But then there are all these others where you have just got to try and memorise them some how or other, the mnemonics you can use and whatever.

- Gaye I always had a little philosophy of my own, that 'spelling was noticing'. Sometimes I think if you ask people to learn a rule, it's another barrier.
- P2 Some of the mnemonics can be heavier than what they are trying to remember unless they key in... in some obvious way to the word. There is one, again in that same report, for remembering what the second, third and fourth letters of beautiful are. So its '**big elephants aren't ugly**'.
- Gaye I remember learning one when I started years ago teaching adult literacy. It's 'elephants makes squirts' and that was the quartile way of looking up things in the dictionary. Divide it into quarters, A to **E**, **E** to **M**, **M** to **S** and **S** to Z. And the middle bit was 'elephants **m**akes squirts.'
- P2 ...Yes, nice one. Well, yes, something as simple as that, because for some learners actually remembering alphabetical order, and being able to use it is progress...When we were doing the 'Progress in Adult Literacy' stuff. I did some of the fieldwork myself...and one of the... as we thought, very simplest tasks was to find a person's name and entry in a page from a telephone directory. Despite being told the name and having it there on a piece of paper in front of them, as well as at the top of the sheet which then reproduced the page in the telephone directory...lots of them ended up in a sort of serial search all the way through, rather than knowing how to use the alphabet in alphabetical order to zero in on it quickly. So it's that sort of thing. But all of that is part of a larger concern for me about *can we actually discover or deduce sensible progression routes in achievement in that area. I think its been done for initial literacy teaching with children. Now, can we lift that or have some adults at least failed in ways which, as it were, put them off, trying to learn, build on things and the sequence that successful or moderately successful learners in childhood do. We don't know the answer to that.*
- Gaye Its very difficult even with things like reading age, it's based on a chronological age of a child.... but an adult is an adult.
- P2 Reading ages don't mean anything in adults.
- Gaye Teaching methods might.
- P2 But then you see there are other adults who seem never to have learn the stuff in the first place. Are there progression routes through in the progression of spelling, in punctuation, in sentence structure, in vocabulary?
- Gaye You have got the sense that sometimes... what people expect...some people expect what they received at school... more of.
- P2 Yes, and that's why some of them don't turn up.

Gaye And sometimes you might try a lot of new ideas or new delivery methods but it doesn't go in because it's not what they are expecting... so you have really got to go with it.

P2 Well that actually takes me into an associated subject, which is 'learning styles'. I am in two minds about the whole learning styles business, about whether it actually helps or has any value for the student at all. Because I think most people who have learnt can use a range of things. Most of us, and I am thinking of people like us, who are viable and so have all the sort of auditory and spoken... and the visual counterparts of those and so you don't notice, if we do have a preferred learning style. I think there is a theory around about the weaker people are... the more you actually have to find out what will work for them, and I can see that's a good theory. But I still don't know whether it operates very well in practice. And maybe that is something else that learners have to be invited into the process of sorting that out if we can. Part of the reason why I am dubious about it for most learners, both adults and children, is that when that sort of theory was first brought up ... it was decided that most people were mixed or indifferent learners. Not indifferent in the sense of not caring, but it not mattering desperately what the learning style or the approach was, because they would learn.

Gaye They are in learning mode.

P2 They are in learning mode, sure, that's it... So 'student's voices'. Again this is a bit of a... The next one is also a bit of a *hobby horse* of mine, but I have got it noted down here as not self esteem alone, but progress in literacy. Perhaps literacy and self esteem being worked on in parallel. It does seem to me that there have been, even if the ultimate expression of this is a character in Aunt Sally... *It does seem to me that there have been some practitioners in the field who have said well first of all we have to gain the learner's confidence and help to build up their self confidence and self esteem and they will learn. And I think in a sense is either putting the cart before the horse or its putting two things in a sequence that ought to go together all the time. And it seems to me that one of the fundamental ways of building up learners' self esteem is to show them that you can actually make progress and actually teaching them something where they can actually see their own progress.* It's easier said than done especially with very disabled learners and, I think, learning disabled. But if they can be helped to acquire the accurate spelling of some of the words that they know that they systematically get wrong whenever they attempt them and therefore they are frightened of putting those on paper or indeed putting pen to paper at all, then that seems to me to work. There is a little bit of evidence in the literature on strategies for helping slow reading children about working on self esteem and their reading and improving their reading in parallel works better than working in isolation. That's a very neglected piece of literature, even on poor reading children. *But because, there might be an element of caricature in imagining that there are any great number of tutors out there who say "ah let me learn about you first and you tell me and I will value you as a person and I will*

*build up your self esteem and then we will start on you learning and me teaching literacy.” I don’t think it’s ever quite as crude as that but to hear some of the rhetoric you would almost think it was.*

Gaye The nearest it happened to me when I was an ABE coordinator in an FE college, and the local hospital for people who have had mental breakdown contacted me. Someone who had been under the influence of drugs and the psychiatrist ...and it all came out ...and one of the things that was really upsetting him was the lack of literacy skills. And they contacted me... this was in the days when you could have home tuition. And I went to his home and for 3 or 4 weeks I had weekly visits. And he didn’t put pen to paper and we both found out we had a strong interest in art and in order to break through to him, because he was so nervous he had to get to know me as well... It wasn’t just me knowing him. It was the other way around. It took a long time but I gradually persuaded him to come to a class.

P2 I can see that is a very exceptional case.

Gaye It was a very exceptional case. It’s only ever happened to me once and I knew he would just run a mile if I started teaching right away. His worries about literacy had only come out under therapy.

P2 You have to tip toe very carefully.

Gaye ...Eggshells all the way.

P2 *But again you see ‘what is the evidence’, I have always wanted to know that. And having said that linked back on all the stuff I have been saying about self- esteem literacy and parallel and each building on the other. But I don’t think there is any good evidence of the adult field at all about it. It seems to be part of the ‘air’ in the field that you do this and yet does anybody actually have a notion or a structured way of building up people’s self esteem, or do they think it should be all down to the personal relationship of the tutor and the student? Are there ways that you could actually speed the process up?*

Gaye How do you measure someone’s self esteem?

P2 Well that’s right. There is a piece in one of the Sunday papers, the weekend before last, about this book that came out a couple of years ago; on one of the methods of self esteem. This guy in London said ‘Hang on, all the instruments for measuring it are very dodgy’ ...which they might be... I think some are probably more reliable than others. But there is very little... You see again the whole article was about somebody taking seriously the argument that if you only work on self-esteem... it doesn’t work. And I agree with that. *But what we don’t know in the adult basic skills field, in any structured way with strong evidence, is whether working on the two things in parallel works better and if so, how many would work on self esteem and how you would measure it.*

- Gaye It's a really interesting ...
- P2 Yes but its not one that we have on our list of things to do immediately with this National Centre [NRDC]. But we should get there. There are projects we have in mind where it would be part of the ethos to be looking at that. For instance, we have one; well we have two in mind for the fairly near future. One is look at community-focused basic skills initiatives and to what extent we can actually try to build teaching and learning into a pre-existing community group rather than inviting individuals to turn up at somewhere where they don't like... Whether that has its own distinctive ethos, whether it actually brings people forward more readily... Or threatens their feelings of stigma or less, or any of that. That could be one very strong aspect of that. There are two more, there is one already started directed from London that is to do with young offenders and that is a pretty key group.
- Gaye Yes, I used to teach in a prison.
- P2 Okay, well these would be on probation I think and others would actually be in youth offender institutions.
- Gaye Mine was in male adult.
- P2 *And it's meant to be a very structured tightly designed experiment on what works for them... in doing it in a proper controlled group manner. But that is very difficult because they are very difficult people to keep in any sort of programme let alone an experiment.*
- Gaye It's interesting because the emphasis that has changed at the beginning... because most adults arrive at a college and sign up themselves. On probation it's a ...
- P2 And here is another one...
- Gaye I was going to say a constructive way of leading them back into the outside world.
- P2 Exactly, and then the community focused one would be... you have already got a group out there in the world interacting, how do you get in there and say 'okay, to what extent have people here got basic skills needs that we can now help to address?' The third one that might work like that a bit is the one that we have got in mind with care leavers. And again, you see they are a fairly marginalized and neglected group and things sort of fall off the end of everybody's responsibility for them, at about 16 or there about.
- Gaye I am trying to think of any research ... not in 'care'. No.

- P2 Not in 'care', that's the thing. There is a proposal that we want to revive, because its gone a bit quiet at the moment from a group in Derbyshire to maybe have a look at that.... But implicitly there are all sorts of values here about... lets value... not just value the students voices but try not to let the most vulnerable fall through the gaps in provision even for the pretty vulnerable. And it's partly... I suppose it's another way of looking at the Government's stress on 'are you reaching the hardest to reach?' Which is maybe a wrong way of describing them. If you said 'yes there are those who are the most in need, they are the most vulnerable', then you have got a different definition or maybe a different approach to them, or at least attitude to them. We are actually starting another one in a few days time based at a college for the physically and learning disabled in Derbyshire... No... Nottinghamshire... sorry! It's a specialist college, partly residential for some students with hideously profound physical disabilities. One lad there they tell me can only move his eyes... that's it! So he has a band around his forehead by which he can control a computer. It hardly bears thinking about.
- Gaye I once had an idea, it's has come to mind because you mentioned 'eyes'. This is research, which I think needs doing with adults. When people produce adult readers, you often find for beginning readers the print is large. And I have often wondered why this is the case, because a mature adult has mature eyesight and can take in the symbols etc. I don't know, it's just something I would really liked to see, some research into things like that.
- P2 Yes, why we produce for adults the thing that we know we have to do for children because their perception is still underdeveloped.
- Gaye An adult has reached maturity...so has their eyesight.
- P2 Yes their visual acuity should be fully developed, yes, sure. And they are versions of that... their eye movement control etc but there would be a proportion of adults who do have visual problems.
- Gaye Certainly ... Gatehouse and the Basic Skills Agency have produced sets of readers which look like ordinary books ... so that readers could read them on the beach like anybody else.
- P2 Well the Basic Skills Agency still does and they are always on display of the entrance of their headquarters in London. Yes...now then...where was I?
- Gaye Sorry, I am just trying to share stories with you to help the process along.
- P2 Oh yes, that's alright. Now...thinking about the values that underpin all this... We as a group in the management team in the Centre are concerned to ensure that vulnerable groups get represented and looked at, and that we don't just concentrate on mainstream and on basic skills. Lord knows, there is enough work that needs doing there as well, but we feel we have to show

the commitment to marginalized groups as well as to those who seem to represent the mainstream and those who do come forward anyway.

Gaye ...So that's definitely one research emphasis of the centre? It's sometimes hard to envisage it as a 'centre' because bits of work are being done at Lancaster, at Nottingham

P2 Do you want me to go into that a bit?

G A little bit.

P2 Well very briefly then, it's a consortium led by the London Institute of Education. The other major university partners are Lancaster, Nottingham and here, Sheffield. And then we have two other university partners who are not quite as centrally involved. They are Kings, London, and the London Language and Literacy Unit at South Bank. There are a range of practitioner partners like ROWA, and the East London Pathfinder Partnership... those 3 big FE colleges, Tower Hamlets, City, and Islington and Newham, I think. Then there is [??] Community College and INCLUDE which is the national charity for... a national organisation rather than a practitioner body or a provider body. There is INCLUDE and NIACE and LSDA. Then by contract, or by remit of the centre, a sort of statutory partner almost is the Basic Skills Agency but on the development side, not on the research side. And then cutting across all of that are the strands of the research and then where they all are.

Gaye Who was appointed director?

P2 Nobody.

Gaye I saw [name removed] at the RaPAL Conference and I said 'who has been appointed?' and he said, 'I don't know yet, they had the interviews yesterday.'

P2 Yes, I was sitting next to him on the interview of the panel. It was offered to a candidate and the lady who it was offered to turned it down so we are back to square one and have to re-advertise. Again that is internal news. I can't go any further into the details on that. So we have got [name removed] still as Acting Director of it... at the Institute...and also in charge of Strand A, the social and economic inclusion research. I am in charge of strand B here.

Gaye ...Which is pedagogy.

P2 Yes, strand C is... I suppose mostly the responsibility is shared between [name removed] at the Institute and [name removed] at Nottingham although now she is seconded back for most of her time...to the Institute. There is nobody, oh yes there is, have they just appointed somebody in charge of strand D? Yes, I think they... or have they only advertised it?

- Gaye There is only 3 years to go.
- P2 That's right 3 years with the possibility of 2 more. We are also 7 months into the life of the thing and we don't have a Director yet... But coming back to the appointed issues... assumptions, perceptions and values... So I have already talked about valuing the students. Trying to base what we can as much as possible on the strongest evidence we can find, but that may be different, obviously will be different, because of different aspects of teaching and circumstances of materials and resources. *But according to where evidence from control experiments is missing then you have to rely on less rigorous research designs and then on professional wisdom... which I will value until somebody produces an experiment that says 'sorry it may seem plausible but its wrong', because here is evidence that shows it isn't quite like the way the collective wisdom that the profession thinks it is.* Again another way that things seem to me to be altering is that it seems to be a more increasing emphasis on actual basic fundamental skills within literacy such as word attack skills including phonics. And I think insofar as this may have been neglected they do seem to be regaining emphasis to an extent. Now the risk of course is that the pendulum will go completely the other way and they will be taught in a decontextualised manner... and indeed [name removed], who you have already talked to, tells me that there are already some pretty frightful phonics for adults materials out there... published, waiting for people to run the photocopies off and work on them. It's got to arise from what people need it for and... exactly the sort of mistake you don't want to make that was made at school level... and caused the swing right away from it... which they went too far. And where the pendulum seems to have come back, and people desperately tried to halt it at a school level at a sensible mid point, and not let it swing all the way back again. The trouble is there are fewer of us who are trying to hold the pendulum steady at adult level, if that metaphor works at all.
- Gaye At one point you were going to tell me how you yourself became involved?
- P2 How far do you want to go back... a first degree in Classics and Philosophy from which I have been moving steadily sideways for how ever many years. I then did a PGCE and then taught in Kenya for 5 years, mostly teaching English and then some Education... and then came back and did applied linguistic in a secondary school... and I ended up PhD on Phonological Coding and Silent Reading at Leeds and then worked for 20 years at NFER in Slough... all on language related research, English Language related research almost exclusively. I was 9 years on APU Language Monitoring Project if you remember that.
- Gaye Years ago I did a post graduate diploma in reading and language, a DASE, (Diploma of Advanced Studies in Education) and we discussed work being done by the APU. Have you heard of 'Daisies' [DASEs] as they were called?

- P2 Yes I have.
- Gaye You can do them in a variety of subjects. I did mine in Reading and Language Development.
- P2 Which university?
- Gaye Well it was Edge hill College, which was part of Lancaster.
- P2 [Name removed]. Was [name removed] there?
- Gaye Yes, was he the one with rather sleeked back hair?
- P2 Yes, a very small man, he has been dead for several years. 20 years ago the APU was in full swing.
- Gaye Assessment and Performance Unit...
- P2 That's right, in the DES as it then was, and the language monitoring project was based at NFER so I was on that for 9 years full time doing 'oracy assessment'. And then got more into literacy then... and then I got to the stage where I was getting and directing research projects myself. The first big one was the evaluation of the Basic Skills Agency's Family Literacy demonstration programmes. So that's how it's all developed from there. Evaluations are done ... progress studies, like the 'Progress in Adult Literacy' has been done in fairly ranging research reviews at the time, of one sort or another. 'Assembling the Fragments' is one and, also from time to time, I update my paper on 'Trends in Literacy over Time', trying to assemble that evidence.
- Gaye [name removed] is doing something similar, Changing Faces Project.
- P2 Ah that is a history of policy and maybe some practice in the field over the last 25 years.
- Gaye She is doing it in conjunction with someone at City Lit, [name removed] and She and her research assistant put a workshop on and they asked us all to sit back and think in decades and we all jotted down key events, things that happened in that decade and things. And, I think, using professional narratives as well.
- P2 Yes, probably, a very good way to do it. But yes my work on trends over time is more to do with levels of attainment arising out of Assessment and Performance unit, which was set up precisely to monitor levels of achievement or attainment over time in various school subjects. So I am still to an extent involved in evaluations and since I have been here...well I brought one big project with me... where I am collecting an evaluation of a

project of pre-school initiative in Oxford. And then since I have been here I have directed the National Evaluation of the 'Keeping up with the Children' initiative of the Basic Skills Agency. I've also just finishing off an evaluation, the local evaluation of Sure Start in Rotherham. *I am still heavily involved with pre-school and adult and with family literacy sort of linking the two. Recently, in the last several years, I have done almost no research at school level oddly enough. It has just developed that way. You go where the research is and not for the projects that are advertised. But then... the heart it seems... was knocked out of school level research and the sort of stuff that I had been doing when the APU was abolished in 1990. So that's the way it goes.* (End of side one)

P2 Coming back to the National Centre now, unless there was something you wanted to follow on?

Gaye I will ask a few questions at the end that I have got stored up. I would rather you carry on.

P2 The National Centre is also trying to embody in its research the commitment to a range of paradigms and approaches and traditions... so that [name removed], for instance, is running a big project actually within strand A, a sort of 'social whatever inclusion' bid. A big project which is called an 'Ethnographic Resource' and this is going to follow 500 learners for at least 2 years and probably longer and... find out, in-depth, who they are, what they are like, why they are learning, why they have turned up, why they persist or don't. Try and follow up those who don't stick it, and that's an awful lot of people every year. Typical drop out rates... of non-completion rates are about 50%. Once you realise that the 80% FEFC used to quote... didn't allow for the people who didn't stay after the first 3 weeks. All FEFC returns were based on people who stayed for at least the first three weeks'. They had a snap short day in October. All the people who just turned up and signed on for something and then attended one or two sessions and thought 'this is not for me', they never got counted in their returns. If you go to the sort of research that does look at the people who turn up at the start and then try and track them and find out why they dropped out... then you get a completion rate or a retention rate of 50% rather than 80%.

Gaye I did this with my own MA dissertation. I looked at the drop out rate at Huddersfield Technical College. They wanted to be seen to be doing something about that aspect before their Ofsted Inspection. I included Adult Literacy Classes but not many responded. It was really quite interesting because with the new funding you had to have people at the beginning, people on course, and people at the end. And your funding came in three lumps according to the number of people.

P2 ...Three dollops.

Gaye That's right and you didn't get your dollop if they weren't there.

- P2 Yes turn up tomorrow otherwise we don't get our third dollop. Is it still like that?
- Gaye I am more engaged now with higher education, I am working in higher education now as well as doing my research. I should imagine so.
- P2 It's a mystery to me.
- Gaye It kept changing anyway, there was always new directives. I never quite knew where I was when I was doing my MA.
- P2 *FE has always been a complete mystery to me, almost a complete mystery. I think I more or less understand the school system and just about the higher education system but FE is so diverse and complicated.*
- Gaye Well I am just getting to grips with higher education. I want to be a researcher you see, this is why I am doing this.
- P2 Well at least I haven't been in full time for very long. I started at the beginning of last year... the last calendar year. I have been in NFER for 20 years before that....Though I did work for the Open University for longer than that. I started through part time tutoring I think in 1975 and I just shed my PhD student and I am now not doing anything for the Open University as far as I know.
- Gaye ...For the OU?
- P2 ...The OU yes.
- Gaye I have just applied for a job with them.
- P2 Yes they are always looking for people. Okay, so the balance of paradigms and traditions. But then we are also... I am intent on moving strand B, the pedagogical strand, as rapidly as possible from do we know, what do we need to find out, to lets do something, let's actually do some practical empirical investigations.
- Gaye It sounds exciting.
- P2 And some of those, some of the projects starting about now are beginning to actually go out and look at the situation... and there is this 'ethnographic resource that's going to get going in a big way this term. We're doing... LASDA and Sheffield, are doing complimentary projects looking at adult literacy learner's problems with writing. That's LASDA... and reading, so we are looking at actually going out there and doing a lot of observation, talking to learners, testing a bunch of them to get some sense of what is it? What are their sticking points? Do they actually... is word attack. Lets

make it very specific in one case.... Is word attack the stumbling block that we think it is...And if it is, how does that show itself? Can we measure it? Are we going to be able to think of hypotheses to test about how we might tackle it? That is beginning now. All of the early projects in the centre, certainly in strand B, and its true to an extent to the others, have been review projects...obviously because you know yourself... researchers always start off by saying 'what do we already know? What does the literature tell us? Let's look at that and see whether there are key questions that we need to build on from there.' So projects that are already completed are.... a position paper on whether and how it would be possible to get rid of IELTS data as the International Benchmark for adult literacy, adult basic skills levels in Britain.

Gaye What... to get rid of the IELTS?

P2 Yes, the data as an International Benchmark, You can't get rid of the data because they are out there and published. How can we replace them rather. How can you stop them being quoted ad infinitum, ... an OECD data basis, for instance, has been the measure of adult basic skills in Britain. The short answer was 'only with great difficulty' and only really...professionally, by engaging or taking part in the new international study, which the Government set its face against some years ago. There is another one going on this year...an Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey is happening this year but not in the UK because the Government refused to sign up to it. But that's another piece of history. Let's not go into that. So that was the first one finished. *We have also finished a systematic review and partial meta-analysis of randomised control trials in adult literacy and numeracy. Only found 9, very few. The quality of the research is very poor. There is a bunch of, a much larger bunch of control trials with matched samples rather than randomised ones, that are waiting to be analysed and we have got a proposal in to do that.* The review of the ESOL, adult ESOL literature... [Name removed] led that and its finished. Another one I was working on as you arrived, I am just trying to finish it, because it's due in on Friday. I have got to edit it and shape it and top and tail it. That's a review of assessment instruments for adult literacy and numeracy.

Gaye Who has done that?

P2 Well I have directed it, but [name removed] has worked on the literacy side of it, [name removed].

Gaye And I think [name removed] helped on the randomised controlled trials.

P2 She did the bit on the wider benefits of the randomised controlled trial which turned out to be nothing of any importance whatever, but needed to do it, to do the analysis to know that. The person who is working on the numeracy test is [name removed] who I have known for 20 years because I recruited her to do fieldwork, or marking, at NFER when I was still there. What else is

happening? There is also a review of the adult numeracy wider literature that's going on... [Name removed] is running that.

Gaye I know one of her colleagues at Nottingham. [Name removed]

P2 Yes, we also have an ESOL review leading to the setting up of a working party to decide... what is the key bit of research that needs to be done next in the adult ESOL field. Similarly, we are going to commission somebody soon to review the competing definitions and theories of adult dyslexia in order to try and arrive at a common position in order to let research proceed. And that really is a minefield. We simply haven't enough common assumptions and commonality of definition and stance to do something. Or, if we can't satisfy everybody we will say 'alright in the centre... is going to take this position' in order to get some research started in that area. And then we would probably get blasted from every angle. You can't satisfy everybody... get the thing going. Let all the people who have got 'positions' then tear it to pieces if they want to... the document that comes out of that. Within strand A, there are plans for enhancing the next round of one of the big cohort studies and I think its BCS70 they are working on. [Name removed] again is in charge of that. Obviously, the review of assessment instruments has partly got to feed into that because one of the questions that was remitted to our review 'is there an existing instrument that is usable within that study?' We are not convinced that there is a good one. Well in fact we are convinced there isn't a good one, but there might be at least a bad one and that's what we'll be saying to [name removed] and his colleagues at the Institute about that. Within strand C there's a lot of work being done on enhancing Masters level qualifications at the four main university partners. We have reached agreement on how to enhance and, to an extent, redevelop modules in our major Master courses so that there will be swappable modules...so that any student registered for one of this Master degrees, at any of the four can then pick a module from any one of the others.

Gaye That is really good. That sounds really interesting.

P2 And for that reason they have all got to be available through distance learning. At Sheffield virtually all of our Masters courses are anyway. Our MEd in literacy is exactly like that. So we are more in the case of having to write a new module that is very specific to adult literacy but it would be for open and distance learning anyway. Whereas the London Institute has a brand new MA in basic skills but it's all face-to-face teaching.

Gaye When I did my Masters at Lancaster they didn't have a Masters in literacy. So the nearest one I could take was an MA in Education and Training of Adults and I did [name removed] course on Language Issues in Adult Literacy.

P2 You mixed and matched.

- Gaye I mixed and matched yes, and I got the literacy in.
- P2 Well, you see now, the intention of all of this is for people to be able to mix and match from a wider menu. And obviously have mutual recognition of each other's modules and create a common credit system for them and so on. But that's more difficult than it sounds, that last bit... that really is. Each of the four universities has a slightly different system.
- Gaye Is it 60 CATS credit points you need.
- P2 Yes Credit and Accumulation and Transfer. That is a slightly different thing. If you start a course at one place and then you want to transfer and continue it elsewhere. Then there is APL which is the Accreditation of Prior Learning which is again... that is different... but that is something that the OU hugely pioneered when it got started. This is more like can we set up a definition of the number of credits that you need to get the Masters degree and how they are allocated to... lets say, four assignments and a dissertation. That is our pattern.
- Gaye When I was down there it was 6 assignments and a dissertation.
- P2 Well that's right that is their pattern and each of the assignments is worth fewer credits than ours. That's one of the points that is under discussion.
- Gaye They broke down into 10 modules, 4 of which were the dissertation, and then you have the six 5,000 word assignments.
- P2 Yes, that sort of thing. So that's happening at Masters Level. There is also some enhancement going on to PGCE's or the equivalent which Sheffield is not involved in because we don't have such a thing. That is Nottingham, the Institute and then about 10 other places that are not actually in the consortium, in the centre, but places like Bolton.
- Gaye That figures because I interviewed someone who did her Masters and then she did her PGCE at Bolton. It had a strong adult literacy element in it.
- P2 And then because of all of the... in 3 days time, all the existing sub degree qualifications are annulled. They are no longer on offer. So all of the awarding bodies must be scrabbling like mad to get new ones defined and validated ready to offer and meet... the whatever it is... the FENTO standards or something.
- Gaye The FENTO standards...and the literacy standards that they are going blend with them.
- P2 I keep well away from that.

- Gaye Well I was talking to people at the conference from the chalk face as it were, people who don't have a level 4 in maths, they stopped at GCSE and they don't have a level 4. And yet in order to teach it now you have got to have one. I was speaking to volunteers who could no longer teach because they hadn't got level 4 qualifications. One guy who was so intelligent, he was a vet and then he became a literacy volunteer and he took an MEd here.
- P2 Hugo Kerr.
- Gaye [name removed], I know [name removed]. He was a volunteer and, I believe, a brilliant volunteer but he is not allowed to teach now.
- P2 I know. Well I think I know part of the inside history of this. Clearly there is the desire to say 'right its going to be a fully recognised profession then it has got to have professional qualifications and a career structure'... and you have got to have a sort of ladder of qualifications to teach in the field. I agree with that. The problem is...it's almost as if you're trying to pull the ladder up while you're doing that, while you're actually making it.
- Gaye This goes back to my own early pedagogy... when I started out at the end of the 70's early 80's...the pedagogy was... you were not to look like teachers you were not to give students a school curriculum, that system had failed them. You were not to regards yourselves as teachers you were to regard yourselves as facilitators...teachers no.
- P2 Now the whole thing has gone absolutely full circle.
- Gaye And yet I can understand, they deserve the best teachers going and I accept that too. So my whole pedagogy is revolving.
- Gaye That's right, sure. But I think another bit of the inside story is there was an international seminar chaired by the minister before last, not [name removed].... before the last election early last year.
- Gaye Is he higher education or further education?
- P2 He was Adult Basic Skills...no, he was Lifelong Learning or whatever it was called. I think he also had the research brief within the DfEE. One of the people there was a guy from Flanders, a Flemish community in Belgium...or, was it the Netherlands. Anyway, it was one of the two Dutch-speaking bits of Europe. He was saying that about 5 years earlier... they had just declared that...about 3 years from that date nobody would be allowed to teach in Adult Basic Education who wasn't qualified and didn't have a degree. And so everybody was warned. Those who didn't want to face that dropped out... and those who didn't have those qualifications acquired them. He said it worked. The whole system carried on as before with, on the whole, a better qualified teaching force. Now I think, some how or other, the message got into the DfEE at that point ,in an attempt to do something similar here.

- Gaye I think I have heard it called a 'right to entitlement'.
- P2 Something like that.
- Gaye That came from someone who worked for the DfES.
- P2 Well, the learners are entitled to be taught by the people who were really well qualified to teach them. I agree with that in principle its just that the implementation of it is going to have very sad effects on loads of people like Hugo.
- Gaye Its very interesting listening to you talk about university level qualifications. Now, before Moser, everything was different. People had mentors in the institutions in which they worked. The mentor worked in the same institution as the person taking the qualification. I am thinking about the City and Guilds 928 series. I think it was Moser... before Moser, I went off and did my Masters anyway because I didn't want to the City and Guilds...so Moser recommended that there be diploma courses in universities for people who want to take them. Are you in the position of knowing whether there will be any funding for people who want to take these university level qualifications? There was funding for the C&G.
- P2 Yes.
- Gaye You did not have to pay for that. This is if you were already in post you would have to pay. If you were already in post and you came in... okay, we will fund you to do it.
- P2 Your question is a very, very fair question, and I have no idea what the answer is.
- Gaye No... I am just sharing a question of thought with you. There are so many questions at the moment.
- P2 We are... actually... in effect we are defining another assumption or value, or whatever it is, which is 'professionalism'. And it's certainly been an under- professionalised sector. So the aim of professionalising it...or, upskilling it, which I don't like either... Improving the professional standing of the practitioners and therefore of the profession seems to be an entirely valid aim.
- Gaye You have to think about who is defining professionalism in this field, is it going to be policy makers, is it going to be universities, is it going to be practitioners? Surely that is a whole... it is part of my research.

- P2 It is part of it ...it isn't just to do with the FENTO standards or the basic skills standards. It is all to do with...Because it's not all...by any means, to do with subject knowledge, insofar as there is subject knowledge to be defined, there is the craft knowledge.
- Gaye yes and there is lots of practitioners who feel that professionalism is removed from that.
- P2 That great big box of stuff [points to shelf] yes...weighs them down with far too much detail. Then number 3 which are the ESOL one, no it isn't it's the disabilities one. 'Access for All'.
- Gaye I refused to take those.
- P2 I got this huge box one day and it contained 2 sets... and they just arrived at my desk out of the blue.
- Gaye I much prefer to do my Masters and my diploma and my PhD.
- P2 Well there you are. You are up-skilling yourself.
- Gaye Another thing I wanted to ask you after to listening very carefully to what you have been saying. You talked about student voices; this is something you would convey as being important underpinning to the ethos of training of tutors. What about tutors voices in their training? Would you apply those same principles you apply to ABE students? This is key interest for me.
- P2 Because, to quote McLuhan, "the medium is the message". You want tutors to behave to students in ways which involve and incorporate them, and then teacher educators much teach teachers that way it seems to me. So that the message is constant. The method by which you train teachers is a constant with what you want them to do with students. It goes like that, and if there really is a trickle down or cascade effect... it works that way.
- Gaye Quite often when people go into universities that doesn't happen.
- P2 No they assume it's got to be didactic.
- G There is a dichotomy there.
- P2 I try... even though I am now in a university post I have almost no teaching duties. I do about 3 teaching sessions a year on the MEd in literacy or the EdD... but I never ever just lecture from the front. Always bring stuff out from the students get them to contribute, tell me what you know. More to the point tell me 'what you don't know'. Do you know? Tell that person. Share
- Gaye That's good.

- P2 Well yes because it's don't do as I do, do as I say thing. And it would be much better to do it with teachers the way you want them to do it with students.
- Gaye Yes, admittedly there are certain things you have to absorb in higher education like your academic writing conventions and stuff like that. All that has got to be absorbed and surely within that there can be a way.
- P2 I think on the whole people at that level can absorbed those, if they do enough reading in the research they will see how research gets written I think.
- Gaye I find it quite surprising after working in an adult education environment to come into a higher education institute as a student. Not so much at Lancaster but certainly at Birmingham. And be treated as a student, sit there and learn. So for myself personally I am really pleased it's opening up into universities and spreading. There is this clash with adult education ideals and Higher education traditions which has to be resolved with our own practitioners.
- P2 Did you have another question you wanted to put to me?
- Gaye One thing you talked about professionalisation, you touched on it. When I wrote my own autobiography I came out with all the issues that concern me. Professionalisation was really one of the key issues. For me, this notion of the autonomous professional clashes with the City and Guilds behaviourist approach...which is one I didn't like. It would be quite interesting to see what you think about that.
- P2 I see a sort of parallel between the stuff there [points] and the national curriculum at schools level. A lesson not learnt in this context from the school level... which is that, the first set of definitions from the subject curriculum were far too detailed and complicated and nit picking and looked as if they meant that you had to tick off every little box. And then the second version was much more professional in the sense of... doing...the best-fit... grade descriptions rather than... here is a whole set of criteria... The whole thing was criterion referenced... which it can't be. And I think that in 5 years time there will need to be fresh set of, at least the four curricula... simplifying massively away from the over prescription that is there. Or maybe we have already learnt ,or policy makers will learn more... to say...'okay the profession has been up-skilled a lot and does not need to be led by the nose nearly so much and therefore, you can slim the curriculum down and say what the main tenets are'. That said, I still think there is one area which is still very under-defined... which is assessment and how you actually demonstrate that the students are making progress. Because it isn't that they require every one of those little bits in a tick-box and off they go... I am sure it's much more halting, two steps forward and one back and another sideways. Nevertheless, there has still got to be humane and well organised ways of recognising and celebrating that. At the lower levels it will all be

about very small steps of progress I think. But how do we record that, and that brings me to almost all the way back to what we were saying right at the beginning about listening to students as well in trying to discover and define what those are rather than trying to imagine from the top down.

Gaye I am not saying too much because I want it all to come from you but what you are saying is wonderful. Thank you very much. There is another area of interest for me, the 3 big reports that I am interested in are the Kennedy, Dearing and Moser. I don't know if you are familiar with the work of Stephen Brookfield. He has written a lot on adult education in this country and America. He explains that in America in the late 1990s Clinton brought in the concept of Lifelong Learning whereby education is a continuous process. It did not exist in discrete sectors. This has set adult educators adrift. Because they could have their own territory and now they can't you see, because they've got to link in to all the other territories. It was quite a definite sector... When I first went into adult education this whole thing about school teachers not affecting our students... Adult Education was totally separate. When Lifelong learning became a concept in this country the adults seemed to disappear off the scene. Do you remember the 'Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit'? It became the 'Basic Skills Unit' and I was just wondering if you had any opinions about that. Adult educators, according to Brookfield, they have had their territory taken away from them. It's about the pedagogy underpinning policy I am interested in.

P2 I am not sure I have any very clear views on either of those topics...territory and underpinning pedagogy. It may be that given that its been a Cinderella sector for so long that it has to be brought into a closer connection with the mainstream'...as the American slogan 'from the margin to the mainstream' said. In order to get more status, more funding, more organisation, more recognition, it shouldn't have meant that the barriers or the limits of it have been broken down, and it has been taken over by somebody else. It ought to have meant that it got more firmly attached to the mainstream. If practitioners are feeling that way then, that's sad. I think it would be temporary, because it's a case of needing to them reassert the distinctiveness of the field and then of what the particular values are, what form professionalism actually takes in this particular 'neck of the educational woods'.

End of interview

**Participant Three (NW England): 10<sup>th</sup> June 2002 at work.**

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- Gaye Thanks for agreeing to talk to me Emma. As I said in my letter I wanted to ask you what you think are the main issues and the developments concerning education, training and professional development of adult literacy and basic skills tutors from your own perspective. Perhaps the best way to start would be to talk about your own experiences; it could be from training or you can have experiences in your personal life which might have influenced how you teach or which have become important for your philosophy or ethos or pedagogy or andragogy. So I'll let you kick off from there. Lets start from how long you've been involved?
- P3 I've been teaching... I qualified last year, did my PGCE at Bolton Institute.
- Gaye PGCE in ...?
- P3 The Adult and Further education with the Basic Skills option. So that was for a year so I started here in May last year as a part-time tutor and became full-time in November. I've been here on placement since November 2000 doing various classes.
- Gaye You've been on placement from the institute. That's from Bolton Institute. Do you know anybody called [name removed]?
- P3 That rings a bell.
- Gaye He's Professor [name removed].
- P3 It does ring a bell actually.
- Gaye Well he's more vocational courses and things like that.
- P3 He didn't teach me but his name does ring a bell.
- Gaye Where did you do your first degree?
- P3 I did my first degree at Lancaster in Linguistics.
- Gaye You may know [name removed] and people there. I did my Masters with them.
- P3 I did my Masters there as well... when did I do mine, 1999 to 2000 I did mine.

- Gaye In the Linguistics Department?
- P2 Yes in Adult Literacy. When did you do yours?
- Gaye Well I finished mine about 1996/97. So arranging to go to the literacy research group meeting and things like that.
- P3 I finished my first degree in 1997.
- Gaye Which was in Linguistics and then you did your Masters in ...?
- P3 The MA [in Linguistics with an Adult Literacy option].
- Gaye My MA is in the Education and Training of Adults. But I did [name removed] module on language issues in adult literacy and then another couple of modules to do with literacy. Well that's interesting.
- P3 I really enjoyed it and that's where I got my motivation from, from doing my first degree there, and I was interested in the adult literacy side of it. Then I did the MA there and got even more interested so I decided to go into teaching. I'm finding it difficult from having that background coming into teaching. It seems the two seem to conflict.
- Gaye In what way that's interesting?
- P3 In all the training that I've had from my PGCE. The City and Guilds in 9282, 3 and 4 and then we just had the three day curriculum training, that was in November last year. *It is just the general definition of literacy that we use, this government definition, that's in the Moser report, which is in the new curriculum document as well. It's always quoted and they always use it in training, having the ability to function in society.* This view of literacy that just seems to completely contradict with my own view that I've got from being at Lancaster.
- Gaye Which is?
- P3 *The critical view, that it is not just skills, because there's all the society and the impact of that, and having to teach especially in this course here. It's an employed course so part of my job is teaching jobs skills but I'm teaching them and it's just completely fake and false and just teaching them the skills that I don't think will work. They need to know why they're unemployed and all the issues to do with unemployment and things like that. You know the other side of it.*
- Gaye You think that's important do you?
- P3 I think it's very important?

- Gaye What is it about the critical side that you think is important?
- P3 *How people are shaped and moulded by the government and society and they're just not aware. Then again... I don't know how easy it would be to get that across to them. I don't know because I've tried that in the past putting a critical language awareness...I've tried a lesson on that, we analysed some photographs and decided to try and use it in a lesson where they analysed, took photographs in the locality that they lived in and tried to analyse them and make them aware of the things that are in the photographs. It didn't seem to work but perhaps that's the way I did it I don't know. I might try it again some time.*
- Gaye I'm going off what you said... I'm taking my lead from what you're saying. You said that you felt that your students, trainees or whatever you call them these days, needed to know more about why they were unemployed and things like that? Why do you think that's important?
- P3 Because I think once they do realise why it is, that will help them more. Perhaps give them more motivation to learn because when they come in they are not motivated at all. Give them more of awareness and an ability to do something about it. They just seem powerless in a way to do anything because they're not aware of things. But time doesn't allow us to... it's a 26-week course and in those 26 weeks we've got to get through the certificate and there is just no time, it's hard enough getting them through the syllabus.
- Gaye Are they doing Wordpower and Numberpower?
- P3 Planning services want us to but we're trying to resist that because 26 weeks is quite a short time to get them through that and we're looking at Liverpool, the Liverpool Open College Network qualification at the minute.
- Gaye But...it's if you chose that qualification and the other powers that be, who fund your courses and send you unemployed people together with the funding... so you've got to fight with them have you?
- P3 We've got the contract for three years but they're threatening to pull it next year if we don't do Word Power. They want us to do Word Power Level 1. *A lot of students will get here and they are like pre entry and entry 1 students and it's just impossible. I think they find it hard to comprehend that you do get some students that can't read their name and address and are at that level. I don't know.*
- P3 So you get £500 for every student that gets through Wordpower. You said something about being to do with money? Can you just sort of elaborate on that?

- P3 *To do with money because you've got money for every student that comes here they get money which means that we've got so many students, it's meant to be eight students to one tutor. It doesn't look like it now but before half term it was a lot more than that. So the students aren't getting the tuition that they need especially when a lot of them are pre entry or entry 1 and they are not allowed support workers because there is no money in the budget for that.*
- Gaye So you feel that you are getting too many students for the number of tutors?
- P3 Yes, just because of the money. The college gets money. Because they come in to do an assessment in the next room. So it doesn't matter how much money they get for each assessment and from the assessment then they are referred into this course. Then yes the qualifications, at the minute there is the high level students have to do the City and Guilds the new exam, the level 1 test and again I think if they're level 2 they have to do the level 1 test even if they're higher. Again that is money related so I think it's all to do with statistics and at the minute we've not got any students that have have Word Power which is looking really bad and so they're threatening to drop the contract from us.
- Gaye One of the questions that came out of my own autobiography and it's lead to a question on my research is what are the consequences of any perceived conflict and how do practitioners develop through it. I was just wondering how you see that because you've mentioned the conflict now and you're working through that.
- P3 *I'm still working through it and I find it really frustrating because we keep asking, at every team meeting, we keep asking for even more tutors or less students, but it's like falling on deaf ears. It's like banging your head against a brick wall. We're just trying different ways in the class to manage the conflict...that there are too many students... [looking at] different ways of teaching going towards group teaching really, which isn't very good when you've got such a range of levels in the class there is always somebody who isn't getting the tuition that they deserve.*
- Gaye Do you use volunteers in your class?
- P3 We have had two, one who's doing a PGCE and was on placement and one who is doing a 9292 and she was on placement in the class, so yes, we use them. I mean some of the tutors are resisting doing any kind of qualification with the students. They are resisting that because of the fact that they feel all the planning services want us to do is just make up work just to get the qualification. There is another college.. Training 2000 that runs a similar course.

- Gaye I've heard of that one yes.
- P3 The students come here from Training 2000 with Word Power certificates and Number Power and all sorts. But when they actually came they hadn't done any work to achieve those certificates.
- Gaye You say next year that you might be involved with some training, what training will it be exactly?
- P3 I've been looking at Bolton Institute again. I'm with the PGCE actually delivering the tuition on basic skills to the students and I'm doing... I don't know if you've heard of it the City and Guilds qualification 7324, Basic Skills Support in Further Education. That will be delivering to tutors here, vocational tutors, delivering and imputing basic skills. Because they're doing key skills across college and at Blackburn we have key skills tutors and the vocation tutors are meant to work together to get the students through the key skills. *But there has been some conflict with that where the vocational tutors are just leaving it up to the key skills tutors.* Some of the other things going on in basic skills, you know the initial assessment, simplifying text.
- Gaye So you're basic skills and your key skills are counted as the same here are they?
- P3 They are different.
- Gaye Can you tell me what the view was on them?
- P3 Some people say they're the same and some people say they're different it is not a general consensus I don't think in the department. It is a separate department to our department. We're basic education and they're basic skills. So they teach the 16-19 year olds across college.
- Gaye Because you have to do key skills when you're doing your A-levels don't you?
- P3 Yes, *so I'll be doing that and basically it's like how to do initial assessment, how to use the results on them to do an individual plan how to simplify text. Things like that and just making them aware of basic skills and some of their students will have basic skills needs and just making them aware about them so that they can spot it and identify it in the class and help the students.*
- Gaye You talked before about the wider issues to do with basic skills. Do you think you'll have time to have input on that side of things?
- P3 Yes I would have thought so in the 7324 especially *I'm team teaching and I think it is always difficult when you're teaching with other staff.*

*On this course there are three of us... because you all have conflicting views anyway and I don't think a lot of tutors are aware of this critical view of literacy they just take what the government taught them as gospel and just use that. So probably not in the 7324, on the PGCE I think it is more or less up to me what I deliver, sort of, they give me a bare outline. So in there I quite like to deliver something on that because I think it's important to them.*

Gaye

It's something you believe in yourself.

P3

*Definitely, I mean we did touch on it a little, little bit last year when we were doing the PGCE and we looked at the policy. There are some things that are quite obviously you know to do with social awareness apart from terms not to use for students of ethnic minorities and why not to use those terms, like the background to those terms. So I could easily see it fitting in there and just making people more aware of it, definitely. I don't know how they'd react.*

Gaye

So you're teaching key skills here at the college and you're going to teach on the PGCE at Bolton. Who is your supervisor on the PGCE when you're doing it yourself?

P3

[Name removed] and [Name removed].

Gaye

Have they worked there a long time?

P3

[Name removed] has and he's been a basic education tutor himself. I'm not sure how long [name removed] has worked there for but I think they have both worked there for a while.

Gaye

Talking about the qualifications you've got. You've got your degree in Linguistics, you've got your Masters in ...?

P3

Adult Literacy.

Gaye

Adult Literacy from Lancaster and you've done a 9282, 9283 which is the literacy and numeracy, have you done the 9285?

P3

No.

Gaye

So what are you going to do? Because I'm just thinking what you're going to need because you normally need qualifications at higher.

P3

I'd be interested to see that because I don't know.

Gaye

I found that last week when I interviewed someone else. Everybody is going to have to have an NVQ for Level 3 or 4 whether they teach literacy, numeracy or what have you.

- P3 No matter what you've got, what qualifications you've got.
- Gaye I think you will be able to cross map some of them. It is going to be an awful time. Have you looked at the FENTO standards?
- P3 I did when I did my PGCE we had a look at them but not since.
- Gaye It's just that City and Guilds are bringing out a new course at the moment for people. I went down to do some in-training sessions last week for City and Guilds and thinking about how they're producing their course. So one of my questions was I'm very interested in pedagogy and andragogy and I just wondered if you understood by those terms.
- P3 I understood that pedagogy is teaching children and andragogy is teaching adults, the teaching and the learning of both.
- Gaye Right, no that is fine, so you've come across the word andragogy, don't be sorry you're doing great honestly.
- P3 Malcolm Knowles introduced that term.
- Gaye That's the one that's the stuff yes. I just wondered what you thought were the different perceptions between the two. What perception you have of andragogy and pedagogy and what you thought the differences were between the two. Have you taught children at all?
- P3 No, I would have thought teaching children, I don't know, but I would have thought that teaching adults, adults have a lot more give, they've experienced a lot more whereas children have a *blank slate*, a lot of people would say. Whereas I don't think adults are at all and I think they have a lot to bring so it is just not spouting out from the front they need to get involved and bring their experiences to the classroom as well to the teaching side of it.
- Gaye Think of their own experiences you say that forms part of your pedagogy view that adults they are allowed to bring and have more experiences.
- P3 *Definitely, in my teaching I try and do that and it's always, especially in here as the jobs related things asking them of their experiences. I think some people like looking for work, places where they look for work and making a list on the board as to where they look for work. You know asking their opinions what's good about using Internet sites to look for jobs and what's bad about it, evaluating it and getting their own experiences and opinions and asking if people have used the Internet or do they use job centres or whatever and definitely bringing their*

*experiences.*

- Gaye What sort of things about getting a job, a framework for getting a job, what do you think of that?
- P3 It's part of the contract that we've got to do that, we've got to be job related somewhere in there. *A lot of the students react badly to it because they've had so much tuition they've been to job search clubs, and all sorts of things. I'd like to do it more subtly I think and get it in different ways the skills that they need for jobs. Perhaps in more subtle ways that they don't realise as being job related but it's a new course and we still need to get under it.*
- Gaye I've gone back to your own qualifications now and about what the underpinning ethos is behind those issues that you thought were important behind them. You mentioned the courses at Lancaster so what do you think is the underpinning ethos for tutors If you were going to teach tutors next term what would you want to tell them? How we often teach and how we've been taught ourselves, just from your different experiences that you've had at Lancaster so I was just wondered what you brought, what stuck with you from that?
- P3 *What stuck with me from that it is not just teaching. If I went in now it's not teaching adults the skills that they need, the literacy skills, it's teaching them the whole practices behind that and the social underpinning behind these practices. You know like writing a formal letter is so important where it's got its status from, where spelling, why people have such high regard for things that have to be spelt correctly and perhaps it isn't that way. There is a beef in society about having correct punctuation and correct spelling and you can correct text and pronunciation, people seem to be so hung up on it. You know people have to realise its not, well this is my view, but that's another thing do you impose your view on the students I don't know.*
- Gaye Can you avoid it? So jobs about what you teach tutors about students and ways of tackling that and teaching methods. What about tutors themselves?
- P3 Tutors themselves probably aren't aware.
- Gaye What has sort of stuck with you? You've talked about what you do to students you as a person, as a tutor, what qualities did you feel the training has brought out in you to be able to do that?
- P3 Just making me more aware and raising my own awareness of the things that I didn't realise existed before. I didn't realise before to do with politics and society and how do you convince people you know people from ethnic minorities how they influence people and how you

can you know do something against that.

Gaye

How you fit in as a tutor.

P3

Yes, true. Just a general, there was just practice for the essay writing and the academic conventions and where they all come from. The status that they've got in trying to breakdown that status in a way perhaps break the rules a bit.

Gaye

What I was thinking was about 9282, 83 to 84 just thinking about how those courses are organised, the ethos behind those. What did you feel that was?

P3

From the very first lesson we created those it was the definition of literacy that the government have produced was always on an OHP up on the projector you know and quotes about 7.5 million adults being illiterate and I hate it. It's about to set the scene for me.

Gaye

Why do you hate the word 'illiterate'?

P3

Well a lot of people sort of brand them in a way as being stupid but also the fact that they're illiterate. *There isn't such a thing as illiterate because everybody has some ability to read and write. Even if they do recognise symbols or can read a bus timetable but still they're branded as being illiterate and it's just not right.*

Gaye

As we've been talking you mentioned something about being professional at one point. So you do regard yourself as being a professional?

P3

I think being new to it I've not got a lot of self-esteem at the minute. I feel I'm working with teachers who are like real experienced you know 15 years experience or more. So compared to them I don't feel I am a professional. But with all the training that I've done I do, yes.

Gaye

What does being a professional mean to you?

P3

Having the expertise and having respect from your students is very important to me as well.

Gaye

This concept of expertise is a very important concept I was just wondered if it is something that I've mentioned in my own autobiography and I was just wondering what all training courses you've done which helps and develops the expertise and how have you done it. Don't worry if you feel you can't answer it at the moment.

P3

*I feel my MA gave me the expertise in my view of literacy which I think is important in this job... to have a view of what literacy is and not just*

*think its reading and writing... to have a view of that.* But it didn't really give me any actual skills in teaching. I feel like I gained them from my PGCE. I don't think the 928... qualifications were long enough to go into very much depth to give you expertise. So I'd say the PGCE because we had the basic skills input from actual basic skills tutors and we had input on teaching methodology, different ways of teaching, learning styles, so I'd say the PGCE in that respect although that wasn't brilliant either I wouldn't say.

Gaye Can you remember what sort of methodology the PGCE course gave you?

P3 The teaching vehicles was like you know your group teaching, your one-to-one teaching, those kinds of methods, different ways of demonstration lectures, tutorials, question and answer, which I didn't really feel was relevant for what I was going to go into. Because generally you have small classes of six or eight. But I think I've learnt more by being here by teaching, I've learnt about the multi-setting approach to teaching that I never came across during the PGCE. I've learnt so much since actually being in the job and teaching from other tutors especially team teaching.

Gaye It's interesting, so what are you actually going to do? You are going to be teaching other tutors next term.

P3 Yes, with the 7324 at the other tutors, on the PGCE it will be student teachers.

Gaye Student teachers that's interesting. I was just wondering what ethos you are going to try and implant to them? You know on the PGCE these with the teachers of ....?

P3 Who are training to be adult literacy education tutors.

Gaye I was just wondering if you'd thought about what... having identified your own ethos would you be able to impart it to them?

P3 I've not really given it much thought to be honest and it's a job for the summer. But I'd do it differently to how we/I was taught when I was doing the PGCE, how the basic skills tutors taught us. Generally they just taught you basic skills, language experience, beginning readers, how to simplify text, just general things like that. We didn't really have any time to expand on that and to go more into the background. *They about the Moser Report which I'd already done from my MA but it was just the facts. This is it, this is the Moser Report, this is what they found, and they didn't question those facts, you know, they didn't question anything to do with it.*

- Gaye One of the great beefs about that is they used The Reader, as an example didn't they?
- P3 Yes, were you there when we did it at the Literacy Research Group [at Lancaster].
- Gaye I might have been.
- P3 We had a look at that.
- Gaye I knew you'd had a look at it because I'd got the book and ignore it, you know if you can't read and write you will end up like this and it was just totally, the assumptions there were just massive weren't they.
- P3 For one of my assignments really I analysed the most important the language used in it. It's all to do with getting jobs, the economy, money, skills this and skills that, and so hopefully I could bring some of that to it.
- Gaye That's good I would like to look at that actually if I may. I'll be looking at all these reports and you'll be quoted as an unpublished MA dissertation and all the rest of it. Because I'm looking at all these policy documents and what other... people have done work on them it's really interesting for me because I can move from that to.
- P3 Yes, you can use it.
- Gaye That would be great. Thank you very much. I'm going to stop now and I'm going to share my questions with you. I'd just like to ask you if there is anything else you'd like to add about the research, you said that you're quite interested in carrying on working with it and you are able to give me a little bit more time in the future. I won't take an hour's chunk out of your life like I have done today but if you're prepared to read the transcript of what you said and then I can ask you to enlarge on things yourself.
- P3 I think your research book is really interesting and I'm very willing to carry on with it and perhaps make a better job than what I've done today.
- Gaye You've done a great job today because you've touched on some of the key issues. It's our first time to talk together and there is no way you are going to go through some of the in-depth things. You've just come straight from teaching.
- P3 I feel like I've got more of an idea in my head of the kinds of things you're looking at and the questions.

Gaye

But it's like you, I'm also interested in wider the socio-political aspect of adult education and adult literacy in particular. We've come together on that one. Well thanks for that I'll be in touch.

End of Interview.

**Participant Four (Glasgow): 10<sup>th</sup> July 2002 at work.**

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P4 My name's [removed] - currently on a secondment to the National Training Project for Adult Literacies in Scotland. I've been seconded from Glasgow City Council where I am a community education worker...and I have been a community education worker for about 11 years. I returned to education...I was an adult learner myself and I did a degree in social science. I did a year's voluntary work in an adult learning setting, which included some...a very brief look at adult literacies for the workers there. Following that I did a postgraduate... in community education from the College of Dundee where I did a block placement in a community called 'Haghill' in Glasgow. I think it was there, at that placement that I realised about literacy and the relevance of literacy to adult learning and to community development. I'd been asked to construct a 'dampness' group looking at housing issues. *The area had terrible housing problems, there were structural faults with the housing and they were running with dampness. I was asked to put together a kind of action group to combat the current policies of the housing department, basically to pressurise them to do something about the housing.* But it wasn't until that very moment... after I had been very organised as a student, and planned the meeting and the minutes and all the rest of it... Then I realised... "Wait a minute, I think half the people around this table are actually reading and it was *at that moment that the penny dropped. In fact, they weren't able to because they didn't have those capabilities. They didn't have... They would come into me and say to me "I can't actually read and write but I want to be a part of this group because my house is very damp."* It was then I recognised about how inadequate my approach had been... and that was my biggest lesson on my placement as a student. After that... it was a couple of years later that, I ended up in a community called 'Drumchapel' which is a peripheral housing estate in Glasgow. I was asked to manage the community centre and...as part of that I decided I would put on a ... tried to construct a literacy group.

Gaye Have you taught on any literacy courses before?

P4 No! Never... and there was no training for it. Really we had touched on it in our community education course but we really hadn't been given very clear guidelines. *We weren't prepared in actual fact to use adult literacy. Most of the adult literacy at that time in Glasgow came from one centre in the middle of the town. It was largely run by volunteers... and generally what happened was if you met someone whose skills... and understanding of literacy was limited then we would refer them to that centre.. and that was as much as we did at the time.* So it wasn't until ...probably about 1980 or something like that, I'm not sure of the dates now, that they devolved the adult literacy provision to the area teams. It was at that point I was literally handed a pack of cards with people's names on them ...told who the two tutors were in my area and told to get on with it... and that

was how I was introduced. So I kept looking for an expert to assist me on how I was going to actually manage this provision... and how I was going to develop it and what should be the necessary components of adult literacy provision. *I rapidly realised that most of the people within the service, who were senior management to me, were bluffing... were bluffing their way through it. They had been pretending for many years that they were very knowledgeable in that area but I rapidly began to realise that it just wasn't the case.*

- Gaye When you say 'your managers' ... 'managing' in what? Were they were managing community education?
- P3 Yes, they were managing community education. Because I was a basic grade worker and they gave me the responsibility. Because I think... reflecting on that now... I suppose... I realise now that the reason for that was because they just saw it as quite peripheral to their main service, which was adult learning. They weren't really interested in developing it very much. So somebody who was coming in and posing a lot of questions was actually a nuisance... and, you know, making requests... for professional development and training in the area.... which hadn't been done for years... and I realised it was because it was a *big taboo*.
- Gaye So you were one of the earlier initiators then of professional development?
- P4 I tried to do that with my colleague... and I... I tried to find someone within the service who was like-minded and who was interested. I mean I had been in Drumchapel before I made the move to another area... They sent me to an area called Easterhouse and that is when it was all devolved. At that time they had just set up a specialist project within Glasgow called the 'Community Learning Project' and it was based in Drumchapel and we had two workers. But *they were two workers who were similar to myself... who had a general community education background and who'd started to try and deliver a service. It was largely based on a volunteer model ...there was no group work in it at all. It was all one to one. So we would telephone each other and try and get together... there was no official forum for getting together to share the practise or anything like that.*
- Gaye If I can just fix the picture in my head. You are paid community education worker and you were organising a literacy scheme in your locality or localities but it was all volunteers or mainly volunteers.
- P4 It was meant to be volunteers at the time but when I hadn't handed over the remit... the reality was much different... I found out.
- Gaye What was the reality?
- P4 The reality was there were two groups that I was told about and when I visited one I could never find it. Then when I visited the other it was

mainly special learning difficulties, special needs students. They'd been there for a number of years. They had about two or three volunteers and this massive area of thousands and thousands of people in it and a massive demand and huge waiting lists. At the time group work was really frowned upon... so that it was... when I took over and tried to develop it from there.

- Gaye So how did you manage to do that? We're talking the early the 90s now aren't we?
- P4 Yes, the early 90's, so what happened was I tried to find a training pack, the existing training pack, which the service had been using to train the volunteers which had been organised centrally and found that it was a really short course.
- Gaye How long was the course?
- P4 It was about six weeks, I think, with two hours week ...something like that.
- Gaye That was the volunteer training course?
- P4 [Nods] So fortunately a new worker arrived... just about that time... and she had an interest in literacy too and the two of us set about trying to find materials to put together our own training pack.
- Gaye I'd like to know what was in your training pack and why you put it in there?
- P4 *A lot of it came from the City and Guilds... from England and some of it came from what had been the former Scottish Community Education Council's pack as well. Also, some articles and things that we found were useful from Basic Skills Agency's magazine... specific articles on hand writing etc.*
- Gaye Had you come across RaPAL at that point?
- P4 No, not at all... and at that time the Basic Skills Agency were also producing bulletins on specific areas and so we used all of those things as resource material and tried to construct a volunteer...
- Gaye Well you said you used the City and Guilds things, what particular things?
- P4 I think there is a 9281. I think that was the pack. I'm not sure of the numbers because we never used it as an accredited course.
- Gaye Did you use it for training tutors or the volunteers or both?
- P4 Training volunteers... and tutors, yes for both. *But to be quite honest the tutors didn't really come along. It was rare to get somebody to come in for*

*the tutoring...because most of them were established tutors and felt that they knew it... and that they were above that level of training... and so I think they felt like... that was a bit condescending.*

- Gaye Was there no compulsory attendance... they came if they wanted it?
- P4 No, no. They were offered the training but we couldn't compel them to come because the tutors who were there were largely part-time sessional workers so we were hiring them for four or six hours a week at the most. So that was the kind of state of play.
- Gaye The tutors who were involved were professional tutors who were involved with the basic skills? What were some of the professional qualifications that they had? Did you have to have any?
- P4 Some of the ones who had been around but not in my particular area... we had plenty of primary schoolteachers. But the fact that I started to kind of do my own desktop research if you like... *I realised that their experience really wasn't what I was looking for in a tutor. Because they had a different attitude, a different way. The way I would phrase it now is their method would be didactic and mine would be dialogic. That's how I would do it now. At that time it wouldn't have been to put in those terms. I just knew at that time the kind of attitudes I wanted from them. They had to be with the student and have a very student-centred approach to learning and that was based on the adult learning theories I suppose that I had come from my community education qualification.*
- Gaye Can you remember the theories that stuck with you?
- P4 Well, *Knowles and andragogical approaches* ... we were taught that as part of the course... the group work process because we wanted people to think about becoming tutors in the course. So we put something in on the group work process because we wanted to encourage the idea of working together in-groups and the benefits that could be for adult learning and group work. I'm trying to think of others at that time.
- Gaye Have you worked in schools Fiona?
- P4 No, never.
- Gaye Because I just wondered whether you're thinking... even if you haven't worked in school you've talked about and you've mentioned andragogy... which is one of my issues... andragogy and pedagogy. I did have a background of teaching in schools and it is so, so different I felt when I came into it. I just wondered if you thought or perceived any difference even if you've not taught in school. Have you perceived any difference in teaching adults and teaching children?

- P4 Yes absolutely, I suppose what we call... *We've referred to it in our present introductory course as 'Jug and Mug'. Because a teacher in a school ... thinks of a person as an empty vessel and wants to fill up the mug and the teacher, who is the jug, pours the learning into them and that's how they learn...whereas the andragogy approach is much different from that. We're learning with the student. I think that one of the things we try to put over is that ...as well as you, maybe, translating some of your skills knowledge and understanding to your student... you're going to learn from them too. It is a two way process it is not just about you. So that's the way I've thought about it.*
- Gaye Did your tutors feel that way about It... your professional tutors too?
- P4 Yes, I think some of them did but I think the trouble was for us that with some of them having that primary school teaching background... *Without them realising it themselves, there was a condescending kind of approach in the way that they were teaching people that they knew and not really exploring with people what the person would like to know and... assisting them in their particular journey. I realised that although... some of the maybe... kind of pedagogical kind of skills approaches might have been useful. You know if they had put that inside the kind of approach that they really thought was based then probably the two would have married together and would have been an excellent model. But quite often it didn't work out that way because they wanted a structure; they wanted me to tell them what the curriculum was. I always felt that I was spoon feeding the teachers whereas... when I worked with the tutors who were more student-centred... they were more into the approach.*
- Gaye That's interesting... how you've isolated the two groups of people who have got teaching experience in schools and the people who are community tutors?
- P4 It was a more kind of organic approach. I'm trying to explain. *I think we're more interested in the development of the whole person rather than just a narrow set of skills.*
- Gaye I was just wondering... because in a dialogical approach you sort of talk to people and you talk about why they exist in the state they are in... and try to get them to be critical of their position. I was just wondering if you have any difficulties with the two groups of tutors, you know... the school ones and the community education ones in getting that point across?
- P4 I think the reason it was most difficult to get it across was because we had no time with them for training. So we went to speak to them about their approach... you were trying to catch them for maybe an hour or two hours... in a whole session you know it would be a whole term. We had them for this one tutor meeting there was no structure to it so to be fair to them we weren't really able to put this approach across.

- Gaye I'm really interested that you've broached the dialogic approach because it is something that really interests me and I just wonder how you define that approach as well as it being student-centred. When I think of dialogics I thinking of it in, a say, a Freirean sense, where you question everything that's around you... not just what's going on...but 'why are we in this', why are we having to learn this kind of literacy?' .... and the politics and the culture and the social side.
- P4 It's the politics side for me really because I am a socialist. The politics of... my personal politics have an impact to me. *I think we should be 'organised' and because I'm a socialist. Basically I am Marxist. So I have a Marxist tradition and that's why I became interested in theory because I was very interested... in Scotland the whole idea of conscientization and all of the rest of it. Because I wanted people to have critical understanding of society and that leads back to my degree in applying social science and the sociological background. I was a returner to education myself. When I went to those lectures and heard that... it was like an awakening for me... it was a way of me... a view of society that I could understand and I could truly identify with the way that was explained. I thought it really opened up my view of the world ...and I wanted other people to understand that too. That's why I wanted to try and put that together in a learning situation.*
- Gaye If you did manage to get it across to some tutors what was their reaction, what was their response? Did you actually talk about it in the terms you are talking about it now?
- P4 Not at all because I couldn't... *I would have been fired. There is no way that you could take these kinds of ideas and put them into a learning context because they are too threatening because it is all about powered relationships. So you couldn't do that so you have to find other ways of approaching and using a critical literacy model which...a watered down version is probably what you would want to do which is acceptable within that particular context.*
- Gaye Did you do any of this work with the students as well? This type of thinking with the students?
- P4 *I tried to do it in very simple ways...laterally through the initial training in the area but really to try and get them to examine power structures within their own community and to think about the literacies that got used within their social inclusion partnerships. "Why was it that within the social inclusion partnerships that the information that was put out was always written in such a complicated ways?" So, as an awareness raising exercise, I would pose questions about why we thought that might be. Was it because that was the kind of way that people always write? Or, is there anything more to it than that? Are there other reasons why they may not*

want you to completely understand the way that way that your system works? Is it planned or is it just by accident that they don't understand so they can write in very plain ways? *So we did explore those kinds of things with them in a group.* So we tried to look at that. I also looked at things like... because I was trying to simplify it in a way that...not to be condescending but to try and make it as accessible to people as possible. I used to ask people about why they thought spelling was so important. We talked about Dan Quail and his 'potatoes' and why the Minister [name removed] at one point...I put this in awareness training pack... Why was it when there was spelling mistakes found in her reports for government ... Why did she distance herself and blame the civil servants for them? Why was spelling so important? So I tried to have discussions with them about that. I also tried to talk to them about the kind of premises that they were actually operating in. What did it say about literacy students to actually be taught in the dressing room toilets of the community centre ... that was the only space we could find for teaching. Why was it that we were in the ex-janitor's office what did that say about literacy student's position within society and about the importance that was placed upon them. What did they think that said about the whole system and about the importance of literacy in our society.

Gaye

Can you remember what any of the responses were to this?

P4

Well people were basically saying that they know what it is... but we're not valued, we're the bottom of the barrel, they don't care about us, we're not important. They knew what it meant and it made them angry, they were angry about it you know. We talked about channelling that anger into something that was more productive and more reasonable and thought about the styles of writing that you could use that would maybe help to address some of these things. So I tried to get some of the tutors to discuss these kinds of issues with students.

Gaye

You talked about discussing with students and now you've gone onto tutors, are they both the same? Did the tutors accept this?

P4

Well some of them couldn't do it because they didn't have a background.

Gaye

They weren't politicised enough?

P4

They weren't politicised themselves. So sometimes I would go in and I would do some group work alongside the tutor... and I think they were quite shocked by some of these kinds of things. That maybe they thought that it didn't have a place in literacy tuition... that what they were teaching was punctuation, they were teaching grammar and they were teaching some phrases and sentences to be useful. The provision was so loose ...Issues about progression had just not come up... recording was limited. In a sense, I was running before I could walk and I was raising issues...I realise

this now but at the time it didn't seem that way.... but there was a lot of other things that needed to be put in place and it was out of my control.

- P4 We've talked about tutors being politicised... do you think they should be politicised?
- Fiona I think they should be politicised, I don't care what side of the coin they're on but I think they have to accept that politics both big 'P' and small 'p' has a huge impact in the provision that they're delivering.
- Gaye In your new specification for tutors the framework that you'd already got... are you making provision for this politicisation? How are you handling it?
- P4 Well, we're trying to put forward critical approaches to literacy and numeracy within that... We hope that the examination of powered relationships there... will help to politicise some of the tutors and make them think about the broader societal impacts upon the learners. Why they're in the position they're in. We know, through research that has been done, that there tends to be certain groups in society whose literacy hasn't developed in some areas than it has in others... disabled people and generally poor people. I know that 'poor' isn't a word that people like to hear anymore, they talk about the 'socially excluded' or 'socially included' but at the end of the day poor and poverty, minority groups, women ... there are all these types of categories. I think the tutor should be able to examine why is it that we keep coming against the same categories of people all the time. We should know and understand why that is happening.
- Gaye It is really interesting... and can you incorporate this into your new professional training framework that you're devising?
- P4 It is very limited. We're trying to put in critical approaches.
- Gaye You'd think it would be acceptable to the powers that be? I suppose it depends how you put it these things in.
- P4 I think there is some acceptance of it in some ways but I think history has shown that when communities truly become empowered that's generally when projects could shut down.
- Gaye That's a really interesting observation. Do you mind if look at that one for a little bit. History has shown that when communities do become empowered that the project shuts down.
- P4 Well funding becomes withdrawn.
- Gaye Why do you think that is?

- P4 Well, because they only want people to challenge counsellors, let's be blatant about it. They only want you to assist them to achieve their own policies. If it goes beyond their policies into what people actually want then that goes a bit too dangerous and they remove the funding. They don't want hundreds of people clambering at their surgeries telling them that they are doing everything wrong. At a staff meeting one of the counsellors, in fact, I think it was Counsellor [name removed] ...I was so astounded at an input he gave us at a staff conference that we had. He told us that community education workers would be alright in the next round of cutbacks ..In Glasgow City Council... but community development workers, we were under the social workers department, and we were on very dodgy ground because lets face it we're all for the socialist workers party and they had been leading local people in a certain direction, that basically it was their fault that people were angry. But I think what had happened was the community development workers had been working closely with the people and had truly empowered them and the counsellors just did not want that.
- Gaye It was closed down was it?
- P4 They chopped it and they changed the remit so for us and they changed the remits of the community development workers. So the community development workers ended up supporting community care projects more. Our community work remit was taken away from us altogether and we ended up with an adult education and youth work remit. That was shortly after that input from the counsellor.
- Gaye You've given me some marvellous information... your andragogy or pedagogy is coming out and we've talked about a dialogic approach and we've talked about politicisation, we've talked about student - centredness and you've talked about an experiential approach. ..Did you say that this course you're now planning is going to become compulsory?
- P4 I would hope it would become compulsory.
- Gaye Why do you want it compulsory?
- P4 Because I feel it is an obligation. My obligation is to the learners more than to the tutors I'm afraid. My interest is in their development and I think that if we do have, I mean I'm just learning about this myself. Because on one hand I can see the negative aspects of ...ring fencing a profession, and how that can be quite negative and very protectionist and I don't know whether I like that idea. But on the other hand I can see the benefits from it because we would get people on board and they would understand more the skills, knowledge and understanding that are necessary ...a more kind of rounded provision rather than just having very narrow skills.

- Gaye You said the ‘The skills, knowledge and understanding necessary...’ if we just look at this ... what do you say the skills are for it?...
- P4 I don’t think you can separate them. I don’t believe that. I always say to people its like a 3-ply piece of wool when I’m knitting I don’t separate that out, its 3-ply and all the three strands have to be intertwined in order to get an approach over. If I just knitted with the 1 ply it would quite an inadequate jumper. So I like to think of it as this 3-ply piece of wool and all those things need to be there. I think there is an overlap...
- Gaye I’ll tell you where I’m coming from on this because in England at the moment we have this emphasis on competency based...what a tutor had to do was prescribed. You had to collect a portfolio of evidence and meet performance criteria... to meet these competencies to say that you were competent. In some cases and some places people are just teaching to the competencies and not beyond that. In some areas, and in lots of areas in England the 9285, it has been phased out now, but it was compulsory you to do it in order to be a basic skills tutor. There were some tensions in that because some people like the professionalisation of the profession ... whereas other people thought it was a very limited model.
- P4 I think the reason I’m so keen on professionalising it is because professionalisation brings money. I know that our system in Scotland hasn’t been professionalised ever, it never had any kind of qualifications at all for literacy workers. I know that we wouldn’t get full-time posts unless we professionalise the discipline. I do see it as a central discipline and I do think it is something we do need lots of different types of training on. There needs to be psychology, sociology, there needs to be some aspects of linguistics and all separate parts and some underpinnings of language awareness I suppose we’d call it. All of those things need to be present and without professionalising it, without having compulsion to have that kind of qualification I don’t think that we’ll see you know I don’t think the profession will develop without that.
- Gaye Where would one’s volunteer fit into all this?
- P4 I think there should be a different role for volunteers. I think largely what’s happened in Scotland is we’ve depended upon them to deliver the service. I think it has been very unfair to expect that from volunteers or the kind of work that should really be paid. I think it is unfair to the learner as well because I don’t think they have the kind of knowledge and experience that you really need to have in order to deliver an effective service. I would hope that there would be a change of role for the volunteer that you would define what they would do and it wouldn’t be the same job as a profession tutor, as a paid tutor would do but I would still hope that they would be there. I still think there will be a need for one-to-one.

- Gaye Because in a Scottish provision am I right in thinking you've still got quite a lot of volunteers, on a one-to-one basis, out in the sticks and its necessary because of the geography?
- P4 Yes, it is geographical because people live up in islands... and you just can't get a group together on the islands.
- Gaye Going back to what you said about group work, introducing group work and the importance of group work. It must be very hard... and there is another tension there isn't there? You've got these people who want some sort of help with their literacy and numeracy and they're on a one-to-one basis with the volunteers. Yet there is still this need of... getting people in and getting them to talk about their literacy and numeracy in groups... there are all these tensions and I just wondering how you work through it?
- P4 This is one of the few areas that I think that 'on-line' would be helpful in that kind of basic skills context. Because I do think that there are isolated volunteers and learners the 'on-line' conferencing could be useful to try and help and to get a group work feeling. Or even just trying to get some communication with other learners through on-line, using email or whatever else they manage to create. I know you can get these groups, I can't remember the name of it now, but you can log in and you can have a kind of room with a web site and you can go to the chat room and join together as learners. I can see how that in the future could work. I think it is very difficult when you live on a very small island and have been isolated by that. I think probably the learning will be limited I don't think you can progress as you would if you were in a group.
- Gaye I'm just thinking about ... we've talked about the wider, social and political things. This project that you're involved with now, which started about 18 months ago, it's been called the National Training Project, what prompted it?
- P4 *There was a report brought out, I think it must have been 1997 or something like that, by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who also wrote this book 'Community change through Learning', £4.99. Within that... it talked about community education approaches to working with adult learners in communities. Within that document there was an important paragraph which talked about the relevance of teaching adult literacy and numeracy in communities and the provision needed to develop. It was a double-edged sword in a sense... because in one sense it said it was only community education approaches, which were the important things... which we all agreed with... but we also realised it meant the end of community education services. So it was kind of a double-edged sword so that's where the impetus for the project came. Following that the Scottish Executive set up an Adult Literacy 2000 steering group and they brought out the adult Literacy/Numeracy Scotland Report. They commissioned certain pieces of research and... learners, how to study...and they also asked... constructed*

*our National Training Project and carried out a training analysis on existing adult literacy practitioners in Scotland. So that's how we came about.*

- Gaye So with the training needs analysis I know it's not been published or anything because I think you told me that before but do you remember the things in it...when it came out?
- P4 Well it was an absolutely massive questionnaire. We asked them about all sorts of things. We asked them about what their roles were and... it was cross-sectoral analysis that we were interested in. We knew... *we had an idea before the training analysis that probably much of the training had been done in the community education settings within local authorities. They were the ones who constructed training for volunteers and the tutors... so we knew that was happening. That was confirmed by the training needs analysis. There was very little training in further education at all and we didn't record any at all from voluntary organisations or business-type projects and there was none in the prison services either.*
- Gaye Were there literacy/numeracy classes in the prisons?
- P4 Yes.. They were mostly those classes are commissioned from further education colleges. So the staff within the prisons was actually commissioned staff and not full-time staff.
- Gaye It's interesting to know that because when I was a co-ordinator in an FE college in England I also taught at the local prison as part of my timetable so there was like a college/prison link. But then we had incorporation, and even the prison education departments just became completely separate.
- P4 That's the same kind of thing... and we discovered that. The other thing we found out there was that largely it was a very fragmented work force, they were mostly sessional workers, part-time, or adult literacy was part of a larger remit. They asked for all sorts of training. A lot of it was skills-based training they were asking for but they were also asking for other things too. They wanted current research, they wanted to know the current research, and they wanted to know about underpinning theories. There were specific things they were asking for in relation to specific learning difficulties, special education needs, dyslexia ...
- Gaye They being ...?
- P4 All the different tutors that we interviewed for the needs analysis. So they asked us about all those kinds of things. There were no real surprises to be quite honest within it. At the end of it, I suppose, what we have to balance up is the training project was what I like to see is needs and wants. And I think there is always a balance between that about what people need and what they want. Because how can they know what they need if they don't

know the range before them. *They're making decisions in a vacuum in a sense because they haven't had that training. As well as providing the kind of things for their immediate needs we also saw there was another layer underneath it that possibly needed. Some of the training providers didn't have any kind of professional background and they didn't have any qualifications at all. That was another aspect of it, the qualification level, and the things that people saw as important as underpinning their work... that was quite interesting too.*

Gaye When you talked about training agencies before... because this is like a separate entity to anything else. In England I remember people coming on my volunteer training course and then getting a job in a training agency and that was the only training they had had at that point.

P4 It's interesting because some people cited the most unusual things as having an influence in their work. One person, a journalist, who found her journalistic skills had been very useful in that kind of setting because she was used to interviewing people and used to having that kind of relationship. Another person said because... they'd been a driving instructor because they were used to having this one-to-one... and those kinds of relationships had been useful. But most people... the training that they had had was the local authority, very few were accredited.

Gaye So is there any accredited training for tutors at the moment in Scotland?

P4 Some people do a tutoring adults module from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. It wasn't specifically written for literacy but it has been adapted for use.

Gaye Was it compulsory at all?

P4 No, there's no compulsion in that.

Gaye John mentioned something about a community education qualification, if you don't have it you can still do the work but there is a bar on the salary or something. Is that the same one or is that a different one?

P4 Well in local authorities you wouldn't become a community worker if you didn't have a community education qualification. You could probably do a similar job in the voluntary organisation though... they don't look for that. Quite often they look for an SDQ in the Scottish (end of side 1)....

A colleague of mine got the voluntary training underway and we ended up having lots and lot of volunteers, so from having two we ended up having a lot of volunteers. I think that at the time we had 38 volunteers or something like that in this small area. It was hard work and we did really well but we didn't have any premises. We were still trying to let out a room in a community centre... but because my managers was connected to the local

hierarchy through the Labour Party and that... a counsellor (the local MP) was a massive boxing fan. The only spare room, which was available, was this room which had a boxing ring in it... and he would not... although this room was only used once a week for boxing he would not ask the group to leave the centre. So for the other six days a week that room was left empty with this massive boxing ring in it and he would not give it us for literacy work. So we trained people in the toilet, in the dressing room of the ladies toilet, and on the stage of the community centre and wherever we could find a corner of the room. It was all because the local MP felt that was a good way for people in that area to get out of poverty was to do their boxing there. That was what it was about... so I think the premises for me it was massive issue, it was just a big an issue as actually... the experience of the tutor. Because I was having so many difficulties being allowed...

Gaye Because you have to rent properties don't you and its money as well.

P4 There was no money for renting and we didn't need to in any case. We had 52 centres or something like that at that time in Glasgow and we were dedicated space to this in one room in one centre. It just shows you the emphasis within adult learning... it just didn't exist. Even when you got asking for training... because I was really interested in trying to get training... even through... inside the education department at that time... I was hoping that we could have joined in with the teachers training, the maths specialists and the literacy specialists and thought... well even if we take on board some of their approaches... we would maybe develop it within our own literacies training and that would be very useful... but we weren't allowed to join onto that... that was for 'teachers' and I think they would have been upset if community education tutors had been allowed to go there. Then they started to blame the rules as well... about... we weren't able to do direct delivery any more... *Where before... community education workers would deliver the education and training* and we would have been allowed to do one-to-one and maybe some small group work ourselves, do some confidence building, committee skills kind of training, and all those kinds of development training within an adult learning programme. *That was stopped... and we were told we weren't allowed to do any of that kind of teaching any more that we had to commission in all the work because the council had been restructured and the adult learning workers had been severely cut back. So... where there had been 10 workers there was me... so I started managing programmes rather than actually delivering them. So that was quite difficult too.*

So that is about my interests and I am so delighted to get into that.

Gaye I was going to ask you about participating in this kind of research... where you've been allowed to say what's going on.

P4 I always say if you've got the opportunity to do these things... it is always very cathartic... because... it is one of the things about coming to this

project actually... that was great. Because we all had a good moan at the beginning about all the things that we could have done ... that we weren't able to do... because there were all these constraints and funding and premises... Generally, it would be the lack of understanding in our own management... There was no emphasis on adult literacy at all. They didn't see the relevance of it. It was a fight to get anything done...It was always... you were waging war all the time at your team meetings, having to argue why do you need a tape recorder on a literacy project. Why would you need that? Why would you want to start a creative writing class what's the point of that? Those kinds of attitudes prevailed. So... it was quite refreshing... coming to the project to be with other workers and finding out that it wasn't an experience that I was alone in...that they all shared it....

- Gaye It's this sharing that is really interested me... coming to Scotland... because you've mentioned so many things, which affects the tutors in England as well... deliverers and receivers adult literacy education in England... My research is not so much about particular courses or anything like that... it about what it's all about...and I am finding lots of common themes and interesting connections in doing this. I was just briefly going through some of my own questions, which I'll show you. I'm going to stop the tape now because we've gone onto the second side and each side is 45 minutes so I think you've had a good hour and I've got to transcribe all this, are you happy with that. Is there any thing else you want to mention?
- P4 The only thing that I haven't mentioned is I haven't really talked very much about the training framework that I'm involved with. If I can just give you a brief run down of it. What we've been trying to do is because the results we got from the training needs analysis... we wanted to try and construct a training framework which would reflect the current status and needs and wants of the field as it just now. We wanted to have lots of entry points for people, we wanted a variety of exit routes for people, we wanted it to be really practice-based and *so we've set up this training framework. What would have formerly been volunteer tutor training... we've changed that to reflect new policy... and which is more working to a Level 6... we would call it. It's our higher level, it's mapping it to the Scottish credit....*
- Gaye I know it's like an A-level.
- P4 Just below an A-level. So we're mapping it to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and I believe it's a similar process in... *So it's Level 6 of the qualifications framework and its an introduction.*
- Gaye We talk about entry level, level 1, level 2, level 3. Level 2 is about the GCSE and level 3 is about an A-level. So it is a similar kind of process.

- P4 So we've constructed all that *and we hope that will be used for classroom assistants, well we them call classroom assistants but in the report we refer to tutor assistants.*
- Gaye This is one that is just before the under the higher with Level 6 did you say?
- P4 Level 6 is a bit higher and then we are hoping to construct, in conjunction with the higher education institutions, something around Level 8, which is a diploma... it is just under the degree. There is reasons for that because of the part-time nature field and because some of them are on short-term contracts.
- Gaye You mean the diploma would be just under a degree. Because I did a postgraduate diploma...so there is a difference.
- P4 So it is just under a degree... what we're hoping is... is that we will provide specialist courses after that... so they could top up the credits and make it up to a degree. *We're also in discussion with a number of higher education institutions about the possibility of having practise tutors and practise assessors who would actually encourage reflective practise in the field.* We would look at the literacies and the community pack and look at the core principles and values which underpin that particular pack and ensure that they're thinking about those things when they're working in the field. I see that as a kind of add on a support system, a quality mechanism and a way to try and get people to thinking about their own practise, about why they are doing what they are doing and to try and improve their own practice.
- Gaye You talk about reflective practice in the field... I was just wondering if you could you expand on that a little bit.
- P4 Well we want them to reflect on their learning... *I mean we're asking learners to construct a learning plan and to think about themselves and their own learning and review their own learning and think that practitioners should be doing that too.* I see it as very much the same kind of process. When you're doing a learning plan for a student why aren't you doing that with yourself? Reviewing your own practice, looking at what's, looking at where things haven't worked so well and thinking back through and thinking about well how could I have done that better? Sharing that kind of information with other practitioners and trying to improve the whole service... and I mean that in a Scottish sense... so that it contributes to research and just makes our understanding of the whole process a much more valuable one. Plus, it makes us feel as workers that what we're actually doing is important and valuable.
- Gaye I noticed with what you were saying you were talking a lot about... you mentioned the higher education institutions and I think that is imperative.

- P4 I think that's absolutely imperative and that's one of the reasons that right away that we've gone into discussions with higher education. Because, what's particularly lacking in Scotland is a research institution for literacy. We don't have the benefits of Lancaster, Sheffield, Kings etc, we don't really have anybody apart from probably {name removed] and {name removed], I trying to remember his first name because I haven't met him I've only read about him. There are very few people up here that are actually involved.
- Gaye But Jim and Lin are sort of more community education rather than literacy although they do a whole lot of literacy stuff as well.
- P4 They do. So what we would like to see is some kind of research in one university, a university, a grouping of universities becoming involved and thinking about literacy and about starting to do research with a Scottish emphasis. To think about our cultures and to try and you know put in our cultures within the framework. We want it to feed back into the framework. We want to encourage research amongst the practitioners and for them to become involved in that, that whole process.
- Gaye That's marvellous because you're talking about the Scottish culture I was just wondering what impact devolution has had on your thinking in all of this. Like the Edinburgh conference it was all happening wasn't it... Scottish devolution.
- P4 I don't know whether we would have got any money at all if it hadn't been for devolution because we haven't had any money for literacies for such a long time. I think that's a benefit... I think the proper benefit is that we don't need to be tagged on to the English curriculum which is very prescriptive and skills-based.
- Gaye I was going to ask your opinion of the English system, go on carry on.
- P4 *Well, I was horrified by the subject specifications* because for me there has been shift away from what I would regard as adult basic education. To me there were more competencies that I would expect to find in a further education lecturer and communications... or something like that. *When I heard some of the comments from literacy workers at the RaPAL conference...* their views and how they thought it was condescending to do the one level and... this was last year when it first came out. *When I saw the kind of qualities they were looking for the kind of language that was used within it I thought, "Is that a foreign language?"* I don't understand half of the things that are in it." I know part of that's because of my training... I think "Do I really need to know all of those things in order to be teaching someone how to do their everyday literacies in their home, with their work etc"? Up to this point I've managed to progress people, I've sent them onto college for them to do English and to do a variety of

different kinds of courses...they have gone on to work and all the rest of it.... and they've been very happy with what they've received. *It just shocks me to see the kind of approach that's happening in England, particularly because it's related to the school system and because most of my students are products...are failures from that kind of system.*

Gaye They've been "labelled" failures from that kind of system.

P4 Yes, well they've labelled themselves quite often from that. When I see that, I see that as more of the same you know. So what we're doing is we're saying that's a terrible experience so why don't we just go at it again and have another... another terrible experience. So that's what I feel about it. I felt that what we were trying to offer was something that was different. That was about an adult context, which was about looking at what their needs are... rather than looking at the needs of a global economy and that's much, much different from what I want to be involved in.

Gaye Fiona, you've been saying some wonderful stuff, I'm really going to be coming back to you on this. I'd like to say officially on the tape thank you very much.

End of Interview.

## Participant Five (Aberdeen): 10<sup>th</sup> July 2002 at work.

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- Gaye Well thanks for agreeing to do the interview [Name removed]. If you can just start off by telling me what your job designation is?
- P5 I am Acting Manager of a National Training Project in Adult Literacy in Scotland. It's a short term project operated by the Scottish Executive to establish a national training framework for the training of tutors and managers in adult literacy and provision. I've been doing this for about 18 months now; only acting manager for about 5 months and the project ends pretty soon. I think its going to end as a project no later than December. My role in it will end no later than the 27<sup>th</sup> September. So you caught me just in time.
- Gaye So what happens to you after?
- P5 I don't know, I think that what will happen that the plan within Scotland is to establish a centre to promote adult literacy. There's not been an agency with that responsibility in Scotland since I think it was called a Scottish Adult Basic Education Unit, closed years and years ago. So although you've had BSA [Basic Skills Agency] in England there's been no such agency at all in Scotland promoting adult literacy. And that's one reason why we're in such a parlous state at the moment. There's a lot of very good practice around about but it's very fragmented and there are a lot of gaps. To get the service to where it ought to be will take a number of years. It's not going to be something that will be achieved just by throwing money at it. And that's one of the reasons why we started a training project. My background is that of community education worker. I was trained in 1974, I finished training. I was then a youth and community worker, became a community education worker, doing a lot of rural work, all community based, all working with local community groups and all about developing ability ... to make decision and achieve what they want to achieve. I then stopped doing that and went to do voluntary work for about 9 years.
- Gaye But it was kind of voluntary work.
- P5 That was running a small community, a therapeutic for people who needed care. It was important to me because a lot of what I learned doing that has been very useful in later years when I got involved in literacy.
- Gaye How did it relate?
- P5 It was *to focus on the individual and the commitment to the individual*. The two things that are difficult to sustain in general community education work. You tend to be involved with a lot of group work, identifying group priorities, working with groups to achieve those; Very little opportunity for working with individuals. And to focus on an individual that I got in the

community, in the therapeutic community... It was very rewarding, it was very hard but it also, I think from anything else I think it showed you how much input is needed to reverse somebody's patterns of behaviour. We work with a lot of 'maladjusted adolescents' used to be the term in the 1980's. I don't know if it would be called that now; But mostly with people with mental health difficulties and with learning difficulties, a very wide range of people.

Gaye What time are we talking about now?

P5 We are talking about the 80's really. Its actually most of the 80's. Then I left there. My wife and I were doing this and we became exhausted so we left. I got back into community education work in, really through part time work and community development work. In 92 I got involved with literacy for the first time and that was as a co-ordinator in Montrose. My job was to support the work of volunteer tutors and to identify new students, learners, as we call them now; getting a development service with Montrose, which is like a huge place. That was only an 8 hour job but I loved it.

Gaye How big an area?

P5 Well Montrose is a pretty well defined area, it's quite a little town. There would be a population in the town of about 14,000 and develop maybe about 18,000 or so in the surrounding area. So it wasn't a big place; a reasonable size.

Gaye So you had all your background and community work and with pupils, what did you call them 'maladjusted' in inverted commas.

P5 I did yes. It's very hard to stick a label on people.

Gaye I understand that.

P5 So yes, I work with people who for one reason or another needed support or care in a living situation.

Gaye And from that you went to manage the literacy scheme, you were co-coordinator in the scheme in Montrose, after having a break in the community work, you went to Montrose.

P5 Yes.

Gaye Had you taught literacy and numeracy yourself before?

P5 Well it crept into the work in the community because we have young people who couldn't read and we worked with them. When you're living with people... it was like 7 days, 24 hours. When you're living with people all the time, a lot of the learning that takes place is by example; it's not

conscious teaching, except that when it came to something specific it might be something practical. When it was literacy which it did, well you just set out about doing it. And you weren't working with a set of skills and you weren't working from a body of knowledge about literacy. You were working with your knowledge of the individual. You were working through the tasks that were part of the way that we lived, because it was a therapeutic community. It was also a working environment. We had a very large garden and we had animals and we had a work shops and practical activities; real activities. Most of the literacy and numeracy things that we did were directly connected with what we were doing as part of life anyway. And it was great because the most poorly skilled, the most apparently hopeless case learns an awful lot just by doing. And you can... I taught people to count just by asking them to go and get me 5 potatoes. And they'll go and get 5 potatoes. But if you ask them to count to 5, they couldn't do it. They can't do it in the abstract. And you build up on very practical activities like that. And you just approach something that somebody needs to learn a little bit every day, and they get it. And that's the luxury that you've got when you are working for 24 hours with the people all the time.

Gaye But I can imagine... as you said it gets stressful.

P5 Well it does get stressful and its very difficulty way to learn.

Gaye You talked about when you're teaching people something they need. Were they able to contribute to their own curriculum?

P5 Well the whole place ran on cooperation. There were no sanctions. People got involved with what they wanted to get involved with and if they didn't want to get involved. You can't force somebody to dig a garden. Or you certainly can't force somebody to care for animals. So everything is done with people's cooperation.

Gaye Were they assessed for literacy and numeracy?

P5 No we were not at all interested in, and we've already talked about the difficulty of labelling people, and most of the folk that we'd got had been in all sorts of other places and they have worn labels all their lives; most of them, the labels of failure, at school, at home, wherever. And so we would have resisted any attempt to test people, to assess people. We met people as we found them and worked on what interested them. If we didn't have it, we would make it. If we didn't have a workshop and they wanted to do something, we would make it. I would get somebody in to work for them and that. So we would have somebody to come in and do painting. We'd have somebody to come in and do a bit of pottery, because we didn't have those skills. But the whole approach was that you create opportunities for people to succeed. And that applied to absolutely everything. It applies to social behaviour just as much as it applies to literacy or...

- Gaye So you took all these ideas with you to Montrose?
- P5 I think they become part of you; when you work for 8 or 9 years doing that all the time. Yes, the part of the way that you approach people.
- Gaye And when you were in Montrose were people in classes or was it home tuition?
- P5 It was very, very little home tuition. Most of it was one-to-one. There was occasionally a group. There were very few people. Very few students at first but they did build up.
- Gaye Who were they with, volunteers?
- P5 They were almost always with volunteers. When we've had a group together we've paid the tutor. That for most of them, there was an additional thing. There was a local resource centre where people would learn individually and the tutor went in there and gave the tuition. That was quite a separate thing.
- Gaye And were the tutors especially trained?
- P5 Yes there was a training course.
- Gaye Could you tell me about that?
- P5 Yes, it's a training course I think would be recognised anywhere in Scotland, that looked at attitudes and approaches to literacy. It looked at how adults learn. It studied situation a little bit, local situation, just to give people some background information. And then it began to get into specific approaches to teaching and read, writing and numeracy. It looked at how to create a lesson plan and how to negotiate a programme of learning. It did that in about 16 hours. So it was running for 8 weeks, 2 hours a week. But the sessions were a bit long, somewhere between 16 and 20 hours. And that's been the pattern all over Scotland.
- Gaye Really, until recently.
- P5 Well it still is.
- Gaye So people still go volunteering training, at least 16 hours, volunteering training, or similar training courses. You said that your course in Montrose talked about attitudes to literacy and views of adult learning. I was just wondering if you could remember any?
- P5 Of the attitudes to literacy?

- Gaye Yes.
- P5 Sure. This is where the connection with the community work, the work in the therapeutic community came up because the attitude was based on a brief sketch of understanding of what it might feel like not to have literacy. Not to be fluent with literacy and numeracy. So there is some kind of empathy and an attempt to establish (unclear) ... And then there was a matter of an approach where you understand how adults learn all through adult lives. *That they come to a literacy programme with a lot of knowledge, a lot of skills, levels of experience. And learning is best developed by using what they can do; that the basis of working with people is that you believe what people tell you. You don't test people. You find out what they can do and build on it.* If you test pupils, you find out what people can't do, and fill gaps. *So rather than follow that deficit approach the attempt is always that we can build on a positive view of what we can do.* It means spending a fair amount of time talking to people; listening to people. That discussion that happens with learners when they are new is probably the most crucial bit of the experience. In a way it's the one opportunity perhaps that you have to make sure that somebody really follows up the request for some sort of learning. I always thought it was the best bit of the job and the most important bit of the job because it couldn't be done by volunteers. It was part of what I did as a ... coordinator to assess new learners and find a way during that first meeting to convince them that they were capable of learning. And that's quite crucial. The other side of that, that I would be involved in the training of tutors, new tutors and the support of local tutors so that I would know who I had that was available to tutor and make the best match between the two.
- Gaye. That was something like I did in the 80's.
- P5 I think that is the model that it's built on, an old model. It's nothing that is particularly new. Just now things have changed dramatically. The view of the usefulness of volunteers is changing. My own view changed while I tried... changed while I tried to develop the work later when I got into the literacy full time which was in 94. The first task was to build up the number of students and the number of tutors and very quickly within a year we had triple numbers which came from a small start. But we had reached a point where suddenly we had an awful lot of relatively new tutors who were maybe not doing the best work and learners were not getting perhaps the best opportunity to learn.
- Gaye Was there a stipulation that tutors had to have a teacher training qualification?
- P5 No qualification whatsoever.
- Gaye Well some backgrounds from your paid professional tutors come from?

- P5 Well paid professional tutors we have had very few. Budgets were extremely small; very, very small. Some had a teaching background, some had a community work background. Some had no particular background at all but had been a volunteer tutor for a number of years, and that was where .... But there were not many. There really were not many tutors around. That was partly a financial thing because we didn't have an invoice yet. It was also partly a geographical thing because we couldn't get groups of learners together very easily. Within Montrose its quite difficult, with a population basis of 14,000 it was hard to get enough learners together at the same time at the same place. I think within 18 months of starting there I was going for full time and my responsibility was Angus, the whole of Angus. So you're a 110,000 people and very few resources. And we had altogether I think at that time in the whole of Angus. In the whole of Angus I think about 29. We had 29 learners plus all the ones that was going to learning resources centres.
- Gaye So at least it's possible for everybody to know everybody else then in a sense. Did you get much chance to meet?
- P5 No. It's actually... Angus is quite spread out and the transport is very poor. It's a very big geographical area... Even though it's probably no more than, from one corner to the other, from Montrose you're going 40 miles. That's without a car, it's quite difficult, there isn't a direct transport between a lot of places. So eventually we did, after the year we had built the thing up, we then began to do ongoing training.
- Gaye Did you say before it's become more difficult now to use volunteers. There is an attitude towards volunteers is changing.
- P5 Not that is more difficult but the values, not values...the view about how best to use volunteers. The view of the limitation of working with volunteers had changed.
- Gaye Can you expand on that? And how you yourself feel about that. There was certainly attitudes with volunteers.
- P5 There was an attitude if you could read you could teach somebody to read and that was sort of to get things going. I think understanding about [pauses].
- Gaye ...Understanding about?
- P5 ...The complexities of literacy has changed. I think also the view of the rate of learning you can achieve through a two hour session once a week was also changed. And that changed a long time ago to be honest. I think it was the mid 80's that the BSA was talking about Programmes ought to be offering an absolutely minimum of 4 hours face-to-face with a tutor. And that really is rarely, rarely happening, and that's very sad. But I think a lot

of it with the BSA doesn't apply in Scotland. The funding arrangements and the development in England have totally missed us in Scotland. Some of them are very gladly missed, I must say that. There is not a lot of envy. There is not a lot of envy for that. There's a limit you can get to the time, there is a limit to the imagination of creativity that you can expect from a volunteer who's working with the same individual week after week. There's quite a gamble in the matching process when you stick two individuals together. With the best will in the world you get limited information with your first interview with somebody. You can spend an hour with somebody and you get certainly not a lot of information. But you start working with them and you learn very quickly that there is lots of other stuff. And very few programmes based on volunteers have adequately resourced support for the volunteer tutors. Despite good intentions they are very often left too long without support without access to support materials or just somebody to talk to. So I've attempted in the past to redress on going training needs; things that are occurring that I get from going out talking to tutors.

Gaye ...Talking to volunteer tutors?

P5 Volunteers tutors, going and meeting them while I am actually working with a learner. I could never get around. I had at one time .... I think I had about 42 volunteers actually working. There were more that were not actually working at the time, but to actually go around and put the support time in for 42 volunteers is almost a full time job in itself to do it properly. I think that one full-time person given that they have all sorts of other stuff to do shouldn't have more than about 20, 25. Those were my thoughts at the time. I now think differently. I now think that because of the limitations of what you can expect with volunteers, because of the gamble that's involved; because of the support difficulties, because of the time that you have to put in to retraining, the 25% of volunteers who leave every year. This whole thing, is it a practicable way of basing your programme? And I think it isn't. I think volunteers can operate. I think they can sometimes be the best solution for some people. I think they can supplement the work of a paid and experienced paid tutor. I think they can sometimes be the turning point in somebody's learning path. They can be the means of transition from somebody who believes they can't learn, to somebody who believes they can and is prepared to take the chance and learn with others. I think to leave them is the only learning resource for somebody is a mistake. So there ought to be limitations on what you asking volunteers and there ought to be proper support. There ought to be a quite clear understanding of the main task of the volunteer. And that should be, not that they are the main learning resource for an individual from now until whatever. But that their task is to work with somebody and really to work on identification of any or every day of progress, made with the learner and to be spotting the opportunities for introducing the learner to have a variety of modes of learning. But you need the variety of modes of learning as well. So that's the next thing.

Gaye

All your pedagogy is coming up, variety of modes of learning.

P5

Well we have to offer people what they need. At the end of my time in Angus I was certainly still reliant on volunteers. I was still finding it difficult to establish groups and where groups were established they tended to have the same characteristics that after a period of time the more able, the more confident learners would go and they would leave a growing core of less able, less confident people. And before terribly long they were perceived by outsiders that would be non-literacy workers as a special needs group. And it really kind, it's a very good ... terms to have an outsiders view, however appalling you make think their summation of the people is. It nonetheless makes you really look at that, what is it they are seeing that I am not here. And I think what they are seeing is a group that's static. And that has grown towards care rather than education. And that is a trend, I am not talking about, not a fact, but a trend towards... So I began to do short course work with learners. They would remain with their individual tutor or in their group but would start to work... in some way... whatever means I could get them to work in a shared or collective way. I suppose the most successful area of work there was with writing by definition that you are talking about learners who gained a certain level of competence and confidence. I think once you get people on to developing an interest in writing then you are really at a stage where you are almost up and running with people but you can begin to sort of really enrich the learning that we did. So we did all sorts of things. We produced books of student writing. We had occasionally had a visiting writer to come to a residential or a writing day where you could write collectively. You could meet others. We had already started an annual get together just to sort of let all the students know that they weren't on their own. There were other people in there who were learning. That had mixed effect because whenever you run a thing like that you could always get droves of people, of the people who were taught in the learning resource centres. Learning resource centres in Angus I should explain are run by the social work department to give day education, training, and I suppose personal development for people who are living in a community, or had some kind of learning difficulties. Our literacy work was done in those centres with that level of people. But whenever we got folk to learn together in Angus we couldn't be exclusive. We had to be inclusive and so we invited everybody and we would get free mini buses for people. And the kind of balance of attendance was skewed by that. And the view of who we were working with was skewed by that. And against either view that I mentioned before of a group was almost reinforced just by that scheme. It was just the difficulty of what to do when you get people together. So social get together stopped being productive. But themed get togethers were always good. So if we looked at and the example here with formal writing, you would have a good chance of getting together with more active writers. But we had something/ learning in common.

- Gaye You mentioned something about collaborative writing. Can you expand on that one?
- P5 Well it was an exercise that was done. The last one that I could remember was we got a local writer. A local published writer, not a national name but a local published writer to come in and run or contribute towards a day of workshops. And part of the contribution was to get them all to produce a piece of writing. On that she was very, very good. She actually was one of our volunteer tutors. She actually got into identified the theme and produce a short piece of writing at the end of the day. That was a very ... everybody, there wasn't a single person there that day who didn't contribute to a piece of writing. All around it was a very, very constructive thing to do and something that they identified as that most enjoyable thing they'd done in the whole time. Even though they had got a lot out the books that were produced as well which were in the local library. Because we had them in the libraries and they were real books.
- Gaye Are we still in the 80's here?
- P5 No we are in the 90's. I have been in the 90's since I had started literacy work.
- Gaye Of course we are talking about Montrose. And that was your last job before coming through to finish this project, the national project.
- P5 Yes.
- Gaye And you did that 18 months ago. The provision you've been talking about with your volunteers, this is still essentially what is going on now.
- P5 Yes.
- Gaye Because you talk about some of your worries of using volunteers and I was just wondering if you had done anything in the last 18 months of change the set up?
- P5 Yes, we are convinced ourselves that there are so many limitations with basing a programme on volunteers that there really has to be some effort to encourage providers of literacy services to look for other modes of development. And in fact that's a consistent feeling through the whole strategy that is going to be implemented in Scotland, there is a lot more partnership working. The development of literacy in the next stage, this is the Scottish Office, the National Training Project is part of what we hope will be a development centre. That we will also encourage development in practice. Our focus has been in training but training is .... And less practice ... one of the things that no one provider can meet all the demands and people need to work in partnerships. So we've had within Scotland there's been community learning partnerships, every local authority area... There

are 32 local authority areas. Each one has a community learning partnership. Each partnership has drawn up an action plan for the development of the literacy programme which required to do that taking into account that all the players within that area. So that would include. Okay the community education service, FE colleges, training providers, guidance services a whole range of people.

Gaye Do you have all training agencies?

P5 Yes training providers and training agencies. There is something in Scotland about the training agencies in that they have come in to being because of the development of agencies like New Deal. They have therefore followed the funding that was established in England, that the funding was the same, that they have used the same curriculum that was developed in England. Not the national curriculum but they've used Word Power and a very focused fixed curriculum. And they have been working in particularly circumstances. They obviously started off working with young people. They are working with a client group. They are working with a client group that is traditionally, I hope traditionally has escaped all community based learning. I very rarely get learners from below 23, 25, that kind of age. I haven't worked with anybody who left school. But very rarely got them, but if I got them, very rarely managed to retain them.

Gaye It's a funny age... when they have left school anyway.

P5 Of course it is, it's a long time ago, from what I can remember, that I have had quite distinctive interests at that time and it had nothing to do with learning. Even though this particular group go into the training agencies and were focused on getting a job then that was the widest part of their interest. I think it's a difficult group to work with and I think there may be an argument for saying though that a set curriculum maybe a good idea for such specific groups of people given that you're only allowed to work with them for a short period of time and all the rest of it.

Gaye So the Scottish agencies were funded like the English agencies so they had to be Wordpower and Numberpower... to get their funding.

P5 Absolutely and it was exactly the same thing, it was all the department of employments that was what it was called. And they still are in that kind of situation.

Gaye And you have never had that kind of community provision at all.

P5 No. I did say we don't envy the English situation accept and I would envy the fact in the three year period we are in the middle of an annulment, Scotland has had £23 and a half million pounds dedicated to adult literacy. England has £967. But unfortunately I can see that the argument would be that there is not in Scotland the infrastructure to spend the money at the

moment. We are so disseminated and so fragmented. After local government the organisation in 925 literacy services that it built up in the large regions that existed before were broken up. So I started in 94 when I was part of the Tateside Wide Team. That included Firth and Ross and Dundee and Angus, big area. We had a team of I think about 10 of us. And that was a collection of quite a lot of experience and such a lot of first year working with all these people you know. I am very glad of that. We had a huge opportunity to share experience and to call on each other for support for different things, to develop the training, to develop materials; all sorts of possibilities that you have with that size of group of people. By 1996 the biggest group of practitioners in Scotland was in Edinburgh. There were 12 people on the team in Edinburgh. They were one third of the Scottish workforce, that's how fragmented it became in just hardly any time at all. And so you can see the size of it. We were working now for a very loosely, crumbling foundation.

- Gaye Some of the English developments that escaped you, you mentioned Word Power and Number Power that is like the student curriculum. It has also been in England the 9282/5 series of qualifications for tutors.
- P5 Those were the City and Guilds that were used in Scotland here and there. One or two places did use those but they never really caught on.
- Gaye There was no qualification.
- P5 No qualification, entry requirements or anything in the Scotland and it remains like that now. The limit would be that within local authorities there would be a pay bar. If you were working in community education and you don't have a community education qualification you can't get beyond a certain rate of pay regardless of what other publication you might have. You might be a trained teacher with years of further education and learning support tuition, a lot of relevant stuff. You might have hundreds of qualifications but if you didn't have a community education qualification you couldn't get past the pay bar.
- Gaye But you would still be involved in the work.
- P5 You would still be involved in the work. But what it means to me is that the status accorded to your learning in other areas was not recognised... What I think of as a blinkered approach to other disciplines. I think that's rebounded in some ways because I think community education hasn't established for itself, standing with other disciplines. I know one thing if you don't respect other people ... there is a leaf(?) or a dialogue which may be the partnership working.
- Gaye This qualification of community education, does it have a name?
- P5 Community education is now a degree, it's a degree qualification.

- Gaye So despite all my qualifications if I came to work in Scotland I still have to have that qualification. Well no you could still do the work.
- P5 You could do the work, your pay bar. It depends the pay bar was applied to tutors or coordinators because the work part time, because they had separate salary scale. I don't even know if whether you would get an interview for a job full time. Some areas you might do. Again that's something that has become a bit fragmented in Scotland the way local authorities had different rates of pay, the same with FE. One of the disappointing things with the action plans being written locally that when you come to employ people to develop services they have been appointing people to coordinate and fill in ... forms. Some of the rates of pay that have been offered for what is a very intricate and complex is laughable. So there's a great deal of work to be done about raising people's understanding about what literacy is, what it involves. It is often in Scotland dismissed as (end of side one).
- Gaye .... Of approaching adult literacy
- P5 And the other way is looked at that we are describing as being precious... and that's our own problem I suppose because we don't express ourselves in a very positive way. There is a tendency for literacy workers to distinguish themselves from other people rather than to say positively what they do. But that's quite difficult. But we have to find a way.
- Gaye You talked to me about tutor qualifications like the 9282 series being used in places in Scotland. I was just wondering what you thought about such courses, the underpinning pedagogy philosophy which underpinned such courses, did you come across it yourself. This idea about competencies being met through performance criteria.
- P5 I think that approach for people who are actually delivering education is very sad. I think that one of my worries always was that whenever... however complex a course you run for people, you only ever get to find where they can start. Somebody can go through a course and not and really learn (inaudible).... What they are learning is before ... that in practice is a quite important element of the training frame ... got together
- Gaye So do you have competence ...
- P5 Well where we are at, at the moment, we have an outline cradle in 3 levels, an introductory level which is a development of the kind of training that is going on in Scotland.... Only it's much more focused towards understanding the complexity of literacy towards the need for critical approaches to literacy and for training for learning to learn and probably learning to recording and evaluating progress. A lot of gaps that we in the old one we hope will be filled by this one.

- Gaye When you say the old one, you mean the old 928?
- P5 The old kind of 20 hour thing. We are now up to 40 hours with the introductory thing but it still is only getting people started to work with support.
- Gaye And the people who start on it, they don't need to have a full teaching qualification?
- P5 No.
- Gaye Is there an entry qualification to start this training course?
- P5 No, because the level they started we hope would be around about the Scottish Higher which is somewhere like A level. That's the kind of level of work that we're looking at then. But the crucial one that we're looking at for people who would take responsibility for tuition of learners so they would deliver but they would also have more responsibilities and the work of volunteers will improve, so would the responsibility for learning programmes. That level would be about HND level looking at without covering the same ground of that higher level of being very practice based where it would give competencies... that you can do. And we're hopefully people involved. We have a tiny pragmatic field to develop this intermediate level of training, the crucial one requires the existence of support within the field for the work that people do. So you can't just put somebody out into practice and say we will call you practitioners. You need observations and you need ... so we need some kind of field practice assessing system as well. So that is what we're working on now and how best to implement that. But with a small field that's developing very quickly that has got no people qualified at the moment, it's quite a complex situation about how you actually enrol that. So we're...
- Gaye Is it going to become a compulsory qualification do you think?
- P5 has got adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland.
- Gaye That would be very useful. Thank you.
- P5 Last August or July.
- Gaye Was this your training needs analysis?
- P5 No, no there has been several initiatives in Scotland developed over a period of time. *That report is quite crucial. It made a number... I think 24 recommendations* all of which have been endorsed by ministers. *In amongst them are really important and really good stuff like that it will be based on a learner centred approach, that it would be measure a learner's progress by the distance they have travelled and not by any hysteria criteria. So there is*

*no test imposed.* But that requires still a deal of development because there has to be measures of progress that are comparable. There is no way they can just set that ... unless you have some means of saying... well what they're saying in Fife is the same as what they're saying in Glasgow. They have to have the criteria established for that. And they've not been done yet. There's a lot of holes in the actual implementation of it, but the basic strategies are laid out and we are quite pleased with that. That is a very important document. And the other important document was developed by a group called Adult Literacy 2000 and they produced a pack about literacy in the community. It's a resource pack for literacy programmes and its in 3 sections and it has a section about what is good practice and it has a section about programmes and staff training ... and they sit together in the same folder. What they add up to is quite a good model of what good community based literacy around here is made up of. That includes a self assessment so that people can take a good hard look at what the provision is like.

Gaye You said what the good community based adult literacy consists of. Can you just say what that is off the top of your head?

P5 Well I tell you what it is, its very hard to find a simple way of saying something that is really very complicated. In many ways I've talked about it already. *I've talked about it in terms of learner centred, of respecting learners and building on what they know, rather than the deficit mode; the actual participant model that focuses from the point of what people know now towards what they need to know, what they want to know. What their learning is based on is real issues and real concerns that they are facing in daily life.* Have concerns about whether it helping children with homework, whether its getting a job, or whether its paying an electricity bill or working household budget, whatever it happens to be and if that is the progress that the learning follows, that it develops from there and by whatever means can be invented, and that's what I am talking about a variety of modes of learning, a lot of different opportunities for learning and for partnership working where there is proper collaboration between different providers all of whom can offer different things. It's very difficult programme to offer; an holistic type of experience, but they can get together. And what we did in Angus we would get together and do a pre-access course for people who they were... the college concerned about whether they could manage the lowest level of communication and for our programmes, the people who are ready to leave our programmes, supportive transition stage, and it was done in collaboration the ABE service and the college. That was a good use of collaboration. That should continue. Colleges have got great resources that community based learning hasn't got, and its certainly got ICT and they've got lots of other stuff. What they offer to me, literacy learners their sense of fitness to engage in normal education, not special education, or isolated education, or secret education, but everyday, like everybody else.

Gaye I have one question I would like to ask you, you talked about things in the English system that escaped you and knowing what you do of the way we

now are going train English adult literacy practitioners and the national curriculum. I just wonder if you can give a comment on that?

- P5 I know more about it from comments from practitioners in England than I do from direct engagement with what's being offered, so its second hand. But I don't find a lot of enthusiasm for it. I got a sense that now there is more resources coming on stream people are beginning to find ways of stretching and dodging , looking around the curriculum and finding ways to respond to what learning really needs. So that was only an impression I got. I don't think I know enough. *What I am very wary of is any pre-set curriculum for adults for literacy.*
- Gaye Would you apply that to tutors because you said at one point you'd like the idea of these competencies for tutors.
- P5 I like that. How they are framed is important and the language that they are framed in for a start ought to be accessible. There is a huge literacy job to do with the people who write these bloody things. It's simply appalling. That is something else, but if the languages is right that's fine but I think that's the way they go with people that you're asking to take responsibility for learners, they have to show that they are competent of actually doing it. I've got some years of experience and I recognise that I needed to learn a lot more than I knew. And when my contact with other colleagues dissipated after the reorganisation.... That's when I knew I had to go and find some other...
- Gaye RaPAL, How long have you been involved?
- P5 Off and on. I had been a member before that but I think I missed a year once. So I think it must have been 95 that I first got in touch. And then in 96 I started pestering the employers to let me go to Sheffield. It took a year to persuade one to do that.
- Gaye What did you specialise in your MEd?
- P5 Oh I looked at adult literacy.
- Gaye So it's an MEd in adult literacy?
- P5 No its an Med in literacy. So there was contact on the whole range of literacies, but I did focus on adult literacy. I was very much concerned to develop useful knowledge for my work. That's why I went. My interest was in working with adults. You can't go to a course like that without picking up interests in other stuff as well. So I did.
- Gaye I did mine at Lancaster, they didn't have a specific one in literacy but they gave me the Education and Training of Adults and that is when I first got involved as well from about 93, 94, something like that.

P5 Well 97, 99 that I did mine and that was brilliant, it really was good. But all of that doesn't mean that you ... it doesn't mean that I taught better. And I certainly know who are an awful lot better than me. And I think that.

Gaye This is where there's a lot tension with volunteers isn't it?

P5 Oh yes.

Gaye And attitudes that you are not qualified.

P5 Oh yes.

Gaye But that there might be a better person to do it, but even now you have got to have at least a level 3.

P5 What is level 3?

Gaye Its equivalent to an A level. There is an entry level, level 1, level 2, level 3. Level 4 and then your level 5 is your PhD and your Masters.

P5 What we are talking about now in our framework is the introductory level. We have got a Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework where Level 6 is equivalent to a Scottish Higher which is roughly like an English Advanced. Level 8 would be the next step, it's a big step. I think that's like HND or a Diploma level almost. And then we are talking about a higher level which could be right up to an advanced Master's degree. And the higher level would be hopefully researched based because also it's a research base that has gone on. And this wonderful new research thing that we got together in England is not a UK research base. It's in England and Wales research based.

Gaye No Scotland is not involved.

P5 No it's not involved. And that's really important, the chance of that.

Gaye Please go on about that? We call it the NRDC The National Research and Development Centre. Do you know how it's spilt up between the universities; four main universities, London, Lancaster, Nottingham and Sheffield.

P5 And they have some colleges in there as well?

Gaye Yes there are like associate people, organisations like Read On Write Away in Derbyshire, that is an associate partner. And Kings College is involved. I think Kings College is going to concentrate quite a bit on the numeracy side of things.

P5

Well you know that whole involvement of the Higher Education Centre is lacking in Scotland although there is a great deal of interest as we've been going out talking to people. In fact there is a lot of enthusiasm for people in higher education to get involved in literacy. What I feel about it is the MEd at Sheffield is a researched based thing anyway, so that was my concern. I feel two things about it is as a discipline research has got, it is great for really tying down pieces of knowledge and digging into them and evaluating them and if you read a lot and it broadens your knowledge as a practitioner, as a professional in literacy. Involving people in research is also a very productive educational experience. *And the fact that I have sat here gabbing for an hour is very useful for me because to explain yourself to others is to develop your own thinking. You never end up an interview at the same point you started as an interviewee.* And my evidence of that I did with learners in my research that I did with learners in the MEd, that their involvement in my research... I did several pieces, one with an individual, one with a group of people, their involvement in that research made a huge difference to how they saw themselves. Research for literacy learners is brilliant. It confirms their worth to them suddenly they become worth... and they hadn't been before. That is not ... adult themselves as being worthless. The best example is the guy whose literacy is ... tracked for an assignment. Previous to that he had written his life story in 3 short sentences ... and that was all his history that he felt was worth writing down. And we talked about his history and the fact of having somebody interested and reacting as you can't help but react to the questions for the interview. That when that happens to somebody then you are valuing what they say... and that was the same with this guy and then we wrote a few chapters of his life-history . And that was a total of a by-product, but what a fruitful by-product of research. So I think that research is really important and worth doing and I think it should be part of the modes of learning that is available to learn.

Gaye

I have chosen to do a PhD, I have a choice to make. I am really pleased you said that about research because my main own autobiography I wrote about. In England in the 90's where training for adult literacy tutors was carried out by mentors on the 9282. Professional tutors were taught by mentors but the mentors were actually based in institutions where they actually worked. It's not something I was too happy about. When the Moser Report came out one of the specifications that it said was that it recommended that literacy should go at least to diploma level in universities. I know that there are MA's and Masters have been going on but it has never been officially sanctioned and I was quite intrigued, because lots of people with the BSA didn't want that professionalisation. But I was quite intrigued. But I am going to stop now John because you have given me loads of stuff.

**Participant Six (Scotland): 10<sup>th</sup> July 2002 at work.**

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Gaye I am talking to {name removed} who has very kindly agreed to be interviewed. We have gone through what my research is about. I thought to start off with [name removed]... with just explaining your own job designation and what you're doing now and then perhaps go back to how you first started. And then we can start thinking about the underpinning ethos behind the professional development of tutors?

P6 I am working for the national training project in adult literacy in Scotland which is managed by Community Scotland who has recently moved into this organisation. However, it still remains a marginalised section of it because we are awaiting the development of a development centre which we have integrated further into the other sections of the regeneration division. My job at the moment, I am just known as a 'project worker'. At the moment I am working with the rest of the team to produce an initial training pack and this would be for use by tutors locally and be used for training up new tutors. We are trying to avoid the volunteer (unclear word)

Gaye This is for paid tutors?

P6 Well no, not necessarily, maybe, but I doubt it. Just now the service for Scotland is such a point that it is still largely dependent on volunteers. So although we want to move away from that model and ensure that people work in the areas do get a different look ... I don't see that happening for another two or three years. We have also been working for the past 12 months on a development of a training framework which has got 3 levels really, which includes the professional qualification that would be recognised by the regional councils and people like that as the required qualification for adult literacy tutors.

Gaye You want this to be compulsory?

P6 We hope to be. This is the hope. There will be problems there because of ... legislation basically... how can we enforce councils, local authorities to recognise this? ... So it has to become... I get kind of lost with the language but I know it's about statutory division that it should be recognised in the same way like a teacher in a secondary school is recognised. But I think that's got some way to go before we get there. We have also been working on seminars and support sessions for the action plans... people who have been involved from the community learning partnerships in the development of actions plans to develop practice and provision rather than all do it different in different areas.

Gaye You say an action plan for a scheme, a literacy scheme rather than an individual action plan for tutors? It involves the tutors presumably?

- P6 Yes, oh yes. This action plan involves management and tutors. They require people to ... in order to access money that has been made available from the Scottish Executive, to support these initiatives in adult literacy development, then people have been required to just plan which, how can I put it? ... Follows a certain pattern, they have to show that they will implement a certain amount of training and they will develop a particular kind of practice. They will target certain groups of people etc. And basically that's what you would have to do in order to access the money. So that was quite fraught, because cross-sectional working is not always the... So anyway, we are doing that as well. And really it's been quite difficult at times because we're in such an unsettled position. In my case, my contract finishes at the end of September and there is no way that I could get a renewed part-time contract, or short contract. When my colleagues joined us... the same. And so it does unsettle things a bit and we are largely understaffed.
- Gaye When this contract finishes... have you got a job to go back to?
- P6 No, I wasn't seconded. I am directly employed at this job. I came from had a different background from the others.
- Gaye So how often do you get this development centre? Would you apply for funding there?
- P6 I think that's what the suggestion will happen. Once a manager for that course, than the other jobs will be advertised. There is an unspoken expectation that we will be employed. But there should be other people as well.
- Gaye It should be advertised nationally.
- P6 And numbers should go up.
- Gaye Numbers of...?
- P6 ...Of staff. So that's good. The whole thing... to be able to spend so much time planning and finding out about the best way to implement a training strategy in Scotland, it would be very sad I think for us all, if we weren't then given the opportunity to see some kind of implementation. So we will see what happens.
- Gaye It's quite exciting when things happen.
- P6 Yes, slowly, slowly.
- Gaye When I talked to [name removed] and [name removed] and now you, and you have all mentioned there is still a strong reliance on volunteers?
- P6 That's right, that's right.

- Gaye And you want this new professional qualification to become compulsory?
- P6 Yes.
- Gaye I am just wondering where ... how you... your volunteers? Because you have got volunteers out in the sticks.
- P6 I know, I know, it's going to be incredibly harder. One of the difficulties I think is that the action plans were required before people had done two things. One) got their heads around partnership working on a cross-sectional basis. And two, had thought clearly about how best to implement and development the regional literacy. As it has been in Scotland... most places have used the majority of the money that they have had access to for the last year to employ one specialist person rather than employ tutors. Which means that for another year at least then the emphasis will be on volunteers. It's quite frustrating when you see that.
- Gaye And what's your attitude towards volunteers?
- P6 One of my past jobs was that I used to train volunteers. In fact, I have just finished doing some work with volunteer tutors who have been trained to become group tutors then be able to be employed on a professional basis. And I think... *it's just a substantial fact with the service at the moment, we can't do anything without them. The difficulty is that most don't perceive themselves as development group tutors and in some kind of way, the system that exists at the moment can be seen to be self limiting... because people are most comfortable on a one to one set-up than thinking of progressing in their own practice and different ways of working.* So it's difficult but it's not the ideal way...
- Gaye What do you think the ethos behind using volunteers was, initially?
- P6 Well some of it was... how can you say, with the best intentions...? I think, because you were working... I was working for example in an area which was acknowledged as having a certain amount deprivation. And so to get local people to come along, who had sufficient skills and understanding to volunteer for services and undertake training and then become volunteers, was a wonderful way of drawing in the resources of the community, which I felt was very important. However, people don't stay. It's common knowledge that you maybe only get a year out of a volunteer in many cases... and so you have got this constant turnover of people. There are real difficulties about bringing people together outside of the time that they were seeing the student. The organisation is quite difficult.
- Gaye You say your volunteers wanted training courses, what do you think is underpinning them, what do you try tell volunteers about teaching adult literacy students?

- P6 *The emphasis was on a move away from traditional models of education towards self directed learning from the learners' point of view. If that got through sufficiently, I don't know, but that's partly I think because maybe not enough time was spent considering those ideas, those concepts that underpin this approach to adult literacies.*
- Gaye And how long was the training course?
- P6 It was maybe 2 week's. No, sorry, 10 week's, 2 hours a week. Its 20 hours. It's not a lot.
- Gaye Is there any in- service training for volunteers?
- P6 Yes there is, there is, it is awkward, but again it's difficult to bring people together during the day because often people are working... And if they were giving up one evening to tutor then they weren't keen to give up another one. It's also to do with the places that you are asking people to work in and it's difficult. This place...Apart from the adult learning centre where I worked...which was in the middle of a car park in a quite a sticky area. That made people less willing.
- Gaye Which town was this in?
- P6 ...In Edinburgh. So the factors around that influence things
- Gaye How did you get into...?
- P6 Adult literacy? I started off as an English teacher, I was trained as a teacher and well at least I did my Diploma of Education and fell into teaching. It was the first job I did a lot of supply just for the money.
- Gaye This was in school?
- P6 Secondary school in Scotland. And then came down from Shetland and didn't want to work in an urban school, a big school. And then a job at the YTS [Youth Training Scheme] appeared and it was a newly created post, partly the existing tutors had realised that there was a need for support for literacy and numeracy.
- Gaye YTS, is this youth training?
- P6 Yes.
- Gaye Can we date that?

- P6 That was '88. And it closed actually; all the YTS schemes were run down by the early '90s. But it was a wonderful opportunity working with teenagers that I was quite comfortable with... given the free hand to prepare what I like to think of as innovative working, I had to do the videos and dramas and functional skills. Because you were working all the time in conjunction with the trainers from the different ...like graphics and joinery and catering. So yes, and from there, there was a job... some research had been done which showed up that there was a high percentage of people in that area that had literacy, low literacy skills and so a specific project started. I wasn't manager, I was a co-worker.
- Gaye Right, one of the things you mentioned was you worked in schools; do you find there is a difference to teaching adults and teaching in schools?
- P6 I was talking about this the other day. I actually don't. I haven't found so myself. Because I think, okay, you have got more set agendas to get through. Its not self-directed in the same way as you can have literacy with adults. But there are many aspects that cross over. A good enjoyable class will have the same features as a good enjoyable group of adult learners. I never really thought it was restricted, but there again I stopped working in schools just when all the testing came through, when it really started to hit them... If the kids were high and it was just better to do drama...you could do that. And then the next day you could change things around in quite a constructive way. I don't think it's the same ... about working in schools, I think there are so many assessments that have to be done.
- Gaye Yes there is a point in England where adult education is 'separateness'. People talk about andragogy as opposed to pedagogy and things like that. Have you come across those?
- P6 Yes I have. But maybe its also partly to do with the fact that I worked in rural schools and its undeniable that kids in rural schools... they were softer, they were just more amenable and you could give them a lot of space which you couldn't possibly I think have... Well I wouldn't have had the confidence in those days to do it in a big urban school. I felt that there were qualities in the people and in the culture that I was working in that enabled me to teach in a certain way.
- Gaye So there were interactive processes...
- P6 Yes absolutely and I felt quite comfortable doing that. It was good.
- Gaye So when you are teaching your volunteers... I am trying to get some of the underpinning things you tried to teach them about adult literacy.
- P6 Well, largely... *One of my great concerns was the democratisation of the relationship... in a sense.... between the learner and the tutor...* And I think that's something in Scotland... and maybe in England... I am not sure.... that you have

to approach in quite a gentle way. You have to be prepared to... like really try to expose this and not just try to pussy foot around it. Actually say... look it is different. *You have to be willing to be open to criticism and take part in the full reflective process and all that that entails.*

Gaye That's interesting! "You have to be willing to be open to criticism and take part in the whole reflective process and all that entails"... Are you are talking about criticism from students?

P6 Yes, from learners. I think that is definitely...it's happened... and constructively. I am pleased to say that there have been times, particularly after I left... I left the West Hills to go back to study and when I came back I was so fed up with the post-modernist theory and critical theory that... people had said that they would like a course built around Scotch identity and various things like that...which is fine... but I pitched it all wrong. During the first session people said, 'Anne it sounds fascinating but we can't understand a word....'

Gaye How did you approach it Anne?

P6 Well I crammed so much in, I was talking about Europe and the development of the Scottish identity. It was all quite complex. It ran quite well. There were students that I had worked with before and we were comfortable together.

Gaye How do you find students react to the democratisation process of the future student-tutor relationship?

P6 Well I think that some students perceive a fine line between a tutor who is at ease in that kind of democratised relationship. And one who isn't actually sure about where they are going and what they are doing. I think the students are highly sensitive to that. *And I think that's why the idea of democratised relationships has to be underpinned again... at another level, by solid teacher skills; solid pedagogical skills. And thinking about the development of a kind of sensitivity of what would be best, of what opportunities to provide in a class in a learning situation.*

Gaye If you were going out to teach tutors would you recommend the same democratisation?

P6 Oh definitely.

Gaye How do you think it would work? Have you done it? I am interested to know how you have done it.

P6 Well, its difficult because tutors are, they were volunteers, currently working as volunteers but they were moving to become group tutors... but they were all quite

highly skilled. They valued the whole experience. I think also that working in Edinburgh provides you with a range of volunteers... of new tutors, which is not necessarily reflected elsewhere. I think the geographical differences that are thrown at you...that are being thrown up just now. Fiona will tell you working in Glasgow that there appears to be differences in the kind of people who are attracted into it. It's interesting.

Gaye And this framework you are in the process of drawing up now, can you describe what's in it?

P6 We identify what we call three core strands and it's what you were saying earlier on... this idea there are certain things that you want people to be familiar with, or to understand, or acknowledge. The key material that is essential.

Gaye Can you think what some of those are?

P6 Well ideas like complex capabilities ... you know the idea that a task such as reading the paper often doesn't involve a straightforward process of reading, you are multi-tasking when you undertake something like that. And to get that through... and to give people opportunities...prospective tutors... to think about that, and think about all the different ways that could be approached really. And it's also the innovative practice to try and give people the confidence to really... not rely on published resources, although they are always so helpful, but to really and try and be responsive to requirements. That's definitely in there... and 'complex capabilities' ...the reflective process. The need for record keeping in actual fact, as a part of reflective process and a part of the monitoring progress as well. The need for guidance.

Gaye And would you involve the students in that?

P6 Oh yes absolutely. Whenever possible the students would keep the records themselves. Well there is loads...again... plus the more technical side of teaching... to do the reading skills and breaking that down and to think of how you are going to approach it, and so on. So there are key areas really the material falls into. One is about the context and the kind of ethos, I suppose, of the approach that we are advocating. The second is about the organisation and the learner's involvement in that organisation...and, thirdly, there's the learning activities...

Gaye You talked about this democratisation of the teacher-student relationship, it's really interesting. I was wondering what would happen if students turned around and said 'we don't want this. Let's be democratic...give us what we want.' It could be something really old fashioned that you are trying to move away from. It's quite interesting how you work through something like that.

- P6 That's right. I do think a lot of students come... especially the older adults...they come to join a group and they still very much expect that. They expect the grammar and they expect various ways...are advocating an approach to literacy... I suppose you could determine literacy as plural...which is lead by understanding before the functional skills.
- Gaye What kind of understanding?
- P6 *Their context, like having an awareness and an understanding of a context genre and the relationships and the values that are attached to different literacies by society.* So we are looking at the prioritisation for different kinds of literacy. I have seen it over and over again. I just believe this is the way to engage adults. The irony for me certainly... its not irony at all... it seems to me some of the best ways of working are to, not even look at paper-based materials to begin with but to go in there with a video film or television...because so many people have clicked with strategies that are honed in those areas. It's just a case of providing opportunities to shift from the one area to another and making the connections. I just feel that I have seen it work and work.
- Gaye What you say about film, do you remember 'Kes'? He has this kestrel and his literacy skills just blossomed as he tried different ways of communicating about it.
- P6 That's right and I think its just so useful because people... it's whether you are working with people in a highly structured context where there are not generally encouraged to question or be critical... but how you can actually use these common resources to say, 'You do this all the time, actually, by the way. Look at what you already know. Look at the skills that you have.' Then to build their confidence. I feel it's a bit of a mission, this thing about moving away from paper-based material, but making more use of them.
- Gaye I am grinning because you said 'it's a bit of a mission'. Someone read one of my interview transcripts and said, 'She sounds like she is on a mission' How do you cope with that kind of thing?
- P6 Well what I think is wonderful is that I have had the opportunity to encourage other tutors to work in this way and to be able to explain quite clearly...I have put together material which gives outlines of what can be done and examples of working. And approaching the functional skills in such a way that they are joined up with people's understanding of the text that they are writing and why they are writing it, and what this means for audiences for that text.
- Gaye You have been talking about how you have had the opportunities to put your ideas to train tutors? Have you ever had any tutors contradict what you say or gone against what you say, or question?

- P6 Not particularly actually, not particularly. I think some people feel that it's not quite official enough. There has not been enough mention of phonics.
- Gaye You are saying the official line is that we should have phonics and things like this? Is that the official line?
- P6 No, some people do think that they are more comfortable with this based on their own experience of education. I am quite honest because I have had no training, specialist training in adult literacies. If I am weak in an area, that's where it is. In fact I am probably more comfortable working with, not your basic, basic learners, but the people who had just made that leap and are just at the point of developing longer pieces of writing...or finding what they want to do with their skills.
- Gaye Have you seen the sort national curriculum in England, the things the tutors have to know, the grammar, the phonics? Some tutors are quite scared of that because they haven't got it. There comes a point with grammar that you stop studying it. You just carry on and use it, but if you are you are not doing a degree in linguistics or a degree in English you don't need...
- P6 It doesn't really broaden your understanding. I don't think it's necessarily required to have. I think people need to have certain competencies, if I can use that word, in their reading and writing skills, and numeracy... but I don't think that there's a great need for extensive knowledge of grammar and the wonders of linguistics.
- Gaye One of the things that's upsetting people in England, especially in training is the maths, the level of maths that you have to reach now. Level 4
- P6 I do agree.
- Gaye When I think about myself, I did GCSE maths, well, the old O level maths, and then I have not touched maths since. When I became involved adult literacy I just did some basic numeracy with people but I haven't got an A level in it.
- P6 No.
- Gaye Did you go to the RaPAL conference?
- P6 No I wasn't there.
- Gaye In a workshop someone was talking about new qualifications and people were asking 'how are they going to meet them. Have we got to go back now and do 'A' level maths or the equivalent'? The presenter said that for existing tutors they wouldn't become compulsory these qualifications but anybody new is going to have to go through the hoops as it were. Yet at the same time people, if you had to

have this high level of qualification in your maths or your English what is going to happen to people who don't have a degree or an 'A' level in English? She said, 'You have got to think about partnerships'. So that made me, so if you are in an institution with a maths expert they will bring in the maths expert and they will have to take on board adult literacy and basic skills theories of what they do. There was a lot of bridling and stiffening. This will come on board in September and no one is quite sure what is going to happen. At the same time people are pleased that there is this sort of professionalisation. There are so many tensions, it's incredible.

- P6 The same in Scotland there were some people I talked to when we were doing the action planning sessions who were vehemently against any move towards professionalisation, because they saw it as being... taking the learning away from the people. I never quite understood exactly what they meant. There is some kind of really rooted community education practice model that they are thinking of. Somehow, they are thinking professionalisation would mean that the provision would move out of the community and into FE. That there would be this huge loss to the local authority...but I don't think that will happen. It's difficult.
- Gaye I was talking to one person who said that she had a student who had just learnt how to multiply. She (the student) was re-enforcing her own learning by showing someone else...yet someone else was saying that she has experienced volunteers who now can't teach because they haven't got the level of qualification.
- P6 It's daft.
- Gaye I was just wondering about the training. I have been in a situation in England in the 80's when I was doing a volunteer training course, people would come on board and train as a volunteer and go and get jobs in training agencies.
- P6 Yes, I am familiar with that one.
- Gaye So what do you think then of professionalisation as such?
- P6 I think its really important, I think that it...one of the reasons that we have pitched the professional qualification for the proposed framework at HND [Higher National Diploma]level is to allow greater opportunities for people who don't have a higher education or a degree background to actually access it.
- Gaye And could a volunteer work through this as well? As well as someone who has got a teaching background in schools like yourself... will they still have to get that qualification?
- P6 Yes.
- Gaye Volunteers don't have to but they would be allowed to work up to it.

- P6 Yes.
- Gaye That's sounds interesting.
- P6 And then if people want to go further then there would be a degree further on, but again that would be contributed to by to the undertaking of the HND. So there would be all the prior learning would be taken into account, so some people could include...
- Gaye These chunks.
- P6 But again this idea of making the opportunity, of creating the opportunity for people who maybe have tutored on a voluntary basis for years and years and have heaps of skills and heaps of experience. As it stands at the moment they'd only be interested in going back to college perhaps to gain Highers or whatever, in order to do a diploma.
- Gaye So it's practice-based?
- P6 60, 40.
- Gaye 40 practice?
- P6 Yes. And also lots of different models.
- Gaye In your staff development programme when do theories of teaching adults come into it? When do you bring them in?
- P6 That would come in for the HND. It would certainly be introduced at that point, because you would want people to take some of the ideas that they come across in the taught sections to form the research that they do outside...because research could be an integral part of the training.
- Gaye And research... you regard that as an integral part of the training?
- P6 That's right especially in Scotland where there are so little historical or cultural backgrounds in adult education. Examples like the WEA and beginning like learning and educational programmes back in the 30's and the 20's and so on. But in order for any qualifications and any training framework to be truly reflective of the development of a good practice in Scotland then it needs to be influenced and effected new systems...by a new style of working.

- Gaye You mentioned 'good practice'. That is one of my own questions. I am just asking you to, not define it but... say some of the things that you think should be involved in it?
- P6 *In good practice, I have to go back to what I was saying about learner centred, the democratisation, a responsive curriculum. A curriculum that challenges as well... A curriculum that encourages and gives opportunities for development of critical strategies as well as skills based... and I think at the end of the day empowerment in as much as the student having a greater sense of control and choice.*
- Gaye So its empowerment...its empowering tutors to empower students?
- P6 Yes because unless you are sure that the tutors have an insight into the different ways... in the case of literacy, literacies are employed in our society, then I don't see, what's a learner going to do? A learner is at risk of being given a very ...erm.
- Gaye Have you got tutors on board who think the way you are thinking?
- P6 Yes.
- Gaye And have you incorporated teaching a framework. How far can incorporate it?
- P6 It would depend ...it would depend on the way different areas implement... where they see the priorities. Where they see the priorities because in some cases, for example, I was up in Inverness a couple of weeks ago and people were still meeting on a one-to-one basis in students houses because the stigma is so great. To work in Edinburgh on that basis... we are just not allowed to. So it's not going to happen at a common speed. Things are going to take longer in some places and some things are going to be identified as being more important in certain areas than others. So there is going to be a period of maybe even 15 years before they start to see an informed, well staffed - by that I mean enough staff - for the provision of service.
- Gaye This new development centre that you are hoping to establish... you mentioned research and development centres...
- P6 Well they say it is, they say it is, they specially say in the description that was given in the report... they do mention that, and certainly that was one of the most exciting things that we saw in the report, the recognition of this need for an informed development of practice. It's not just something that is frills and principles but something that keeps evolving and keeps changing. In response to the change that are going to on.
- Gaye Before today I hadn't realised that you felt the lack of a research base.

- P6 Yes we do.
- Gaye My last impression of Scotland was the Edinburgh RaPAL Conference and you had all these people there... [Names removed] [From Higher Education] and yet they are community based, they are community educators not particularly literacy educators.
- P6 Absolutely yes. And this is also a bit of a mission at moment as well, working as they do now as part of the community of Scotland and alongside community learning and development there appears to be a lack of understanding as to the distinguishing features of adult literacy. But you have the danger, there is a very real danger that adult literacy is going straight into community learning and development, and seen as a skills resource that you roll out and you release it and give it input.
- Gaye What are these are distinguishing features of adult literacy. I am just trying to think about how you would put you message to these people.
- P6 I know! I have been trying articulate it and to write drafts. [name removed] has got a draft, and try and do this. If we don't then a misunderstanding will lead to adult literacy schemes subsumed by the development side of things. I said... the other day, I had a meeting with one of the guys downstairs, from Community Learning and Development, and I was explaining about the critical contextualisation of the material that you use. And his head was just going like this... and he said, 'Oh, I see.'
- Gaye Do you think your framework will go through? Do you think there will have to be modification?
- P6 Yes, I think that what they want is...I think FE want, for example, want to see the introductory level 6 probably and then probably a certificate.
- Gaye Now your level 6 is about.
- P6 Kind of like an A level, a wee bit over than an A level.
- Gaye Then there is level 8 which is like your HND.
- Anne Certain people have mentioned that they would like to see an HNC, because in between, because it means that you would have a smooth, a very clear and obvious way to a higher qualification.
- P6 You mentioned a link with higher education and research. Would there be funding for tutors to go and do this?

- P6 I would hope so.
- Gaye This is a huge problem because I don't get enough.
- P6 And they have got no idea.
- Gaye Some people might get funding out of the development and assessment centre which is coming out now, but up until then if you wanted to do a Masters or a PhD got funding from the Research Council or from the university, if you were lucky, or paid for it yourself.
- P6 Yes I know.
- Gaye It does put people off. And there is also... one of my questions is 'Where does professional development take place' because in England you have situations where people who are on the 928 series of qualifications, City and Guilds qualifications. People were being trained by mentors in institutions in which both they and their mentor actually work. and there was very little connection with higher education. Unless, like you and I did, you went if you strongly felt you wanted to go. You felt you wanted something else, but it's difficult when there is no funding. There is no funding and no tradition. The thing is that there is a lot of work that is going on in universities but it's not been traditionally linked to these the people. People doing the research are trying to link it to practitioners but it was never considered a natural development for practitioners to go into higher education. The other thing that interests me is when you talk about research (end of side one).
- P6 If FE was to deliver the training then there is a great likelihood that the placement for practice assessments and so on would actually be found in FE. Whereas... which wouldn't necessarily happen, there would be less chance of that happening.
- Gaye I get the impression that this is word literacy, which sector is it? There is the adult literacy; there is the community education sector.
- P6 Who there's a wee bit of conflict with.
- Gaye And there is the FE sector and the higher education sector. What kind of provisions are within FE?
- P6 Well they call it 'learning support' but very often that is people's learning disabilities.
- Gaye Are there any adult literacy classes actually in there?

- P6 Yes there are a few. Again it doesn't tend to be in groups, it tends to be one-to-one... And also it tends to be led by learners, students needing to get through or to practice certain skills in order to pass another qualification like engineering. So you don't have the chance to develop a broad-based critical approach. In fact I know that because I have seen some of the materials. Its very skills processed.
- Gaye So what say about literacy? Would you say it's evolved as part of the community education set up but it's still not got its own public status within that?
- P6 Definitely not.
- Gaye And you are trying to keep the community and link it to it. And what about FE then?
- P6 Well this is it, what we are trying to do and we realise that this training, even the initial training, one of the criticisms of the drafts is that its very, very much the community-based model and it doesn't take into account other sectoral needs and demands. It may well be a big criticism but nonetheless it doesn't necessarily take away from the model of learning that takes place...it advocates. So I think we just have to be up front with it.
- Gaye I would love to find out what happens and how you got on, when do you have to submit this framework?
- Colleague I have come to remind Gaye that her train goes at ten past five...
- P6 Yes it will be very interesting. I think there will be power struggles between the different sectors that will have to be acknowledged and rationalised better than they are at the moment. Remember that FE was sorely disappointed by not having been given the money that went out to ... because the rumour was that for long enough that that is where it was going. And then there was this turn around.
- Gaye There was some rivalry there to sort of get to grips with. I am going to have to stop Anne [train due]. I am really grateful for all the help you have given me.
- P6 I'm so sorry for going on and on.
- Gaye The thing is, it is 'thick description' which is what I want, It's up to me to pick out what I want. And then again it might not be; you might not like what I pick up... yourself.
- P6 I hope you find something.
- Gaye There is so much there, It's just amazing. Thank you very much indeed.

**Participant Seven (Somerset): 7<sup>th</sup> June 2002 at home.**

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- Gaye (Unclear)...Community education, adult education, training sector.
- P7 It's a mixture of FE [Further Education] and local authority. Because the first job I had as a tutor was actually with a college but I was at.... kind of... one of their satellite centres. So that was about 8 years ago and I never intended to become an adult literacy teacher.
- Gaye How did you get into it?
- P7 Well actually I've got a friend to thank for it really. Her son was in the same class as my daughter. We lived in Bristol at that time and this college is actually [Name removed] College in Somerset. But they had a kind of outpost near where we lived in Bristol and this friend, Julie; she went on this course for women returners. She said to me "oh you ought to come" I told you before I had my children I worked in a secondary school and I didn't want to go back to that but I didn't know what I wanted to do instead. So she said 'oh you've got to come on this course with me' so I did. In a way nothing came out of the course except that when the people who were teaching it organised all the basic skills tutoring at the college and at the end of the course she said "do you want a job". My kids were very little then so that was ideal really one evening. So I started there and really liked it so I think I've been teaching really a year before I did that 9281, the initial certificate, because they changed all the numbers didn't they.
- Gaye Well when it first came out this scheme, the City and Guilds scheme, I was a mentor on the pilot of the original 9281, which was the forerunner of the 9285. So when you actually started your class did you have any training before you started your new class?
- P7 No it was assumed because I'd taught English in a secondary school that I would be able to do it and looking back now I just thought "Wow! I didn't know how to do it."
- Gaye Sometimes though if you're in a good school you're in blissful ignorance aren't you.
- P7 I find that sometimes. Because at first this person who offered me the job kept saying 'oh you'll be fine' and I didn't know that there was another way to do things.
- Gaye What time scale, did you say about 8 years ago?
- P7 Yes it must have been. I think it was, I'm just trying to think my daughter

was in Year 1 at school and she started school in September 1992, so this would have been September 1993 that I started. But then it wasn't until the next Spring... I think... that I did the 9281 training. But I did do the, you know the FAETC Stage 1, was it called the 730...?

Gaye The City and Guilds 730, yes.

P7 It's not basic skills, it's generic training for adult education. So I did that. I don't know if I started that almost straight away after I started the teaching or whether it was a while later. I know what it was they said to me at the college ....really they preferred people to have these qualifications, it wasn't obligatory then, and so would I be prepared to do this 9281 and the FAETC so I did them both within that first year of teaching.

Gaye It's the further and higher education teaching certificate.

P7 I don't think it's higher actually.

Gaye Further education teaching certificate then.

P7 Further and adult education I think it is. We did both of those and I really enjoyed doing them at the time but I think that was because I needed some mental stimulation.

Gaye Your colleagues at that time, when you first started, you said you hadn't taken anything, any sort of professional training as such. But had your colleagues who had been working there for any length of time?

P7 I don't know because I didn't really get to know very many of them because I used to teach there, I spoke to this satellite centre on a Monday night. There was one and I think it was in the second year I was there and there was one other basic skills tutor who was lovely and we used to have loads of great conversations in the corridor. She now works in another college in Bristol full time and I'm still in touch with her so that's good. She was really the only one I got to know and we used to go to the termly staff meetings. I think the woman who was actually in charge of all the basic skills she wasn't qualified as a basic skills tutor. But she was qualified in teaching EBD, Behavioural and Emotional Difficulties, or something. That was her background and so basically adult basic skills was in this department in the college which was called learning support.

Gaye Was this special needs student's?

P7 So basic skills were put in with that.

Gaye What do you think of that... basic skills being put in with...?

P7 I don't think it should be it's not in the college where I am now. But I think

this is wrong but I think a lot of people within the college and maybe some of the managers, I don't know, probably look down on that department. I know the equivalent, when I was teaching in a comprehensive was what they called the remedial classes, they were certainly considered second class students. So I wonder if that was, I'm not saying that the women who were in charge of basic skills had that attitude, she didn't, she was great but she didn't have the training. The person who's like... the next one down who was my immediate line manager... she did. She had a background in adult basic skills and she'd done, there was a qualification that even local authority, when it existed, they used to run that and she'd done that....and I think... Was there an RSA?

Gaye The RSA [Royal Society of Arts] Diploma.

P7 Yes I think she'd done that too. I don't think it was in my first year there but in the second year a couple of the other teachers were doing this thing called the 9285, which they used to complain about the whole time. At the end of that year my line manager telephoned me at home one day and said would you like to do the 9285 next year and I kind of said "No, thank you" because they'd all said what a nightmare it was.

Gaye Why did they say it was a nightmare?

P7 Because they were the first people to do it and apparently nobody really knew what was going on, there was tons of paperwork and there were these silly situations. You know part of the training was you had to do something like D32 and D33, which fits you to be an assessor for other City and Guilds things. There were these silly situations where the tutors, who were the basic skills tutors, were in their class being observed for their D32/33 and the observer was being observed for the D34 at the same time. So there were all sorts of things like that and people not really knowing what was supposed to be involved and what they were meant to be doing. So I eventually put it off for one year and then the next year I thought well I've got to do it now because they were going to pay for me to do it as well so it would have been silly not to I suppose. At that time everyone was saying "oh if you want to carry on in basic skills you would have to have that qualification otherwise you won't get a job." So I thought 'oh well I had better do it then'. But it's been phased out altogether hasn't it. So the next year I started doing this 9285, it wasn't as bad as some people made out, I think there are some people hoping to get sympathy isn't there. When I say it wasn't as bad, it wasn't as difficult to do as some people said it was going to be but I think it was quite boring.

Gaye Now why did you think it was boring?

P7 Because what I wanted was... and what I hoped I would get... was some sort of training where you would be thinking about issues and ideas and having your thoughts challenged maybe and actually learning something

new. I felt that all I was doing was manufacturing bits of paper of what I already did. I was observed teaching and everything and everybody said it was OK but I've never felt there was any requirement I suppose or any opportunity to improve what you did. Do you see what I mean?

Gaye Is there any other criticism of the 9285?

P7 Well this may not be a criticism of bit per se; it's a criticism of City and Guilds really. But the year I started which must have been the third year they were running it by then. The City and Guilds decided that they were going to revamp the whole thing. So I enrolled and went to my first meeting at this college in Bristol where it was being held in the September. At the first meeting the woman who was running it had to apologise that the new course handbooks, which would tell us all about it were not yet available. The City and Guilds kept saying they're coming soon and they didn't actually come until after Christmas. You probably know all this from your own experience. It took the whole of that first term and we didn't know what we were supposed to be doing and neither did the tutor so she was sort of trying to do things that she thought would be relevant but she didn't really know. So we sometimes used to go to these classes on a Friday morning and she would kind of say 'what shall we do today, do you want to get out your portfolio and which bits do you want to discuss'. We were thinking well we don't know what we want to discuss because we haven't done anything yet, we don't know what we're supposed to be doing. I think the college had pushed her into offering it because they thought they'd get some money, that's my guess, I don't know that. She placed her in a very difficult position as well. After Christmas we all knew exactly what we had to do and there was mad rush to get it done in time.

Gaye You talked about criticisms of it what about anything positive?

P7 As part of the input into this we had some sessions run by somebody who had been in the days of Avon Local Authority.... she was being county wide trainer for definitely adult basic skills, I don't think it was all adult education. She was really good and she actually did some sessions, which were not things like how to fill in your portfolio but more of what I was wanting. So it was things like what is dyslexia, how do you diagnose dyslexia, what teaching methods might be suitable and things like that. So that was a bit more stimulating and I did enjoy that aspect of it.

Gaye Can I take you right back now? When you were talking about adult basic education being part of the special needs department. You said that you didn't think it should be and I just wondered if you could expand on that a bit.

P7 Because I think the kind of thinking that underlies that it sees literacy as some sort of problem. You know because people are in special needs department maybe they have got a learning disability something like that

and so literacy is seen as an issue about what people can't do and problems that people have. Whereas I don't think it should be seen like that it's a continuum and we all might be at different places on the continuum. You can't have this magic cut off point and say well if you don't get up to this standard you're illiterate. I think things have changed now and I'd be very surprised if it was still running the same way in that particular college where I worked and it isn't it's a college where I am now. Its very much... basic skills is officially it's under the umbrella of adult and community education but it's much wider than that because its all through the 16-19 year old section as well. Now it's seen as something, which could be part of other courses that people might do. You know somebody might be on a hairdressing course and there might be some basic skills input into that. So it is much more contextualised, which is good and its not been seen as a problem so much.

Gaye

The deficit model and things.....

P7

It's not seen like that particularly by my... well actually I think a bit of that model does prove things sometimes still. There are probably members of staff in the college who maybe have ideas which aren't always going to help, I don't know. But my line manager is all for not having us cut off in our own little island of basic skills; but integrating it.

Gaye

So how many hours a week are you teaching now?

P7

Only six at the moment. I used to do quite a lot more because up until summer 2000 I didn't work for a college, I worked for the LEA community education in North Somerset and I was the co-ordinator for basic skills. It was a part time job because it was a very small authority...but I was doing about 18 hours a week at that stage. Then we got taken over by the college and I had to chose between 'did I want to do 18 hours just teaching or come down to six hours' I mean there were various reasons why it was a choice between those two numbers. But there was no opportunity for me to have any management role in the college. As things turned out it didn't matter to me, and I didn't mind. But a lot of other people thought I should mind. The whole take over actually wasn't handled very well at all either by the college or the LEA. You will have to change the names.

Gaye

What was the college again just remind me?

P7

It's where I work now at [name removed] and it was North Somerset Education. But before that, before this take over I had seen adverts for the MEd in Basic Skills magazine and places like that and I also knew a couple of people who had done it and I really wanted to do it myself. But my children were quite a lot younger then and with doing the 18 hours a week I thought no I just can't do that as well. Then I had to make this choice between 18 hours and six hours and I thought right I'm going to go for it now so that's what I've done for the last two years.

- Gaye Are they all similar classes? When I say similar classes they're all sort of over 21 or are they 16, 19?
- P7 Oh no, I haven't done any 16 to 19 but I'm doing it this year. Well last year I was just doing three standard/traditional literacy classes I suppose, one at the college and two in the community. This year I'm all in the community, but one of them is actually ESOL, which I'm not qualified for, but really enjoying it. The reason I got into that is because when we were still community education do you know about this DfEE (as it was) laptop initiative?
- Gaye Yes.
- P7 Well in community education all the basic skills tutors and there were only six of us. We all got a laptop through that which was wonderful. They weren't our personally, officially they belonged to the DfEE and they were on loan but they belonged to the LEA really and they've been allowed to keep them now. So we had these laptops and they did this free online training through Cambridge Training and Development plan.
- Gaye It used to be the old Cambridge house stuff didn't it I think.
- P7 I don't know. It's a company, which specialises online in software for training and that kind of thing.
- Gaye So you'll know the name Martin Good would you?
- P7 Yes.
- Gaye It's the old Cambridge house set up. They were one of the first areas who started adult literacy classes and the centres.
- P7 I didn't realise that.
- Gaye When I was training to be an adult literacy tutor Martin Good wrote this book which used to be my bible. It was all about adult literacy and the title just escapes me and he really summed it all up. It's funny reading back what he used to write because I believe he's now been responsible for the E-tests. But that's something else.
- P7 Yes, it's good that online training. So when we transferred to the college it all started getting a bit political with a small 'p' I suppose and who was going to have the laptops and how are they going to be used and for various reasons... For my first year teaching at the college I didn't have access to a laptop for any of my classes, and neither did the other basic skills tutors who were out in the community. But then this year, I know we had, it was probably to shut me up because I kept banging on about this and saying that

these students were being deprived because they didn't have the same facilities as the ones at the college. They said "right if you would like to design a course with the laptop you can teach it." So I wrote this course, it was a 10-week thing and it was kind of not teaching IT, but improving literacy - or improving English. I think it was called "through using a computer". So then they said I could start teaching that September 2001. So I did one 10 week round of this course. But what happened was my line manager was trying to get us to recruit potential students to this course; last summer before we'd finished for the summer. So there was this one in [unclear] which I ended up teaching in September (pause due to aeroplane going across). So then what happened was one of the ESOL tutors thought that I did this course for ESOL people as well and she'd recruited these seven students, so I thought 'Yes! Fine! Teach them'. I was thinking I don't know what to do because I've never taught ESOL but the ESOL teacher has been really good and we've got together. She's explained what she's been doing in her classes; so I very much followed in her footsteps and did a lot of kind of reinforcement. Because these are people in a basic... its called Beginners ESOL so they need loads of repetition and reinforcement because most of them don't speak any English outside the class. So I've done that and I really enjoyed that. I can't remember what else I was telling you about that.

Gaye

You said how it had become ...

P7

Oh how my job has changed. So this year I've had mostly kind of traditional ABE literacy classes and then one ESOL.

Gaye

So you've had quite a bit of experience now teaching adults and you used to be a teacher in school.

P7

I did a bit of family literacy along the way as well.

Gaye

How did you find that?

P7

The first time I did it I found it really hard because I don't think I knew what I was letting myself in for.

Gaye

I'd like you to explain what you actually did in that?

P7

Well it was when I still lived in Bristol. I used to get asked for jobs you know that were ... I don't know I must have been on somebody's mailing list because of working for this college. I saw this family literacy one and I didn't really know what family literacy was but it had a bit of blurb about it, and I thought 'oh that sounds really good' yes'. I like kids so I thought I would have a go at that, and somebody said "this is the new scene and there is going to be loads of this." So I thought from a selfish point of view. It was quite early on, I think it was shortly after all the pilot projects were done. We were one of the first when the funding was extended, it was about

1995 I think, no 1996 I think it was. It was a bit different from a lot of them because a lot of them were Community Education or Further Education... working in partnership with schools. But we were Community Education in Bristol, working with partnership with the social services day nursery, and in one of the most deprived parts of Bristol... which was quite near where I lived. This area was quite notorious. Nobody had a good word to say about it, and it did have a load of problems. It had loads of drug problems for instance. There was a big crack down on pushers in the centre of Bristol. Apparently what had happened was... these people kind of thought "oh where can we turn to next" and they targeted this estate and flooded it with cheap drugs to kind of get people hooked and they succeeded. So there was huge problems with that. Anyway, all these kids who were in the social services day nursery were there. Either because it was felt that it wasn't a good idea to keep them at home with their parents very much, and/or really because the parents maybe had so many problems of their own that they just needed to get a break from their kids. One of the big problems we had was... that these parents did not want to do anything jointly with their kids. They were really resistant to that, and we were supposed to be doing, there was one other tutor and me. She was a child development tutor. So she was supposed to be having a lot of input on that and I was dealing with the basic skills literacy side of things. We were supposed to encourage these parents and children to do activities together as much as possible. It was really hard and even when we did you know... I felt that it was all mothers as it turned out. They had so many difficult things going on in their lives that really we were asking too much of them to say "Here you are here is this opportunity to improve your basic skills and you might be able to go to college or something." I always felt that, I never had the courage to say it to the person who was managing that project at that time, and it was only really when I was on the MEd that I felt that what had happened and my feelings towards it were validated. Because I think I blamed myself. I mean the project wasn't a failure and it carried on after I'd left, because I then got a job over here and we moved here so I left the project well after the first phase, which was the six months. But they got funding to continue it in some form, not exactly as it had been. So it wasn't a failure but I felt you know... I didn't do this or I didn't do that, they didn't all get Word Power and that was a condition of the funding you see you had to enter the local Word Power.

Gaye

Who was running it? Can you remember who was running it?

P7

It was through the Basic Skills Agency. Then when I was on the MEd one of the readings and one of the modules was this really good article by [name removed] from Sheffield. She was working as a researcher at Sheffield University but she had the opportunity to do not exactly family literacy but some thing like that involving parents and children in a really deprived part of Sheffield. Then she used it as a kind of research opportunity. Do you remember the paper; it was something like 'exploring

an alternative literacy curriculum for socially and economically disadvantaged parents’.

- Gaye Do you know that [name removed] used to be part of RaPAL? She used to be the Digest Editor.
- P7 Yes and then eventually retired. She was at the first RaPAL conference I went to. We didn’t know each other then.
- Gaye Which one was that? Was it Sheffield
- P7 The Sheffield one yes.
- Gaye That’s the one I helped organise. There was Carol and myself and David from my Lancaster who did work on that one.
- P7 I’d read this article where she was saying exactly the same thing that...you know... it needs to be a very sort of softly, softly approach. Word Power, and that kind of thing, is not appropriate to people who have just got all these other issues that need to be resolved first. When I read that it cheered me up a lot, and I thought that well maybe I wasn’t so bad after all. So that was my first experience of family literacy. Then when I was co-ordinator for [name removed] Community Education I set up some family literacy projects. Actually I could have taught on them...Oh yes I did actually teach on two. Some of those were the BSA model again which, I mean we had a really enthusiastic tutor to work on those who was great, and some of them. I can’t remember how many I set up now.
- Gaye Is it still going because you don’t hear of it?
- P7 Yes, I don’t know... because BSA is not flavour of the month anymore and I don’t think the BSA is funding it any more. But Western Super Mare is an education Action Zone so the one’s I taught on were actually funded through that which I felt gave us a lot more freedom. So it was just us in community education, well me really, working in partnership with a teacher from a local school.
- Gaye You had parents with their children in the school situation; you went to basic classes in the school did you?
- P7 Yes, it was in the school. Each one was three hours long, something like that I can’t remember, and for the first part the children and parents were separate. So the teacher from the school was with the kids and I was with their parents and then we got together. I still don’t think that’s a perfect arrangement, but at least we did have a bit more flexibility as far as the actual content was concerned. But there were issues about recruiting parents because the assumption seemed to be that just because children might not have reached whatever level on the national curriculum they

were supposed to be at. That the parents had basic skills needs and on my first session in that school I could see that wasn't true. Some of them did and some of them didn't... so it made it quite difficult. I think the second one I taught there, there were a couple of mothers who were quite resentful of the fact that they had. I know what happened now, The first time I did the recruitment with the teacher and we were working in partnership. We had plenty of time and we invited the parents in for a coffee morning and that kind of thing. Although you know that there was still the issue that you couldn't assume mothers and fathers necessarily had, I don't like to keep saying needs and problems and things, but you know I don't mean it. When you're talking about that it's actually hard to resist that vocabulary sometimes I find and I could kick myself every time I say it.

- Gaye I find what you're saying is really interesting because you've taught in school and you've taught adults. Then you've been in the family literacy situation where you have parents and children. Thinking of those situations that you've been in I was just wondering what you see to be the differences between teaching children and teaching adults.
- P7 Well teaching children... you can't assume that they're all the same but they have more in common than a group of adults. *If you're teaching seven-year-olds say or in my case teenagers, they all have seven years experience of life. Whereas with adults they are all ages, all people come from different backgrounds, they're all there, they've got different goals when they come to classes so it is much more diverse. Therefore I think harder to have, perhaps not harder because you've got it now, but less appropriate to have a standardised curriculum.*
- Gaye One curriculum fits all. Have you come across the term 'andragogy'?
- P7 Yes.
- Gaye What do you understand by it?
- P7 I think that it's like pedagogy so kind of the theory and philosophy that underpins practice. But I think, *was the word invented for adult education* because it was felt that pedagogy wasn't appropriate, you know it literally means its from a word in Latin or Greek or something that means "child" doesn't it, the 'peg' bit and 'andra' is adult I think, I don't know. It must be I suppose I don't know Greek. So I think that word was coined because I suppose by people who must of felt that adults were being treated like children and that this was a way to show that it ... *actually adult education is something different. It's not just going over and over the things that you think people have missed or didn't understand at school that's probably the worst thing you can do. I think that's how I understand it.*
- Gaye That's great and so where did you hear the term?

- P7 The first time I remember hearing it was actually you know when I said I was doing that 9285 and we had some sessions by this person who had been the Avon County Council staff development person. By that time she had set up and was self employed, one woman business so she came to do these sessions when I was doing the 9285. It was in one of those sessions and I can't remember what the session was about but I just remember hearing that word and her explaining what it meant and it was a new word to me so it stuck in my mind.
- Gaye It was used by someone called Malcolm Knowles he's an adult educator in the late 70s. When I did my training he was around and it was all the go. He tried to establish a theory about a way of teaching adults so it was all these pedagogical theories you see about teaching children. Some people say that it never actually developed as a theory, what you call in research terms "a theory". I was very keen on listening to what you said about you couldn't teach adults as you taught children and the different motives etc and it could all contribute to what was going on. Now other people have argued that that wasn't the case that those people who criticise the theory of andragogy say this isn't necessarily the case... because adults come with one of our biggest learning experiences, what we learn at school. So when adults come to classes they expect other things they have got in school and it is not necessarily what you want to give them. So you've got to work out some sort of compromise.
- P7 I think you do especially when the person comes to a class new. They do expect, people have said to me before, "Oh I thought this was all going to be spelling tests." and "I thought we'd all do exactly the same as we did in school." I see my job partly as, I don't want to say changing their ideas because that sounds as if I'm brainwashing them or something... but offering more than that, and actually helping them to develop different or wider goals and aims for themselves. The reason they expect that... I suppose... oh spelling tests and what have you... because that's what they had in school and why should they know it could be anything else. Especially when in the media and everything literacy was always presented as illiteracy and problems and all that kind of thing. So when they came to a class and you ask them what they want to learn, they will say spelling because... their model of what literacy is has come from their school days and the media. I see our job as kind of helping them to see what other things are on offer; like a kind of feast.
- Gaye That's a good way of putting it.
- P7 You know Jane Mace, her book 'Talking about Literacy...' that she's got this lovely metaphor in there of recipes and students and teachers created dishes together and drawing in all different ingredients and I love that and I've used that in one my MEd essays. I quoted that and actually said, after all the points I've made about this new core curriculum, I thought that students were now being offered fast food instead of whole food. It's

thanks to Jane that I was able to see it like that because her metaphor made me think 'oh yes that applies to what we've just been talking about'.

Gaye That's a great point. What about what tutors are being offered in their training?

P7 Well last September I had to do this 3-day obligatory training for the literacy curriculum. It's difficult because, I'm not prejudice but my ideas were coloured before I even went there...because I'd talked to people who had done it before and who had been on the training the trainers thing and you know they were telling me about how awful it was. So I probably didn't go with a completely open mind. When you had the opportunity to work in small groups and share experiences and discuss ideas. We had very limited opportunity to do that and that was OK but the rest of it was all very much... you know this is what you must do, in this order, everything has to be done this way and you mustn't deviate from this. Which in a way I found it a bit insulting. Maybe I shouldn't have done because I think possibly, I don't know. But I feel this training was possibly designed with new in experienced tutors in mind in anticipation of this expected huge expansion. So people from all kinds of backgrounds and not necessarily education are being recruited and it maybe it was felt that it needed to be at that level. But even so it could have been at that level and still had discussion of ideas and things... but it didn't. It was all a skills approach I suppose. You've got to get these skills and then you will be a good teacher and it makes it sound so... well it's a very mechanical kind of process and it doesn't really I think engages your mind in a very stimulating way, it didn't with me anyway. It's all about what you should do and not about why you're doing what you're doing I think. There is no questioning about it wasn't encouraged at all.

Gaye I was going to ask you about the new qualifications. Have you seen the FENTO standards?

P7 I've seen them but I'd be lying if I said I was really familiar with them. I've just glanced over them so I don't really know much about them.

Gaye So we are now waiting the new qualifications and also have our qualifications assessed to the standards. It's all got to be done by 2005. That's what the Moser Report said anyway but they never stick to that. Well thanks Amy it's really interesting some of the things you're telling me. We talked about pedagogy and andragogy and you've heard of andragogy and you know the difference between the terms etc. I was just wondering do you think learning to engage with pedagogy and andragogy, whatever you want to call it, can help devote tutors professionally?

P7 Yes I think it's essential really. This is one thing I've thought about a lot since I've been on the MEd. This idea of research and practice actually being two halves of the same thing if you like. It's not theory and practice.

Because whatever you do you do have a theory because we're rationale human beings so the way that you do something it must be based on a thought. But I think if you don't consciously examine why we do things... all that happens is that what you do will be based on assumptions, prejudices or maybe ideas that are right but maybe it would be more by accident than by design. Whereas if you're constantly thinking about why you do what you do, and was to kind of research in your own practice in that way, then it is more likely that what you do will be based on sound reasoning and projecting.

- Gaye Since you've been doing your Masters has it made you think more consciously about things and terms? Has it made you think about what is good practice, what is bad practice?
- P7 Yes definitely it has. *I would say it's transformed the way I think about what I do. Because I think when I first started maybe that first year or two all I had to go on was this kind of deficit model because that's all there was. I didn't know about RaPAL or anything else and then I think gradually I started to change the way I think probably largely as a result of having contact with RaPAL and reading the RaPAL bulletin. Also other colleagues who I knew who challenged this standard idea. Now I've been on the MEd I feel like it's forced me to think about things in a much more systematic way. Before I had vague ideas about student centred education and all that kind of thing but I hadn't really thought them out.* (End of Side 1).
- Gaye So you say it does help you develop professionally. Nowadays I was just wondering.... there is lots of talk about professionalism, professionally, re professionalisation. I was wondering if you think about professionalism - what does it mean to you. Do you regard yourself as a professional?
- P7 Yes definitely. One really important aspect of it is what I just said about researching your own practice and developing your own philosophy to underpin what you do.
- Gaye When you say "your own" are you talking about some degree of autonomy?
- P7 Yes, although there'll be kind of big ideas which a lot of people might agree on. *Things like the idea that you could view literacy as a social practice rather than a set of technical skills.* But even so if you took 10 teachers who all had that view of literacy the details of what they thought they think and their practice is going to be slightly different because they're all individuals. So yes when I say your own ideas I think that's what I mean not just being told what to think but being able to work something out for yourself.
- Gaye Do you feel you can do that do you?

- P7 I do because I've always been a stubborn person who doesn't like other people to tell me what to think. It's not always easy because I think this deficit model of literacy is just so powerful and dominant and I think its what underpins this new curriculum we've got unfortunately.
- Gaye You're talking about the student curriculum here?
- P7 Yes the adult literacy core curriculum. You know I keep saying to myself well when Word Power first came out which was actually a bit before my time but people have said when Word Power first came out loads of adult literacy tutors threw their hands up in horror and said 'Oh no this is terrible'. But then people gradually worked out ways to use it creatively. In a way you have to play along as it were because, no... I don't want to use that... because play makes it sound all like a game, and it is much more serious than that. It's like you know in politics people are always saying 'Oh it's the art of the possible'. I think we have to consider our situation like that in a way and that we can't just chuck out this core curriculum and say to the government 'you've got all this wrong and we are going to do our own things' because they'd just say 'right no funding then'. So you have to be perhaps pragmatic, creative interpretation, but there is not an infinite scope for that you are limited and you have to face that. But having said that,...you know... compared with the first however many years when I was basic skills tutor... now is brilliant because its actually been pushed to the top of the political agenda because its being linked with all these issues of social inclusion and exclusion. I think deep down this government probably really does care about basic skills, but they could do with some tweaking. Well they care about it but its how they're going to achieve what they want to achieve where I disagree with them. But you know we have got all this funding and there are opportunities so I think it would just be foolish to say 'Oh no, we don't agree with that'. But not to have anything to do with it; you'll be just looking a gift horse in the mouth.
- Gaye We talked about your own professional training and your opinions about certain issues. Is there anything else outside this professional sphere if you like, something in your personal life which has influenced your pedagogy about what you do or issues you think about when you're teaching?
- P7 Yes because everyone's life experience influences the way they think. I suppose for me it was... that... well... I said I used to be a secondary teacher but I don't come from a middle class background and I was the first person in my family to go to University and it certainly wasn't expected of me by parents or teachers.
- Gaye I was too.
- P7 So you know what it's like. So you know I guess I've always been conscious that there are lots of people... although in theory we have equal

opportunities and anyone can go to University. In practice it doesn't happen and... you know... I can look back and think why did it happen to me and there were certain reasons I can probably say. But I also feel that for a long time... I went along with that way of thinking about things. Because you're told aren't you "oh well you went to University because you've worked hard and you've got the intelligence" and all things like this and you know there's more to it. You know there are other people who have worked hard and are intelligent and didn't go to University. So I've always felt strongly that education should be a more equal, a fairer thing than it is. I think when I was teaching in a school I don't think I challenged it enough. Now, I wish I'd had the confidence to say more of what I felt but I was like the most junior member of staff in this really male dominated, old fashioned. It was old fashioned and it was a comprehensive but it was like... needless to say it was a comprehensive masquerading as a grammar school... masquerading as a public school. I wish now that I had the confidence to speak out more, and you can tell. You can get a class of 11-year-olds, and with a very high degree of accuracy, could say we know these ones will go to the sixth form and go to University. And it was all the middle class ones. People weren't, to my knowledge anyway; people weren't questioning that at that time that was just the way things were, certainly in that school. So I guess that has influenced me quite a lot. Also because of my parent's experience, well not my mum's particularly because she went to grammar school. But my dad's childhood and education was really disrupted by the war. He was evacuated and had a hell of a time and his education suffered. Fortunately, he has grown up with this big inferiority complex now, because he left school at 14 and he worked in a shop for most of his career. He wouldn't really talk about these things but I know he's got an inferiority complex about it. I've always felt that's not fair that, just because he had all that awful time and didn't have the chance to complete his education, he's always been kept down and probably not able to develop as much as he could of done, I don't know. I hate saying things like that because it makes it sound as if I'm being snobbish towards my dad and I'm not.

Gaye

No, that's wonderful. Is there anything else you'd like to add now Amy I feel we've talked enough and I was just wondering if there was anything else you would like to add? What I would like to do is I'll send you a transcript of the tape and I'd love to enlarge on this if possible or if there is anything else you feel you want to enlarge on yourself, you've just got going now, just feel free to do so. You can do it on tape, you could do it orally, or you could write it. Whatever is easiest for you. I don't want you to feel that you have to do it in writing or anything. Also I tell people that there is complete confidentiality about this. I might want to list the people who have contributed to my research on a page in my thesis would you mind that? It wouldn't be ascribed to what you actually said it would just be a thank you to [name removed].

P7

No that's fine.

Gaye                    There is one other thing when somebody comes out with a really good quote I want to put it in. Now I don't want to take advantage of that quote and if you want your name to go on it you can.

P7                        I would rather be anonymous I think.

Gaye                    You'd rather be completely anonymous. It is completely up to you. It's just that I might think 'Oh that's a good point I'll put that in'. You will have the choice. I will show you the piece of the transcript with it in and you can then decide.

P7                        I probably wouldn't mind then no.

Gaye                    Well I'd OK with you first. Well that's OK thank you very much

End of Interview.

## Participant Eight (West Midlands): 1<sup>st</sup> November 2002 at work

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Gaye [Name removed] has decided to start her professional narrative about andragogy and pedagogy, and about her training when she first came into Adult Literacy.

P8 Well, I came in as a volunteer, which I think is quite common really for teaching in ABE [Adult Basic Education]. And I volunteered for a year. During that year I did some basic volunteer training, and it was not terribly structured at that point.

Gaye Can you tell me how long the volunteer training was?

P8 I think was six weeks...eight; something like that, but it wasn't anything like a module. It was just one-off sessions that lasted about six weeks...and we did a lot of work around...how working with adults was different to working with children because there were people moving from being teachers in school into working with adults... so they'd obviously stressed that quite a lot.

Gaye Can you remember what they said?

P8 I remember being struck by the fact that I'd never wanted to be a teacher of children so, for me, it was exactly what I wanted to hear, which was quite interesting. The tutors were people that I'd only met once before but I immediately felt an affinity with what was behind what they were trying to do...

Gaye That's very like me.

P8 So that was the first training. Then I was in the group working with a very experienced tutor... but he had an F.E. and A-level background and taught...what I saw him teaching... I felt was a very much a school kind of way of teaching. Although they sat in a group, they didn't sit informally, they sat at desks, because we were working in a school. And although he'd take individuals, and do work with them one-to-one, the others were given something fairly structured to work on while he was doing that. And I used to listen to people read. And that seemed to me what I was there to do. Every week, I'd listen to people read.

Gaye Just that?

P8 Yes. I didn't enjoy it very much but I wasn't sure of my role in the group to try and change that. Gradually, as the year went on I got a bit more confident, and then suggested... maybe I could do other things with these learners. He allowed me to do whatever I asked to do, but it was quite interesting that he seemed to think that that was what a volunteer was there to do... was to listen to them read. And they had to do that every week. Somebody had to read every week...

Gaye So the tutor you were assigned to as a volunteer, taught like people taught did in school?

- P8 I felt he was coming from that background, yes. Lovely bloke....
- Gaye Yes. Ok, I'm just making a note of that because I might come back to it
- P8 He was grateful for the help, but I never felt as though I contributed much. You know, it was one of those situations where I'd say... if I had to miss a session I'd ring and say I couldn't make it. I'd apologise when I did see him and he'd say, 'No, no, no'. It's a bonus that you are here'. So it would feel like I was valued...but not much. So I was enjoying the work and I went as often as I possibly could. It was on a Monday night and I used to dig myself out. I got asked if I would like to do 'The New and Potential Tutors Course'...
- Gaye ...'The New and Potential Tutors Course'?
- P8 ...Yes. It was probably something specific to Birmingham, I don't know. It was what they had as a pre-runner to the 9281 and all those ...
- Gaye Was this especially for literacy tutors?
- P8 ...and numeracy.
- Gaye Literacy and numeracy, and just adult tutors in general? What about ESOL.?
- P8 Basic Skills, Literacy, numeracy and ESOL. It was very much to do with an introduction to being a tutor with adults in basic skills groups. And that was a much more structured course. I've still got the folder about the work we did. There were things that you were asked to take back to your group and try out. So I did that. Some things worked better than others. I did some lesson-planning and things like that...
- Gaye .How long was it?
- P8 It was probably a terms-worth. [Name removed] Centre in Birmingham was very active in training. I don't know if you have heard of them.
- Gaye In the North West we had something called North West Regional Accreditation Centre....(NWRAC). When Further Education was still part of the Local Authority set-up.
- P8 We had the West Midland Accreditation....as well.
- Gaye We had an Advisor who put on training all over Lancashire.
- P8 What Birmingham was particularly good at, was targeting that very different kind of work that you do with adults who have had very bad experiences in the past. There was a lot of emphasis on how to deal with people who might be quite frightened at coming into a learning environment.

- Gaye We also had a lot of one day training courses and weekend courses. Sounds like your 'New and Potential Tutors Course', but it wasn't a block course.
- P8 Well, this was odd days too. It wasn't a block course. We were all part-timers...so it was evenings and some Saturdays. And there were assignments, but they were practical assignments. Like go back to your class. Try this out. Come back to the group and feedback...
- Gaye What era are we talking about?
- P8 I was teaching for 12 years, and finished just over a year ago...Christmas 2001. So I started...12 years off 2001
- Gaye That takes you back to 1989.
- P8 That sounds about right. I would have volunteered in that year. So I would have done the 'New and Potential Tutors Course' at the end of that year. On that course I met some really good friends whom I'm still in touch with now. Some others I have lost touch with now that I have finished teaching...that was quite interesting that I actually made friendships myself in that environment.
- Gaye Can you remember the ethos underpinning that course?
- P8 The thing that they were very keen on was to make sure that there was no patronising. These were learners who were learning for whatever reason, and any reason was a good reason. It didn't matter what it was...they should be valued as individuals and [we had to be] non-judgemental, all the things you would expect to hear really. But they were very hard into that. And it was sold to us in a way that people who've had bad experiences in the past, which a lot of these people have had, are very sensitive to things, and kind of react maybe more that you might expect. So [you had to be] sensitive to how you are approaching things. I mean there was the obvious thing about multi-cultural resources. And in those days we had some pretty appalling resources...but they were beginning to think these are actually not too good [especially for] ESOL. But still there are some pretty bad things in the system. And we had some quite good discussions about that. In fact, I remember going to work in one of my jobs and finding a resource cupboard and chucking out everything that was there.
- Gaye Yes. I have done that.
- P8 We did lots about learning styles and things like that, which was quite good. So looking at how people work, they may be visual learners. Some may be more auditory and some may need a variety of approaches. And that some people are good at learning on their own and other people learn more from participating. We did quite a lot about 'Language Experience'...

- Gaye ...The Language Experience Approach. I did a lot of that.
- P8 A lot of that approach was very, very central to what we did. We watched experienced tutors on video and then commented. I think it was a very good introductory course to being a tutor, and to actually running a group. Because it is quite different working as a volunteer in a group to actually managing that group yourself. No matter how involved you are as a volunteer...the responsibility is always... and then there is all the admin stuff that you don't even know about.
- Gaye Did you have home tuition in those days?
- P8 They were phasing out [home tuition] because they didn't like it...It was felt that everybody could benefit from working in a group...There was a kind of interim time when we had volunteers working with individual students normally within a group. But actually the reality was that they spent their entire session working mainly with that student at the side of the room... but they were in the group.
- Gaye You are in a group but isolated in a corner with your volunteer .
- P8 Sometimes they'd be in a separate room... but the same building, because that person cannot be integrated and just refuses to be integrated into the group...but they phased that out but it took a long time for it to become absolutely not happening. Probably five years ago [circa 1997] it was still happening just in rare cases...I remember them saying to us 'you should have a coffee time because it's good to have that 'social time' and I'd struggle like mad to get my group to have a coffee break. They just wanted to keep on working, they didn't want to stop and have coffee. Then you had this horrendous business where somebody makes the tea and coffee and somebody else doesn't like the way that person makes it...so they always want to do it...that means they always spend time making the tea and coffee, and it is a lot of hassle. But I know to some groups it is very important and they do learn an awful lot from it. But the kind of students I ended up working with tended to be the more able ones, and those two hours were precious to them and they really wanted to use it.
- Gaye Did they have 2 hours a week?
- P8 I had two groups to start with, one which was based in a school, a very traditional old-fashioned school building and the students I had there were extremely basic level. Some of them had been to [private training provider]. They were struggling with fairly entry-level type things, and I didn't feel I had enough experience to be working. I had no volunteer at that point so there was me and this group and we built up quite a nice little group atmosphere there, but they weren't the best attenders, and they were very poor at letting me know when they weren't going to be there. So you'd turn up with a class prepared and they would be as a group and then a key person

wouldn't be there so you couldn't do what you had planned. So I ended up planning separately for the individuals but trying to make it a group session, which was very difficult because they had such diverse interests. One was obsessed with cricket and the only thing he wanted to work on was cricket, which was fine... so I got to know more about cricket in that time.

Gaye It's very, very exhausting because you were run off your feet. If you have 8 students....

P8 It was a very small group...it was four. I think five, at one point but somebody came into the group who was at a higher level and immediately didn't stay. I had to speak to my co-ordinator and say, 'either we have a volunteer, or you look very carefully at who you place here.' Because it didn't really work with levels higher than that. They also weren't very proactive at bringing any resources in so it was all left to me, even though they were encouraged to bring in the resources.

Gaye Where there any resources in the building?

P8 This was the place where I had to throw everything out and it was a cupboard in a school...it had been there and people had just tipped into it. I went, typical ABE, carrier bags; both arms; newspapers; everything, paper..

Gaye I remember it well

P8 That group actually folded because the co-ordinator and I had a long discussion at the end of the first year, and agreed that those students would be better placed in a larger group where they would get more input from a wider variety of students. I came across one of them who actually did. I think the others opted out. But one of them did move, and I came across him in another context, in a big group, and he was quite happy, and he'd done quite well in there.

Gaye Sometimes they were a bit like a social club.

P8 But it was out of the school and that was good because the school environment was not...and it was impossible to change the desk arrangement because they were in rows and there were these desks that had seats attached to them.

Gaye Did they have sloping lids?

P8 Yes, but they used to be in twos then and they were all 'channelled' were pupils had dug holes out of them. So it was a shame in a way but it was the right decision for the students. So she pulled the plug on that class, and by that time I'd already started working at another centre about half way through, or even less, maybe a term into that year, that academic year, at the group where I actually stayed until I'd finished. So that was a Tuesday

evening group. They were given to me as a group of people who were interested in Word Power, which was new...I'd never even seen Word Power before. I had a nice group of people. They were a real mix of ability but they tended to be at least Stage 1, or over. So they were articulate, often working [in jobs] because it was an evening a week, mix of male and female and we had a wonderful time. We just had a great time because they really wanted debate, they wanted to role-play and we had a really, really active participant group.

Gaye Marvellous. What did they think of Word Power.

P8 What we did was... we used Word Power as quite a nice focus for certain things but usually it was after we had done them. So we'd do an activity and then we'd go 'Oh, look at that!' and we got quite a lot of Word Power things done in that way. They used to peer assess...we did a lot of variety... but they were a very capable group which was lovely. Now at the end of that year (1991 or 1992) some of them wanted to go on and carry on with Word Power. I have to say that we failed in that I hadn't got anybody who'd done it, finished it, and gone on to another level because it wasn't my main push. My main push was to give them a variety of experience [Word Power accreditation wasn't compulsory in this tutor's context at this point in time].

Gaye What did you think of Word Power?

P8 As a new(ish) tutor, in fact a very new tutor, I quite liked it [Word Power] but only as a framework. But I found it quite nice because I thought 'well if these are the sorts of things we have to cover, and I'm covering loads more which I think it is important, then maybe I'm not going too far wrong. So for me it was quite a reassuring thing. The only thing I wasn't too happy about was that... what I found students used to like was they wanted the right answer and this is quite common. They wanted to know 'what is the right answer' and it took a while... these students were quite good at it by the end. They...OK...what might be the most common way of dealing with this and could we reach a consensus on that ...but it wouldn't necessarily be an absolute right and wrong about certain things. It's like layout of letters, which in the Word Power books makes it sound as though this is what you do. And we had to accommodate people who'd learnt in school in the early 1900s... who had learnt a particular style which was now old fashioned but was quite acceptable, and there was no reason why they should change a habit of a lifetime to suddenly write in a block form where it's all done down the left hand margin...They'd never been faced with that before...

They also found it quite amusing that if I was writing something I'd ask them 'have I had spelt this right?' And they'd go 'well you're the teacher' ...And I'd say 'well I can't see it from here' and I'm the sort of person who needs to look at the board and what it looks like. So it was like 'does it look right to you...could someone check it in the dictionary for me' you know, we did lots of that kind of thing.

- Gaye How did they react to that?
- P8 They seemed to accept it quite well because the ground rules that we laid down was that everybody could say what they liked in that group but they needed to respect other people's views. So we had those ground rules and people may have had very strong views on certain things but just because they have doesn't mean to say they are right, and that *although I'm the teacher and supposedly I have more knowledge/expertise in this area than you do there will be times when you've actually got the expertise and I'm learning from you*. So they kind of accepted that ,because that's the way I taught. {The participant confirmed, when I asked, that this was how she was taught whilst undergoing her own professional training.
- Gaye In your training, was that how you were taught?
- P8 . . .there was a certain amount of information giving but there was also plenty of room for discussion. The only thing that they were very adamant about was the system that you went through to do 'Language Experience' that you had to follow...like some of the methods for learning and spelling...that is a process... and unless you do the whole process it won't work. So there were very good reasons for giving you the whole thing to follow...
- I worked with tutors who were much more didactic I would say but that was never my approach. So we underwent the same training yet came out with different styles, and I am not sure why that was.
- Gaye That's interesting. We have highlighted another research area. What about if you were advising a new tutor who was just starting?
- P8 *To value each individual person is the key thing with any work I think with basic skills. The wonderful thing about working with adults is that they do have this wealth of experience, and usually they are quite happy to share it. So that's probably the one thing.*
- Gaye Earlier on, you mentioned that on your first volunteer training course they taught you the difference between teaching children and teaching adults. Can you remember what they said?
- P8 I can't remember specifics...it was a great surprise because I was quite relieved, but it was what I wanted to hear. But they made a big thing about 'you can only request. You can't insist'. Now that is quite a different way of working...that those people are there of their own, most of them, in most classes, they are there at their own volition...and that's quite different from school as well. So the fact that they are there means they want something. They want to get something out of being there even though it might be quite difficult to see what that is. You've got to draw it out.

- Gaye Did the term 'andragogy' ever crop up?
- P8 Not at most days. No. [it was in] my own research that I came across that and I'd never heard of it before and in fact *I went round everywhere saying 'what does 'andragogy' mean?' ...I came across it in somebody's MA, through RaPAL, actually...1992 maybe or even earlier.*
- Gaye Many people have not heard of it.
- P8 Well, I delved into Knowles's work quite a lot and quite liked the idea of 'andragogy' I must admit. *But I do feel that it's got its limitations and I've moved on from there now. So although I am aware of it...and I think it was really good work because it highlighted that there were big differences between adults and children and their ways, their styles of learning and the fact that they want different things from it often. But I really like his idea of helping them become independent learners by facilitating...rather than doing this...a feeding model.*
- Gaye I have difficulty knowing whether to use the word 'andragogy' because some people feel quite strongly about it.
- P8 Although... at one point I think I was extremely convinced that it was a completely different concept. *I'm actually not sure now that the way it's described matters that much...I think that with children we are also trying to make them independent learners to carry on learning throughout their lives. So I think the whole terminology has got problems and I'm not using them now.*
- Gaye Have you done any other courses besides the 'New and Potential Tutors' course.
- P8 I did lots of little one-offs. I did a numeracy taster course. We used to have lots of in-service things on offer so I'd do everything I could. The only thing I never got into was ESOL...that was a fairly kind of pragmatic decision... that I couldn't do everything and so I would stick to literacy or numeracy. I quite liked working with numeracy but felt too unsure of my own subject knowledge in numeracy to be able to go forward...other than at a very basic level. In some classes you find that you are doing numeracy alongside literacy anyway. So there was a need to have some knowledge but I never felt that that was the route I wanted to go. And so I stuck to literacy. After those initial taster sessions...I got the opportunity to be part of the pilot group...there was quite a big regional drive to get people trained for City and Guilds...so what was the 9285... I did it as the 9281 [ This was a two year pilot for the 9285 on which I (Gaye) was a mentor]
- Gaye I was a mentor on the original pilot. In our area they did not have the RSA Diploma. So I taught on it. But I never took it.

- P8 That was a fascinating experience but it taught me that... it taught me a lot about my own learning styles, preferred and not. We had an initial meeting where all the students and all the mentors got together. We were given a presentation of what it would consist of because portfolio-building was quite new at that stage (1991/2). So we had this big meeting, and then we were allocated to our mentors. My mentor seemed lovely and I was quite happy. My friend, who was a numeracy tutor, was there and he got allocated to his mentor and it seemed fine. So we gaily go off and do our own thing and we were told that we'll have six-monthly meetings as a whole group. Then you'd be left on your own, and you just do it, and you come back at the end with whatever progress you have made, which was a bit scary. But my mentor worry. We'll go through it all'. And then she started talking about APEL {Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning}. Well, I'd never heard of APEL before. She said 'what learning have you done in the past?' and I said 'well I've done this and that'. An I'd been a breast-feeding counsellor for NCT [National Childbirth Trust]...and she said 'Oh, I'm sure we can find something from that that you could APEL to get accreditation'. So we had some quite interesting discussions about APEL . She was wonderful and she had such a clear way of looking at things and she chunked it for me... which without that I would have been struggling because it just looked so huge, so huge, unmanageably huge.
- Gaye It was very hard work for mentors as well. Participants were very reliant on mentors. I had three.
- P8 She had three. My friend who was mentored by another woman had troubles actually managing to arrange to meet her...I think he manage to meet her twice and he gave up, which was such a shame. He just gave up and didn't feel that it was a good way of learning.
- Gaye What did you think of this way of learning
- P8 It was an OK way but it was utterly dependent on your mentor, and without a good mentor you didn't stand a chance unless you were very experienced...because there were some people doing it who were very experienced tutors who just wanted the qualification. So they literally just had to say 'Ok, here's my evidence for this. Here's my evidence for that, and they could do it.
- Gaye I'm just checking the tape.
- P8 But some people finished very quickly and their portfolios were like this [indicates a wide thickness with her hands]. And I said 'Oh, I haven't got [that much]...because they just produced evidence which had been there and they had their observation by their mentor.
- Gaye That's right. I remember doing observations
- P8 [My mentor] suggested to me doing a video, which terrified me, but she said, 'you'll get such a lot from it', and it was the best advice that had ever been given to me. Because when you watch yourself teach you realise all the things you are

doing wrong, lots of arm waving...when you're talking to people and you're trying to do things...you think 'Oh, I'm wasting so much energy with this'. And you also realise why you're so tired because you are on the go all the time, checking this, checking that.

Gaye Sorry. Just watching the tape.

P8 So we had this video which was quite a painful experience because I watched on my own at first, and was horrified. And then she watched it with me. She asked me what I'd learnt from it and we discussed that. She also offered some strategies, which was brilliant because it was really good professional development for me. Nobody had had that much in-depth observation of my teaching before. I'd been observed when I was doing the 'New and Potential' teachers thing. I think I'd been observed by my organiser when I was a new tutor. They'd just pop in and see you. But nobody had ever done this... actually looking at my teaching practice and offering strategies for various things. So that was wonderful; that was really good. I then got input from having her expertise. She was an experienced tutor who also wrote. So she was into theory, and that was really good

Gaye For the tape the participant has just shown me a book about spelling written by her mentor, [name removed]

P8 There was a whole series of those and she was in the process of writing those when she was my mentor...so I felt terribly honoured to be mentored by this kind of person.

Gaye What do you think of the ethos of the course you were doing?

P8 I think the thing that I learnt most from that was NVQ jargon is [something] in its own right, and it really helped me help my students who were doing NVQs later on, and Word Power to a certain extent. But NVQs are worse than Word Power...because having been through it yourself you know what it's like reading gobble do gooke and I didn't like...I mean at one level it looked quite straightforward because the introductory book that you got had it set out in sections and...this is what you've got to do, and that's what you've got to do. But then when you learn the performance criteria - and they've got to be done in certain contexts - and that you have to have all this cross-matching. That I hadn't sussed at all until it was explained to me that this is how it happens. So the areas it covered I thought was fine. I wanted to do some of the management ones but there was something I couldn't do... I can't remember what it was now... and so I ended up ditching that...I didn't do that as an additional module. But the idea of the portfolio I think is good experience because it makes you go away and really look at what you're doing. So I quite liked it, but as an individual I found it very isolated...You had that dialogue with your mentor but then you had to go away and write or produce something...evidence it in a way that it showed. There were certain things that I couldn't ever have done easily...so I had to write about them.

Gaye People have mixed opinion about the ethos that underpins this approach

P8 Well they do in that just because you can tick that box doesn't mean that you can do it all that well. I felt that my experience of it was... that I could do it well by the time I'd finished. But I could see that you could just say 'Yes, OK. Done that, done that, tick all the boxes and not have anything to show for it. So what happened was I developed as a tutor throughout the time I was doing it, and I took quite a long time to complete it.

Gaye Some people said that it made them look at areas they had not thought of looking at before.

P8 I think I liked the things it covered because it did make it useful to move to all those bits that perhaps you would skirt around because you don't really do them very much. It also shows you your strengths, and areas that you might want to look at to develop a bit. So I thought it was a good all round qualification to get. And it was the only way I was going to be able to do it because I couldn't afford the time to go and do a taught course, which was then the only alternative really. But I stress that it depended entirely on that mentor-tutor relationship.

Gaye Yes, and if that was not good...I remember that after we had done that pilot course they started to put it on as a course at the college. They put on modules...

P8 Yes. What { centre } did because they weren't happy with the way there had been a lot of negative feedback from people who'd dropped out... and also people who found it a real struggle to find evidence for certain things... because they didn't have that possibility of doing it in their own teaching placement. [The centre in which tutor training was organised] started putting on modules which built up into...so looking at theories of learning and things like that, which you don't tend to do in your own classroom, do you? So they did quite a lot of modules which were excellent. And I actually did some of those just out of interest...even though I'd got the qualification. I still did some of the modules.

Gaye You are aware of the new qualifications...I just wondered what you thought about them.

P8 Well, I was not a substantive part-time tutor so obviously I was never entitled to get the training, because it was cascaded down and it never cascaded as far as me. I got offered it just as I was leaving so I didn't take it up. So I don't have any experience of what it was... I know what the curriculum looked like...[grimaces and laughs]

Gaye What did you think about that?

P8 That's probably one of the catalysts for me leaving to be honest. The thought of trying to get to grips with a whole new...student curriculum

which we'd been working with in my last year. They withdrew Word Power, so that wasn't around, and they were bringing in something new. There were the new tests which I actively disliked.

Gaye Why what was wrong with them?

P8 They were completely pointless. They're just some kind of political marker. Well they only test reading not writing. One of my students who was a very able student got quite stressed by it. He passed it... no problem at all, but he got stressed by it. And I mean he got stressed by the practice document that we were given which were full of errors. I'm not saying that the end test had the same errors in it. But it hadn't been thought through. I didn't think it had been thought through at all. So it was a bit like doing your theory driving test. It was full of multi-choice answers, so your chances of guessing were as high as where you're really thinking between this one and that one. I just don't think they gained anything... except that if they passed it and they got the certificate. If they didn't they were gutted and I really...and I'm not a fan.

Gaye Are these on the website? It's quite a long test, isn't it?

P8 I think it was an hour the paper version. He did the advanced and there were two levels and he did the higher level...which was one person who was very capable, absolutely capable... and it was just a waste of time. He was quite insulted by it. It was just not worth doing. It's values... I can't think of anything very much...may be for students who don't have the chance of doing anything else, but to claim for it that its meaning that people are more literate...

Gaye What happens if they pass? Do they go on a higher level course?

P8 It means that the government can say that these people are at level...whatever. ..Does it? Reading, writing and talking, all those things... can be at different levels of the 'spiky profiles'... and we know all about that. But the students are individuals and they'll have their strengths and they'll have areas that aren't as strong... inevitably...that's what they come to class to learn, and I just don't think those tests are offering them anything value

Gaye Before we finish. You said that when you first started as a volunteer the teacher taught like he did in school. What about now?

P8 What I did was I wrote on my lesson plans what they were achieving in National Curriculum terms and I shared it with some learners but then that was all the mention of the curriculum they made...and we still did what we'd been doing...just that I did an awful lot of work behind the scenes to collate them to the National Curriculum. It was very labour intensive because I was doing all that because I didn't want the learners to be...I

mean you can use it as an exercise in the finding of things, and that sort of thing...in the Curriculum...and 'can you see where this might fit'. So you can do a bit of that, but every week for them to be ploughing through the National Curriculum. I just didn't want to put them in that position. They weren't very interested in it. So I did the minimum that I could, which circumvented the system for everybody.

...One of the lovely things about working with adults as I said.. was you never knew when you turned up to a class somebody might come in with something what had happened or done, and you'd have the most fascinating discussion but the fact that it didn't fit the learning outcomes of that particular session...Oh dear! Now what do we do?

P8 I actually did get...my lesson plans got looked at, at a mock inspection. And I did get pulled up for not sharing with my learners more. I mean I did...but they wanted overtly for me to share with my learners what they were doing. But sometimes I want them to work out what the learning outcome of this lesson is. *Why should I tell them in advance what I am going to teach them? They don't actually come out with that ...You want them to come out and talk.*

Gaye Finally, we have talked about volunteers a bit, and I was wondering what you thought about students being taught by volunteers.

P8 My good volunteer is excellent but I think you've still got in the system some people who need.. either more training or are just not the right people...and although our processes [for vetting volunteers] were quite stringent when volunteers arrived. I had a couple of experiences where people were working with me who I would have rather not because they didn't fit the ethos of the class. Now that's not to say they wouldn't have been fine in a different class where there was a different way of learning going on. But there were instances where volunteers would challenge you – that's fine... if they're challenging in a way that you would want the whole group to challenge. But when it's a challenge I didn't think was the right kind of challenge...Then we had to have some discussion about...you know...that's not how we do it here. There is no time... No time for planning with the volunteer, which I think is just a shame isn't it? There is no way that can happen. And I think without them being involved in that process... it is very hard for them to be involved. I think the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, because having extra people in the class is just such a help when students do need, even if its just someone sitting by them and they may not be doing very much with them, but they are there as a bit of a prod. And sometimes I found students relate better to a volunteer than they do to me and that's fine and that's how life is. So if you know that somebody would rather ask the volunteer because it's kind of only half official rather than asking me, that's fine. Then the good volunteers will kind of develop that and they will say, 'Am I on the right lines with this?' And that's fine. I think it would be a shame to see volunteers going

completely... I have people who didn't do the basic training. They did the first compulsory bit and then we had a system where they had to do the certificate [the new 9281].. They did the obligatory six weeks but very few of them would go on to do the assessment. Because it was just not what they had come here for. What they were coming for was to give some time to help other people learn; not to go and learn themselves which they felt they were doing, and being asked to do...Produce lesson plans. Why, why do they need to do that?

Gaye

I think we had better stop there because I know you are busy. Thanks very much. I will be in touch.

**Participant Nine (Northwest England): 5<sup>th</sup> June 2002 at home.**

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- Gaye Thank you [name removed] for agreeing to the interview. I am going to move around the table so that I can see the back of the tape. Well as you know from our previous correspondence, and talking just now, that I am interested in looking at issues underpinning professional development of adult literacy in basic skills tutors. I was just wondering if you could start by going back to the days when you first started teaching in this area and you can think about the training you had. There is one thing I would like to say, I am not just thinking about formal training here, sometimes personal things can influence how you think about how things should be done. So anything like that, that comes to mind, if you could just say it, it's perfectly okay. So you just told me before we started that you were originally involved with the Cambridge House initiatives. Shall we start there?
- P9 Yes okay... that was going back to the early 70's in London. I was working full time, something totally different, and they were asking for volunteers. I think...I saw an advertisement for volunteers to help... just help adults with their reading. The term adult literacy I don't think had really got off the ground by then. I also did other voluntary work with old people. This was just a volunteer... a sort of 'do-gooding' type, if you really want. I didn't give much more thought to it than that at the time. I went along for an interview. I think they worked out that I had two of everything, and didn't seem totally mad. And that I had a reasonable level of education so I might be quite useful to them. I was put on a very short training course. I think I just attended a couple... I cannot remember exactly. It was very low key. Two or three sessions just outlining the sorts of problems these adults might have....One or two ways of dealing with them. I think just a few little tricks of remembering spellings. It was very, very low key. And then I was assigned my first student...and it was all done in the students homes. You knocked on the door and in you went, and you sat down at their kitchen table or their dining room table, and you did your hour, and you were thanked, and you went away feeling 'hey that felt good.'
- Gaye I did exactly the same thing.
- P9 Looking back it seems quite extraordinary, but I think it did me more good than it did them... but it was this sort of welfarish, do-gooding ethos that underpinned the very beginnings. And that is how I came in. I have always had an interest in language. My first degree is in modern languages. I have subsequently done a Masters Degree in Linguistics. Languages and I are great friends. But I was not applying any language considerations to this beginning. It was something totally different, totally divorced from anything that I had ever been taught. Looking back it was very strange that I reacted in this way. It was one Sunday a month I took some old ladies out for tea. And once a week I helped various students with their English. It was as simple as that. No different.

- Gaye The old ladies were they part of the adult literacy?
- P9 No...This was supposed to be befriending lonely old ladies.
- Gaye When you think of that short training session that you had, were they entirely practical?
- P9 Reasonably practical, but you see I have no... I really don't remember much about it. There was certainly no pointers about treating your students with respect. Subsequently my research is on the stigma attached to literacy issues... but that has only grown over the years as I have taught more and more and realised their embarrassment and all the rest. And that has become the sort of focus of everything that I do now. But then I don't remember anybody telling us how we should treat these people, and I expect a lot of us were incredibly patronising looking back. I hope I wasn't, but I don't know. Certainly there was no guidance on that.
- Gaye When did you first feel... from what you say, when did you first get an idea about... You mentioned stigma. When did your ideas begin to change about what should underpin training with tutors?
- P9 When I stopped being a tutor, a volunteer tutor, and for some reason they then sort of paying me, and I was running entire classes. Again, that happened incredibly informally as well.
- Gaye Are we still at Cambridge?
- P9 No, no, we moved up here and I was doing it through the local college which is [name removed] College. I went in first as a volunteer. I was very useful to them because I was actually very experienced by then and then I was sort of standing in if the tutor was ill... 'Could you do it tonight?' and I would say 'yes, okay.' And then eventually I got paid for my pains, and then eventually I got proper training courses. Everything happened back to front really. It was when I was in further education and seeing students plucking up courage to come to class, and hearing how they would take weeks to... 'yes they were interested, yes they wanted to do something about it.' But it took weeks to pluck up courage, and sometimes you would find them standing outside the classroom door too scared to come in. Sometimes you would even find them in tears. It started dawning on me what is going on here. How is it that we are scaring them so much? How is it that people who are perfectly normal people, functioning perfectly well in other aspects of their life, are reduced to these ashamed and embarrassed wrecks when they set foot and start having to admit, yes I do have problems, please help me. And then of course their gratitude, once you have calmed them down. Once they realised that nothing dreadful was going to happen, they were with sympathetic people and other people in the same boat. They then became so incredibly grateful to you. And that is quite dangerous as

well. And all this... and I was sort of really.... Realising it has to be student- centred whatever you do and that is the crucial thing. Once they started bring Wordpower in... with filling the forms...tonight .we are doing 2.2 which is... and that was really going against my dawning sense of humanity that had to underlie this, and what should be driving it really. But anyway that has gone a long way from the start when I really didn't know what on earth I was doing and was feeling my way. But yes, instinctively, I was trying never to humiliate anyone, but that was just an instinctive thing. I didn't know I was doing it. It was only later I was rationalising, saying 'yes I was very positive, I would encourage people, I would make mistakes myself to make them feel better.' And I was doing all the things that I hope people are now told about. I was finding out for myself. And fellow practitioners were also finding that out for themselves but nobody ever told them. The better ones did it. The off-putting ones never did get their heads around that aspect of it and they were just delivering a set of skills to their students. If they did well, good. If they didn't, well, I tried hard, what's their problem? I don't think anybody paid me for my services until 1990. Meanwhile I was getting bogged down with family things and dipping in and out. I had to stop every time I had a baby. I was in and out. I never let it go because it was... I don't know... it was a way of...Obviously it gave me something as well or I wouldn't have continued. It was a way of continuing to work and be useful, when it was almost impossible to do any other work with family demands, a husband who was always away on business. That's what kept me going with that. I was married in '75, we moved up here. Yes, I was still sort of turning up one evening a week as a volunteer, off and on through the '80's. And then, by into the '90's I was then running whole classes and getting paid for it... Off and on, it was never very secure and they kept changing the goal posts a bit. And I would turn up to take a class and find it that it had been cancelled or moved, and I was out of a job again. And so it went on. It was very unsatisfactory.

Gaye I seem to remember that different areas had different ways of doing it. It was very patchy.

P9 Very, very patchy.

Gaye Up and down the country.

P9 But I did get the benefit. Every time I moved area I got a different little training course, a mini one, three weeks, four weeks. There was a college in North Manchester out in Saddleworth, there was a college there, [name removed] and they gave me a little mini course. And then I had another one at [name removed]. They were very informal, and then of course they really got going with the 9281. That was the first all semi professional course I ever went on, because I had no teacher, teaching qualifications. I never did a PGCE because I never wanted to teach. I avoided any form of education, teaching qualifications. So the 9281, whatever they were called, and I did a D32E the supervisor ones. They were all down in the mid '90's. They

became the minimum qualification you had to have, even as a volunteer let alone a teacher as a class.

Gaye Do you mind if we just step back a little bit? When you talked about the small, the short courses you went on, you said that every time you moved areas you got a new short course. Can you tell me anything about the issues or the ethos which underpinned those short courses?

P9 Again, I don't recall very much about the background of students or what to expect, but I think that was increasing. It was more sort of methods of helping, very practically oriented, very little about the context in which we were operating and very little about how we should behave towards the students.

Gaye Were these in-house courses?

P9 Yes just running for a couple of hours for four or five weeks. They certainly don't stick in my mind. I have a feeling I learnt very little that was new or useful from them, but I had to be seen to go along. It was quite useful. They would give you worksheets. It was quite useful for picking up bits of paper that you would subsequently lose in classes. I don't recall that it was more intellectual than that.

Gaye Its strange that you mentioned the 9281, which became the 9285. I was on the pilot scheme. I was a mentor on the pilot scheme. It was then the 9281 which became the 9285 which was the advanced course.

P9 Yes, I never got as far as the advanced one. But that was the first time that we actually had an introductory session. We were given newspaper headings and all that to analyse. It wasn't the attitudes that are coming through. How do people perceive people who can't read or write properly? And we were asked to share our impressions as well and our expectations. And that was the first time anybody had actually...that was, as I say... that was the first properly professional course. Ours was very well run. I can't fault it. It was too high powered for some of our volunteers though.

Gaye So was it essentially a volunteer course? We are talking about the volunteer training one.

P9 Well all volunteers then had to go on this otherwise they were not welcomed as volunteers. So a lot of them went running screaming at that point because they just didn't want to know about anything like that. And some who did it. Some found it very rewarding, some found it very scary because the amount of writing. We had our assignments to do each week. The course I was actually on was half and half. Long term practitioners like me who tended to hog it terribly with our own, putting our own oars in all the time and volunteers who were slightly bewildered at the sudden professionalism and high-poweredness of something that they were in the

position that I have been in years ago. Just doing this is something nice to do one evening a week to help people. And then they were suddenly thrown up against the growing professionalism of it. As I say it stimulated some and it scared a lot away and we never saw them again.

Gaye Oh dear.

P9 Yes, yes, yes.

Gaye And what about the organisation, the ethos behind the course? The competency statements and things like that, how did you regard that aspect of professional development.

P9 In what?

Gaye Well having the performance indicators in front of you, in order to get through the course you have to achieve this, this and this. How did that aspect of it, how did you feel about that?

P9 It was really quite conspiratorial if I remember. Yes, we have got to do these things. And yes you have got to do them somehow but we know that there are better ways of setting about it. So if you can sort of get through these and tick these off, but carrying on doing what you are used to doing, and in the ways you know suit your students, and if then by the way you can then tick them off from the box. It was very much, they have landed us with all this dreadful paperwork, the powers that be. They don't know what really goes on in our classes. We know. We will jump through their hoops but we will do it our way.

Gaye Did you support that view?

P9 Yes. I was very naughty. I had them all writing poetry you know...that 3 point whatever it was about writing, and they never said that you couldn't do poetry. We did have, I remember in college, these sort of books of templates of worksheets. *Some tutors certainly pulled them out week after week, this and this, do this, this and this. Other people were, like me, were actually given ourselves a lot more work by gearing everything towards each individual student's interests and needs. I would create things on football for somebody who liked football. I would do things on knitting for people who liked knitting. I actually, as I say, gave myself a lot of work, but I was determined to be a student centred as I could against increasingly great odds actually.*

Gaye So this is an underpinning part of our, student centred. What do you understand by the term pedagogy and andragogy?

P9 Well andragogy I have never heard of until you explained it to me earlier. Pedagogy, teaching methods or teaching ethos even...but applicable to

everyone, no distinction between adults of children...just teaching anyone anywhere.

Gaye We have identified a student centred curriculum as one part of your pedagogy.... And I have detected in some of the things you said ...experiential approaches as well. How do you feel with the current emphasis, the new qualifications that are coming out? Do you think those are still possible to pursue those ideas?

P9 Getting increasingly difficult because they do contextualising it even more now, along the lines of school literacy, I gather, I did the latest training on the new curriculum and really we're being asked to deliver a sort of literacy hour which is based on a piece of text that is totally decontextualised. Now that is fine beyond a certain level. I could say it even becomes essential because if you are going to equip your students with a literacy that is going to benefit them, then you will have to, as well as fitting in with what they need or want, or think they need and want, a literacy that is powerful but is the right acceptable literacy if they are going to really go places. But this should not happen right at the start. They need to be beyond a certain level, they need to have their confidence fully backing. I do worry about the use of the new literacy strategy with very weak students and very scared students. These are my feelings. You see I haven't had to deliver this because I went and did the training last summer in the summer. Turned up at college for my classes and found that a new broom was busy sweeping clean and we had a new head of department or co-ordinator and I was out of a job. She had counted up the hours that the full time staff, the contracted staff were doing, decided they weren't working enough hours and so handed out all the part time hours. I was still doing part time, but also teaching by then at Manchester University in linguistics, and handed out all my hours to the full time staff. And I was not the only part time person who bit the dust. So I worked away, and they had spent a lot of money training me.

Gaye You said you did your training last summer?

P9 Yes.

Gaye Now which particular training was this again?

P9 The core curriculum training, I don't know if it has a number, but you know the one that I mean. In a hotel... It was the basic skills... in a hotel over two or three days,...August, September last year.

Gaye Before, when you were talking about the new curriculum for students you were saying that it has been 'decontextualised'. I was wondering if you could expand on that?

P9 *Well it is back to a school-type literacy, isn't it? I mean, the new literacy looks on 'situated literacies' and literacy in context. Once you have*

*absorbed that idea its very difficult to go back to the other sort, the older sort. This seems to be going back. I know its part of the back to basics and more teaching on their grammar and their spelling and their punctuation. This has obviously filtered through. It's not that I disapprove of that at all. But it's not particularly, as I say, relevant for weaker students. That comes later and it is very, very important for later. I mean, I could criticise that core curriculum training that I had in the summer for appalling howlers. I mean, I am trained in phonetics and grammar. I deliver these to undergraduates at Manchester University. But some of the things...I mean they want us to go back to the phonemes and the rest. They were not even correctly identified for any known dialect of England...at the back of the book... the tutors little guide to the sounds of English...they were wrong. In fact I gave a version of that page to my students and said 'right, what's wrong with this?' Very few of them actually could see what was wrong which was even more worrying. These are all people with their three shiny A Levels. Yes, so you can't have it both ways. If you are going to insist on an understanding of English phonology, correct grammatical constructions. Water tight punctuation, you are going to have to get it right, and you are going to have to train the people to deliver it correctly. You cannot do this in a half baked way. You are going to have to give people... the tutors, the deliverers of the learning, a much more intensive training in English... very much so. It struck me... I kept my mouth shut because I thought its not fair to shoot the messenger. They are just there telling us what is in the package. But that also struck me that this was really failing on two counts, one, not really being responsive enough to the individual student. And secondly, it was aiming to go back to basics and deliver top notch English skills again. They weren't even getting that right. This is me talking as a linguist. I didn't say anything at the time.*

Gaye Have you said anything since?

P9 I have said one or two things to one or two people and they say 'oh my goodness somebody ought to be doing something about this'. But I wouldn't know who to say it to now.

Gaye That was incredible. I have done a year with of keeping up with the children on that sort of strand delivering that at primary schools, and I have had to bite my tongue a few times with the poor primary school teachers who also have a very similar mission, getting it wrong themselves, poor things. But how can they not get it wrong when they haven't... You actually need to study linguistics properly. The phonemes of English, people think that is the sounds of English, but phonemes are actually an abstract concept. They are not as accessible as people would like to think. You actually need to go into it very deeply in order to be able to simplify it for your students in a consistent and meaningful way. But that is my hobby horse, you will have to forgive me on that.

Gaye No that is important. So are you actually involved in training tutors?

P9 No I have never trained tutors, I have trained my own volunteers. I was one of the few still running volunteers at college. Most had gone, and a lot of tutors oddly didn't like volunteers in the class. Why I don't know. You can have bad ones but you can also have good ones. But if you have a word in the ear of one or two misguided volunteers, you can turn them into good ones. I always make sure that they know exactly what they are trying to do.

Gaye And did you plan the volunteer training courses yourself?

P9 No.

Gaye Who planned them?

P9 I presume the team leader did. I don't think, until the 9281 there was never anything official for them.

Gaye I am going back now to when I trained to be a volunteer and I went on a specific course for six weeks, two nights a week. That was the start and then we were given other NWRAC 'North Western Regional Advisory Council Qualifications to go to.

P9 No until the 9281 there was nothing official apart from as I said these little informal ones that I don't remember much about.

Gaye So now we are up to the 9281 and you have been training volunteers on these scheme. What about the ethos behind that? How did you approach it?

P9 Dealing with my volunteers?

Gaye Dealing with your volunteers. We have talked about professional development. We have talked about teaching adults in the student centre. Did you employ the same attitude to teaching your volunteers?

P9 Yes I think I must have. All I was determined to do with my volunteers was to make sure that they never humiliated the student in any way. Some volunteers will instinctively know not to do this. Other ones need to be told. I think that again was the guiding ethos. I think occasionally a volunteer would get something wrong. And then umm, that was quite difficult to deal with. But most volunteers had a good enough command of English for it not to be a problem. But you could always turn that to your advantage and say yes look we get it wrong, we need to check in with each other. But then that was a minor point. It was more just about making the students feel comfortable and relaxed. And once you can do that then you can start the learning but not before.

Gaye So we have talked about experiential approach, we have talked about student centred, we have talked about confidence building. Do you think

that there are any other issues in your pedagogical approach? I am trying to sum up as you are speaking.

- P9 It would be nice to think that this was only the start of something for them, and that you can inspire them with enthusiasm for learning other things... for taking it further. But really it's only a beginning. I am always delighted when I hear that they sign on for other courses in the college, whether its computer courses or art or absolutely anything. So getting through the doors is the first big hurdle of going into something that may remind them of school. You see most have had very bad school experiences and that has put them off. It's wonderful to get people back into learning. So it's always nice to think that you can aspire to something else, to take it further if they want. It's not for everyone. As for other features I don't know. I should have prepared this and wrote it down. It's very difficult...
- Gaye It is! You are saying a lot actually. I will send you a transcript of the interview and I may ask you to expand on a couple of things, and I will show you how I am beginning to analyse it, you are free to interact as you wish.
- P9 I am fascinated anyway, in any form of research and analysis.
- Gaye When you are training tutors, volunteer tutors or professional tutors, pedagogy is important and they are all adults whether they are students or tutors. I was just wanting to apply your pedagogical approaches to the training of your volunteer tutors.
- P9 It was no formal training it was just me having a word with them before hand and sitting them down afterwards if they weren't in too great a hurry to go and sort of going down through points that had come up, and just, I don't know, I had a good relationship with them. Very, very few were useless in the end.
- Gaye Did you regard yourself as a professional?
- P9 I hope so.
- Gaye I am trying to think about the time for a little while if that is okay?
- P9 Yes.
- Gaye Do you feel the new approaches to professional development, tutor development, treat the tutor as a professional?
- P9 Yes, I think so although as I say now I have been a year out of touch so I don't know quite what is happening. Professionalism is certainly required but not at the expense of some of the better aspects from the amateur stage. Looking back I am horrified now at myself at my amateur approach to

something that was so vital. Yes I would be proud to be a professional. It's long over due. It's been an area that's been sidelined for so long. Laughed at even by the. I remember my own family sort of hooting with laughter finding I was helping my 'thick' people. All the dreadful stereotypes that. Also the conception that anybody can write English can teach anybody else. That dreadful misconception and that it was easy, a doddle and anybody could do it. You are fighting all that. Certainly all the focus that has been on this can only, I think, be a good thing. I know people like Mary Hamilton have raised alarm bells about the focus of the fresh funding will actually rob the moment of its better features. It's caringness and all of that. It's just long overdue. It just needed a good shake-up. Many tutors I think were doing a reasonable job to the very best of their ability, but sometimes I wonder if that was quite good enough at times. Mainly because they were undervalued I think, and not supported enough. Other tutors I have spoken to had exactly the same reaction from family and friends as to what we did. It was the lowest of the low. Couldn't you get a proper job then? Oh yes. That I hope will come to an end, if it hasn't already. I really do hope so. So certainly increasing qualifications that tutors have to have can only raise the view of the profession and so it's a knock on effect. I think our students would rather be helped by a professional than somebody who is just there to help and be nice. That is good as well, but I think they need to see their teachers as professionals as well, of an equal status, to a teacher of anything.

Gaye You mentioned [name removed] had expressed caution about how we might lose some of the ethos behind what we do and that in the same breath you're saying its good that this has happened.

P9 Yes! I think it can only be good.

Gaye Do you think that there is a way of marrying the caution with the (*not clear*)?

P9 Oh yes, we are in a position of greater power with greater funds at our disposal then we have ever had. It's really up to us to get it right and to tell people when they are getting it wrong. The trouble is tutors have just sort of sat there and taking everything that has been thrown. Oh here is another set, we have got to do this now have we? Right, okay then. Because they felt very powerless and there were a lot sort of hanging on to these jobs like me, as about the only way that we could continue working at times with family and other demands. I had loads of other commitments which I couldn't do anything about. I think a lot more in that position...that it was just a way that they could continue working but because they felt in a very compromised position, they were the last people who were going to criticise anything as well. But no, I think there were some voices being heard, I do hope so. This is it. We will get it right.

Gaye Do you mind talking about your current project at [name removed], with the new research centre that you are involved in?

P9 Yes, I could even produce the protocol for it which actually I have outlined what it is all about. *But it's a matter of analysis of something or other of randomised controlled trials on interventions in adult literacy and numeracy. All the papers have been amassed by losing various computer-based, various search engines and ERIC... and all the rest. We have ended up with very few that actually satisfy the condition of being an RCT. Most were very, didn't fulfil all the criteria. I don't really understand exactly what is involved with that but it does appear to be the gold standard. I ended up with only so far 7 papers to analyse out of 100s and 100s that were located. And they are nearly all American. I think that one British came through and the rest were all American.*

Gaye So you are helping with the literature review side of things?

P9 *Well they are analysing the actual trials and seeing what evidence and the progress as a result of the intervention there was. Now, whether the progress that was recorded was statistically significant or not... Some use far too few participants to be viable. Statistics again, it's not my field. And some used too few students. Of those that had been analysed only two had actually statistically significant results out of the whole mass of them. All I have been asked to do is take out the qualitative data on user perspective, the wider benefits of learning. So I am looking at students reactions. Did they enjoy the particular type of intervention? Did their self confidence increase? Did their job status change? Were there applications of these skills to other context? I think one of sweet thing on the numeracy course, he was better at putting his horse racing bets on...that sort of thing. But there has actually been an awful lot of data available.*

Gaye So the information you've been gathering relates more to students than to tutors...policy intervention because it affects tutors too?

P9 Right, these are just pedagogical interventions using ICT or just different approach. Using close caption television has increased and all the rest. Yes it was supposed to be user perspective from a teacher's point of view but I don't really get many of those so it ended up with. But you see they weren't setting up, that was the whole point. These trials were not setting out to get this sort of data, it was just thrown in incidentally. Which was interesting that they should either, (a), they should even mention it. Some didn't mention it. I had to reject some as having no data at all. A case of just sort of throwing it in and if so, why bother doing it? Because in no instance was it ever backed up. I had to run it around, saying well who actually said it? One or two who have run what they called questionnaires, but I mean, he never said, he never got a sample of it, he just had this little sort of anecdotal things thrown in. I was to analyse these and the conclusion of course is that if you are going to do this you must set it up properly and actually have proper questionnaires so that you can actually trace. Who said the information? They never said how many students. They say students

seem to like this approach...but never how many. Occasionally you get many, a few, but you never get a proper percentage. It was never done properly, because it was a sort of by the way, thrown in. I would beg so many questions as to why throw it in if you weren't going to do it properly. Interesting...

Gaye It's very interesting.

P9 So I shall be writing that up.

Gaye Oh I shall be looking out for that.

P9 Yes well it was draft three stage or something, but there is a lot more data coming through. There are some more papers apparently that have come through. It may all change. It may all change.

Gaye So you say you reflected quite a bit of stuff on this. So the main project is to actually do a randomised controlled trial.

P9 No, the main project is actually to assess what trials have been done, whether they were any good, or if there were any worthwhile ones. The understanding was that there really hadn't been enough research on this anyway. And secondly to ascertain if any of these trials had been done, were done properly. Were they promising? Is it worth repeating what they did? See if it was going to be a viable intervention for another project. So it was really just setting up a background of what has been done? Was it done properly? Does it seem to work? And did they like it? Or did they feel better about it? There is a little by the way, hardly rocket science what I am doing because I have got so little to go on really. But that is going to, the reports to be finished, June, end of June. And there will be a journal paper on it, so you can read all about it.

Gaye I shall.

P9 It's full of statistics and scary diagrams and all the rest.

Gaye You are obviously a qualitative researcher yourself?

P9 I have no statistics or maths background certainly. I can just about work my way through it but it would be unlikely that I would want to use it myself. I always say you can't quantify the unquantifiable.

Gaye What does your own supervisor think of this?

P9 I don't think he knows that I am on this part of it at all. He would probably say why are you doing that when you should be finishing your...

- Gaye Yes I know the feeling. So with all the new developments etc, in professional development and things, do you see any perceived conflict between what you feel is the right pedagogy that should underpin a professional rather than what is actually being put out by policy? I think you have mentioned a few things.
- P9 But this is a tension that has been present, This tension has been around. Its ever since the basic skills have their Number power and their Word power, the grids that you had to start marking things off out. And I think a lot of students I found weren't bothered about getting a bit of paper at the end. You had to package it for them saying "hey this is a really good thing to get". Because they just wanted, 'I just want to do me English better or spell properly, or I would like to be able to read the paper.' What they actually were asking for was not often the same as what a system like Wordpower.. the guidelines there were offering.
- Gaye Why do you think that is? Do you think there is another reason for bringing in word power and number power?
- P9 You did need some system, because you see before there was no accreditation system and I think a lot of tutors felt the need for something to show for all the hard work at the end of the day. And there was nothing else formally in place. The more able students were of course taking the RSA exam which was quite a nice little sub-GCSE preparation. Are you familiar with that?
- Gaye Yes I remember the...
- P9 Its text based comprehension.
- Gaye We did the AEB exams and we did the RSA.
- P9 Before there was that for the more able students and nothing formal for the less able. Now I would argue that a lot of the students weren't bothered about having a certificate unless it was a meaningful one. The first certificate that any of them tended to recognise would be your O Level or your GCSE. Anything less than that was 'well has anybody heard of it? I haven't. What employer's going to credit this if I haven't heard of it? What does it mean?' I certainly used to go around asking people have you heard of? And they used to say 'what?' Yes! It was not well known and until you actually have something that is recognised for what it is. It all ties into school progress and that is your leaving certificate from school, your GCSE, for people who are leaving at 16. It does go down to quite low grades. It is possible to get a GCSE with very, very little, but it is still something and it is recognised by employers and it is recognised by the world. Anything else... (End of side one)

...it's all down to the fact that education...is literacy a right or a privilege? Really, really basic questions... I talk to people in the family who are now taking more of an interest in what I am doing and they imagine that, yes, it's a privilege that you should if necessary pay for. You have your chance, if you miss it, well tough. You shouldn't get another chance, it's not a right.

Gaye This is your family?

P9 Yes, is the way many people see it? I don't know.

Gaye Well I have seen various views, people have said to me lots of tutors and teachers seem to be on a mission, 2, on the other side of the scale people have said, like your family are saying you have missed your chance, you had the same chance as everybody else. So do you feel that people have had the same chance as everybody else.

P9 Exactly, people who are in to literacy know that the damage is done very early on and yes, if people don't get those chances very early they can not then use the school experience. And of course they are going to miss out because the odds are stacked against them. So you need to let them get started properly again. But then literacy tutors feel this way, but I don't think we think that normally about these things. I certainly wouldn't if I hadn't had all these years of experience and just seeing the people who are involved in it. I wouldn't have reached this point of view myself. You actually have to be there and do it to come to these conclusions. You cannot look in from the outside very easily unless you are very good advisers. So when we are talking about policy- making, you have to have people who know it from the inside also up there.

Gaye Do you think there is at the moment?

P9 Well we have had [name removed] making a lot of useful noise. You've seen all that letter stuff that came. Yes, my little bit of sentence got in, very pleased. Most of the names got left off the letter, especially [the person who organised it]. That's a real tragedy

Gaye Yes I contributed to the letter but my name didn't go in. This letter.. I am must saying for the purpose of the tape... was sent to the Guardian about a current policy decision to stop people's benefit if they didn't go to, or at least stop it for a short time, if they didn't go to classes to improve their literacy.

P9 Yes if they refused an assessment.

Gaye That's right yes, or if they took the assessment and failed at whatever level, it was set as then they had to go to classes. Again plenty of otherwise reasonably right thinking people think well that is fair enough, isn't it? Now Jane's argument was that your unemployment is a right, it is not a

privilege, whether you can read or right or not. So this had caused a great deal of constination about policy. What do you think about it?

P9 I think its an absolute disgrace that anybody should even have suggested it. When they were even offering to pay people to attend classes, a sort of handout of money if you attended classes. I actually raised that. There was a roster in the Guardian. But I took that article into class that evening if I remember, and read it out. They all rolled around laughing and said “Oh that would be a great dodge, wouldn’t it, pretend you are even worse than you are, keep collecting the money, keep failing the exams, hey this would be a good one.” Of course it was greeted like that. And the... of course it emerged. Do they really think money will do it? ‘Money is not what we are after for it. It would never compensate for what we have been through to get here. Its nothing. They have just got hold of the wrong end of the stick, but if they are going to do we’ll get some mileage out of it’. It was a wonderful reaction, that.

Gaye Well if we go back to the early ‘90’s... but in my experience I was once the co-ordinator of the pre ET scheme, Employment Training Scheme for people who have problems with literacy and numeracy. And so they were asked when they went to sign on at the job centre or when they went and got their benefit. This was at a college in Wigan, all the local agencies that dealt with people who were unemployed, just as Job Clubs, benefit agencies and so forth, they were asked to send people on this scheme to refer them to me as I was the co-ordinator. And for people opting to do it they were given £10 a week extra on top of their benefit and this was as early as ’92. I feel that... if you were female and you didn’t have to. Before you could get benefit you have to be unemployed for 6 months. Well if you are female, if you were a woman, you didn’t, you got the £10 right away. It was [name removed] College which was just becoming part of [name removed] College and of course all the people in that area were unemployed miners, it was just after the aftermath of the horrible miners strike... So lots of people came purely for the £10. And I thought well ‘Why not. Why not? Because when they were there they got really involved most people. I did feel that some were a bit better (*unclear*) So its quite interesting to see what goes around, comes around. It’s amazing.

Gaye Well you have done a lot of talking Maxine and I would really like to thank you. Is there anything that you would like to add?

P9 Well probably once you have gone I will think of things. Is there anything you want me to say again in a better way?

Gaye You have mentioned lots of things, they are very formal these questions, in your conversation you have covered lots of things which have interested me. I will turn off the tape now.

**Participant 10 (East Midlands): 17<sup>th</sup> May 2002at work.**

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Gaye I thought it might be useful if you just explained your own professional history. How did you get into teaching adults in adult literacy.

P10 Well it's very simple. I trained in post-16 education and I was doing, working, what was then a polytechnic at Leicester, which has now become [name removed] University and rather thought that that's where I would be teaching economics and the history as Liberal Studies, so it was quite interesting to start with. But I had a number of children... and after my third child I wanted to do some part-time work and couldn't find any in HE [Higher Education]. I went into the local FE [Further Education] college and was given lots of classes of plumbers, bricklayers and carpenters and what have you. In a way I was doing sort of English social studies type curriculum with them, taking them to sewage farms, housing departments and all sorts of things.

GH That's how I started.

P10 I mentioned one day to a plumber didn't he want to get on with his revision because his exams were coming up and he said what revision. I said well you've got a great big folder of stuff there that you could be starting on, a huge thick folder and he said well there is no point is there and I said why and he said well I can't read it. I said something like 'well you've copied all down of the board have you, you couldn't read any of it?' He said 'none of it'. So I thought here we have...he must of being around about 17 or 18... and he couldn't, and another guy in the class also couldn't. So I went off to... I thought, 'Oh dear what's this'... So I went to the local literacy scheme which was just starting up, but it was very, very low key. It was one woman in an office in the middle of Leicester with a kind of bookcase full of books on remedial education. And I said 'well... what can you tell about this reading and teaching, because I've got to do something for these two guys. And she said 'well, there are the books'. So I took a load of books away on remedial education and read through them all, and then went back and sort of got into the whole idea. I looked at issues like assessment and methods, and was a bit struck because I thought the remedial methods haven't obviously worked. But then I didn't know exactly whether they had a regional education... so I set up a couple of lunch time sessions. So I hit the whole issue right then on... This must have been the mid seventies or seventy-four-five... of... we ended up screening everybody who came into the college using Daniel's and Diack Reading Tasks. Doing lunch time sessions on basic skills. The people who I... the woman I had spoken to had mentioned me to somebody else, a new person she had taken on in the city, and she came round to my house. After about ten minutes she said 'I would like you to work for me, I'd like you to go and run a spelling class'. I said 'I know nothing about spelling, nothing about it'. She said 'you're the right sort person for this sort of work'.

- GH Was this person called a Basic Skills Co-ordinator?
- P10 ...Except there was no such thing then. It was like 'literacy organiser' or whatever. We're literally at the point of the very first appointments, and I just said well I'll give it a go but I'll do it as an evening class... and it went really well and I was actually hooked on the basic idea of investigating why people couldn't do things. Again within a few more weeks I had been asked...there was horse-trading going on... wanting me to work on another area of the city as an organiser, distant organiser. Within about, it must have been about a term, either eight or ten weeks; I'd left FE and gone into it, just to interesting.
- GH you'd left FE and gone into?
- P10 Literacy. Literacy in the community as opposed to FE.
- GH At that time did you think there was any underlining ethos behind what was required from this type of work?
- P10 I remember the earlier training because they had an awful lot of training going in Leicestershire at the time for new staff. I was one of the early posts paid for by ALRA [Adult Literacy Resource Agency].
- GH ALRA...
- P10 So right back. I don't know... it was a funny old mixture. The first woman I had spoken to, the literacy organiser in Leicester had this view that students wouldn't get on with teachers. And so in general she didn't want teachers she wanted hairdressers or administrators or anybody who wasn't a teacher. But other people who, you know were a bit, so some of the earlier organisers weren't teachers, but interestingly they often employed teachers because they knew they weren't really...
- GH Right. Why do you think she wanted hairdressers etc, rather than teachers?
- P10 Because of this accessibility issue. She thought people coming back to literacy would fear teachers and would fear failure with teachers again. And by having people who weren't professionally trained they would be more accessible for the learners. That was her thinking, quite explicitly.
- GH And did you agree with her thinking?
- P10 Well I, it's funny looking back, I don't think I knew enough to argue. I ended up... When I'm a teacher and she wants to employ me so it was a bit of a confused situation. I think it was one of those things that she thought in principle, but when it came down

to it she ended up employing quite a lot of teachers. It was strange. Also there was a lot of sort of mix up it seemed to me. There was a lot of focus on interviewing volunteers, interviewing students, and matching up students with volunteers. There was a whole load of that bureaucracy of the literacy organisation really you were trained in. So you would have all these sorts of case studies of people... who would you match up with who? and all this carry on. And there wasn't a lot of analysis of literacy. I think the dominant ethos was, that to be able to read was very, very important, and these people had not had their chances, and it was important that they had another chance. I think that was it really. I don't think there was any analysis of the nature of literacy; I don't think there was any analysis of... the sociological analysis. So for me coming in as a trained teacher, who had done a lot of work on the sociologically of education, the history of education, philosophy of education, the psychologically of education, I found it deeply unthoughtful.

GH Right you said you came in as a trained teacher, had you taught in schools?

P10 No, I trained for post-sixteen.

GH You trained for post sixteen's. Did you ever think that teaching adults was any way different from teaching children in schools?

P10 I think the fundamental thing for me was that you didn't have a discipline issue. You didn't have to control the learner. I was interested in that because when I had done my PGCE, just out of interest I'd gone to look at a school. And I looked at the staff room and I looked at the classrooms and so much was about control and I didn't really want to have to do that. I wanted to be doing learning and teaching, not with controlling people, but to do with people opening up and taking power. I didn't really like the idea that the teacher had to do the controlling. It wasn't my thing really.

GH So there was a difference?

P10 The fundamental different for me was to do with the fact that I didn't see myself as having to control anybody.

GH When you did your training was there any mentioned of things like andragogy special ways of teaching adults?

P10 No. Well I'm pretty confident that the people who trained me had no knowledge of the word 'andragogy' at all. I'm sure they had never heard of it. I think they... Because there was a sort of practicalness about everything... that although there was a lot of phonics. There was a lot of different ways of learning to read, visually, orally. We did all the sort of classic stuff about how you teach people to read, but adults had to do things that interested adults, it was natural. You know they wanted to read to their children, that's what they did. If they wanted to learn something for work, that's what

they did. If they wanted to write some nice stories then that's what they did. There was a general feeling that... well they could do what they wanted to. It was adult's choice. So it is to do with choice and control really in the end, part of it.

GH So would you say there is any fundamental difference between teaching children and teaching adults, apart from the control?

P10 I think the same fundamental things are there in learning... you know... the psychology of learning and teaching is there. *I just think that adults have their own lives. They have their own motivation, their own sorts of goals. They have experience that they bring to the learning. They have all the things that andragogy specialists won't do. So they bring something different to the learning situation really. But at the heart of it it's to do with who determines what happens, who ostensibly thinks it's their job to determine what happens. I think the schoolteachers in the main think it's their job to determine what happens and I think I had a facilitating role rather than a determining role.*

GH Do you think adult education should still have a facilitating role?

P10 It is confusing really, isn't it? Because facilitating for some people is just never taking... grasping the nettle and dealing with content... They are always fiddling around with the process, and you end up thinking 'well I'm not sure that's what I quite mean by facilitation'. I think I mean something a bit more...with at least a bit more in-depth knowledge coming in to the situation. Anybody can come into a situation and enable people to talk, or enable people to move forward, but I don't think it stops with that. I'm only using the word facilitator in contra-distinction to control.

GH Right. In order to reciprocate you and your comments this is one of the things that's describing you. Would you care to read that quote there? I'm just using it as a prompt and you will see what I am getting at.

P10 [Is reading].

GH And then following that...It's about when the Dearing Report came out and introduced the concept of lifelong learning. So a lot of adult education policy is tied up with life long learning. I was going to ask you what do you understand about the policy of lifelong learning.

P10 Oh dear! Well self-evidently one continues to learn through life so in a way it's a general statement of fact about what everybody does, whether they think they are doing it or not, they are actually always hypothesis creating, and solving problems and learning all through life. I think the issue really more importantly is to do with life-long education rather than life-long learning. So I think it is reasonable to say that the setting up of formal and informal arrangements for education, by which I mean that

some goals are set and some intention is laid down and some processes delivered, I think that you can't... you have to distinguish between the stages which sociologically are determined as times when people can make their own choices, and times when they can't. In school, the fundamental choice of not been in school is not there, so the fundamental issue is about control. And I think once you... and the pedagogical objectives and the control objectives are not entirely congruent for school children. So children could learn much more if they were put in to situations where they could choose more things or do what they wanted to do... or just have much more options for when they did it, where they did it or whatever... The point is though is that the way society organises schooling for the grading of this population means that people have to go to school and be in that place and that's where the bit of their education, not their learning, but their education is confined in that way. Adult education isn't so confined. And to me when people talk about life long learning, they often mix up education and learning. And if we are talking about education then I think that you're really looking at all the ways in which adults voluntarily choose, or are forced to choose, or forced to do, certain types of education that are appropriate to different adult functions or stages or whatever.

GH That's really good thanks very much.

The question that I've got here now is how far does learning consciously engage with pedagogy or andragogy develops practitioners professionally? Do you think it is important to have an underpinning ethos of what we do?

P10 I think it's fundamental if you want certain outcomes. To me it's all to do with what the outcomes you get. You could do the same type of... Two teachers could both be helping somebody learn... but the outcomes that they would get would differ, according to a whole range of factors. And one of those factors is the underpinning knowledge of the tutor. The fact that my underpinning knowledge of dyslexia, for example, is quite deep, means that the outcomes that can be gained by any dyslexia learner that comes to see me are far greater than if they go to a tutor who knows nothing about it... whose operating a sort of 'what would you like to learn and what should we focus on and teaching about'... might do an introduction to an essay or planning a dissertation. But the fact that I know about dyslexia; that I can tap into, or ask some questions about the way that they are thinking; the way they think and plan; I can refer them to other people who think and plan in similar ways; and in a way put them in touch with that field of knowledge; means that their outcome at the end of the session is not just how to do the thing that they are doing, but it's meta-cognition. To me underpinning knowledge of the tutor is crucial for leading the student to meta-cognition.

GH So we are talking about the student now? What about the underpinning knowledge for prospective or ongoing people who have been engaged a while, the tutors.

- P10 That's what I mean. The outcome for the student is pinned to the knowledge of the tutor.
- GH Right.
- P10 If the tutor does not have - new tutor, old tutor whatever tutor you like - doesn't have a range of underpinning knowledge about the nature of language, the nature of literacies, the nature of the way language is perceived in society; how it develops, evolves; underpinning differences in perception and information processing the person. Then they can't link the student to fundamental things about their own way of learning it and you get more limited learning outcomes as a result.
- GH Right, that's good. If you were trying to educate a new tutor is there any sort of methodology, ideals that you would raise with them, apart from having the knowledge of a specific area like dyslexia?
- P10 Well I've already hinted at some of them and I've written them down in a chapter in my book on dyslexia. All key areas that I think are needed for tutors to have. Unfortunately I can't actually reel them off to you because I haven't got my book with me but I think I clarified there what I think are the keys areas that any tutor should have, so I'll actually refer you to that Gaye, if I may?
- GH Yes that's fine.
- P10 Because I won't be able to remember them.
- GH Okay.
- P10 I'm very, very hot on what I think is the underpinning knowledge. I'm very unhappy about people who think that anybody can teach literacy. I think at a certain level certain things can be happening. But whenever you hit wider dyslexia things is relevant, is because that is where you hit the persistent impractical difficulties with literacy. And that's why if people are not able to understand what they are seeing, they're not able to investigate what's going on in relation to text, then they are simply failing to recognise what they see and the student gets very, very frustrated and they continue to not perform and not improve. A lot of dyslexia students were saying that when they had their literacy tutors did not know about dyslexia and they found it very frustrating working with them because of it.
- GH Right, when I was doing my own training, I've written my own autobiography about this, and I talked about different types of methodology that we used for training. And I talked about competency based training with tutors, reflective practice and I wondered what you thought about those particular ways of training tutors?

- P10 Well, when I started a diploma course, many years ago now, late 80s. I always felt that... you know it sounds old fashioned, but I felt that you did have to be able... you needed to know some stuff in these key areas. You needed to be able to do it for teaching. So some of the modules involved them been monitored by other people, as teachers. You needed to be able to reflect on it, you needed to be able to evaluate other peoples teaching. So I sent them round the country to visit other schemes so they saw other people in action. They needed to be able to relate this field to other fields of education. They needed to be able to relate experience in this country to other countries. And they needed to be able to understand the ideologies, and the economic practice and political practice context in which all these things were happening. So they needed a body of knowledge as well as a body of actual practical competencies.
- GH So it's like reflecting on your practice and reflecting on the wider...
- P10 Not just like I did that, and I reflected on it, which I'm afraid I think a lot of reflected practice in some professions is being ludicrously... given to people and saying 'what is it', and it's not always explained to them what exactly it is.
- GH What you just mentioned is the key areas of real interest to me. What do you think the opportunities are for reflection now in the key areas with current...?
- P10 What I do or what basic skills tutors do?
- GH The policy documents which are coming out which say 'how we want you to teach?' Do you think there is any room for reflective practice in those documents?
- P10 I think there is a danger of almost... well there is a technician model... you know here it is what you thought you've got to teach, this is the way you have to teach it... and there are no difficult questions to ask really. Almost a sort of a whole picture is being presented to basic school tutors about what the job is. I find it very interesting in contra-distinction to when I went into the scheme, because nobody really thought they actually did know what the job was, they just knew there was a big problem to solve, that nobody had ever really addressed before. That is, people had gone through compulsory schooling and didn't have these skills. So there was a problem. And by definition if the answers had been there we wouldn't have had the problem. So there was a genuine investigative research question at the heart of it. It wasn't articulated like that at the beginning of the literacy scheme. But there was that question. Now it's almost as if... 'We've got a problem now, people can't do it, so this is what you now, need to do'... and the missing bits of like, so what's going on or what is the problem, is not actually been explored. I think in the end you still end up with the question, so I think all the prescription in the world won't release you from the question. So you can give people tests, and you can train them up to tests, and they can get through tests, and they can still not be able to do certain things that they want to be able to do, the literacy tests.

GH This is the same for tutors as well?

P10 I'm talking about tutors.

GH You're talking about tutors, that's great.

P10 I'm talking about tutors teaching, trying to teach people. The thing that has always interested me is that the heart of this work is a fundamental research question and it's being interpreted in different ways by different people. *The new literacy studies people have gone off on the track of what actually is literacy. How is literacy actually been used? What are we really talking about? What are the practices? How are people being disempowered? and so on. And other people have gone off on the tracks of well how do you actually interest people in what they do in class? You know they focus more on the group discussions, the life history's, the narratives, supporting each other through life's problems, and so on. So there is a whole range of different interruptions, but the fundamental question is a research question, 'Why does this situation arise in developed countries with compulsory education, why do you have a trench of people who can't use literacy in a way they wish they could'. I don't think the present... The present policy is based on the idea that the answer to this question is known.*

GH Right, thank you for that.

When we were talking in the RaPAL meeting before you announced, we were going over the old RaPAL articles and you mentioned 'professionalism'. And there are a lot of words bandied about that, 'professionalism'. My previous area of interest was on Does the knowledge of pedagogy, andragogy and the wider socio-cultural activity of what we do, have a bearing on our professionalism?... and obviously from what you say you think it does.

P10 Yeah.

GH But there is a lot of other words that are now mentioned such as professionalism, professionalisation, deep professionalisation and new professionalisation. I just wondered if you have come across them in your every day work with tutors, prospective tutors.

P10 I think professionalisation is a very, very important issue and I think it's one that adult literacy tutors have not really dealt with. My own problem with this is that I feel that the Basic Skills Agency [BSA], or its predecessor, abdicated responsibility for developing this as a professional field when they didn't push for higher education to be involved in developing professional qualifications. And there is no way out of this. The fact is they didn't do that, they didn't push for it. The field was throwing it up,

like at Lancaster, Leicester and London. At one point, the three of us had post-graduate things going, and these were very cutting edge and exciting developments and the central development agency for literacy in this country did not support it. They did not push for it and did not think that universities should be training teachers in this field. And that has led in, my view, to the down grading, permanent non-standing down in grading of this field. So even though individual tutors had been highly professional in their approach to the work; even though whole bodies of tutors have put in vast amounts of creative energy to develop what would be seen as good practice, and would be viewed as good practise... and in fact deals with the really fundamental questions about the nature of adult learning, circumstances in which adult learning can occur when nothing else is in it's favour, has been sidelined and it's been marginalised all these years. So, to me the issue of the professionalisation of this area of work is fundamentally important. And in so far as the new strategy seems to be recognising that, that is a very good thing.

GH I suppose Moser did recommend that we did have at least diploma courses in universities

P10 For years... It's really illustrated very well if you look at what's happened to the 9281. The 9281 was only ever a course for volunteers. It was the course for making volunteer training consistent. All over the country people were training volunteers, there was no consistency. But one good thing that the BSA did, or whatever it's predecessor was, ALBSU [Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit], was to have the 9281, which was to get some consistency into training for volunteers. I have no argument with that, I strongly supported that. But the fact is the 9281 has become the entry certificate at this profession, and this absolutely ridiculous. There is nothing at all in the 9281 which signals about the depth of knowledge and understanding that is needed to do it really well. So to me professionalisation is the bullet that has to be bitten. I know that there is a radical sort of tradition. And I came across some in Canada in last year where several people were saying they had real problems with professionalisation in this field. And that's all to do with well you know we're on the outside too. We are with our learners on the outside too. So we are out there in the community and we're not hiding behind professional barriers. And we're not distancing ourselves from our students. We're out there as adult learners too in the community with them. So I do understand the radical underpinning of not wanting to do that. I don't think that's was the motivation of BSA in not doing it, I think [name removed] does not want universities to be involved in the training of tutors and he was determined to not let them.

GH Why do you think he wanted that?

P10 I feel looking at it charitably, that he felt that the universities had trained all the school teachers and the school teachers failed these learners. So what do the universities actually know about teaching adult learners literacy skills, nothing! I think he thought

they weren't the right people to do it. Although, literally, that might have been true for a period... the point is though... that he did not address the issue of the way in which this profession would be valued and treated... at all, by his decision.

GH What do you think of the word de-professionalisation?

P10 Well 'de-professionalisation', that's all to do with... isn't it to try to break down barriers that professionals put up. You know there is a whole lot of negative stuff around professionalisation, and professionals, where people hide behind. They have limited entry to it, and they bid up their own prices and they keep people out. They monitor themselves, and they're laws onto themselves. So there are a whole lot of people who don't really like that. And I can understand that well.

GH What do you like then?

P10 Well I'm not so bothered about that. It's more that... I just think that as a group of teachers... adult teachers should be on the same view, the same status as any other teacher. I don't think it's matter of... 'We want to be professionals like lawyers and doctors'... I think with all the negative connotations attached to those particular groups. I think it's just that something about depth of training, length of training, theoretical knowledge expected... reflective practice in action, research and practice that's required. It's those elements of professionalism that I'm interested in.

GH That's wonderful thank you.

So we've already more or less covered what you think is the best practice in professionalism in your last statement. Now there is another key area that's interesting me. It's about where should all these tutors wanting training, where are the best places to get this training or is there a different places where you can get the training.

P10 I don't. I'm not naturally somebody who, everybody uses one way to skin a cat. I tend to have a varied plural approach to things. I think there would probably have to be, if I was designing it, some kind of framework which allowed working in the field and university work to come together. This is not unlike traditional teacher training courses, you know we went into the field and we also had stuff back at base. You've got to have chances to make mistakes, you've got to have chances to reflect on theory, you've got to... If you've just have the on the job learning situation where people go in and they meet somebody and they say 'spelling problem okay, learn your spelling. Here's five ways of learning your spelling. Which one do you want to do? Good, you have learned your spelling. If that's where it stops, I'm really worried about it.

GH Do you think that's what might be happening now?

- P10 I think that could happen, because I think there are some issues which have not really been resolved. That is where... The thing is basic skills teaching is going on in lots of different contexts, and ideally you'd have people coming in who have already got... I think ideally you'd have people who have already got degrees and other things... I know this is not popular, but I would make it a graduate profession, and have you coming in... you would have got to have done a degree in something. It doesn't matter what, and then you do a postgraduate qualification in this field, and that qualification involves underpinning knowledge and teaching placements. If you've already been taken on as a tutor in an area, then you can use that as you're teaching placement. You can have all sorts of flexibility, but at the end of the day you'd be monitored and judged on your teaching course. To me the biggest things that made my teaching better was the fact, that when I did two sessions during my year of training I had two different people give me feedback on the session. And both of them said something to me which was completely insightful and which has stayed with me ever since, and which I pass on to other people. Without that feedback on what I was doing, I would have not noticed what I was doing. So to me there has got to be a period within the training where you are taught and you are monitored when you are doing the teaching. I don't know where you do it, or how we do it, whether it's all located in universities, whether it's franchised out, whatever it is. There has got to be a process of acquiring underpinning knowledge and there has got to process of been monitored as a teacher.
- GH Yes. The reason I've brought up the issues because in my own autobiographical account I talk about how when I was a mentor... I talked about how my professional development with practitioners at that time seemed to be taking place in the institutions where they actually were. Where they were taught by staff members who were also members of that same institution. I was concerned that there wasn't a connection in higher education with research in practice and things like that. It became very important to me because I decided that that was the route I was going to take. I did a Masters and now I'm doing a PhD, so that's the basis for the question and I'm my reasons for asking it.
- P10 Well I would just say that I think I did come to a bit of a shuddering halt last summer when I was in Canada at a Research and Practice conference... because several people were saying Research and Practice is for masters level students. I thought 'no Research and Practice has got to be for the first level of training for the professional tutor. So you know if masters is the first, say people do a degree in something else and masters is the first term they come into contact with basics skills then of course it's got to be there. But if the first term we come into it is via PGCE or PGCCE, it's got to be in there. So I would completely concur with the idea that the idea of Research and Practice is fundamental to this area of work. Well, because the questions are not answered. This is what always surprises me, people don't see that it is a research question. Every student who comes into me is a research question. Why can't they do what they want to do.

- GH It's interesting.
- P10 So to me Research and Practice is the method of teaching. I can't see how you know what to teach someone if you don't research it.
- GH And if you were teaching prospective tutor this the same attitude you would have with them, that they are research question too?
- P10 You mean how to teach them?
- GH If you were training a new tutor or educating a new tutor for professional development.
- P10 The research question is how to teach them. What to teach them, because it's a field that has almost got no boundaries. So you have to establish the key underpinning areas of knowledge in it, and you can only answer that question by what has worked really well. So when I did the diploma course that was at [name removed] University, that was a research and practice... piece of research and practice...because I was really saying 'my hypothesis is that in response to the question, What does a basic skills educator, serious educator, need to know and need to be able to do? These are the six modules I think should be done. And I think the hypothesis of what should be done and has born fruit. Everybody thought they were absolutely what they needed to know about.
- GH Can you remember what they were, what you actually thought the modules were?
- P10 Well some of them are sitting up there on that top shelf. Module one was Social and Political, Economics Context for Literacy. Module two was International and Distance mode...It was a mixed distance face to face mode so they had six packages of material to work with. Module three was visiting... selecting some other services in the country to go and see and evaluate, so they all went off to different schemes and came back with horror stories of what they had seen. You know... many centres they couldn't get into, or find, all sorts of things you'd imagine. I think modules four and five were practice modules. So they had to take placements with students and they were monitored by the local area organisers, and they were reported on, they had to keep journals. The final module was a project dissertation module, where they chose a particular area to do.
- GH Apart from the teaching projects were the other modules assessed. How were they assessed?
- P10 A whole variety of things. Essays, reports, distance learning was via a series of tasks connected with the packages that they got.[Name removed] was external examiner. The project was a dissertation. So it was...I think I've probably got to write this up now because I realise now it's deeply contemporary.

GH Absolutely, it's amazing what you can said. This is why I've chosen the themes I have because they are still very much part of what I personally think the whole area of professional development is about.

Have you ever been in a situation where you actually felt the conflict between what policy makers think... depending on your policy makers... on how tutors should be educated, trained or professional development and how you as a professional developer?

P10 *Yes the crucial moment came for me with the 9285, when we were being asked to do that. And I thought there is no way I'm going to do that. I just came to a halt. I thought I am not wasting time filling in a competency based matrix to show that I can do this job when I've been doing it twenty odd years and teaching young people how to do it and run other University courses. I couldn't waste the time. It was a real upsetting point because I just thought I can't actually make myself do that. Quite a few people I knew were doing it and were suffering, they were actually very upset, very angry, afraid, crying, they couldn't stand doing it. They would say things to me like I like work and I'm a hard worker and I'm out researching and I'm like keeping up with my field, this is a waste of my time, I'm learning nothing new and being asked by somebody who seems to know very little about in-depth thinking about anything and being told how she wants me to fill my boxes in. You know there was a drawing board person at a local college who was put in charge of the group and they just found it impossible to do it and it was constant, constant hassle and stressful. And I thought I'm just not going to join in and that's when I got myself seconded out to University.*

GH How do you think the new qualifications or new standards, are they going to change much from that do you think?

P10 I feel very sorry for people coming in for the first time now. I think the picture that they are being given is rather odd... and really won't bare much resemblance to the issues they are going to find as they go along. I think they will be hungry for other things. Actually I've forgotten what the question was.

GH Well you were talking about the tick box approach to training, and how people thought you know it was a waste of time...

I just wondered do you envisage any change when the new qualifications come in?

P10 I think able people will always do creative things however repressive the boxes are. So we had word power, number power, all sorts of things that came in.

end of side A

Side B

P10 Well I just think anybody who is an able tutor, experienced tutor, is always going to be able turn any sort of repressive... frameworks to good effect because they are always going to be able to find a solution to the issue of what can be a creative curriculum and what will fit the boxes as well. And the student... I used to do this quite often... but one was a Downs Syndrome student who was wanting to write a book. She was fed up with how people treated her as a Downs person and she wanted to write about it. So she scribed and I wrote down what she said and produced a book. Now, because of all the stages involved in producing the book we could make that fit the Word power framework... because of all the planning, discussions, reading, writing, listening, speaking... all going on in producing this book. So we got the creative outcome and I think your average tutor who is in ABE because they actually really like creative curriculum development... that's their thing really... then they are always going to be able to do that. I think it's when they get a teacher training course which is repressive and dire and doesn't allow them to develop as curriculum developers... which 9285 was a deeply shocking waste of time.... then they are just not going to go with it. In fact the rationale of the 9285 was not that it would be a waste... it was a way of giving the professional... I think it was just the thinking... At the time, if I remember rightly, it was the way of giving experienced people the higher level qualification in basic skills. So deeply misconceived as an idea as a higher level qualification was that they couldn't really take it on board. It was a nonsense, it was a nonsense to a lot of us in Leicestershire.

GH So how did you work through that?

P10 I didn't work through it I just decided not to do it and leave. I had already got so interested in...I was very interested in dyslexia because I'd started the distance learning programme in Leicestershire, and this led to a completely different approach in a way ... because until I started that I tended to think that the teacher was essential... for learning. Distance work meant that you went to the person's house. You were the professional teacher, but it meant that the house became the context for learning... the student's home. If communication was to happen in the house, like phone-calls or teaching... you could actually do it there and then with the phone; that they would make these issues and then they would carry on and do in your absence over several weeks. You'd come back a month later or they would send you things in the post and they would have done it. And so the whole issue that every time you met the student it wasn't like 'what am I going to put in to my lesson tonight?' It was what will the student have completed, what will they think about it. So it led you right in to meta-provision immediately. How you were learning in the absence of the tutor.

GH Do you think there is room for that in the current ideas about tutor training????

P10 I can't really see it. I think there are things about the traditions been tried in recent years which are being sort of ignored, possibly because they just don't know about them and you know the job is to just remind people what has actually been done and why it was useful.

GH Okay [name removed], I'm going to stop now. Thanks very much.

**Participant Eleven (Wiltshire): 17<sup>th</sup> November 2002 at her hotel near Lancaster**

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Gaye            If you would like to start with what we have been talking about and when did you first come into basic skills teaching?

P 11            I think it was at the start of my first ... 15 or 16 years ago. And I started assisting as a volunteer. I had been working in industry up till then. I did statistics and business information. I volunteered with an adult literacy course. This was in Uxbridge. I was thinking about it last night because the woman I was working with as a volunteer in class, because there was no training before you went into the class, although they were arranging it. But I it was because I had a degree and I had linguistics in the degree and they were desperate for volunteers. There was no initial training before you went into a class. So I went into a class and I think the woman that actually ran the adult literacy service was not happy with the way that class was run. I got to know this lady because I actually took a literature class with her. She also taught literature and I got to know her quite well. And yet looking back at that class now it's almost a model for the way they want us to teach the new curriculum. That it all started with group work. The lady who taught it was probably an ex-primary teacher and she had a spelling quiz up on the board for when people came in so they had to read the clues and if they couldn't read very well then the volunteer would read them. And they had to work out what the word was and write it down. And then quite often it related to a spelling rule or something which she would explain. I can't actually remember a lot more. I wasn't there for an enormous length of time, except that the young man that I worked with as a volunteer was dyslexic..... and actually what he wanted to learn to do was write postcards back when he went on holiday. So I started bringing in stuff about the word you would need. And she was quite impressed and she was pleased that I was doing that for him. And so then I got to go on training. I think always, even now, when I go on training on the national curriculum, I am excited. Even if all you do is share experience with other people, you learn something, and you have new ideas... because a lot of what we do is very repetitive. It may not be the same student but how many years have we taught writing cheques, although that is falling away nowadays thanks to technology. But you need different ways to keep yourself and to find different ways in. So I came back from these training days, they were usually a training day or a morning at the weekend. They were always a model where there was a lot of stuff for you to do, so it was interactive. You weren't sat there being lectured to. You had an introduction, and here are some ideas, and then we would sit down and play with the ideas and then feedback at the end. Now that sort of model I think is very much the model for inset training for adult literacy. You had to do something. I was taught about language experience at one point and we actually sat down and did language experience with each other and then sat and cut them up and thought about all the things you could do.

Gaye I remember doing inset workshop when I did my DASE I had a volunteer and they watched me do it.

P11 Just last year I developed a distance learning initiative including it.

Gaye. ...for Volunteers?

P11 Yes and no. The second one was more to do with tutors who were already teachers but were now doing adult literacy. The first was one was to get to people who... they call them barefoot workers. What they mean is people who work as volunteers, populations that don't come into college ...in homes. But I must admit as part of that they did come in to workshops on how to teach reading and how to teach writing, and I did exactly what I had been doing with language experience, with each other. Because a lot of those things, I think they are very practical and you need to learn to do them. And to feel comfortable with writing stuff out clearly and cutting it up and thinking physically about what you can do...and I think unless you do that you don't get the underlying theory. And even if you never get the underlying theory, you have learnt the actions, you have learnt how to cope so there is an element of practice and perhaps not explicit but its there.

Gaye I seem to remember when I did my volunteer training trying to sum up the theory [for Language Experience]. If I think it, I can speak it. If I can speak it then I can write it, or someone can write it for me. If it can be written then I can read it because I thought of it in the first place.

P11 Yes that rings a bell. But I never had a proper volunteer tutor training as you would look at it. But I know...I moved in the middle of this.... that had, and also she put me in this volunteer class ... (speaking too quietly)

Gaye. A date? Can you remember, or decade?

P11. ...1980's. Late 80's. I had given up full time work and that was why ... I did all sorts. I went to volunteer in an old people's home where they were doing art classes. It was occupational therapy, it was keeping their hands working. So that was good for me. I'd spent 9 years in industry and it was good to get back to the sort of thing I was interested in. Anyway we moved to Wiltshire and then I became a volunteer in Chippenham. I went on a training course there which was run by someone... I am now aware that I am being recorded because she died last year. And this person was just weird. She believed we had been visited by people from Venus... and I think just before we moved, I miscarried, I lost a baby. She was asking me all sorts of questions and she was explaining to me that it was all for the best. All of these things happen to us for the best. My dad had died and I had lost a baby. And I can remember sitting there and thinking 'right in 10 years time I can look back and think that's all for the best'. She was a strange person I am afraid. During the training course she tried to convince us that because dyslexics have mixed up dominants...because they haven't learnt to crawl

properly. So she encouraged us to get up and go down on the floor... and crawl about ....

Gaye Hadn't learned to crawl?

P11 I told you she was strange. So I met some nice people on that course and we all took it with a pinch of salt. The important thing is that I then went on to the ..... Further and Adult Education Teaching Certificate, City and Guilds 730 which was a godsend because I had a wonderful tutor who facilitated. It drove a lot of the people, each of them, you get a lot of ex-RAF personnel coming through. Its not adult literacy but this was my general training course. And I can remember one guy saying 'I have used the same overheads for 20 years and there's never been any complaints'. You are not going to complain in the RAF are you? Jerry was a lovely man and he really wanted you to work it through for yourself and facilitated learning and I took to him like a duck to water. And I think that has underpinned my own practice for teaching. But a lot of people hated it. They wanted him to be much more direct. You have got to learn this, this and this.

Gaye. But adults remember when they were at school and they have a picture of this and that is what they want.

P11 You are just dealing with everyone from people teaching adult literacy to adult basic skills to yoga, to engineering... He was very supportive and very encouraging. By this time, before I got the evidence for the certificate.... I was teaching. I was being paid to teach. And I think that is probably par for the course for a lot people in that generation of teachers. If you were good at it or if you appeared to be good at it, you got given a class.

Gaye That was your first teaching qualification was it?

P11 I did a BA...studies in the humanities...an American style degree because I couldn't decide what I wanted to do. The first year you did 5 courses. My friend Liz who I saw last night, this is where we met. We remembered when we first met. I remember her wearing sun glasses, she remembers me limping and telling her it was Shrapnel that had caused it. So she knew we were going to get on because I was obviously mad [both laugh]. You took 5 courses. I had to take philosophy, literature, linguistics, history of ideas and non-humanities. Because it was a polytechnic and it was run by a man who thought we needed to collect both the arts and the sciences. Of course you don't study linguistics in this ... And then suddenly here I was in a situation that suited me... and it was about language but it was logical and its founded in evidence whereas I had always found literature, I never quite got it. Whatever I said was wrong. But with linguistics if I could look at something and analyse it and I could say quite critical and say 'this is my evidence too.' And it was just such 'breath of fresh' air so I took to it.

- Gaye Well I came through and I did drama. And its funny I came up with literature and linguistics.
- P11 I can remember now, our first lecture, it was about what is language? And It's Saussure, The arbitrary sign and then you did this stuff on communication which is actually what I did my final year project on, the showing what language is that animals don't do...
- Gaye ..... she did her own PhD theory of practice and I have been looking at it.
- P11 But you see in terms of writing, there is this wonderful influential book the 'course' which was written after he died from people's notes of the lectures.
- Gaye What was it called again?
- P11 It was called 'course', its French, linguistics. But that's the seminal work, Saussure; He didn't write it, it's someone's notes of what he heard, which to my post-modern way of thinking is absolutely fascinating... anyway... totally irrelevant. Lange and Parole, Parole is what comes out here [points to her mouth]. Lange is all the rules that are in your brain. Very similar to what Chomsky called competence and performance. .. But to me this was very, very exciting. What I did after college you see, I did 18 months working on a dictionary and translating 'Webster's' into English for Longman's which was... I wish I could do it now, but then it was very academic and I'd had enough. In fact I was offered a chance to be a research assistant and I had had enough .... So then I went into working with business information, statistics. I took a course in market research at night, only at the end of the year to realise that I didn't want to be a market researcher. It taught me an awful lot of about questionnaires. You see nothing is lost. You come to research... In fact I have always used questionnaires a lot in a certain format to guide... or when I have been involved in staff training to try to get feedback from staff before designing the training we next do [pauses].
- Gaye I am just thinking, I'm trying to reciprocate, just as your previous experience was in business, my previous experience was as a copywriter in an advertising agency. I wanted to be a journalist and couldn't get a job as a journalist.
- P11 But then you see those years were okay especially for [when we taught] people like on YTS [Youth Training Scheme] trainees and in the office we would have one. Or in fact they weren't YTS; they were YOPs [Youth Opportunities Scheme]... so young people come in and learning and find a job. But then when I was involved in that later on you have that experience. You can say to them this is fine but no employer is going to put up with this sort of behaviour, or this is what is expected of you in the workplace. Where did I get to? I am working in Cheltenham ... part time running an adult literacy class which was also a combination of literacy and numeracy, over 20 students quite often... And it was extremely unusual, most of my

volunteers were quite young and they used to go to the pub afterwards. Some of the students used to come as well. So I was doing that and ... Now this woman that I was working for, then asked me and my friend who had done a course if we would like to take part in teacher training. So we used to do a lot of the teacher training. And I also got involved in learning support at the local agricultural college for the first time for kids on agricultural YTS courses. I did an awful lot and I learnt a lot from doing the work. So while I was working I did the 730 in that year... And then next year I did the RSA diploma in teaching and learning in adult basic education.

Gaye. Can you think back to what the ethos was?

P11 Well as I said in the FETC...it was in a moment of transition, it was changing from... the structure to the one that is very part one and part two. I can tell you. It's towards the end of the 80's, 88ish. It was changing in structure to where it is now. You had to do teaching assignments. There was no exam. I know what was changing, it was changing... it changed. You used to be able to get distinctions and stuff on it, and it changed the year I did it. It was either pass or you failed. So you're moving towards competency really, although it wasn't fully on board. And then in the following year and still in the 80's because at the end of the 80s I did the RSA diploma which I thought was brilliant. I had a good tutor, Judy Dale who was Judy Vaughn and has published a book on assessing reading using 'cloze'. So she was good. She used to get people in and so when we did the equal opportunities it was lovely. She was excellent. And that was much more academic than the FE teaching certificate. A lot of the assessment was based on doing something. So you had to look at another form of provision you had never worked in and do reports. And there was a writing process. You put in an initial one and then another one and then another, which was incredibly boring. Doing it twice I think would have been okay, but I think you had to do it three times... because I looked at prison education. So it made you think about something ... and that was good. What else did you have to do? You had to do a materials thing and we had run a training day for other people as part of our materials... So the assessment was actually based on quite practical things... And then you find a project which I think combines stuff so there might be theoretical underpinning but it was actually looking at... I think I did mine on learning support at the agricultural college. But all the way through you were actually learning theory, so you were actually learning about the psychology of education. We had a long thing on literacy... Frank Smith... the writer and the reading, key text. There was a linguistics thing which wasn't that good and I used to do the linguistics thing. We did numeracy. We had someone really good from county that came and did numeracy. So when I say we did it. We really did look at the theoretical underpinning as well as the practical application. And I think what that gives you then is the critical eye when all these new initiatives come up and you can think well okay, they are going with this. Because... I was talking with my mate Lucy about this last night. We think, the fact that we learnt history of ideas is probably the thing that we have really taken forward with us from

college. Because history of ideas is all about studying, how frameworks, how the paradigms with which we use in English have changed. And I think looking at the field critically does for you is makes you realise that there is always a framework. There is always something. And I think you need that to be able to critically assess whether new methods fit in with the way you want to go. *But I think the whole impetus at that time was that you didn't teach. You facilitated learning. You were a facilitator.* And in fact, I was involved in a county project looking at ... What we were doing, what we needed to do... and that was when [name removed] was doing her Progress Profile.

Gaye She came to Chorley with it too

P11 She was a mate of Judy's. The old girls network has always done very well, and continues to do so. *Me, I was always on board with that, I loved the idea of facilitating and I think that has been the ethos that I came into. I actually came in at the tail end of the teaching and into the beginning of the facilitating.* It's always an on-going sort of process because in Wiltshire, a lot of the people... didn't have time for assessment and evaluation because it takes all their time to organise. Now I knew at the time that Salisbury was behind the rest of us. And really at this point I then go across the ocean. This is when we went to America with my husband's job and I wasn't allowed to work but could do my MA. So I looked around. I looked for applied linguistics and I would have had to do that in New York and I got a place to do it at Columbia. I don't know if you know New York?

Gaye No I have never been.

P11 New York 12, 13 years ago was not same place as now, September 11<sup>th</sup>. It was rough. Now Columbia is just at the part of New York which then becomes Harlem. And there are all these evening classes, most of their MA's are in professional development, so they are evening classes. And although I had a place I knew, because we lived in New Jersey, that I couldn't come on the sub-way... I just couldn't do it, not at 10 o'clock at night. I wasn't going to do that. So I had to look at what there was in New Jersey and so that's why I ended up doing an MA in English and Comparative Literature. But again as soon as I got into the college system there was a culture shock. It's just very hard to work out how to get in. But once I was in state college and the state college was wonderful. So the state colleges are where basic writing classes and the theories of basic writing are. And as soon as they knew my background I got a chance to be a graduate assistant and assist in the basic writing programme.... *But you had to take the teaching basic writing course, and, of course, a key text was Paulo Freire 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'.*

P11 It was wonderful. It was run by the guy that was running the department, Jim. He was brilliant. And the writing course, you do the teaching, basic writing course. You have to write, every week you have to write. So again you're

learning by doing. You learn how to teach students how to critically assess each other's work and give critical feedback. Now by critical, I don't mean critical, I am thinking of... You start...you say something positive and you don't just say that's good, you say what's good about it. Even if it's only a.... And we had to do that for each other. And I had so many hang ups about writing that I actually worked through.

Gaye Was this to help postgraduates to write.

P11 It's to help undergraduates. You have got to imagine the American state school system is built on multiple choice testing. They come to college and they can't write an essay. Plus a lot of the kids coming in are immigrants having second, third and fourth language. They would come from depressed areas because schooling in America is mostly funded locally. If you live in a poor area, your school is in a poor area. So there is no playing field at all. And quite often we would run summer schools to get kids up to the point where they could take basic skills. So that is what you are doing, basic writing is really about getting the pen on the paper, writing paragraphs, different forms of writing. We used to do a lot on what Halliday would call 'texture', about how the use of linking words and phrases throughout a text and pronoun reference. Then we come to the National Curriculum [in the UK] and its there, although not as explicit as that. And I was thinking, 'I was doing this ten years ago... and there are all these wonderful materials that show you programme efforts and very much a structural linguistics and systemic grammar...that sort of approach to the analysis of text so that you can then learn to do it. And those sorts of linking devices, and so on, are quite important as well for second language students.

Gaye I have suddenly come up against it now. I am not against it. I need to learn about it.

P11 When my friend Alice came over last summer she brought me a load of stuff that she got free off various publishers which I anglicised and used. So that's what I was doing. So as a graduate assistant with an assistant professor and they all had to do basic classes. Some of the them revel in it, others let the graduate system do the whole thing. So you get a lot of experiences. We had a writing workshop in the basement of the maths building. My first class was in the basement. It was learning support was doing at the same time as the maths.

Gaye ... you have to take basic writing classes.

P11 Yes you do basic composition and then you do freshman comp. Fresh comp is where you learn to write in all sorts of ... if you did really well in one of the standard tests and produce a really good research paper, you could skip those. So you only had to take basic comp if you fail basic skills... It's all made explicit and I have learnt to write by getting it wrong, by it coming back and saying you haven't done this. And I can remember linguistics

coming back to me saying you haven't used tests of statistical significance. What! [Both laugh]. There are faults in the American system without a doubt. And the over-emphasis on multiple-choice testing because of statistical validity actually robs of a lot of practice in literacy... in terms of writing. But they make it very explicit and there is always a style guard. I was working in literature so there is a style guard which is a paperback book and it tells you exactly. If anything you have got to put in the bibliography it will tell you exactly how you do that; pages of it. And there will be one for psychology. It makes things very clear if you are going for a publication in America ... The bad thing from my point of view is how much they compartmentalise. So we taught writing, the English Department. But you learnt reading from the Reading Department. So I took the module that is teaching basic writing and one summer I also took adult literacy module and that was run by the Reading Department. This was at Mount Clare State College in New Jersey because I had given up Columbia. And Mount Clare is nice, it's a nice college, it's a state college but it was lovely. I did some wonderful courses ... going back to the history of ideas course, which I had done an undergraduate ... and that is what I did my thesis on... and in a way for me you see that brings everything together. It was about a 17<sup>th</sup> century woman writing and women weren't meant to write because their experience was private not public .... And so she had all sorts of slurs cast against her, and that was because she was into writing and being published. And so I was looking at this whole change. Do you know what I mean? So what happened then? We came back from America and eventually I got a full-time job as a basic skills coordinator at Salisbury College; the only college in the land who by then had been failed [both laugh] as a centre for the 9281, the initial certificate.

Gaye When was this?

P11 In the early 90's, 92. 93 I started, January in 93 I started.

Gaye I was [a mentor] on the pilot in 91-92

P11 Well I was on the pre-pilot, they did some pre-pilot training when they were piloting and we went to America. So by the time I came back it had been piloted and was up and running...because the training was so awful... And the people had gone through the course, bless their heart, I had to take them through the course again, most of them. The woman that was running it knew everything and nobody was going to tell her to do this differently. But there again she was very committed to phonics. I was trying to think of the earlier stuff I had when I was a volunteer way back and that was actually a list of phonics and the order in which to teach them, which I ignored. I don't think I have ever used them. Anyway, I didn't have a lot of them, only 2 or 3. Tutors were all part time, were all ex-school teachers, primary teachers. They ran one, an enormous Monday evening class which was, it wasn't split into two. It ran over two classrooms, lots of volunteers, lots of one-to-one, paying two tutors to run it and all they did was organise the volunteers and

the coffee. I didn't get rid of people but they seemed to keep resigning [both laugh]. The first one went within a couple of months because she... I very gently *I wanted to bring them into what we were doing. So I was having to set up training, to get across this idea of facilitating just rather than teaching.* I don't think they had legs to stand on the way they were doing it. Because they weren't teaching, they were just putting people with volunteers and these volunteers just weren't...I felt not supporting them, they didn't really know what they were doing. A lot of use of reading schemes still, and I had books I held on to for ages as an example to use as materials workshop of what not to use with your students. Especially the one about being a secretary... It was outrageous. It was absolutely phenomenal... So what I actually had to do was...I had no choice because my remit was to get us the quality mark.... So there had to be record-keeping, there had to be some sort of planning of what this person who came in and wanted to do...And of course the person who had been running it had been the one who was anti-everything... So I suppose I was running the training there and part of the quality mark was that they had to have qualifications in adult literacy... And they didn't. I think one of them, she'd worked with children with all sorts of learning difficulties and she had a fall when she going to visit a student and decided then to retire. .although, again, she was well past retirement age. It was quite hard. She took it out on me. So it's quite hard to link change. But I suppose I have seen it from both sides really.

Gaye [not clear]... When I was a coordinator I upset one or two people because I separated basic skills from special needs...Up till that point I had been a great friend of the special needs tutor but....

P11 What I was coming into was a situation where people have been coming to classes since they started in the 70's. And this one lad, bless his heart, he still had to use a card to check when he wrote his address. But what the tutors who worked with him in that year did was to make sure that he had survival techniques. He got Word Power at Foundation Level. And then I talked him and his social worker and said what can we find out, what we are going to do. Because my feeling is if someone is not progressing, you are not just going to turn him away, but you have got to find something else. And he was so upset. But the other thing that we did was to set up daytime classes, Adult Training Centres (ATCs) for people with special needs. .. institutions where adults with learning difficulties work. Something that was useful. It's always finding a linking, a balance between equal opportunities and access and not having someone walk in and thinking 'I'm not like that and walking out again... Which I remember as being one of the problems... But I think it got better because when you got enough classes you could differentiate the grade. So I actually kept two classes on the Monday night. One was a beginning class and the other was a creative class. And that was lovely because you had movement between the two, there was somewhere to go.

- Gaye Well I was in a situation with adult literacy students and students with special needs in the same classes. You would get newstudents walking in and see someone with, say, Down's Syndrome' and walking out again ...
- P11 I suppose we have a mix now.
- Gaye It's a very delicate situation, because why should they feel like that?
- P11 Well, no that's right, but sometimes it's to do with if the classes are balanced in the wrong way. By which I mean, if there is a group, four or five men with learning difficulties, then it's very hard. I have got a class on a Monday night now and I suppose I have got 3 young men, one is obviously special needs ... he is so slow on the uptake. But the others are well socialised as adults. And they accept-in the young lad who is still very immature for his age. But if I had another seventeen year old like that... then I think the group would fall apart.
- Gaye Did you feel a literacy class was the best vehicle for him. Has he elected to come himself?
- P11 No his mother elected for him to come and then she rings me up to see what progress he's making and I say I can't talk to you, if he has come to an adult class. But he is just finishing off Word Power before it disappears.
- Gaye [I matched P9's above story with one of my own but the tape is very unclear here so I have reworded my account][I had this bossy Jehova's Witness visit my class once, and she brought a new Jehova's Witness recruit with her who hardly spoke, and she wanted someone to give [the new recruit] some books to help teach her literacy. I said that the scheme did not give books out but the new recruit could join the group and be matched with a volunteer. The bossy one wanted to be the volunteer. However, when I said that she would have to attend a volunteer training course to see if she was suitable, and, if she was, she would not necessarily be matched with the new recruit, she did not like it. I never saw them again]
- P11 In Wiltshire at that time we had Judy, was she still the part time co-ordinator? We had someone that had a county role. Basic skills has always been organised through the FE colleges in Wiltshire. So that when the FEFC stuff came in it wasn't a big change for us because we had always been organised that way anyway. And because it's rural we have a good number of students but not masses and the same with the tutors. We used to do county training and we would all get together to train and that would have been after the regional training went because I don't think there was much in that way after FEFC came
- Gaye No there was a huge training for local tutors, local paid tutors.

- P11 That's right, before the FEFC funding changes, before that we were funded by FE, we had a regional set up because we used to have regional training because we tend to go down to Devon. So the region went from Cornwall to Hampshire, Gloucestershire. So if you got on that training then you were mixing with people from an enormous area. If that was training that would be led by one of the co-ordinators
- Gaye ...Can you remember what sort of courses you put on at the regional training
- P11 I didn't have anything to do with putting them on but I went to them. County training assessment and evaluation we did. Working in groups, we did some group work. There was a really good one about reading, we got some people from Gloucestershire, and they were using model of reading. Barratt's [Does she mean Bloom's?] Taxonomy There are different sorts of reading and they showed, and again, its one of those practical things. And they went through the background and she showed 5 questions that she used. And they tested all those different sorts of comprehension. It's a model I always use now. And the final one is not comprehension, but it's, 'What's your reaction to it? But that is the sort of training, county training we had.
- Gaye ...Could you remember the ethos behind it, the underpinning philosophy?
- P11 Sharing good practice. Someone would come in with something that was a good idea that contributed to good practice. So it would either be about the way that you ran classes as in the group work, because if you go back to the beginning it was thought that one-to-one was the best way to teach. It's not practical. You don't have that option. You can't do it. It's a group work. So that's about how you run the class...teaching methods. Or it would be, the reading would be teaching methods but also the production of materials. And it would always be someone with more experience or something to show in terms of the practical .... It was always felt like you were sharing good practice. Regional training particularly was an opportunity to highlight stuff that worked.
- Gaye. I always used to enjoy regional training. We always went to Blackpool or St Annes.
- P11 We used to sometimes go down to Dartington in Devon. (end of side one).
- Gaye Sharing good practice on your training, that's why we were talking about.
- P11 *And still the ethos of teacher as facilitator. I can actually remember that term. It was such a key term at this time. I never said that I taught. It's been really hard with the changes now because I am a teacher at the moment. I am not in a facilitating a role, and that's the big change with the core curriculum. You are teaching. So I was at Salisbury and two years later I managed to have a baby and I left. Salisbury is a miserable college and all of the changes with the FEFC and new contracts, and people were saying 'you*

are either with me or against me'. I am glad I left Salisbury. It was a miserable college to work in. They now use tutors, they pay part timers through an agency they earn a lot less.

Gaye Is the college you are at now still have part time?

P11 Yes they are very good and you get increments and training, bless their hearts, they are paying for me to be here. It's a good college, it merged with another College two years ago. What have I been doing since then? I worked part time, so I went back to teaching and continued to be involved in training on and off, so it's been much less in-service training... Much less in recent years, Because I think most people are so oppressed... I interviewed my boss for something I was doing...talking about her changing role. She has maybe four times the number of students as when she started ten years ago.

Gaye The old ALBSU numbers...One tutor to each eight students.

P11 Our classes are still small, there are still six to eight students in a group but the point is that she is the co-ordinator so she is the one that interviews, assesses and puts students into groups. So she is dealing with a much bigger population of students. The amount of organising hours has been cut to maybe a quarter of what she had when she started..... So as that happens people are so depressed and a lot of training funding is going. It was never ring fenced, the minute, and what happened at Salisbury after I left and what happened at Trowbridge.... Basic skills came in with special needs and foundation. In recent years obviously it's got better. Not been doing a lot of training. A colleague and I did, following the Sheffield RaPAL Conference where we went to a visual literacy workshop which is brilliant. It gave us lots of ideas and we went back and used the ideas in our classes. And then we shared it with our colleagues. So that was very much a new model. 'Look, we have got this idea and it works'. Go and see. We brought in loads of magazines and I spent half the training session on visual literacy. I think always as a tutor if you walk away with resources for training, it's been a good training. Anyway, the other stuff, because of my experience and because I am a sort of free agent now, I have had lots of interesting things to do. So I develop distance learning packages.

Gaye. For whom?

P11 ...For Wiltshire College. And then we used it for some tutors who are now doing basic skills classes. For example we set up a lot of combination of basic skills writing classes which are very popular. They are working very well. We have got good skills on the team. So it's training people up.

Gaye There has got to be this combination of specialist skills.

- P11. Yes, and because I have now been working for a number of years for the Open University.
- Gaye How long have you been working for them now?
- P11 It was after I had Matthew, so 4 years.
- Gaye. May I ask you which course you were on?
- P9 English, Language and Literacy for level 3.
- Gaye An MA course, yes?
- P11 No, it's a BA course but level 3, its one that you take towards the end of your Batchelor's Degree and its got linguistics, which forced me to update myself in terms of linguistics. And I suppose the other thing which you wouldn't count as mainstream training was starting to go to RaPAL conferences. That all came out of Judy, my friend Judy Vaughn, giving up on education.
- Gaye ...Giving up on education?
- P11 She was working in an EBD school. It's a boarding school for naughty boys.
- Gaye I've worked in an EBD school.
- P11 Now she tells me that good practice is good practice, which is always what she taught us in any situation, good practice, is good practice. Now she runs a health food shop; a tea room. When she gave up she threw all her stuff away. She went through her office and she threw loads of stuff away and threw some of it in my direction including RaPAL bulletins which is how I *then got into RaPAL and then started going to conferences, Which again is about getting into the New Literacy studies and a different way of looking at literacy.*
- Gaye I did my MA on that.
- P11 *...And then obviously teaching on an OU course which has a section on language and literacy practices...David Barton*
- Gaye So the OU course you are on is not specifically literacy. It's more linguistics a wider course?
- P11 Its different approaches to the study of language, so section one is socio-linguistics, section two is Halliday, section three is critical linguistics, particularly Fairclough, and then section four is mostly ethnographic studies... Shirley Brice Heath, D. Taylor, Brian Street, Barton and Padmore... its an early paper that came out with Barton and Hamilton book. Katherine Rockhill. That's part four of the course and then part five is

politics and literacy. And you look at functional literacy, cultural literacy, critical literacy and the future of English ... and politics of English. It's like a half section, so it's about the critical ways that you can look at language... and then the application of that to the New Literacy Studies.

- Gaye It sounds quite interesting. I am interested in all that because I applied to become an OU tutor. I have been for an interview.
- P11 Yes you said to me. They won't know until they know how many students, and that will be Christmas.
- Gaye I said, "Don't I even know whether I have got to be approved or disapproved?" And she said "No, because the idea is that even if there is somebody we think is better than you, they want you, they will keep you dangling on". She said to me "I just don't know at the moment"
- P11 But they interviewed you so that is good. If they knew they had plenty of tutors they would need you. The fact that they have interviewed you means that they haven't found enough ....
- Gaye It did say on the web site 'the North Wwest', and I thought that is my area, so I have had a go and we will see what happens.
- P11 Anyway, that brings us up to, we are almost up-to-date. The only big thing recently now is the core curriculum.
- Gaye. For tutors?
- P11 Yes, I went on the training the trainers course.
- Gaye Can you tell me all about that?
- P11 Well I nearly walked out on the first day. No the second day I nearly walked out.
- Gaye Why was that?
- P11 The first trainer we had literally kept saying to us 'you are not following good practice'. Basically you have been doing it all wrong and we have had to follow this new method. And she didn't know us. She took it for granted none of us ever taught group work.
- Gaye Is that what she actually said?
- P11. Yes. She took it for granted none of us did group work. We were all getting so angry and then we had a much better trainer take over. And she very much stressed that we were building on good practice. And I knew the first one was right because there were a lot of people that were not doing any

group work at all. But she was dealing with the most experienced people. But we were experienced people. We were the ones that were going to go out and train everyone else. And I think the Basic Skills Agency people realised about this. But it wasn't just that. And then they asked you at the end were you willing to work as a trainer? And my colleagues in Wiltshire also put me forward as a youth trainer for Wiltshire for the simple reason I was part time. The rest of them were full time. Had they done the job, the money they were paid would have gone to their colleges.... Not to them. So I did that, I went for this interview and I said to her, I said, "I am having really difficulty with the whole premise that this has been on, the structural linguistics doesn't somehow fit in there. "Oh that's alright," she said, "but do you still want to do the job?" And it was like, they are desperate. [Both laugh]

Gaye. That's alright! You disagree but will you still do it?

P11 So I did end up doing it. It was okay at the beginning, I had done four literacy courses. I had done a lot of the training, worked with other people, we have had two or three other people that I have worked with. That has memorises, but the course is a set course. And there are bits. I always say to them at the beginning there will be bits where I will just read it as it written here ..... They were so insistent it was the course as written. It wasn't these are the objectives, do the training to meet the objectives at all. It's the course as written. So I was assessed on the first course I went on. And she thought that we were really good, we were very pacey which you are meant to be. But I was criticised for not modelling, not doing the work right. I did model. I read out loud on the second course and it puts people off.

Gaye You had a text and you read it out loud.

P11 They were ready a text, you were told it was the one on people consumption and you are modelling reading for them, and tell them what to underline, in what colour and then you read it out; which I do...do in class with adult literacy students, but not with tutors. But it said that I had to model the reading.

Gaye. So the big criticism...?

P11 It's the only one I had. I don't care. I don't give a stuff, sorry. I have been asked to run another one but I have refused. Enough is enough. The early ones were okay because the people that were coming on were good experienced tutors who knew their stuff and although they were thrown by a lot of the concepts, particularly the stuff on grammar. You'd be amazed from the panic among people that teach literacy. It was okay, we were sort of saying 'well look lets identify' and part of it is planning. Identify where you need live in terms of in-service training... and go back to your institutions and time at the end and that's what you have to do. But all of them asked for time to come back together in six months and to discuss

between how they dealt with the curriculum. So they filled in evaluation sheets, I summarised them and I sent them to Basic Skills Agency. Why? Who's listening?

Gaye So what annoys you about doing the course as it is written?

P11. ...Because it's actually very hard. You have to re-learn it every time; whereas if I am running a training course, I just run because I've pretty well got it. Because I have had to think it through, and it obviously doesn't fit with my way of thinking. I think the core curriculum is alright if you are confident and you have got enough knowledge to use what is good in it.

Gaye. But you can't choose anything but you have got to do it as it's written.

P11 You do this thing where there are certain [example] texts formats.... and it says what the key things of the text are and that is what you teach the students. And what my colleagues are now saying to us you can't find a standard text to fit this. Well, no, you can't, but what I do is take real texts and have a look at the key features in them, rather than trying to fit them to these archetypes. But that is what I am confident enough and experienced to do. The majority of people I trained towards...on the last two courses, some of them didn't know what 'language experience' was. So there has been a real gap... I think between the RSA Diploma and now. We then have the Moser Report saying that people aren't properly trained and, I felt in the language, blaming them for it. We then go to that RaPAL conference last summer and we got the ALI [Adult Literacy Inspectorate]...the inspectorate saying that they are spending too much time worrying about the curriculum reference. You have got the learning and skills councils, who fund us, saying that there have got to be references all over your learning plans.

Gaye It's a hotch-potch.

P11 Yes, it's no good blaming the people who are then at the chalk face.... So I get cross... And to be honest when I am involved in training ... I don't think I am empowered. I am [empowered more] in my teaching in my adult literacy class... Because what I do is after I have been on the 'training for trainers' course I went back to my students and I shared the whole thing with them. I shared how the curriculum was set out. I shared the sort of methods I was expected to use. I said we are going to do it for a term and then we are going to decide what we like and what we don't. And, you know they loved it ... they have always done group work and I now do more, I do teach better. I do. They like that. They piloted some of their tests. They liked them. All the stuff I thought they would hate. They do complain now because I have got people at level one and one of them was saying to me 'look what I have got to do, I have got to learn writing, but the test is multiple choices, just reading.'

Gaye Its interesting isn't it?

P11 Yes but I always thought the students voices were totally missing from Moser. They weren't student voices, they were just these people who don't realise they have got a problem and you have to make them work. There was a whole paragraph about [these]people that don't. So that's where we are now.

Gaye Well lets call it a halt now. Thank you ever so much. You have told me much more than I ever realised.

## Participant Twelve (Gloucester): 7th June 2002 at work

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P12 It goes into the fact that they want them to have Further Education Teaching Certificate (FETC), that sort of thing, which is fine, teaching qualifications, but if you are going to teach adult literacy you need to have a level 4 language qualification. And they are talking about linguistics, they are talking about language acquisition and it looks very scary, level 4. If you are going to teach adult numeracy you need to have the teaching qualification plus you need to have a numeracy qualification at level 4 and... Okay, I have done GCSE Maths.

Gaye A-level is level 3.

P12 Yes its half way through a degree level... is what they are talking about; they are talking about HND level. And that is, I think, pretty scary. I know they are trying to upgrade the level of basic skills teachers, but I think that might well put a few people off... But I just felt that if that's the sort of route that we're going down, that is going to reflect on people's feelings of where they have come from and where they have got to go to. So they are talking about everybody who starts in September. So any new basic skills tutors have to go through this route, otherwise they will not be qualified to teach. So again that gives you a 2 TFE, current basic skills practitioners.

Gaye What is your own background Sue if you don't mind?

P12 Okay, I came through teaching as well.

Gaye Did you go through a teacher's training course?

P12 No I did a degree, I did a degree in Languages, English, French and Italian at London University and I then did a PGCE in middle school, but then taught in secondary. So I taught mostly French with English at a comprehensive in Gloucestershire and I was there for 7 years full time. Then I started my family and came out of teaching to have a family. After that while the children were small I did all sorts of things from delivering phone directories to selling nappies to everything, selling books with Osborne. But I also did, still do, a little bit of supply teaching. My husband is a teacher so at his school if they were short of an English teacher I would pop in for two days or so. So I kept going with the teaching. And once my youngest daughter went to school, I went back in, still doing a little bit of supply, but I went into home tuition and started working with children who had been excluded, school phobics, long term ill, that type of thing. And that was probably about 10 hours of teaching a week or so on, going around to their homes. At the same time or just prior to that my daughter was at playgroup, this was my younger one, and in the area that she was in, it was an old

school, her playgroup was, and across the play yard there was a small adult training provision.

Gaye What period are we talking about?

P12 This would be 1990, because she was born in '88, so it would have been 1990. I went over and said I will hang around here for an hour because my daughter is in playgroup. Can you do with any help with reading or that sort of thing? And they said "oh no, we are fine thanks, we have got lots of people". And I said I am not asking for a job I am just happy to volunteer. And they said oh well yes in that case we will have you in. And so I just started popping in for an hour and just listening to people read and going through books with them and that sort of thing, and that was Bridge training. And so after about a term when Catherine finished at playgroup and started at school they said to me "we are quite interested in what you are doing and we have had a look at sort of funding regimes and so on. Would you be interested in a day a week actually teaching here as a paid job?" And what they were doing there was a work based training, I suppose it was, I am not absolutely sure of what funding mechanisms there were, but most of the work that was going on was bought in from the Riverside Authority, people were going out and laying paths and doing canal renovations and up-keep on the canals. So it was that type of work that was going on and it was contracted through Riverside Authorities I suppose. But they had felt that a lot of the people who were working with them, because they were special needs, could have done with extra tuition with in maths and English. So that is where I came in. And so that would have been I guess about 10 years ago now. And I started just a day a week and we ran Number Power and Word Power. I guess that probably happened for 2 or 3 years. The IT side of things expanded and we moved to another area of the city and we had a big horticultural, we had gardens and we used to train in horticulture, and I used to just go in for a day a week. So really everybody who was on programme then would come in to me for that day a week and do back up English and Maths. We are talking at small numbers. There was only possible about a dozen who used to work there at the maximum. We really started to expand I suppose probably about 6, 7 years ago when we moved here. We didn't have this side, we were just over the other side, where you saw before. We didn't have the carpentry area and it was basic skills. Sorry, where the computers are that was carpentry, so it was carpentry plus basic skills. I started then working two days a week. So it's growing. And then eventually the IT came on board as well and we were starting to pick up more contracts. Its really only been probably about 4 years I suppose that we have been running a full time basic skills department.

Gaye So what is your actual job designation now?

- P12 So my job designation now is training manager because I don't just oversee basic skills. I oversee the whole area, so any training is through to me, but I am basic skills co-ordinator as well. I teach probably 2 days a week, admin 2 days a week. So I think probably the admin is beginning to take over more. There is a lot more admin now.
- Gaye When you talked on the tape about teaching in schools and then teaching at Bridge Training, teaching adults. Do you perceive any big differences?
- P12 Yes, yes, massive differences. Massive differences, I would find it very difficult to now go into a classroom. Numbers fairly horrendous, the thought of being in charge of 30 is difficult. Although on the other side... 30 children who are more or less at the same stage whereas 8 adults can be very, very different. So there are pros and cons. It's more individualised teaching that we do here. People are at different levels. It's definitely not a sort of disciplinary situation where I am in charge of you. It's more of a working together and much nicer atmosphere. I don't think I would find it very comfortable going back into schools.
- Gaye You said before that you hadn't heard of the word 'androgogy'.
- P12 No.
- Gaye There is a concept or a theory, a budding theory, developed by someone called Malcolm Knowles, he uses the word pedagogy, so teaching adults is andragogy. He tried to develop it as a theory and it has been criticised since. And then we had the concept of lifelong learning when the Dearing Report came out in '97 in America started to talk about lifelong learning and said that these learning sceptres are actually continuous. They are not discrete separate sectors. So some people feel that adult educators have been 'shipwrecked' a little bit about this concept of lifelong learning because they need to identify themselves with andragogy and with these separate, discrete... separate from schools basically. And it gave them... someone called Stephen Brookfield who has written a brilliant article about it and people thought that because they were teaching adults and because they had a concept such as andragogy, they were different and discrete group of people and their own identity and they have their own set of practices, adult education... and things specifically to do with adults but now people think that because of this concept of lifelong learning your education is continuous. It isn't a separate discrete sector. Some people use the example of the Basic Skills Agency dropping the 'adult' from the 'adult basic skills'. They don't use the adult anymore.
- P12 Accept in the tests.

- Gaye So that was what I was getting at. It was something that really intrigued me from my own autobiography. It's quite interesting how people see that. Especially if people who have taught in schools like I have and they have taught adults. I didn't want to go back into schools.
- P12 No, no, no. It's quite interesting now because we are starting to take in some 14 and 15 year olds and that is quite difficult because you do have to discipline them still. They are not capable of disciplining themselves. There are problems there because of them being in the same classroom as adults. The adults are very'...get very angry if they are not allowed to teach because some of the youngsters are messing around. And I think the youngsters at that age are still looking for discipline if you like, because they can't control themselves. This is very generalised obviously, some of them are mature enough to do so. But then you think "gosh yes, I remember now what it was like". But there again I do teach. I have a key skills group who come in here 2 afternoons a week who are a Year 10 group of girls. And that is quite interesting because, yes, I think my attitude to them is different from the attitude I would teach my adults because they, they are school age and they come in. They come in and they are totally different. They are off the walls, they come in and they are screaming and yelling. They don't come into it with the same sort of...
- Gaye Do they come in and actually work with you or do they come in and observe?
- P12 They are ESF funded. The school has asked us to take them on. I mean.
- Gaye There is this thing in schools where they try to get 14 and 15 year olds into other things because...
- P12 Well that is basically it. They are a non-GCSE group and so they are on an alternative curriculum basically. Mostly based around work experience. But they come into us for key skills. And we do the full range of 6 key skills with them. But that has to be a tighter knit disciplined group simply because, I suppose that is what they expect really. Because when they go into a classroom they expect to be disciplined and if they don't get disciplined they are not so. I think they mess around if they don't get disciplined. They need that discipline to be able to... for the teacher to be able to show their authority I suppose. Whereas I feel that I don't need to do that with adults. Its this business of what is authority and whether its kind of disciplined or whether you have got an authority in the fact that you have got more knowledge and I think adults appreciate the fact that you have

authority in your knowledge, whereas I don't think youngsters do so much and they need to see that authority portrayed in another way.

Gaye And there is also the difference between authority and being authoritative and...

P12 Oh yes.

Gaye Authoritarian.

P11 Yes, which kids will see through as well as adults.

Gaye I was just thinking about on your training you talked about doing your degree in English and Languages and your PGCE which was in middle school education. Have you got any more qualifications?

P12 I have. Loads actually. I have done, I took time out to do a year TFEL training which was interesting. That was evening classes 3 hours a week. And that was good and that was mainly like the group of students you were talking about, sort of educated, high flyers coming in from abroad in Cheltenham which is a well known centre for TEFL teaching. So a lot of far eastern, a lot of Japanese, very intelligent people who just wanted to upgrade their English and were able to do so within 6 months because they were so motivated. A lot of Europeans as well. That was quite interesting. I did wonder at one point whether my career would go in that sort of area. But in the end it didn't mainly because of the timings actually. A lot of it was evening classes. And a lot of it was sort of very early start, 8.00 am and weird things like that. And with a young family it didn't really fit in so well and so I didn't go down that route. But it has proved to be very interesting, very useful.

Gaye And what do you feel was the ethos behind your TEFL training?

P12 It was very much linguistically based, I sort of picked up a lot of linguistically education for myself. When I did my English degree it was mostly literature, very little linguistics and language. Although I did a bit of middle English and that type of thing. But it was very much on phonic-based, strangely. All the different sounds and that funny language thing, the phonic alphabet, all the different signs for that. And that was brilliant. That has been really helpful with this, to know all the different sounds that you can get from an 'A'. So it was very linguistically based, very orally based, very little written. And very fast moving. We had to do teaching practice and that was quite scary because I think everybody picked up things so quickly and it was very teacher led and very teacher driven. You had to

know exactly what you were doing because everybody was so quick at picking things up. So there was a lot of oral stuff going on and then development.

Gaye So it wasn't much written?

P12 No, no.

Gaye A practical course rather than a theoretical course.

P12 Much, it was, a big, big emphasis on the spoken language. But also within that, a big emphasis on correct procedure. The sort of first conditional and second conditional, all this sort of thing which we don't think about when we are speaking.

Gaye It's good to have the training, but a lot of teachers don't.

P12 That's right and it has been very good.

Gaye [unclear].... At university.

P12 Suddenly teaching those.

Gaye I find it very stimulating, very interesting.

P12 Yes it was, it was very rewarding but by golly a lot of work.

Gaye If you look at literacy teaching where they now have to now do this.

P12 Well this is one of my worries on looking at that qualification is this what they are expecting people to do.

Gaye And teaching ESOL.

P12 Yes, it will impinge on that as well.

Gaye Did you do any of the literacy qualifications like the 9281?

P12 Yes I did 9285.

Gaye You did 9285?

P12 Yes, so I did that and I have done a module of an MEd in helping children, but I did my hopefully based on an adult and they did allow me to, with

specific learning difficulties. So that was useful again. That was done again in evening class over a year. I had to actually help a dyslexic child. But I was very fortunate that I got a 16 year old, so I could actually... yes, moved through into the adult. This was sort of 3 or 4 years ago. There is very little going on about adult dyslexia, and trying to find information was quite a challenge.

Gaye Are you okay with that now? Have you heard of {name removed} in RaPAL?

P12 Yes I have. The whole sort of adult dyslexia thing has opened up which has been brilliant. I have just got some of the assessment materials through from... I think it is Chris Singleton actually. Yes, Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening which I have some. .. I have a problem. I am going through this whole thing at the moment with dyslexia because the majority of the people I have in here are of low learning ability. And if you try and dyslexia test on them they all come out as having dyslexia simply because their reading skills and any other skills are low. So although this assessment deals with segmenting three different syllables, so you have something like 'un-dit-end', total nonsense words but they have to make up those sounds and so you have to find the different syllables to make up the word. And because their phonic knowledge is not brilliant they can't do that all that well. The second one is really just a reading test and it gives you a whole bank of words and you have to say which one is the correct word. So you would have things like persuade, pursued, all this sort of thing. Now, because they are quite difficult words some of them, again, they don't know how to spell those words. And then the third test is a backward digit scan. So you have 3, 6, 5, 4 and you have to key it in backwards. And a lot of them, their numerical skills... they can't retain the figures in their heads, and so they immediately come out as being dyslexic because they can't do even those three things. So I am sort of having problems with 'dyslexic', does it mean that they can't read? It goes against what I thought dyslexia was in that its just one aspect of their learning that is a problem.

Gaye And the test only looks at one aspect of things.

P12 The test looks at those three aspects but all of my learners come out as having problems with all of those three things. Not necessarily because they're dyslexic. Now when I was doing my dyslexia course I actually tested by using things like Radiance Matrixes.

Gaye Well I was back in the days of Ann Arbour...

- P12 But I find that worked better because something that doesn't depend on a form of learning, even though it's a digit scan and you're reading it backwards. I still feel that that is acquired. So sort of acquired knowledge I think is difficult for people who have learning difficulties anyway. Whereas looking at what bit of puzzle fits in, is more spatial awareness and is a more objective view point.
- Gaye So you have actually done a course on dyslexia as a teacher, a teacher training course?
- P12 Yes it was part of this Med. It was an MEd module.
- Gaye So it was quite theoretical.
- P12 Oh very theoretical, but at the end of it you are assessed as being able to assess people for dyslexia. So I am a member of the BDA (British Dyslexia Association) and I can actually assess people for dyslexia. So I have had problems with that. I actually went and did a dyslexia course. Because I thought I will just go and see what they are saying. And I put this question to her and I said 'how do you actually tell if somebody who has sort of lower ability in skills, how can you tell that is dyslexia and not just learning disabled?' and she couldn't give me a straight answer. That is quite interesting. There is a lot of fuzziness about this thing, going around the houses thing. It's something that has facinating me at the moment. It's quite an interesting topic to think about. Is it just that all learning disabled people are dyslexia because they can't read? So dyslexia actually means you can't read, so we do say that they are all.
- Gaye Was it a sort of medical model with other things involved?
- P12 Exactly.
- Gaye Where there were other things involved like you are clumsy.
- P12 Yes and this business of the brain scan that they are doing at the moment, they are finding that this bridge isn't there that is linking the sort of language to hearing, and this sort of thing is missing out. And there is a lot of stuff going on in that area now. So that is physical disability not just a learning disability. But I would be quite interested in doing a lot more work on that if I had the time. And finding out and doing some of the more psychological tests and finding out if there is a big difference between those and reading tests.
- Gaye When you did the 9285 as well as your Masters, when did you do that?

- P12 Right 9285 I did way back. that was sort of when I started doing my day a week, so that would have been probably about 1994/95 somewhere along there. I am just digging on my CV because it should be on there. It would have been about 1994/95 when I did it. That quite honestly has been one of the most useful things.
- Gaye Has it? Did you find it useful?
- P12 Yes I did.
- Gaye In what ways did you find it useful?
- P12 I found it useful in things like looking at how assessment is carried out and group teaching and all those sort of things which you don't really do assessment when you are a teacher in schools. The kids are there in front of you and don't individually assess them. That sort of thing is useful. It gave me a much better idea of basic skills teaching. I did find that useful.
- Gaye And what about the format in the 9285, it was performance indicators...
- P12 Yes, that was okay.
- Gaye Compared to your other...
- P12 Academic things. Yes, it was the first thing I had done like that and it was quite different not being. Actually when I did the MEd bit that was totally taught, so again that was different so again that was different, I was suddenly sat ... And I did find that way difficult to begin with, to do the sort of portfolio based.
- Gaye And what did you find difficult about it?
- P12 Just being able to identify where I had hit the criteria I think. Reading through the criteria and thinking "where have I done that? How have I done that? How can I show that I have done it? I know I am doing it, but how can I prove that I am doing it?" That type of thing.
- Gaye Yes, getting the evidence for it.
- P12 Well even knowing what type of evidence. Things like show that you are using an equal opportunities policy.
- Gaye What do you think of that word...evidence?

- P12 I have actually started, I have just started as a tutor in the last year.
- Gaye Are you delivering it?
- P12 I am not delivering it within this context but I am actually as a mentor within the Guide Association. The Guide Association has taken it on, the TDLB, the old units, they have taken those on as the structure for their training licence.
- Gaye Talking about adult leaders.
- P12 It goes through a, b, c, the whole lot. And it's a selection of about 8 different. You have got a whole range, A21, A, B33 all the way through to Es as well, not the Ds, so it's As, Bs, Cs and Es. And I have actually got a girl at the moment who I am taking through it. I think one of the hardest things... And when I have taken through some of my assessors here, because I am also an Internal Verifier (IV) here. I am an Internal Verifier as well. Taking some of the tutors through the Ds has been immensely difficult because of the language that it is couched in. I find that so difficult to understand the criteria. And I have had to, the workshop tutor who has come up through industry, he's worked on the machines, he has not done anything academic before. He needs to do his D32, D33 to be able to assess what's going on in the workshop and he's hit with his language which he hasn't a clue about. I have actually had to sit down and translate this criteria for them so that they understand what they are supposed to be doing.
- Gaye And how did you find the language in 9285?
- P12 *Okay I think but that was probably because I came to it at a higher level. So having done a degree it wasn't such a problem. But it is a problem if you have got people who are not at that level. It sounds awful but if you have gone through an academic training, it's not so bad. If you have come up through occupational training it is quite difficult to suddenly to jump into that sort of language I think.*
- Gaye And most of your tutors here have they come through the occupational side of things rather than the academic side of things?
- P12 Yes virtually all. Peter who you spoke to outside he has a degree and he is come in through teaching. And one of our IT tutors has come in from doing an IT degree. Apart from that everybody else has come up through industry. So it's quite hard for them actually.

- Gaye So those taking the path through industry have suddenly found themselves teaching basic skills.
- P12 No, these are people who are not teaching basic skills. Sorry, people who are teaching IT, people who are teaching in the workshop.
- Gaye Right and what about your basic skills tutor?
- P12 Right, the basic skills tutors, Peter has come up through teaching. Liz who... Peter and Mary only came on board in December. Liz has come up through FAETC in college based courses. So she did her FAETC, she did her CertEd.
- Gaye So Sue is now going to expand on some of the positive aspects of the 9285.
- P12 Okay, the positive aspects I think were the whole way its set out with assessment at the beginning, mentoring skills, group teaching skills and then evaluation. That is a good habit to get into. So I think it kind of trains you in that area to start with. There's a lot of aspects that come into it which I haven't really thought about before I looked at the qualification. Things like equal opportunities, learning styles, all those type of things which are there but you don't analysis I suppose when you're teaching, and you don't look at it in the sort of, in the course of things, you don't actually look at how am I teaching with an equal opportunities hat on. It just happens. So I think it's quite good to be able to identify where you are using equal opportunities.
- Gaye Equal opportunities is part of your pedagogy then?
- P12 Yes, yes, exactly.
- Gaye And maybe you would want to impart.
- P12 Oh yes, and I think its good to highlight it because it, because okay, it may well be part and parcel of what you're doing but you don't realise it. And the same with things like health and safety issues. *The whole aspect of teaching adults as adults rather than as children. The whole aspect of sharing things rather than just filling up containers.*
- Gaye I am really interested in what you have just said there, the idea of sharing rather than filling up containers. It's this negotiated aspect.
- P12 *Yes, exactly. And the important factor that a lot of the people who come here and I am teaching, have things that they can teach me, because they have other skills, they have other life experiences that I haven't had. One of*

the lads was teaching this morning about football and who was playing who and how important it was and all this sort of thing. And I said great. And it's good to be able to do that sort of thing.

Gaye Yes somebody once explained to me, some of my students once taught me about the off-side rule.

P12 That's right, yes. One of the guys the other day had been over the Cheltenham Race Course to back a dog. Oh no, he often goes to Cheltenham. He was going up to Reading I think to back a dog, 'can I get off 10 minutes early because I have got to catch a train to Reading. I have got a winner on.' And then the next day he came in and told us that he had won money, and it was great because we could talk about betting and we had it all up on the board. And he was telling us, and I didn't realise that you get your bet back and he was explaining all of this. And it turned into a lovely numeracy lesson because of ratio and all this type of thing. But it was really his influence that had led us to that way. And this whole aspect of adult sharing teaching I think comes out in the 9285. *It's kind of having respect I suppose for what they bring as well.* And I think that side of thing has pushed the 9285.

Gaye Do you have any criticism of it?

P12 The only criticism I have really is the language I think. The language and the criteria... is very difficult, very academic and very difficult to get your way through sometimes. I have just been seeing it from the other point of view, from the tutor's point of view. With the girl that I am tutoring now, I am going through it and I have done an observation on her tutoring and I am thinking when did she do that? Oh yes she did that, and that. And I think one of the problems with these which has only just struck me recently is the fact you have to do 100% to get a portfolio based qualification. Any other qualification you don't have to do 100% do you? If you do a GCSE... In fact it was through the key skills route I was thinking of it.

Gaye I know what you are getting at.

P12 Yes, and you don't even have to get, if you get 60% you pass, you get your qualification. And I think it was in a key skills context I was looking at it. And I was thinking about a portfolio based on communication. And you have to hit every single one of those things in there. And in the application of number you have to do scales. You have to do amounts. You have to do a graph. You have to hit every single thing that is on that list. And there is no other qualification that you have to hit everything. If you do maths GCSE for instance you can pass with 60%. I know when you're taking the

test you don't have to get 100%. But for that portfolio, by golly, you have to know absolutely everything in there. And that's the same with the 9285. You have to touch on everything, which can be a benefit, but its also hard work.

Gaye

So your main criticism then is.

P12

The language I think. And also I think some of you have to steer your route and you have to convolute what you are doing sometimes to be able to hit some of these things.

Gaye

[checks tape] I was just thinking about the new interest now on the new qualifications that are coming. You have mentioned some worries about that. And I can't remember whether we have got them on tape or not.

P12

I think we did because we stopped the tape for me to look for them.

Gaye

When we were talking about the good points of the 9285 and you said how it sort of stressed the student - centred curriculum, negotiating things and things like that. Would that be something that you would pass on to a budding tutor?

P12

Yes, yes, very much so. When I have been tutoring this other lady, I know it's a different context, but it's still sort of tutoring. Yes the aspects that I have picked out are sort of the adult based stuff and how they can share their learning as well, and this type of thing, which is probably even more relevant within guiding because you're not necessarily that much better than anybody else in guiding. It's just an aspect that you have taken on. So it's quite an important part of it.

Gaye

And what about the theoretical??? (interference from outside) and what about pedagogical side, do you think being asked to learn, participate, think about pedagogy or andragogy or whichever one you want to call it. Or if you don't want to call it either, you can call it issues behind or the ethos behind what adult literacy and basic skills teachers do. Do you think it has helped to engage in that?

P12

*For me it has been but I think it is a little off putting for some people who maybe. A lot of basic skills tutors have come up through volunteers and just with a desire to help other people, because they have learned a lot from basic skills tuition. And it would be a shame to put off people like that who certainly have a lot to offer and who are not academically biased and who can't, who are not interested in that side of things. Having come through from a sort of academic background, I am interested in that type of thing.*

*But some of my colleagues for instance who work here in basic skills and who have come through. Some of the have come through occupation and just through a desire to learn and have a lot to offer because they can get down to the level of the learner more easily I think in some ways. One of my colleagues has problems with long multiplication and she has learned how to do it since she has been here and she is one of the best people at teaching at because she's gone through that system herself. And she is the first to admit that her maths skills are not brilliant, but having learnt how to do something she can pass on that skill I think a lot better than somebody who has always been able to do and doesn't understand why somebody else can't do it.*

Gaye So obviously some of these new ideas behind the new qualifications what people have to achieve... do you think it's a chance that they can be more professional?

P12 Well it is but I don't want to throw the baby with the bath water, because yes, it's a chance to professionalise it. Some professions have gone too much that way and so you don't have. You're chucking out people with skills. I am looking at the teaching profession and I have seen great changes in the teaching profession. I have seen my husband go through it and I have seen other older teachers go through this whole system of being chucked out, being made redundant simply because they don't go down the route that they're supposed to do down. They are excellent teachers. They're brilliant people, people. They work well with people. And because they're not theorists I suppose. Because they are more practical people they are considered to be not as good and that worries me, considerably. Because I think, I think we are going too far... In some areas we're going too far down the theory side of things. And we are losing this practical streak. I think...I've been reading a lot on emotional intelligence recently and in that whole aspect... which is beginning to hit England. And it's looking at things like how important it is to be able to get on with people. How important it is to have other skills other than academic skills. And I think that is so important and I think if we're going to push through all the time... you have got to be academic, you have got to know what all these big words mean. You have got to know the theories behind things before you can teach, I think that could be a danger.

Gaye The next question is do you regard yourself as a professional?

P12 Yes I do.

Gaye How would you define a professional?

- P12 I think I would define a profession as something you don't leave behind you when you shut the door. So when I go home tonight I am still thinking of ways to teach ratio. It's something that is always within you I suppose. It's not something you can block off. It's something that you breathe, it's something that you're working through all the time.
- Gaye And do you ever think about the wider socio-cultural, political aspect of what you do?
- P12 Yes I do, especially having read a lot more about it recently. Especially having thought about the whole basic skills need obviously in the country at the moment and how that is going through and what we're doing for it. Yes, again I have problems with that as we all do probably. Because we are a basic skills centre but we have to go through these tiny little channels. I have just been talking to Jackie our administrator. There is no point in Sandra doing her courses next week because we don't get funded for it. And I think. And she said it doesn't matter do it with her anyway. And I said I am going to because it's going to be beneficial for her. But as a learner Sandra can only be funded for one qualification. So she has done an IT qualification. She's going to do a basic skills qualification. As a company we are actually having to pay for her to take this qualifications and so we get nothing back. And that is terrible that people can't... And the whole socio economic thing we see it here with the benefits problems. People are here because they have to be here. And there are other people who can't be here who want to be here. But because they don't go through those doors, because they don't go through those hoops they can't come in. It's ridiculous. If we get people in to do basic skills tests, if they end up at level one on the assessment we can't have them in because they would be too high for us. And so they immediately go to another provider who puts them straight out on to work placement because they don't have any training in house.
- Gaye Do they get any basic skills training?
- P12 No. So all of these level one people who the government want to hit are just going, flying off in to space.
- Gaye Because I would imagine that level one upwards...
- P12 Yes, level one, level two is still basic skills. Level one is our 11 year olds and those are the ones who are supposed to be...There is just so much going on.

Gaye One of the questions I ask myself is what do practitioners? The consequences of any perceived conflict in how do we develop through it? You have mentioned a couple of things now with this high level...

P12 Yes, yes, we have very few routes through which we can go. I have another issue that I have spoken about and I have gone through a route to this, but you never hear any more back. One of the issues, I have problems with that. All the business about people going through to level one and I did complain to the employment service who are our contractors about it and said 'what's happening?' but you never hear any more back and you wonder if it just gets left on somebody's table. I still have major problems with the tests. Testing people at level one and level two. I have had 5, 10, 16 tests go through since Christmas (end of side one)... one of the reasons being that they were petrified because they were coming into a test at the examination. They had practised before but they still knew it was the real thing and that worried them. The second reason was they moved the pass mark. So the pass mark was 20 last July when everybody went through and the government was doing really well. Come Christmas they had moved it to 25. Now that is a big difference out of 40. I had issues about that and I passed that through because we were a pathfinder accounting. I don't know if you were aware of that, which means that we were doing a lot of the piloting. They passed that through pathfinder. I am not sure if all the messages get to the right place. I am sure they don't. but that is a problem. Last time I had 3 people booked in for tests. Two of them didn't turn up because it's not a priority to them.

Gaye Right. Why are you doing this test then I just want to learn how to literacy?

P12 Exactly and one of them was on a work placement and "I am not going to come back in here for a test I would rather be earning money." The other guy had finished his placement anyway and he said 'yes I will come back in and do that.' But he didn't turn up. And they can't see the point of it really. Some of them can. I had one turn up, he thought it was a benefit. But there are a lot of anomalies there that, that are all part of the socio-economic culture I think. The whole, we are really trapped by benefits. People come in here and they are upgrading their basic skills in order to get a better job, but they say I can't get a job unless I need to earn more. Well I need to earn £600 a week to cover everything I am getting in benefits. And you think "what". By the time they take out their rent, their council tax. If they have got a few kids they get benefits for the kids, they get free school meals, they get free...

Gaye So if you have a job you have got tax.

- P12                   And so they say there is no way I can get a job. this is really bad for these people that they are trapped in that benefit culture that they can't get out. It's not just one. A lot of them are saying I have got to earn £450, I have got to earn £400. But one guy had to earn £600.
- Gaye                   He must have a few kids.
- P12                   Yes a few kids, I think he had a disabled child which meant that he got, his wife got money for looking after the child at home and all these sort of things. But if he started earning a lot of these benefits would go you see.
- Gaye                   Interesting. I am going to call it a day now Sue. You have done me proud.  
End of interview

**Participant Thirteen (Lancaster): 15<sup>th</sup> July 2002 at Lancaster University**

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P 13 *I will start off by saying where I come from because the way I was brought up influences the way you are and I have to say I was brought up in the lower middle class household. I do not come from the working class, but my mother came from the working class and my father ran a shop. It was an eccentric household in that my father was a member of a Communist Party of Great Britain, probably was until it packed up, or his dying day, whichever came first. Therefore, I was brought up to go to a Methodist Sunday School on Sundays and on Marx's theory of history and class struggle the rest of the week. This caused me some difficulties with my own education. I liked telling the story of how I tried to convince the geography teacher she'd got China wrong because she hadn't mentioned that the farmers were collectivised and got a grade 9 in my O level geography. When you go into education people are always assuming that because you're a school teacher you have certain middle class attitudes. I am not sure what my attitudes are but I get very irritated when people try to convert me to socialism assuming that I come from a Tory background. That is my gripe about university lecturers of one kind or another. I have got into adult basic skills teaching probably, I would put my hand up as a middle class do-gooder. People say, because I felt I wanted to do something useful, not because I particularly wanted to go out and train people to change the world or whatever. Because I suppose I thought that if people couldn't read and write it would make their lives harder and I thought it might improve the quality of their life, which is a very wholly Liberal thing to say, but I don't have a problem with that really. So I worked on the general assumption that people were adults and tried to...because, they said they had got to train me which made me feel that there must be something special about teaching adults that I somehow didn't know. And the training was a bit of anti-racism, a little bit of anti-sexism, but only very little bits. It just struck me as being very, very, very superficial and some of it struck me as being bad, wrong, and not evidence based. I got interested, the issues that I got interested in was the accreditation schedule that I was working with because I felt that bits of it made no sense. And I had a feeling, having worked in schools, a feeling for how people got better at reading and writing and that didn't seem to me to be matched by this accreditation schedule. Bits of it made me feel as if it was teaching badly and I just started asking questions about why it was like it was. I had never heard of NVQs. I had taught TVEI which is a vocational thing. I taught communication so I had been involved in this vocational thing.*

Gaye Just to chip in there, you talked about your training, where was it and can you describe your training of what you had and what you thought underpinned it?

- P 13 It had been about three year's ago at the Adult College Lancaster. You were trained in actually, I think, as well as going on sitting on a course, you were trained to use the accreditation schedule. Basically they pointed you at the shelves where they had got numbered and labelled bits. So if somebody wanted to do spelling, you were directed to take a worksheet off the spelling shelf. And the shelves are all organised by what they call elements in the accreditation. And everybody was registered for an accreditation.
- Gaye Which type of accreditation schedule were you using?
- P 13 This was something called Foundation Accreditation in Maths and English (FAME) which was externally accredited by the Open College North West. At that time I had never heard of Open Colleges. And we were told then "it is beginning to be nationally recognised". ..and vague things about how the levels mapped across to Word Power levels, which again made no sense to me at all. I wanted to try and understand it how it might map across to say, GCSE levels. I now understand in quite a lot of detail that this mapping is in fact very, very broad based. But there is a lot of things are written as if it's all very specific and precise and that interests me because it's not. *It's spurious precision. But I actually think you have to get into the positivist tradition before you can begin to understand that.*
- Gaye This training course you were on, was it a volunteer training course or a training course for new tutors?
- P 13 It was a training course for volunteers.
- Gaye And was there accreditation for it?
- P 13 But I think some of the people there.... Yes, it was City and Guilds 9281. Some of the people there were, I think, working as tutors. Some of the people were working as care workers. I was interested why care workers might be wanting to do it. And I guess this will be about funding - that presumably if you are working in a hostel for people with learning difficulties and you can get the evidence, you can perhaps claim funding for doing it. I actually felt that... they say that these things prevent people from being dangerous. I wasn't convinced of that at all. I thought it might actually make them dangerous. And one of the things I didn't like about it was precisely that it encouraged a fragmented approach to language. Language was divided up into lots of little bits. Reading and writing, although we are now used to assessing them separately, for a beginning reader they are not distinct and separate. And they are not distinct and separate from speaking and listening. A heavy focus on accurate spelling I felt was counter productive because people aren't very good at writing and lack confidence to express themselves, making them worry about accuracy. It's the last thing they need. I thought this was totally and utterly

counter productive. *There was a lot of... A lot of the methods that I was taught actually I was familiar with from school; the use of cloze procedure. The research that I had read always said it was no use as a teaching method. It was only any use as a teaching method if it was a basis of small group discussion. And that comes out of the positivist tradition of course which as a qualitative researcher you won't be interested.* But people have studied it. Don't ask me what instruments they used to assess the success of the.... So I felt frustrated partly because I felt, without wishing to sound arrogant, I had been trained as a teacher and I couldn't understand why these people were insisting on training me again at a much lower level of competence. It seemed to me to be a complete waste of public money and my time.

Gaye That is really interesting. So you talked about the content of the course. Before you started talking about some of the wider issues that you felt underpinned the course. You said a bit about equal opportunities, a bit about anti-racism. Can we explore that a little bit further?

P 13 Well I guess that the course probably, in fact, functioned more as a... Obviously you don't want people who are racist, sexist or whatever working with adults. Some adults who are pretty sensitive often I would say are quite vulnerable. That might be patronising but... Aright it is patronising. I am vulnerable, we are all vulnerable. So I felt really that it was done in a very token way. It could have been developed in a lot more detail. So there was a point for it being there. Well you could go on and on forever about why things are sexist and racist and discriminatory. What interested me was that the tutor said that there were some women locally who wouldn't come to mixed classes and said she didn't know what they were. And I found that quite offensive actually because I thought she ought to have the courtesy to find out. I assumed they would be Muslim women and I felt that she could have least had the courtesy to find a respectful way in which to mention these people.

Gaye Yes I have had this problem.

P 13 And I actually thought of putting that on my feedback for the course but decided it wouldn't be tactful. Tact is not my strong point.

Gaye I did have this problem myself when I was an ABE co-ordinator, I was asked to put classes on, in the living rooms of Muslim women and there was always a man watching me. It probably was Muslim women.

P 13 It seems funny that she didn't identify them. It suggested to me a possibly a rather negative attitude.

Gaye You did mention before that you had taught in schools and you're a qualified teacher. You have a degree in English. Is that right?

- P 13 I have got a Joint Honours Degree in English and Psychology and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. I went to Keele University, you do a 4 year degree course. They actually believed in a broad education. You do a foundation year where you do basically everything, life, the universe and everything. And then you had to do 2 principle subjects and 2 subsidiary subjects. So my main subjects were English and Psychology. As you can imagine Psychology is quite interesting from the cognitive psychology point of view. Which again is a 'hate' word for some people but I think there's a lot of interest in it. And I did subsidiary statistics for social scientists and education, but in stead of doing a subsidiary for one year, you did it for three years and you did your teaching practices and the university's vocation and school visits. Because it was a four year degree course they let you combine your teaching. And I worked for a year in a primary school before going to university. So actually I do feel I have got some experience and knowledge to draw on in numeracy at the very initial levels, because of that experience, although if learners have got very great learning difficulties, they struggle.
- Gaye You said you taught in schools and you taught adults. I was just wondering if you could talk about the differences?
- P 13 *I know that there is a lot of stuff about adults being active learners whereas children are passive which doesn't actually accord with my view of how children learn. Because even perception isn't a passive activity, so I have never seen learning as being a passive activity. The difference I would suppose with adults really is that, one main difference is that you would expect them to be motivated to learn. They say adults have a lot more experience of life than children, but I actually think children have a hell of a lot of experience of life. And I think we learn more words in the first five years of our life than we learn in the next... however many years afterwards. So obviously the power situation ought to be different with adults. It should be a partnership. There are issues about expertise and professionalism, and there are also issues about the consumer and the customer which I think become commercial rather than educational.*
- Gaye Could you expand a little bit on that?
- P 13 Well its all supposed to be demand-driven now in this new neo-Liberal privatised. .. So if the customer wants something, you put it on. If the customer comes along and says they want to improve their spelling, you run a spelling course. I wonder how far those kinds of pressures might lead to things that lead to things that perhaps aren't what I would think of as being educationally valid perhaps... being run.
- Gaye Have you come across the term andragogy at all?

- P 13 *Yes I have. And then there are issues about whether that is teaching men and whether women learn differently from men as opposed to pedagogy which in itself a sexist term because it's about. A pedagogue was a Greek slave I think who looked after the children. So I think it's a big thing but it's over-stated. Because to me it implies that children are passive and I don't think they are. I think children learn actively. I haven't really gone into that in a lot of detail, but I have come across the term.*
- Gaye It was Malcolm Knowles, he came across it. He tried to develop the theory of andragogy which depends on adults being self directed learners more so than children. The thing is they can walk with their feet, whereas children can't.
- P 13 *There is one line of theory that schools perpetuate the class structure of society because the teachers are the bosses. But I can't imagine a socialist state which didn't try and tell its children what to do occasionally, to be quite frank. Can you?*
- Gaye Yes I think that whole issue of freedom to learn, no matter which fundamental political/social philosophy whether its socialism, conservatism, when you're teaching children in a classroom and you are there.
- P 13 You have a responsibility for the safety apart from anything else.
- Gaye Yes there comes a point when they have to, it's a control thing as well. There is more control in a classroom than there is with adults.
- P 13 Oh definitely there has to be really.
- Gaye And there is not as much discipline problems with adults because they don't need the same controls. If you are teaching children they are going to react and be bolshy.
- P 13 We all know that as parents, having a teenager. Having brought her up to think for herself, or try to, I now regret it deeply.
- Gaye How old is she?
- P 13 14 going on 25.
- Gaye Have you got any more or just the one?
- P 13 The one.
- Gaye Has having children of your own influenced the way you teach?

- P 13                    When I went back into school, definitely in a subtle way I think. I can't really say exactly why.
- Gaye                    What I want to ask you is your own training. You are now studying for a PhD. Did you say you had done a Masters? No, you have done a PGCE haven't you.
- P 13                    Yes.
- Gaye                    And now you're doing a PhD. Is the way that your learning, the way that you are being taught, does that effect... you're an adult and you are being taught in a particular way, is that going to effect you when you are teaching yourself in the future do you think?
- P 13                    That's a hard one.
- Gaye                    We can come back to it. As you know my research is what should be the underpinning ethos in the professional development of adult literacy tutors. You have mentioned one thing Karen; you mentioned partnership with the learner. And you also mentioned, briefly, equal opportunities. Do you think there is anything in how people have been taught in the past and how they are going to be taught in the future with the new developments that sort of kicks against that. We have talked about the new Research and Development Centre, the new qualifications and the new accreditation which is for students and the new qualification for tutors.
- P 13                    *I have a concern that there maybe a fragmented approach to teaching because the curriculum seems to me to be, in itself, an achievement given the time scales and the procedures that people have had to develop it in. It's very much a sort of management by bullet point. And I find that the curriculum itself is crude, over simplified, inappropriate for some of the learners. The requirements for explicit grammatical knowledge... These arguments have gone on for ages in the school sector and this is where you end up having to read linguistics ... I don't understand linguistics accept a lot of it looks very like politics to me.*
- Gaye                    Could you expand on that?
- P 13                    Well there is one strong right-wing position and there are two strong left wing positions on the role of language, and the knowledge about language. And there are issues about Standard English; Lots of arguments. Have you got into these arguments?

- Gaye I have probably touched on them in the past. I have talked about perceived pronunciation.
- P 13 There is lots of stuff about Genre theory as well. The adult basic curriculum has got bits in it, its influences from all over the place. They seem to have picked from the school curriculum things that underpin key skills which are supposed to be skills for work. I am not sure all this makes an awful lot of sense really. The good thing about the curriculum is that does actually emphasise things. It does actually mention things like citizenship and family life and personal life. Whereas it seems to me all education now is supposed to be about making us all work smarter and the intensification of work and so on. I am not sure that's the best way. Ideally I suppose...
- Gaye Why not? Why is it not a good thing to emphasise work?
- P 13 Because there is more to life than work, or there should be. I actually see myself as teaching people to read and write. What they do with it is, in a sense, their own affair. But that's because I have that kind of attitude... Coming from a Stalinist background I tend to have a thing about individual freedom I think. *So I try to look at the curriculum in really in terms of is it going to help people to develop and transfer all the skills that they can use. But that in itself, seeing literacy as a set of skills, is not always approved of.*
- Gaye So what about this thing at Lancaster where its social practice, literacy as social practice?
- P 13 In a sense it's pointing out the obvious. As I understand it at Lancaster they're very fond of teaching the bits of literacy you need in the work place.
- Gaye Can you explain that?
- P 13 That is the link that I make just because of the particular experiences that I have got.
- Gaye You started off in the late '90's.
- P 13 Anything, anything. They say the personal is political. There is a long standing sense in which anything can be interpreted from a political point of view.
- Gaye Can you talk about when you got to Lancaster was that the next stage? You went to the adult college and you did your training and you did the 9281. How did you get involved at Lancaster, was that soon afterwards?
- P 13 I think it was about at the same time.

- Gaye Can you talk about how you got involved there?
- P 13 Well I applied for a job on a temporary basis and spent 10 weeks marketing and administrating a course.
- Gaye Can you talk about your experiences doing that?
- P 13 The course was to train people to negotiate and market workplace basic skills products at all levels really right up to degree level.
- Gaye And what was the ethos underpinning that course? Think about how you sold it and how you marketed it.
- P 13 I marketed it by talking about international consultants because some of the people asked questions about whether the people teaching it had got any teaching qualifications. This caused some difficulty because they hadn't.
- Gaye In what way?
- P 13 Some colleges have a policy of only having people who are qualified teachers to teach. And some Training and Enterprise Councils also had similar policies, but not very many. So otherwise the course sold itself because FE colleges are businesses. They provide training for industry and so any qualification which is going to make them better able to market themselves, I suppose, was attractive to them. So it was a sense in which it sold itself. And there was a lot of talk about industrial problems being caused by lack of skills. And the Basic Skills Agency has invested millions in finding evidence that we have got basic skills problems and so on. And there are international quality standards...
- Gaye Has it marketed abroad?
- P 13 Yes and delivered abroad. I think certainly the Republic of Ireland, I think that's the correct name and I think New Zealand too. Massively successful project and all due credit to the hard work and foresight of the people who...
- Gaye Did you ask questions about it? You mentioned before we started interviewing that you had some worries about it.
- P 13 This was interesting because again this was a sort of competency-based course, so the learning outcomes were expressed using jargon like 'assessment criteria'. And there were aspects of the course which weren't crystal clear where the requirements appeared to be ambiguous which caused one or two queries and questions from the students.

- Gaye When you say the students you are talking about tutors.
- P 13 Tutors who are taking it. Actually some of the tutors didn't like the course. A lot of them thought it was very useful.
- Gaye Can you say what they disliked about it?
- P 13 People felt it didn't concentrate enough on numeracy and ESOL. Some people felt it didn't concentrate enough on numeracy and ESOL. But it has been changed since, modified since. And I think some people felt that they had provided evidence already but then were required to provide more evidence. This was due the ambiguity in the structure of the course. I think it's very difficult to express the outcomes of the course in terms of behaviour and all performance criteria in an accurate way. I do think that there are conceptual difficulties in doing it and that is one of the things I am studying in fact, the problems of criterion referencing.
- Gaye If you could explain what your studies are throwing up would be interesting.
- P 13 Well I have learnt 'criterion referencing' as a phrase dates from an American behaviourist psychologist working from the Navy called Robert Glaser. And it's now come to be used in this country very heavily to be associated with NVQ, GNVQ and competence-based assessment. If you actually read the original Robert Glaser was referring... his idea of a competence was being able to write a science report... completely different from how it's developed. But America has always used a testing, it's mandated objective testing. 'Objective' normally means you have right and wrong answer. You have a lot of multiple choice. But it also is used for a lot of intelligence testing in the American Army, for example. They wouldn't have you if your intelligence level was below a certain amount - unless they were at war in which case they lowered the requirement. This is quite fascinating really. But intelligence tests were widely discredited, not least because they were shown to be racist. This again is your positivist research. If you have a black man taking the IQ of a black man, the subject gets a higher IQ than if a white man does it. Now those tests are called Norm Referenced... because they were designed about norms and normally they would report the results with an average of 100 and a certain standard deviation according to the normal distribution curve. So one of the reasons these got discredited was because it was felt that it was felt that they were discriminatory. So the move to criterion referencing was on one level an attempt to assess people fairly by what they could do... in a less unjust manner. But you cannot really distinguish norm referencing and criterion referencing as clearly as is often done. Because some criteria underpins the norm. Your block design test on an IQ test, there is some norm of what intelligence is underpinning

the design of the tests. Some criteria by which people are assessed, Criteria referencing, has idea of norms. Look at our national qualification framework, there are norms all over the place. Norms about what people on different tracks can achieve, and norms about what qualifications at different levels should look like. The QCA has got general level descriptors for levels... So these in a sense are norms. If you scratch a criterion referenced framework you will find a norm underneath it. But also the minute you begin to specify a competency. These are big issues about criteria for standards; content standards and performance standards. ..is your criterion, to write an essay. Sooner or later you are going to end up with some norm of what that population of essay writers should be able to achieve. So it's very, very difficult. The best person on this I read is Butterfield. There is a chapter in a book called 'Criterion Referencing, Now you see it, now you don't'. And she has taken lots of examples.

Gaye Sue Butterfield?

P 13 Yes, I thought that was an excellent book.

Gaye She was at Birmingham.

P 13 That is a really, really useful book. The other thing I found really was Alison Wolf. She takes maths and shows... She has this thing about this supposed precision and shows that it's really very difficult even to get two different mathematical problems that are of equal difficulty. And you would think that if you could do it with anything you could do it with maths, you would think. So I got interested in all of those issues.

Gaye Are you more interested in numeracy than literacy?

P 13 *I am more interested in literacy, but I have to get interested in numeracy because I am trying to work in a positivist tradition and I have to be able to read statistics. I also tell people I am not very numerate but I have to be able to.*

Gaye And how do you find you yourself as a researcher coping with the positivist tradition?

P 13 *Well I think there is a role for positivist research. When people start talking about culture and so on, then its, yes it's socially constructive, this, that and the other. But things like pain and hunger aren't. I can see the point of accountability and trying to evaluate and assess by a whole range of techniques including statistical ones. But I think this is a good thing about the key skills really that we have to be able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of all approaches.*

- Gaye If you were going to?
- P 13 How would that feed back into my teaching.
- Gaye Because you were going to teach a prospective basic skills tutor. Can we get back to the ethos, to the underpinning issues which you think they should know before they give you the job from your own experiences? You talked about the partnership with learners. I was just wondering if you could extend on that a little more. How would you develop a partnership with a learner?
- P 13 Well its easier said than done I feel. There is something else that I have noticed that I feel very uncomfortable with. When we are talking about adults learning very often, being in basic skills there is something about that use of the word 'adults' that I am very uncomfortable with; particularly adult with basic skills classes. In itself there is something that I can't quite put my finger on. Perhaps it's because I have read so much about it, it seems to carry a lot of connotative baggage with it that I am unhappy with.
- Gaye The fact that they are adults?
- P 13 No it's just, it can almost be used pejoratively I think. I think there is something I am uncomfortable with.
- Gaye You're uncomfortable with the term 'adult basic skills' and 'adult basic education'?
- P 13 No it's specific uses of the word 'adults'. There are things that are said about adults in basic skills, or ways in which things are said that you wouldn't talk about an adult in a university or an adult on a management training course in quite the same tone of voice. You would need [name removed] really to have a good look at it, but there is just something there that struck me. I make subjective statements sometimes and that is one of them.
- Gaye That's important, that is the type of thing I am getting at. Adults being taught in basic skills classes... there is a different emphasis on the word... a different ethos to the word if you are talking about adults training to be adult literacy tutors and basic skills practitioners.
- P 13 Yes there is. I am certain there is but I can't quite put my finger on it. You would have to get [name removed] on it... Yes I would have to go away and think about that.

- Gaye Well if you can think about it I would be really grateful because when I send the transcript back to you I would like to expand on it.
- P 13 That is a thought I have often had.
- Gaye The way adults are taught on basic adult education classes.
- P 13 It probably stems from sensible motives actually. I think if people come to an adult basic skills class. My basic feeling is that they have taken a very difficult step. I know that is true having spoken to adults and observed adults. From the training I was given I did make that point, and I just think they deserve a really, really good service. This is a really boring and un-radical thing to say, but I just think they deserve to be taught.
- Gaye When you say 'a good service', do you think they have not been getting a good service?
- P 13 I think its perhaps been a bit variable really. Well I felt that the accreditation schedule that I was working with was making me teach badly.
- Gaye How did it make you teach badly?
- P 13 Because I had to assess by a certain criteria that I felt... some of them were absurd.
- Gaye Really?
- P 13 Definitely.
- Gaye Can you remember any of them at all?
- P 13 There was an element about descriptive writing. One problem with this course [FAME] is that it was designed for everybody. It was designed to cover ESOL and speakers of English as first language. So there's sorts of bits of grammar in it, although they said they didn't want explicit grammar teaching. There was a descriptive writing element, in which, I can't remember it now, but there was something about people had to understand some grammatical stuff about the types of words used in different grammatical writing. This appeared to come down to adjectives. So the assessment tasks involved giving people stories with the word 'nice' in, and they had to think of a replacement word, and that was assessed as a piece of descriptive writing. You could argue, perhaps The Basic Skills Agency with its vocational emphasis would feel adults had no business learning descriptive writing. I don't see why you shouldn't take an artistic and creative approach to literacy. I would say it could be a very good way of

developing people's sensitivity to the meanings of words. So people who were struggling to read and write any text that involves expressing meaning or writing in sentences, or reading frequently appearing words... will help them to get more fluent. So that was, because... what I did they would laugh at because I took a page of Dickens in that described Scrooge, read it through with the learner. The learner discussed it. I said what have you noticed about this writing? She commented that Dickens repeated himself a lot, which he did deliberately for dramatic effect and then suggested she wrote a description of Mrs Scrooge. I thoroughly enjoyed reading what she had written and she seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed having done it. But all the time she was practising her spelling, her writing in sentences, her self expression, her writing in paragraphs. I thought she produced a really good piece of writing. But for some reason the college thought it would take her 10 years before she could do GCSE. I felt quite strongly that this was not, somebody who could read for themselves. Dickens is hard. A page of Dickens, and then have a fairly good go at reproducing their style. She would have been able to get a GCSE a lot quicker than 10 years if well taught. That was my general feeling. It's a good job I am still not at that college isn't it?

Gaye

It's really interesting because some of the things that are coming out now, you believe in the partnership with the learner. You believe wherever possible using an artistic approach rather than a vocational approach.

P 13

I wouldn't shove an artistic approach down the throat of anybody who wasn't interested in it and didn't want it, because that would be counter productive and stupid. But I don't see why people... I am absolutely certain that people who are struggling with their handwriting, their spelling, their writing in sentences. Creative writing might be as good a way. I think you can learn more about the world from literature than you can from reading a lot of text books myself.

Gaye

So already some of the ethos which you think should underpin the curriculum for students is the artistic approach, student expression, creative writing if it's of use. It's all to do with the partnership of the learner.

P 13

Not always creative. It seems to me... beginning learners... you read jingles and rhymes because of the phonological awareness stuff. And it may not motivate all learners. A lot of adults aren't interested in fiction, they might be interested in reading manuals, stuff about their own hobbies. So you work with what the adults are interested in.

Gaye

I agree with you this is why I am using narratives.

- P 13            You work with what there is. But then there's no materials so you spend hours and hours creating materials on what they are interested in, because you cannot cover the whole range of... I was working with what the learner is interested in gardening. I could not find anything. This learner was working towards entry one I would say. You can spend hours preparing work for one learner.
- Gaye            Yes you have got the skills for entry level one, but its achieving them through a means that can take on board the student's interest.
- P 13            Yes.
- Gaye            It's funny you should say this because when I was an ABE co-ordinator. I had a student come in, I was interviewing a student, and he wanted to read the Icelandic Sagas. It was wonderful. It took me a lot of text adjustment for him, but we went from that.
- P 13            I had a learner interested in heraldry and I could tell him about the different things on the shields.
- Gaye            Were you able to adapt these to the performance criteria for the accreditation schemes?
- P 13            This was another thing about FAME that I was unhappy with. It was a good idea that it seemed to me had gone wrong in practice. A very good idea that the students should do a project (end of side one) un-directive project work in junior schools. Now I have missed most of that but I have seen it; kids getting stuff from books that they haven't read, re-worked, interpreted or selected and copying it out, and actually learning not very much in the course of it, which is where your study skills, your information skills, come in. Now failing this you would have a requirement for a project, but an awful lot of copying out and sticking in was done. And the criteria by which it was assessed were very strange. For example this learner had done a project on heraldry and she had written all kinds of things. Accounts of visits to armoury museums... There had been a lot of copying out of stuff which I think is fairly pointless myself. Although in conversation she had shown she understood a lot of it. And she had to have chapter headings to show that she could organise her work. I was told she had got to rewrite the chapter heading pages using much, much bigger writing because these were called 'flagging devices'. It was another absurdity from FAME English. And apparently the external moderator had commented before that if the chapter headings weren't written in big enough letters they weren't 'flagging' sufficiently effectively. That is absurd. That is totally and utterly absurd. The 'flagging devices' and I had never heard of them, and I spent a long time looking at linguistic books and texts books to see if this word "flagging

device” had any currency anywhere in the literature. And I looked at the manual and attempted to work out what a ‘flagging device’ was and decided anything that wasn’t a word or a coffee stain was a ‘flagging device’. They had to be able to highlight these ‘flagging devices’ in one of these things. And as somebody said to me if a paragraph is a flagging device, you had to be able to highlight more to get higher levels. So if you just highlighted the whole thing you would get the top possible level (laughs) because it was just absolutely absurd. And I also realised that by the criteria if you gave somebody something Arabic, possibly not Arabic, but certainly something in Italian or French, they would be able to highlight a large number of the ‘flagging devices’ without understanding a word of the texts. It was a totally and utterly bizarre. The manual for FAME which had got some beautiful grammatical errors in... Even more significant are those long sentences with one or more clause and the main clause in the middle rather than at the beginning of a sentence. How can you have the beginning of a sentence in the middle of a sentence? This manual just did my head in totally.

- Gaye How do you feel FAME compares with the other student accreditation like Wordpower and others?
- P 13 If the project-work... If there had been the time to give people the guidance. And if used well a project could be great. You can teach the ability to select information appropriate to the purpose; to collate information for more than one source, the use of simple note form, writing up from note form, All kind of things. But it wasn’t really assessed on sensible learning outcomes really, as far as I could see having looked at quite a lot of them. It had its strengths and its weaknesses. Wordpower isn’t as bad I don’t think, as it’s made out to be because it did have a bit where people could express ideas and feelings. So it did have... But a lot of them don’t have group work at the lower levels. And I don’t see why there shouldn’t be a group. They sort of start off and you talk to one other person at the bottom of the progression ladders. That’s silly. There should be the ability to speak with a group of people. That is actually very, very hard for some learners.
- Gaye I agree with that yes.
- P 13 At all levels. But I think possibly where FAME went wrong.
- Gaye Do you still use it now?
- P 13 I think it is still in use and there is a new version come out. There will be more difficulties there because one of the.
- Gaye I am just wondering with the new national curriculum.

- P 13                    There is a modified version so I think a lot of this will have been dealt with or reworked. But I suspect that a lot of the old materials that were used will simply be renumbered in line with the new bullet points. So whether it's all the changes that they want will have been achieved... There's a lot of good stuff in the new curriculum, but I think because FE tutors are very much trained in this 'little bit' thinking, they may be tempted to take a fragmented approach.
- Gaye                    It's about the underpinning knowledge necessary to achieving...
- P 13                    Well when you look at it in detail they try to put in a lot of stuff I think as underpinning knowledge which isn't necessarily underpinning knowledge, although it might be desirable knowledge. And so I think a lot of the stuff that's in it won't actually, might not get taught or assessed because assessment has a big effect. They are not assessing writing are they, in the key skills tests? But whether they will be assessed by portfolio I don't know.
- Gaye                    You said at one point that you thought adult literacy students, or adult basic skills students, or adult basic education students, which ever way you're looking at it, deserved a good service.
- P 13                    Now that's a big issue.
- Gaye                    It is a big issue. I am just trying to define a 'good service' and how volunteers fit in to that.
- P 13                    When I was a volunteer I was surprised at how much autonomy I was given and I felt that the way that everything was set up appeared to be designed for volunteers. I felt that this was why there were the shelves with labelled worksheets, because I felt, rightly, this was a system set up to manage volunteers. And it was, I think [name removed] has talked about "Death by worksheet". But I think it was possibly the management of volunteers by worksheets. This is how I.
- Gaye                    That's interesting.
- P 13                    But that was just a sense I tried to make of the situation in which I found myself. To be fair they gave me an awful lot of... well the student and I could negotiate a lot. But I did feel there were things that I had to do because they were required, and the criteria by which I was supposed to assess, that had an adverse effect on the quality of what I was delivering.
- Gaye                    What did you feel about the autonomy you were given, were you happy with that?

- P 13 I was happy with it because I felt reasonably confident and I knew that the student was happy with what I did. In fact she still sends me Christmas cards, so she must have been. And she's my reference. I give her as a reference. That's quite nice actually.
- Gaye That is excellent, yes.
- P 13 It was very nice of her to agree to do that.
- Gaye A reference for what?
- Karen Well if I apply for a teaching job.
- Gaye She is going to be a reference for you.
- P 13 Well if they want somebody who can work with adults then a former pupil seems to be a fairly good thing to put down. But somebody who has just got that qualification may not have been given the same freedom that I was really. In my experience of working with volunteers it's quite difficult. It can be difficult.
- Gaye It's just that with the qualifications for tutors coming out now, I heard it mention at a RaPAL conference the 'right of entitlement' because some people who were there, were complaining about the high level. You have to have a level four in English or numeracy now. Actually some people have actually stopped. Volunteer tutors have actually been stopped teaching because they haven't got a high enough level of English or maths. And when this was brought up.... Its upsetting lots of people who are tutors because they have not got level three or four in maths or English. Like for myself I teach GCSE maths. The old O-level maths which is the equivalent to a level two. And when this was mentioned at the RaPAL conference, someone was doing a workshop on the new qualification, she said people have the 'right of entitlement' so people have the best knowledgeable tutors as possible. And I said how are you going to do it? And she said well all this is going to be done by partnerships whereby teachers have to do their teaching of basic skills, they will have to take a basic skills qualification, but they will have the depth of maths necessary to teach.
- P 13 They have brought that in for teachers in schools now. I have got O-level maths. I did statistics at university so I can't be that innumerate really.
- Gaye But some people it's effecting, some people don't like using volunteers in their classes.

- P 13 Well there's an assumption that I was always unhappy with, that anybody could teach initial reading because we can all read. I am not convinced that that's the case. Even with a well motivated adult learner. There are perhaps issues, if you are thinking in terms of standard English really about how far... if you can't do it, you can teach it. But standard English need not necessarily be a big issue for all learners. It's not an issue for reading.
- Gaye Well I became and did my volunteer training there was a fundamental issue and ethos then. I was chosen as a volunteer because I was the right 'sort'. I didn't come across as being a school teacher. Some of the students had had a bad experience at school.
- P 13 Oh yes, they will have had.
- Gaye And they didn't want a teacherly approach.
- P 13 That's right.
- Gaye But now with the new qualification there is a more professionalisation of the work and I just wondered what you thought about that particular issue?
- P 13 It doesn't necessarily mean you're going to be more 'school teacherish', does it. Being professional needn't necessarily mean being 'school teacherish', whatever that means. I will just have a moan about the rubbishing of schools because we were persistently taught on the City and Guilds 928...whatever it was... that these people would have had that experience in schools and I am sure some of the people I have taught in schools will have had bad experiences. I have had bad experiences. But this can be linked I think to the general rubbishing of the school system of which there was a lot under the Thatcher years; very often labelled as trendy Left Wing Teachers. And you can read articles now that say we have got rid of all those teachers. We brought the national curriculum in and it drove them out. Of course the Basic Skills Agency as part of its own survival technique is part of that culture I feel. I think the evidence from the National Foundation of Educational Research really is that this supposed decline in standards was a figment.... of the... certain political characters really. *The positivist evidence did not show that it had ever taken place, this alleged drop in standards in schools. I felt that, I read something more recently which actually was a bit more honest, and it said "allow learners to blame schools. It may make them feel better" which I thought put it in a slightly more tactful way.* That is a personal.
- Gaye We were talking at the RaPAL Conference about how volunteers were not allowed to teach because they hadn't got the Level three qualifications.

There are a lot of people who are now floating around and a lot of volunteers will have to take quite hard...

P 13 They won't even let people be a volunteer now without...

Gaye That is the impression I am getting. It's going to be interesting to see what arises.

P 13 They will APEL a lot of people... People have to know all kinds of terminology know don't they?

Gaye A lot of people said it's broke the profession now that it is being professionalised. Now, because people have not got the qualifications, can't teach. In those days, when I first started there was a lot of socio-political influence about being a volunteer trainer. And the emphasis now is such more to curriculum content about the nature of basic skills, the nature of reading and writing. That wasn't that much involved when I first started.

P 13 *I am not opposed to socio-political stuff but I do object that they rubbish technicist approaches to teaching reading and writing. But I do think there are good ways of going about it and bad ways of going about it. I have to say I am not happy with the approach in the National Curriculum either. That comes from behaviourist psychology as well, the emphasis on objectives and that's all about performance management and accountability. And a lot of the explicit grammatical knowledge that is required in schools, there is no evidence that it increases people's competence. The positivist evidence suggests that it doesn't. George Hillocks they taught standard grammar, transformational grammar, all different kinds. This is at high levels and just in terms of does it help people to write better sentences. The answer that they came up with was "no it didn't really". In fact teaching things like that is an art. There is no science to it really. There is just silly ways of doing it. So I am not opposed to what might be criticised as technicist or cognitive psychology approaches because I think people want to come. As I said before they want to learn to read and write and not be lectured on political this, that and the other, do they? This is a very conservative thing to say. But I believe that the communist, Gramsci, spent his time in prison writing letters complaining that his children weren't being taught spelling and punctuation in school.*

Gaye I didn't know that.

P 13 It's a good one, isn't it. He objected to the progressive educational methods that the fascist were introducing in Italy. Did you hear that?

Gaye I knew he was in prison.

P 13 But they don't tell you that he complained about his kids not being taught spelling and punctuation in schools do they? These are the drama theory arguments really. But I think the other interesting issue for me is the stuff about dyslexia because a dyslexia specialist... (a) does it exist? And there are a whole load of arguments about that. There is a load of, I will say this, glib superficialities around, learning styles and dyslexia in FE. And it's very irritating. I've spent a lot of time looking at the books about it and I have just come to the conclusion if somebody comes to me and says they are dyslexic, it means absolutely nothing, because I don't know how they have been assessed. Who has assessed them; if they have spent 2 minutes, 10 minutes. The same with learning styles; I was instructed again on a pre-prepared course that I had to deliver. I had a one side questionnaire that seemed to have been photocopied out of some text book. "Do you like to learn with a record player on, in quiet or by... This was evidently... There were 20 questions on this and at the end of this the learner and I was supposed to understand her learning style; a load of rubbish; an absolute load of rubbish. And that's straight out of City and Guilds 9285 isn't it, because there is a requirement in there for learning. You end up with tokenist, useless rubbish. So there are so many different ideas of dyslexia whether it's biological or not, even that can be socially constructed on some views. *But the so-called dyslexia specialists very much like structured phonics approaches which generally are seen as being... don't ask me why, it's all politicised, on the whole phonics tends to be associated with Right Wing approaches.* Are you aware of this?

Gaye Yes.

P 13 But if we have to teach dyslexics using the specialist methods recommended by a lot of dyslexia specialists. This comes partly out of, traditionally you teach somebody a little bit of something, and if you are looking for a bit you look for phonics. But if you start looking at phonics that all falls to pieces fairly rapidly. *There is going to be an awful lot very bad phonics teaching because of the adult basic skills curriculum I think. But I would say if a phonic approach helps somebody, I don't care if it's Right Wing or Left Wing. To me some things it's silly to politicise.* Those are issues I would have thought though fully for myself. It's not that I am not a none-political animal but some things irritate me when I think politicisation isn't particularly helpful.

Gaye Looking at some of the ethos which you say should underpins the teaching of students, as well as good service you mentioned the artistic approach as well as... the partnership with the learner. And rather than technical it can be creative as well but you don't decry the technician approach.

- P 13 No, no.
- Gaye You mentioned equal opportunities, some of this ethos...there are others that you have said on tape, I was just wondering if this would apply to the training of prospective tutors as well as students. For instance, should they have a good service, Should there be a partnership with prospective tutors and their educators etc?
- P 13 These are interesting. You have obviously thought about this a lot. The other thing here that I was introduced to is a very much task based approach to teaching. There was definitely a sense for me of overlap between social support and teaching. And there are these checklists, what do you want to do? Do you want to be able to write a letter, fill in forms, this kind of checklist? And I have actually tried asking people that kind of question and they say, "No I just want to learn to read. I just want to learn to write". That is quite interesting.
- Gaye I was just trying to get out whether you thought these sort of things applied to prospective tutors as well as adult literacy and basic skills students, this idea about partnership with the learner.
- P 13 I think it's different because, it's different in the sense that you are taught that adults are coming to basic skills class because they have in a sense a very real life need. Employment is the big thing, I think employment is probably structural and political and not...we are not allowed to tinker with the economy anymore and create jobs for people. I have these old fashioned ideas that you should really and that there should be... We should make a society in which everybody should. How do you feel?
- Gaye I do.
- P 13 There is a lot of sense in negotiating with the learner about what their needs are.
- Gaye Has this happened in your own training do you think, when you trained as a tutor? Did people negotiate with you?
- P 13 Oh no, no, I don't think so. Well no, they wanted me to take the 9285. Some of these colleges are businesses; they have to market the products they've got. That's how I see it. That might be a bit cynical. They are very much, they have to market. Well presumably they get funded for training people. So common sense suggests there will be all kinds of factors influencing what you are trained in. I could tell you what I would like more training on in that sense; people with learning difficulties. I have been told you're not allowed to say special needs in adult education. We have to say

learning difficulties, particularly people with language difficulties, because I have been working with some learners who have language difficulties. There are loads of issues there I think. Ethical issues about people's medical confidentiality as well, which I would absolutely 100% respect. Although from time to time I have felt if I had more insight into, the medicalisation of things... Those are ethical issues as well. Like the more confident, that what I was doing was beneficial to the learner if I had more understanding of the learner. Not all learners....

Gaye So when you did your own thing were you allowed to negotiate any elements of the course that you did?

P 13 Well in a sense the evidence I have put in of work I'd done was I suppose. You had a certain degree of choice. You have to simplify some of it.

Gaye You couldn't change an actual performance criteria?

P 13 No you couldn't. I never understood them actually. They're not clear I don't think. You weren't sure what level of competence was required.

Gaye .... about the criteria.

P 13 When I did the 9281 there was a booklet; no we didn't even that until the last day. There is a booklet with performance criteria in and you have to fill it in. Do you know the one I mean?

Gaye Probably, its loads and loads of years since I did it.

P 13 This booklet says City and Guilds on the front and its got the performance criteria and then you have to say which bits of the course you think...apparently just attending some of the sessions counts as meeting some of the criteria because you could just put the notes of what you've done on the sessions. They didn't actually really test whether you had understood it, it seemed to me. You just put the handouts in and that was evidence. Handouts from the course were acceptable, evidence that seemed a bit weird to me. You had to put them all in. They assumed you'd learned just by being present in that sense, but we didn't see that until the last day. It was a final session where she went through and told us what we could write where and these booklets. But I have since found out you are supposed to go away and work out what your own evidence is supposed to be and I think generate it.

Gaye I am going to stop there, you have given me loads of stuff.

P 13 You don't come to an adult literacy class to find out causes of their oppression. I just think I am impatient of left wing trendies who... it seems to me there is a lot of Left Wing. There is a potential for Left Wing trendies to exploit the unemployed basically. I think there is a potential for people to one way or another to exploit. I do.

Gaye *That is interesting because of your Marxist background.*

P 13 *Well I am rebellious and I rebelled against it.*

Gaye So you do you think Freire and conscientiation ???

P 13 Well that is the idea of false consciousness which is a Marxist idea linked with class consciousness which is supposedly linked with... I don't know. If you have been brought up like that you can't help thinking like that yourself. But this takes us back to what Eagleton says, that is the source of. Terry Eagleton, have you not read Terry Eagleton, he has at least got a sense of humour.

Gaye Where is he based?

P 13 I think he's in Ireland now. Yes I just feel there's a lot.

Gaye Where have you felt it? Did you feel it in your own volunteer training? Did you feel it when you worked here, at Lancaster on the work-based training? In your own research when you did your own research?

P 13 I don't know where I felt it but I have read about it since, in the discussions of something close to it, in discussions about using life histories and stuff in research. I think those are discussions about researchers exploiting people. And they talk about collaborative research don't they? But I wonder whose name goes on and who gets the royalties myself. On a very crude level that's one set of concerns really.

#### STOPPED TAPE AND STARTED AGAIN

Gaye We are talking about literacy as skills and literacy as practices.

P 13 In a sense it's just a true thing to say that anything you do is for social reasons. There are skills involved in literacy and I've seen it argued that above a certain level there are no transferable literacy skills. In particular by an American called [name removed] whose heavily involved in the work place literacy. That is interesting because it flatly contradicts all the stuff about key skills which is supposed to be transferable. In fact, key skills is supposed to be the glue that sticks the whole framework together.

- Gaye What were you saying about people who are talking politics? People who talk about literacy practices are talking politics
- P 13 It goes back to all these arguments that I remember in my initial training about Vygotsky. Well it links in with loads of stuff really, the relationship between thought and language on a broader level. You are teaching people skills which they can apply in different situations and I think some linguists want to change the social order and therefore. Well they just see anything in terms of linguistics really. It can be very, as I said (unclear) its all language and nothing is real, which is [name removed]. Some of the arguments that literacy is contextualised are put forward by people who are in the business of selling contextualised bits of literacy, such as [name removed] for example. So *I think there are transferable skills* that you probably would need in terms of the craft which OK, is a cultural thing. These are the arguments that the genre theorists come up with. There are different sets of joined up theory arguments. Have you read any Joane Rothery?
- Gaye No.
- P 13 She said the narrative is the ideology of capitalist society but she evidently hasn't read the Bible or the Greek myths. But you get bits of that, bits that creeping in.
- Gaye What is she called again?
- P 13 Joan Rothery. There is a lot of it comes out of Australia. She would call me a Romantic. She said [narrative is] something to do with the ideology of capitalist society, because it's individualistic, the idea that you have a story and if somebody does something it changes something. She said it was linked in the capitalist individualism. You can write down that my professors thinks Kant comes into this somewhere.
- Gaye So [name omitted] thinks Kant.
- P 13 It's about we perceive time and space and therefore if you have got time and space you have got a story. I think this is part of it. That's about the philosophy of perception as well. There are strong and weak theories of how far language determines thought.
- Gaye Time and place, you have a story.
- P 13 That is a very oversimplified version. He said something far more intelligent than that. He's got brains in his spit, [name removed] has, it terrifies me.

- Gaye How did you feel about the experience of talking about this?
- P 13 Odd really. Interesting to see what it comes back like, I shall wince with embarrassment. I can put this in afterwards. I have a certain, if I feel if somebody with very highly developed literacy skills, self evidently your developed literacy skills is saying I shouldn't be teaching literacy skills to somebody. Then that irritates me. I think OK you go out and live without all your literacy skills, your articulateness, your cultural knowledge, your etc, etc, before you tell me not to go and try and help people to learn to read. Do you understand that point?
- Gaye Yes.
- P 13 I don't know why I am doing an academic course really. I was bored. Somebody asked me that the other day and I said oh its better than being a bored housewife.
- Gaye What is your research exactly? Assessment?
- P 13 To be very, very specific my idea was to have a look at the accreditations. I got interested in the accreditations and have a look at the pre-Moser, and I have got a collection of the ones that come afterwards, and just to look at them in terms of behaviourist influences. So there are lots of horses that have come out of the behaviourist stable, because the behaviourist, there is behaviourist philosophy, is there a ghost in the machine still. And again there are behaviourist approaches to teaching language which is very much a little bit at a time, which to me is about skills and integration which is where you get... They are now talking terms of text word and sentence level and all that. That comes out of behaviourist psychology. Then of course there is all the NVQ type... that comes out of behaviourist psychology. And the assessment methodology comes out of behaviourist psychology. So I keep looking at things that say if this is real adult basic skills we should be taking a social radical, whatever, approach. I don't feel inclined to follow that line of thought myself really.
- Gaye We will stop it there. Thank you. End of interview.

## Participant Fourteen (Lancashire): July 2002 at home.

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P 14 My name is [removed] and I'm just going to talk about my experiences as an Adult Education Tutor.

My formal education was very standard; grammar school and then I went to University and did a degree in English. Teaching seemed to come naturally and it seemed to be the automatic thing to do... so I went on to do a fourth year, did a PGCE and got a job in a direct grant school; a second in an English department. It was a girl's school, they were well behaved. There were no discipline problems whatsoever. My work load was mainly A Levels and GCE (as was in those days). It was very varied, very interesting, very literary, very disciplined and although I would have hated to go to the actual school it was wonderful to teach there because the kids were so good.

I left because in those days you couldn't have qualified teacher status if you worked in a direct grant school. You had to work in a comprehensive school. So for that reason I got out and went into a comprehensive school as head of English... and I was head of English for three years; head of an English... well it was a Humanities Faculty really and covered languages as well as English, that was fine. Then I gave that up to have children. Because I knew I would miss the teaching, I had taken on an evening class, teaching adults... A-Level. I did that for about three or four years...and I continued that... teaching A Level at night to keep my sanity. At some stage when my child was about three, somebody said in the college that they were stuck and they needed somebody to teach an advanced ESOL class and all I would have to do was chatter to people and it would be all right. Keep them talking and would I do an hour's session. So I did this session, really enjoyed it ... and they took me on and gave me more work. The work wasn't really working towards any accreditation. They were conversation classes and the whole thing was very loose. People came and went and... it was very enjoyable. I might have done about four hours a week maximum. Then I was asked to do one at [name removed] College in Chorley and... which I'd never heard of. I went along and started a class there, which was very easy, people came along... did a bit of English and we worked our way through books. At this time it was suggested that I get a qualification and I did the RSA certificate in what is now I suppose EFL... but English as a second language. While I was at [name removed] during that first year... my line manager suggested that there was a good course at Warrington... and this was the RSA diploma in teaching literacy to Adults... something which I had never thought about. To do that course I had to have a class which brought me into contact with Gaye... and Gaye said she would find me a class so that I would be able to go on this course. I took on a class. I think it was...Lostock Hall...wasn't it?

GH. Yes, it was Lostock Hall. That was a long time ago.

P 14 .... and to Lostock Hall came a mixture of people, some second language people

... a lady who had dyslexia and who had never admitted it. Do you remember that lady?

GH Yes I can.

P 14 She is still going strong... and various people came. *The general ethos seemed to be one of... bringing people back into education, not embarrassing them, not exposing them... fostering them. There was always the fear that we would be empowering people. And might empower people... women who had been dominated by husbands who could do all the reading and writing and who might be in the background... and they thought if we gave them literacy skills we might empower them and come between their marriages. So everything was... very very... pussy footing and very careful and... extremely enjoyable... not very structured, very student centred ...and people learnt ...at their pace. It was all individual work. We did very little group work. Then bit my bit... various schemes were introduced such as FAME [Foundation Accreditation in Maths and English] which gave us a format to work to. This was competency-based, this was through the Open College and gave people a structure that they could work through. This worked really well... because ... the FAME system worked very well indeed because it is quite loose, you can adapt it enormously to students' needs and yet it gave them ambition, it gave them a possibly of getting a piece of paper at the end of it ...and gave some structure to the actual lessons. At this time along came 9285 [staff training] and the people who had sort of... done ABE... as a sort of natural progression out of their... people who had not been qualified suddenly had to have qualifications... put it that way... and the 9285 was introduced. Now the 9285... I was saved from. I'm saying saved from for the simple reason... because the people who did it didn't particularly enjoy it because it was very much a case of proving the skills that you already had... very paper based... rather than teaching you new skills. Now I, having done the RSA diploma which was wonderful, it was a taught course and I learnt an awful lot, not only about teaching methods but about the background to literacy... work done in other countries... the pioneers of adult literacy and... I enjoyed that enormously. My feeling about the 9285 was that it was more or less if you can do it you record it and... you get the marks for what you can do... rather than actually learning anything new...*

GH Can you remember what the system of underlying ethos of the 9285... as ...a tutor was like?

P 14 No I didn't teach it.

GH You remember it being introduced. Can you remember what the underlying ethos /philosophy was.....?

P 14 I didn't have an awful lot to do with the 9285. I taught 9281 to volunteers, that was the basic volunteer one but I didn't actually go through the 9285.

- GH Yes. You talked about doing the RSA diploma and the wide view it gave you.
- P 14 Yes, enormously wide
- GH In literacy... comparing that, can you re-emphasize what the difference was between that and the new 9285.
- P 14 Well in the 9285 competence based ....so that...
- GH So what did competence based mean to you? What did it involve?
- P 14 Competence based presumably means that you prove that you can do various things ... and give evidence(?)... from a structure.
- GH. Carry on Jackie...I seem to have stopped you in full flow.
- P 14 It's because I actually didn't do the 9285, but certainly people I know who did it... didn't find that they learnt a lot from it. Everybody said they jumped through hoops ... you had to do this and you had to do that and there ... was a lot of paper work... not particularly stimulating and... just reiterated what they already did where as the experience I had... had been very stimulating, it made you think ... but the 9285 seemed very dead and I was just glad I missed it. I'm glad I didn't have anything to do with it because the others were much livelier and... also it was taught on a one session a week. It is difficult for me to say because I don't know exactly how much tutor input there was on the 9285 ... but certainly from people I know who had done it they didn't rate it and found it tiring... you know...not fresh. Is that OK?
- GH. That's fine. Thank you. Carry on.
- P 14. I don't know from here...I did ESOL classes and ESOL classes were...again were... we didn't have at that stage, we didn't have any qualification aims at all with the students. The only qualification aims we had at ESOL were literacy based, they put them through FAME if necessary but we ... worked on individual bases, in classes...used volunteers an awful lot because we had to,...we sort of ..... different students at totally different levels of language, we had to use volunteers... *and it worked very well I think in that we got to know the people, we knew them as human beings, we got to know ... problems... au pairs having difficulties with families, very, very ... socially based, the student was very important... the learning was important but only in a sort of human context ... but it was very important that they were happy and we did as much as we could to help them out ...* and that's the way the ABE classes went on even though as qualification aims became tighter, as they have done now, and everybody has to have a qualification, and there came a time when everybody had to either do FAME or ABE or Word Power and that was very, very

restrictive. [Learner's name removed], who I mentioned before who is a very good person to talk about. [name removed] was a dyslexic dame... a vicars wife and who had to face up to her problems with dyslexia, which she did and she came out of it well... and she absolutely blossomed and she did FAME level 3, FAME level 4, and... eventually, after several years... but then she got to the start were we got her through Word Power 2 and she was very good at it but she came to the stage where there was no other qualification that she could go for other than Word Power Level 3 which is very, very academic. *And she felt very, very much that she was been stifled, that she wasn't... able to progress but at that stage they introduced... when you can work to your own goals. You could specify student's goals and work towards those goals and get something for that and therefore they introduced the Runshaw College Certificates... which meant that [name removed] now can, if she wants, work towards a particular goal, it means she doesn't have... She can work on her speaking or listening skills. She can work towards a greater competency in writing essays and she is not as hidebound by the full Word Power Structure, so it's made that easier. We are sort of becoming aware of students who have been around for a long time. I have a student who had a brain haemorrhage and she comes ...and... in all honesty she is not progressing and we recognise that in pockets ... there were always people around who were not progressing and who were tending to keep on. They were going sideways and they were tending to keep them on because it was so important to them, the social involvement was so important and the actual coming to the class was an important part of their lives... but as far as actual learning was going - if you put hand on heart - they weren't actually learning a lot and... what is happening now with the introduction of the new curriculum and the recognition that if we look at the actual progress that ABE students make, on the whole, it is not very great. We are having a change of emphasis altogether, classes are becoming shorter, we are having to work towards the new curriculum which is another way of working altogether... but the ethos we have been told has to change... and that people have to progress. There has got to be progressions, there has to be monitored progression and possibly we are going to have to treat our classes entirely differently... that they are, for example, going to have to start on time and there is going to be a lot group teaching because analysis has shown that if you work with eight individual people over a two hour period you actually get about... four, five or six minutes direct teaching and the rest of the time you are worrying about pouring coffee and... how are you getting on and how is your Susan doing at school sort of thing. So as far as teaching, the amount of teaching per person goes, students are not getting a good deal ... and one way of rectifying this... is by doing group work. Now I've done group work with a class... I had a FAME level 4 class on a Thursday and the way we work it... the first hour we did... it was tutor taught as in schools, near the blackboard or group work and... after that they got on with their own work for an hour ...and it worked extremely well and that sort of paradigm is now being introduced right across ABE... that we are going to have an hour initially... start on time... an hour initially where we all work together in a group and then for the other hour people work individually. Now this obviously has to relate to people's individual goals. So what you have to do you have to look at peoples*

individual goals and see what group work brings in as many of those goals as possible. Now, if they are reading... for example, if you are doing something on instructions... it should be possible to do some work on instructions and look at the aspects of an instruction... that are common like... instruction words, like doing things in order, like using illustrations, like putting things in your list, like simplification, that all those things are there and the theory is that if you are working on this, people can work at it at different levels. They can do gap filling with their ... level 1 or 2, they could do alphabetical order and lists and instructions, they could put instructions in alphabetical order, they could work on punctuation and do capital letters and full stops of lists. Some people could look at the imperative verbs. Some people could write a list of instructions on how to make a cake. Somebody could look at the vocabulary used in instructions on the back of microwave packets, the sort of terminology... you could do it on different levels, so the idea is to have one hour where you take the thing like that but the work that goes of it is varied and fits into people's individual goals. .. *We have had a meeting on this recently and... what has trickled through from the training is that possibly that this is the line that is given... that possibly we have been pussy footing to much with people and we've been in a effort to be so nice to people and to retain people and not to frighten them off, we have in fact possibly done them a disservice by not challenging them enough, by not giving them the opportunity to progress as much as they could.*

GH You say the training was very popular, has this trickled out from the training?

P 14 The national curriculum for E .... the training is now been offered to all ABE practitioners who I think does up to about 6 hours or more.

GH Have they taken it on?

P 14 I've taken it, we did three days about two weeks since at the Jarvis. It is a residential course and we were taken through the curriculum bit by bit and shown how it works on Word ,Text, Sentence, Word and the numbering systems. A lot of ideas really. But this training has only been given to a few people in the department and it now has to go out to the ABE practitioners who just do maybe one hour or two hours a week or one class of two hours.

GH Are you going to be involved in the...?

P 14 No, No.

No [name removed] who is a trainer on the course will be doing it. She is saying we are going to have to change our attitudes to students although it is going to be student centred, even we might have to do assertiveness training.

GH Do what sort of training?

- P 14 Assertiveness training. Instead of being so nice and kind and wonderful to students we are going to have to start being a bit harder on them because we have to have results and we have got to show progression.
- GH Can I go back to... As you know I'm looking at the ethos which underlies professional developments. You have talked a lot about the students. I'm interested in the training you have had. Does the term reflective practice mean anything to you?
- P 14 No afraid not. I've heard of the term.
- GH Talk about when you heard of it?
- P 14 No it doesn't no. It doesn't mean anything to me. I have heard the term but it doesn't mean anything to me. The training I've had. I haven't had ... since doing the diploma, the training I've done has been just in-service training.
- GH I was thinking about the ethos.....You've talked about competency and there is also another ethos called the directive practice.
- P 14 When I did my PGCE at Leeds I got a...commendation for practical teaching and I didn't know I was good but it turned out that I could do it. What I used to do, I didn't have any pattern... but very often I would make up my mind what I was going to do on the way upstairs and I can remember one morning ... an oil rig collapsed in the North Sea and.. I immediately thought, other.... and did a lesson based on Aussie Manies nothing else remains the low level sand stretches far away and talked about the vanity of materials and the vanity of man and there was an ability to do that sort of thing and I think some of the lessons were bloody good. I think they were really good but they were very much in the moment and although the lesson itself was structured the lesson itself did not necessarily fit into a wider framework... and I think when it works well that sort of teaching is fantastic but it doesn't always work well. There is a possibility that things are missed, no it's not, if you are awake things are not missed. There is a possibility that some teachers would miss things and there isn't the crutch of typed curriculum as there is now I suppose in national curriculum... as there is in competency based accreditation. I can't help feeling that in the old days before competency based accreditation came in there was more inspiration, there was more excitement, there was more professional adventure in it, but working with the types of curriculum... working with a tighter competency based does mean that everything is covered so there are pros and cons. Certainly, the training I had for secondary and the parts I did for a PGCE seeing most of which was totally and utterly boring apart from one afternoon where I did English Language and that was utterly inspiring, that was wonderful but... that afternoon, the RSA diploma that I did were inspiring and thought provoking and energy giving.. and it is the enthusiasm that carries the student forward,

it is the enthusiasm for teaching that makes it more possible. People want to be teachers if there is enthusiasm....and its inspiring.....

The End.

## Participant Fifteen (ESOL London): 22 July 2002 at work

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GH Thank you for agreeing to being interviewed at such a short notice, but the fact is I was coming down to London and I didn't want to miss the opportunity and [name removed] has very kindly agreed, so thank you. Okay [name removed]? I'm just trying to look at the back of it [tape recorder] in case there's a fault.

P 15 Oh you're just checking it?

GH Right, do you feel ready to start?

P 15 I think so.

GH Don't worry if you think, "Oh god I'm 'rabbiting' on here" because that's what I want you to do, and I'll pick out the tape what I need.

P 15 Yeah, you need to get me talking.

GH Do switch it off whenever you feel like it.

P 15 Basically I was trained as an ESOL teacher and so I think of those...I've been working as a basic skills teacher trainer since 1990 on accredited courses, okay. So I've been teaching accredited basic skills teacher training for a long time. As a practitioner I probably date back to 79/80.

GH That's like me.

P 15 I was probably involved in some training with other colleagues from about 1985 onwards. I would say, and I think an awful lot of the values that underpin what I think needs doing. Some of it comes from just the reality of being a teacher, and you can see what learners need and what the system is not doing. But also it is definitely influenced by the particular pattern of training that I went through. I started off doing one of those four-week crash courses in EFL, never with any intention of teaching EFL. I knew what I was going to do; I already had the part-time work lined up. I had some friends and colleagues who were already working with Vietnamese refugees, that were coming in at that time, and that's what I was going to do. And, you know, ESOL teacher training as such hadn't been developed at that stage. So you just did that because at least then, you knew how to teach language, or you knew the beginnings of it and you went off and learnt the rest. I'm not singing any praises of that..It was just a starting point on how to jump in the deep end.

GH Did you train for four weeks?

P 15 Yeah. It's not significant really... but several years later I did the diploma, the RSA [Royal Society of Arts] diploma in TEFL [Teaching English as a Foreign Language]... you know teaching English in second language in further adult community education. That was brilliant, absolutely brilliant course.

GH What year was that?

P 15 1984-1985.

GH Right.

P 15 I did that at Westminster College, it was a fabulous course, really brilliant. I mean I put off doing it. You know what it's like when you're a part-time worker and you think 'oh god, and it was wonderful'. I would think from that moment on, I got involved in some of the training out of doing that course. I then,...and the situation in those days in London with the ILEA was... basically if you wanted a full-time job... I was in to a full-time job by a month in to the course. I wouldn't have got that job if I hadn't have been doing that course.

GH Really.

P 15 You didn't get... because they wanted the people who were doing the right training. I've talked to a lot of other people since who said 'oh yeah I got a job after I had done the Dip'. But, in my case I think I was in to a full-time job by November even though I started it in September. The guy who was leading the team that I was working on, took a long holiday to go to Australia so somebody had to do it. So not only was I straight in to a full-time job I think I was managing, we had about 60 students, all 16-19 split in to four . It was a big programme.

GH You said there were four different sub groups?

P 15 ...Within it, yeah...four or five groups, depending on different bits of the timetable. But after that full time job the college said 'oh well you haven't got a job. you had better go and train as a teacher'. So I was then sent on a part-time CertEd on secondment one day a week. Well not secondment, day release for two years. I have never been so bored in my life. I mean actually, funny enough one of my kids was born in the middle of those two years and even though I took maternity leave... obviously, I didn't take any time off from the course because I couldn't face the thought of it been delayed another year. I used to cart her along in her Moses basket. It was lip service for something... I recycled all the assignments that I had done before and they thought they were wonderful. I mean on the specialist's schools I had eight supervised teaching assessments, they'd come and watch. They really put you through your paces on the feedback about 'oh why were you doing this and why didn't you think about that', you know really changing your practice.

GH Took you to task, yeah.

P 15 And on that CertEd I go two visits, 'thank you that was very interesting'. They didn't know anything about the area. They didn't know about how to teach language at that level. So they had no idea. It was just... all they were looking for was had you planned your lesson, had you done that, had you done that, did you sort of manage the outline of the process properly. Not about how you were actually challenging learners, how they were structured, and whether they were learning, none of that. It was all kind of superficial stuff about the shape and management of a learning environment. It was like...

GH You said you really enjoyed the RSA diploma and I was just wondering what was so good about it.

P 15 Because it was thorough, in-depth, addressed what you were doing, made you think, introduced you to theories that shifted the way you thought about your work, and because the practical element was completely built in, and because the same person that had taught you about this and that and the other came to watch you teach and made you make the connection between theory and practice. If they came to see you and you weren't actually implementing what was being discussed in the course... there was incredible feedback.

GH You say theories, I'm not actually asking you to remember theories. Can you think what ethos you took from that?

P 15 No.

GH Don't worry about it.

P 15 I don't know how to put a name on it really. For example, I was working with students who were fifteen to nineteen who were recently arrived refugees and who had interrupted... disrupted education and needed to get back into the system. You know they weren't just learning English. They needed to reconnect. We reckoned we could get them into university by the time they were nineteen or twenty, so you know given the s [unclear] they might have been on, they were delayed. We weren't just doing English. They had a whole curriculum and they had everything, you know they had maths and science and computer skills...that's' what it was called in those days wasn't it? and options in whatever options they wanted to take, and progression on to other courses and all of that... so for example one of the theories by [name removed] was about comprehensible input. You know... learning language through other things so it's very relevant, not like stuck in the classroom teaching English.

GH That's interesting.

- P 15 He did a lot of research in Canadian stuff where they were just... not quite emotion but you know... it's different, I can't remember the details. I think all of that affected...I think what's going on at the moment is very interesting because it's bringing together the different traditions of mainstream teacher training with specialist teacher training for the first time. This is still not recognised and this is. But this makes you a good classroom teacher in specialist area and this doesn't. Obviously, that's me talking about something about twenty years ago. But then I was working and there's no point employing people who have been on these courses.
- GH ... just done a CertEd. What's happening now? I'm saying this just for the tape. Is a combination of what you found good in the RSA diploma been combined with the teaching methods of the CertEd?
- P 15 No that's not what I'm saying.
- GH Your saying what's happening now is a combination of what's good?
- HC No, no, no. What I'm saying is coming together with two different streams historically.
- GH Right!
- P 15 You know the Subject specification and the FENTO standards
- GH Yes we talked about this at your workshop?
- P 15 Yes. I think interestingly I think they both have things to learn from each other because people in specialist teacher training don't understand some of the stuff that's in the generic stuff, they don't realise it's there.
- GH Yeah.
- P 15 But they have... they both look down on each other. It's quite remarkable. You talk to people who deliver Cert Eds who think that anybody who is involved in basic skills teacher training are training do-gooders, helping people.
- GH Is that's still going on?
- P 15 Oh yes, I've found that alive and well now in people who deliver Cert .Eds. They think they're doing it properly and all those other courses are badly eaten (?) about the edges, helping people help people. You talk to people who come from the specialist tradition and they think this lot haven't got a clue about methodology and how to do it. You know what I mean, it's all about theory and generality.

- GH It must be very difficult for you to ...well...trying to put forward what's happening now to different groups of people.
- P 15 No. They've got to talk to each other.
- GH Yes. Have you found any negative reactions from your presentations when you've been talking to them?
- P 15 To whom?
- GH If you were talking to a group of specialists and a group of generalists ...do you get any sort of kick back, negatives, positives or anything?
- P 15 They recognise that that is the case usually.
- GH I was trying to think of some of the comments that I heard at your workshop because one or two very worried people...
- P 15 That's the RaPAL one isn't it?
- GH Yes. Afterwards some thought they were going to be done out of a job with this business where people have to communicate and share with other members of staff. What do you think was the word you used?
- P 15 I can't remember, I said they would have to talk to each other.
- GH They had to talk to each other.
- P 15 You said they thought they were going to be done out of a job, that's quite interesting. I can't see why because they all need each other. Neither can do the whole thing on their own, and they do need each other and they don't necessarily understand that yet. Most of the questions and worries you get is anxiety... it's not yet... because it's the time of change.
- GH Do you think people have to have level 3 or 4 in English and Maths or something...? I'm trying to think of the word you used at your workshop when you said that the responsibility for delivery will be shared within the institutions and you've got to, as you say, people will have to talk to each other and you have to get the specialists in.
- P 15 Yes, I was talking to the specialists there wasn't I?
- GH Yes.

P 15 They need you. I don't know... Okay moving on from that really, that's skipping from the 80s to now. But there is actually. I got involved in teacher training... Oh I've taught them all. I've taught 9281, 9285, 730, RSA certificates. I haven't taught the diploma, I've actually never did that.

GH The initial levels?

P 15 Yeah, One could write a thesis about the nuances answers of what's right and what's wrong with 9281 and the 9285.

GH We could put that down if you like. I'm quite interested in hearing that because I've had quite a few more comments about that one, and it does seem to be a key theme.

P 15 Yeah. But everyone says the same things don't they? 9281 was created for volunteers. Why did everyone use it to train teachers, because there was nothing else. Insofar as it went, it was useful except of course it's so un-standardised, and it varies from a course that's taking two weekends - because it only says 30 hours in the book - to a course it's taken all year part-time and it actually had some very good skills develop within it. It is chalk and cheese, and it's never been part of the City and Guilds remit or they haven't taken it on board to standardise between the centres particularly. You know, you got your certificate if you had done a portfolio that meets the standards, you've done all the assignments, and got all the right boxes ticked and that's set in performance criteria in the front in the book. There is nothing to level them. There is no indication of depth, so people interpret it in a way from whatever perspective they look at it, and you know the highly trained people look at it and interpret it their way, and others look at it and interpret in so far as they understand it.

GH I'll share a story with you. When I first started being a mentor on the 9285 working with people in colleges and working with people in training agencies and the difference was enormous.

P 15 But nothing been done to help to level it or to standardise it or to monitor it. If people are in their own world and they only know that world then it really doesn't connect does it? On the 9285 I taught once, never again. Well that's the one that really upset everybody. There wasn't room to teach anything. It was all assessment. I think there were a couple of places in the country that managed to do it in a creative way and turn it in to a programme where people were taught something, but even where that happened and we did that, but even where there happened the onus on the candidate to produce such a complex portfolio was mad and it didn't work. They created it like that to try and match it to TDLB and they didn't even do that right because it didn't give you an NVQ even.

GH No it didn't.

P 15 It was created at a time when NVQs were developing. I think the people that created it... some people that I talked to at the time, didn't really realise that if you were going to work with the standards you couldn't change them so they contextualised the whole of the standards in to basic skills in a way that it meant that they weren't acceptable. So the whole thing was a pointless exercise. (Turns off tape)

GH ...I'm thinking of contacting them (City and Guilds).

P 15 Well do, well do.

GH And see if I am able to use them in my research because the person who trained me to me a mentor years ago, well he is called [name removed].

P 15 Oh yeah. He's in charge of it at City and Guilds. Okay so as a teacher trainer I taught all these different courses and we somewhere in the mid 90s. Oh there is another whole story in here.

GH Go on. Tell me what happened?

P 15 What happened with NATECLA (National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults) in that in ESOL when with all the changes in the early 90s with the introduction of the 9281 and the 9285 the RSA closed down loads of schemes didn't they?

GH Erm.

P 15 They closed down the Diploma in Adult Literacy, they closed down the TESOL (the one that I had done. They closed down the certificate in TESOL and that was the point at which NATECLA...they created its teacher-training working party. Yeah, what's going on, taking away our qualification? So there was a group in the NATECLA people that kind of talked the City and Guilds... and you know were very unhappy right from the start at the shape of the 9281 and the 9285 and basically weren't listened to. The City and Guilds were very frosty. Who are you... you lot?

GH So it's ...?

P 15 National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults. It's sort of like RaPAL but it's for ESOL teachers.

GH Of English...

P 15 And community languages to Adults. So what happened was that as a stop-gap NATECLA... RSA had a thing where you could take on a qualification as a customer specific scheme so NATECLA actually held on to the RSA certificate,...the TESLA

Certificate for several years and became the owner of them as customer specific scheme... so that they didn't die, so that we didn't have the 928s or nothing. Where there were bad flips in numeracy they were way worse for ESOL because it was the after thought, that was always the way wasn't it, in those days?

GH Yeah.

P 15 BSA in those days didn't officially do ESOL, they kept on changing it's mind about whether ESOL was or wasn't in it's remit. Then there was a point where NATECLA group had to make decision about which way to go. Like ESOL was too small to survive...you know the political climate then... this was early 90s, maybe 94 or something like that. It was either go with basic skills or go with EFL... yeah, and basic skills at that time... that was creating the 928s, and also wouldn't listen to that group.

GH Right.

P 15 So an approach was made to Cambridge, who did the other bit of the RSA exam, foreign language rather than second language one. They said Oh, when is RSA closing down... they sold them off to Cambridge. So what was when the RSA Cert TEFL became Cambridge syndicate owned one.

GH Right

P 15 And then Cambridge were in the process of redeveloping them in to the Celta and Delta framework and then the NATECLA group worked with them on ensuring that the new Celta came through in a way that was useful for both the FL and DSL and then once that was kind of safely on board then the Customers Specific thing, which was only ever a temporary arrangement because NATECLA didn't have the resources to become an awarding body, or didn't want to, it's not the point, it's a professional association.

GH That's Right, yeah.

P 15 There was an interesting change over that happened at that point on the point of change over to 'CELTA', which I think it happened around then in general. We used always use the same traditional method. We would send them all out of placement and we decided to trial, there were several centres that did it all at the same time, but all linked in to that NATECLA group which is where people would discuss it using the more EFL methodology of teaching practice groups as opposed to sending you all out to a class. And it was absolutely brilliant. It transformed the quality of practical teaching skills, it was amazing. On the course the year before which was probably one of the 928, you sort of plan a session. You do a session on some aspect on delivering methodology or planning or ....., it didn't matter what it was and there would always be

'oh you couldn't do that with my students, you couldn't'. They would always argue the whole time and you would spend ages persuading them that actually they needed to go and give this idea a try to see whether or not it worked. It changed into this other model, so you had two groups of learners.. half the trainee tutors were in each group and then switch over half way, so you make them all teach beginners and an upper level.

GH Right.

P 15 And plan, you get to know the learners, you find out who they all are, do the needs analysis, do some planning as a group to start with. The second half of the course they plan more independently and they each take responsibility for different bits in the session, you know, so they have to do a lot of co-operation which is a skill that teachers have to have isn't it?

GH Yes.

P 15 If you work on a course team you are never teaching in isolation really although you are in the classrooms.

GH There was so much of that in the early days, wasn't there?

P 15 Yeah. But we could say 'are you going to do this' and they say 'oh all right'. You say 'no but it is right for these learners, you going to take a risk and try it.' Afterwards you discuss how it went and sometimes it worked brilliantly. Sometimes it didn't because.'... So they learn a huge amount from the whole collaborative exercise when they weren't teaching, so you've got a classroom with lots of learners, yeah, and this is an ESOL version of it. But you've got a teacher trainer and you've got lots of little trainee teachers, and one teaching, and then they swap, so this lot sit round the edge of the classroom, yeah,

GH Right

P 15 And after the session is over these people sit down together to debrief, and you do a... so they talk about what it felt like from over here. And they've all had a turn. Initially they would all take a half hour slot, and then later on it might just be two people who have taught to day. Yeah, but they learnt so much from watching each other because when you're over here you know it didn't work, but you don't know why. When you're over here you can see what they are doing wrong. Do you know what I mean?

GH Yes, absolutely. I was trying to think of a word of explaining your model on my tape.

P 15 You'll just have to take my piece of paper.

- GH Okay.
- P 15 But it basically gives you, if gives you a lot of peer feedback and evaluation. They learn a lot from that process.
- GH Teacher trainer, teaching teacher, teaching in front of classrooms.
- P 15 And there are lots of students and it.
- GH I am only doing this for the tape.
- HC It developed their practical teaching skills in a way that sending them off every week to their own classes could just never have done because it was continuous feedback and also a lot of integration of theory and practice. So if you... say they had just done a reading exercise and it didn't work... or some sort of reading activity, and the week before you'd been looking at how to teach reading... then in that discussion afterwards this person says 'well remember...', get them to sort of come out with something they'd identify.
- GH They think is wrong?
- P 15 And you say okay now think back to what we were looking at last week when we were talking about Frank Smith or whatever, do you know what I mean?
- GH Right.
- P 15 And how does that relate and what was going on here that wasn't yeah.
- GH How often did this go on?
- P 15 Every week.
- GH Every week?
- P 15 Every session. They would come in for one day a week and about half of the day was filled with this process and the other half was the next batch of input and theory so the day would contain planning.
- GH So about half of day?
- P 15 Yes, planning, delivery and feedback and then... erm... you know separately input sessions moving through. So this kind of supported integrated whole is there throughout and they get a certain amount of assessed teaching.

- GH Sounds excellent.
- P 15 In fact, I can't tell you, I've been training people in the same community, in the same building for five years and we switched to this model and the results were so much more employable.
- GH Right.
- P 15 It was quite radical.
- GH Remind which course we were talking about now?
- P 15 What was it? This was the early days of the CELTA. But it's an ESOL teaching certificate. It's kind of equivalent to 9285 I suppose for want of... you know. You know that sort of level.
- GH Yeah.
- P 15 Not up to a diploma or a full Cert Ed type of level, but they come away from it with the basic practical skills in place and more recently [name removed] was there at that RaPAL workshop wasn't she? [name removed]. You know I was sitting here and there was a woman over here who'd worked on one of the programmes I'd worked with?
- GH Yes, yes. She was there and I was there and she was around here somewhere.
- P 15 And [name removed] who was here earlier, they're co trainers, those two, [name removed] and [name removed]. They taught a course together where they went and looked at.... We've been running this model now for years in lots of places all over London, and they adapted it further for literacy ,because of course in literacy you need some smaller groups going on, on a more frequent basis for these learners... yeah?
- GH Yeah.
- P 15 ...Although you do want some whole group stuff... They kind of developed the model a bit further, where at certain points more of these people would be engaged in doing small group work at the same time, simultaneously. And the teacher trainer would probably be only observing one. The others would just be were there would be some peer observation going on... and when... I don't know whether I talked about it at the RaPAL workshop... I certainly do talk about it... because I think that one of the challenges we have got at the moment is that we haven't got enough... we haven't got the quantity or the quality of teachers out there to teach lots of new teachers quickly. Where are all the placements? If you do it like this, you can control the quality because it's all under your wing as a teacher trainer. You only need a couple of groups

of learners. You know we made sure it was built in to the learner's timetable. It wasn't an optional extra or anything. It was part of their course but they are given... at the beginning they are told well this would normally be a 10 hour course. You are getting a 12 hour course because you are getting 2 hours of the trainee teachers... and they love it. They get all protective over their trainees. Do you know what I mean? They watch them make mistakes but they kind of forgive. You do quite a lot at the beginning to make sure these people get to know each other.

GH Right

P 15 Well you have to don't you if you are going to work with the learners.

GH If they are going to observe you ,you've got to have some kind of trust.

P 15 And it's kind of funny, because they get kind of quite protective of their teachers and how they're getting on and they see them develop.

GH So do you think this will become a form of...

P 15 I think it's a novelty. It's quite complex to get your head around, but it works.

GH Oh know I can see the value.

P 15 And it certainly, I mean you don't, in terms of all that time you take travelling around to try and visit people, you don't do it.

GH Wonderful what a brilliant idea because you can have all the group in at once. How big would a group be of trainee tutors?

P 15 I would say not more than six, seven at the absolute outside.

GH You could do it easily then?

P 15 Yeah, yeah. It works up to about six or seven.

GH That sounds brilliant.

P 15 And you are managing a very different process. This group gets quite intense because they work together with a lot of peer observation and feedback and sometimes you are dealing with some quite interesting group demo mix there which is another skill for this person.

GH Yes.

- P 15 But it is definitely productive. I mean you know it's efficient and productive, whatever. So my experiences is as a trainer I suppose, because although I did experience that methodology way back when I was very first trained in that crash course, I don't remember much about it to be honest. Because I hadn't taught at that time,...but we weren't doing it as a crash course, we were doing it as part of a year long academic year.
- GH Have you ever taught in schools?
- P 15 No. I've never taught under 16s, well only my own kids but that's not teaching.
- GH How old are your own kids?
- P 15 Just coming up to fifteen and twelve. But no, no. Everything I know about the school sector I know by being a parent and a parent governor and all that kind of stuff, I've never... so I suppose I know quite a lot about it but I've never taught it.
- GH Would you perceive any differences in teaching kids and teaching adults. I know this seems a silly question but I'd like you to think about it for a few minutes and see if you could identify...
- P 15 *Yeah well there are major differences. I think it is one of those things where people get very touchy about it. It's the same subject matter sometimes and a very different client group and though, some of the things that's gone on at the moment, some of the cross overs with the literacy and numeric curriculum stuff for schools and adults...stuff like that and with the subject specs and the teaching knowledge and stuff, in the hands of somebody who has only worked in one-sector things can get awry but I think we need to be careful not to say it's all-wrong. It's not all wrong it's just that maybe sometimes some of it was written by someone who didn't understand a different learner, client group and maybe we need to tease out more of differences between pedagogy and andragogy, I don't know.*
- GH I think there is a research gap there actually...
- P 15 *I mean there are major differences aren't there. Adult learners come and go as they choose and if they don't like what they get the walk back out the door and kids have to stay and suffer it. Also adult learners, I mean given all their stuff about different learning styles and of course the prevalence of dyslexic features in the adult literacy population is that the kind of methodology used in schools clearly failed and on this particular... so therefore, methodology speaking I think there is massive differences.*
- GH It's interesting you know. I've come across some people who have been involved in the adult sector quite a while and they don't know that term (andragogy)

P 15 No that's true.

GH They tend to use pedagogy for all of it.

P 15 *Pedagogy gets used as a generic term, isn't it, that's true. I've seen examples of primary school teachers been brilliant as adult literacy teachers and I've seen others where it has been disastrous. I mean, if you can, I think actually if you're a teacher that's really got the skill for been learner centred then you should be able to shift between one sector and the other.* Although you have got discipline

GH I taught in schools first before coming in to adult literacy, at about you know 79, 80, something like that. Then I switched permanently to adult.

P 15 Sometimes, there was one point in the early 90s, there was a woman who came on, it was before we developed that particular method, one of the certificate courses for ESOL. She had been head of English in a big comprehensive in Central London. She had retired or taken early retirement and she fancied getting some part-time work in the adult education institute teaching ESOLs. So it was why she came on the course and she absolutely loved it but the thing that I remember her saying was "why did nobody ever teach me this lot before"? Now a lot of that is now been taught to teachers. All that stuff about language analysis and understanding how it works and all of that. It just wasn't part of secondary school teacher training then, it is now. So that's kind of one example, it works both ways and she was like "wow" and some of the methods because she taught at a school full of refugees, she never had any training in how to teach it and to teach ESOL. But that's common in schools isn't it.

GH Oh it is yes.

P 15 I mean when I was a governor in primary... I think they need a new special needs teacher and it would be... "who was most in favour to get a bit of classroom time taken off". There was no real recognition in the management of the school of the fact there was specialist qualifications or understanding of how to work with dyslexia kids. Not tiny primary schools with one class a year, you know. And they same with ESOL, not understood.

GH And it would also mean if you got a specialist in you'd both recommend, certainly in the organisation which the school didn't probably want to cope them or couldn't cope them.

P 15 And, or whatever, yeah, or the resource implications or whatever. I mean I think they were not doing a good service by not from what I see from the distance I was standing ...and of course I got in enough trouble as it was for over stepping the mark between governance and management.

- GH Really what did you do then, go on this is interesting?
- P 15 Oh I can't.
- GH No personal as well as professional on this. It all helps create the picture.
- P 15 Does it?
- GH Yes.
- P 15 I just fell out with the head teacher. She was the sort of person who wanted her governors to say yes to everything she wanted to do and she had a chair of governors who did do that.
- GH Right.
- P 15 Yeah. So when she started to have some more active governors who could have been a major support she... I mean, it wasn't always a bad relationship... but she didn't use the strength she had in the governing body, and could have used.
- GH So the relationship between staff and schools and governors is incredible because I know someone who is with me at Birmingham University and she was head of a primary school and she left it because of the influence of the chair of governors. She didn't get an airing on anything she said. ..it was just totally... it's the other side of the picture.
- P 15 Absolutely.
- GH Well she did actually leave.
- P 15 Well I came to the end of my four years as whatever it was, as a parent governor, and they asked if I wanted to be co-opted and I said no thanks I've done my time and shook his hand. He did actually leave at the end of that year... but I don't think that was because of the rows. It's a tricky one isn't it, you know.
- GH It is, yeah.
- P 15 Anyway.
- GH Is there anything else you would like to?
- P 15 Assumptions underpinning, there is a wonderful list that I've got somewhere that I use often, which actually came from the people at [name removed] in Plymouth.

GH [name removed]?

P 15 It's the College of [name removed]. They do a lot of teacher training there.

GH Right. And what's on your list, can you remember anything from it?

P 15 Know. *It's all about learner centred and adults who only learn if they want to learn and stuff like that.* It's a list of about 20 points.

GH Can I have the list?

P 15 Yeah, yeah. I'm going to give you this later.

GH I'll remind you about it anyway.

P 15 The reason I pulled it together as a list, well it's an adult?

GH Is this a list you've created?

P 15 No, it's a list that was created by some people I met on a course.

GH Yes. Do you adhere to what's on the list?

P 15 Yeah... But I think most of us would.

GH You'd be surprised at some of the things I'm hearing

P 15 Oh right, that's interesting. We in London have twice running now. We've done a course of training for all teacher trainers for basic skills. [Name removed] and I have worked on it together this year. Taking experienced basic skills teachers and helping them shift them in to being teacher trainers. Like [Name removed] was on the course the year before.

GH Right.

P 15 And looking at a whole range of kind of generic training skills, so that list came out, okay, what are the underpinning assumptions, where are we all at, lets unpack that to start with.

GH Oh that would be fascinating to have.

P 15 What's the central belief here?

GH This is what all my research is about.

- P 15 Oh and we came a cropper on that over the years in the ... I mean I spent about ten to twelve years delivering teacher training in ESOL, in around Brick Lane really, with a colleague and we had some bad experiences... where we had, you know, you always do get your entry criteria right in the end, don't you... But where we learnt to scream for some of those beliefs. Not to scream but to be explicit about what the beliefs underpinning the course were because sometimes people chose not to join.
- GH I would be fascinated to see the list, yes.
- P 15 Well that wasn't to do with that list... This was just to go with... Well for example we had a guy on the course one year who in the end in a sort of little explosion, said that this country's concept of education was ruining his children, and he came from the sort of black board and stick brigade.
- GH Yes.
- P 15 *And he was from another part of the world where teaching methodology is very different and he thought the Guardian was responsible for the liberal stuff his kids were putting up with. In the end we had to agree to differ but we learnt to say "look the central tenet of the course you are coming on is learner centred and communicative teaching and if you think teaching is about pushing things in to people, that's not what we are going to learn you how to do and if you really think there is something wrong with that then...."* And we developed a whole load of really discussion things to use through the recruitment into courses, which was actually really interesting. We put people in a group and give them controversial statements. They had slips of paper and they had to turn it over and read it out and then discuss and then do the next one. It's like a pub game, but the controversial statements were all things like, oh god can I remember some.
- GH ...Controversial statements?
- P 15 Or sometimes just provocative, like, " a beginner reader is not a beginner thinker" that type of quote. We didn't use that one.
- GH Or "adult literacy students are lazy..."
- P 15 " group work is a waste of time you need to learn from the teacher". "You can't possibly learn another language if you haven't learnt to write your own". Just all sorts of things...
- GH That comment I made about adult literacy students are lazy is actually made by princess Anne who happens to be patron of the Basic Skills Agency.

P 15 Oh Jesus!.

GH I accidentally discovered this on one of my MA assignments a few years ago.

P 15 Yeah... Just to get people talking. It was partially because we wanted to see how they worked in a group and how their oral skills were, rather than just face to face in an interview. But also to unpick some of that... But also some of them were geared at helping some of those attitudes out because we had had a couple of people who... I mean it's like anywhere,...you get... and there was one time on a 9281 when we have a guy who was, you know, he was a bit of an ex-colonial... and he had some very clear ideas about how people needed to be taught, how to live their lives... a bit of a missionary zeal there.

GH I remember having people like that who were volunteers.

P 15 Yeah this was a volunteer training. The guy was dangerous in terms of equal ops wasn't part of the agenda. "We're dealing with, you know, there's something or other needs to be put right", (Background noise) I think we should probably move on. I think we've done most of it haven't we.

GH What we are going to do, I'll just tell you, is I'm going to, when this is transcribed I'll send it on to you.

P 15 Oh right, that will be interesting. The end.