The Grit in the Oyster – TQAL for Pearls of Practice

ACA Conference October 2008
A radical shift in our understanding

‘... an understanding of literacy and numeracy as complex capabilities rather than a single set of skills... It moves us away from earlier notions of literacy as purely educational or functional skills towards a focus on real life practices.’

(Scottish Executive: Literacies in the Community Pack 2000 p. 5)
The Scottish Context

• Learning Connections is the government agency – training, research and resources
• Adult literacies work routinely organised by full-time staff
• ….largely delivered by part-time or volunteer staff
• Most people undertake ITALL
• Approx half have a university level qualification in subjects other than literacy
The job

• To devise and deliver a Pilot TQAL course around 4 learning centres inclusive of..
  – Practice tutor training
  – Face to face teaching
  – Practice based learning
  – On-line learning
Four Modules

- Learning Worlds
- Making Mental Models
- Expanding Our Repertoire
- The Enabling Net

Variety of assessment formats

Each module 30 SCQF credits at level 9

investigating...modelling...sharing...experimenting...reflecting
Practice Tutor Development
- builds on learners' prior knowledge
- learning is a social activity
- not just facts but the big picture
- expertise acquired through practice
- scaffolding develops fluency

Practitioner Development
- builds on learners' prior knowledge
- learning is a social activity
- not just facts but the big picture
- expertise acquired through practice
- scaffolding develops fluency

Adult Literacies Work
- builds on learners' prior knowledge
- learning is a social activity
- not just facts but the big picture
- expertise acquired through practice
- scaffolding develops fluency
Curriculum Design Principles

Learning in communities of inquiry

Emphasis on critically reflective practice

Action learning

Empowers participants to take responsibility for their own learning

Collaborative

Modelling of learning and teaching approaches

Responsive to current and emerging priorities in Adult Literacies

Knowledge in ‘design’ mode

Programme designed to use a blended approach with a wide range of strategies and techniques

Emphasis on critically reflective practice
'Threshold Concepts' may be considered to be akin to passing through a portal or conceptual gateway that opens up previously inaccessible way[s] of thinking about something" (Meyer and Land 2006)
Threshold concepts?

- Active learning through action enquiry and research
- Learning through critical reflection on practice
- Learning as collaboration – the Community of Practice
- Learning using VLE and Web 2 tools
Action Enquiry Cycle

The aim of Action Enquiry is to learn about practice from practice

Reflect critically on current approaches to teaching and learning, identifying areas of concern. Consult current research and theoretical literature for insights to inform planning for development.

Locating and/or developing new teaching and learning strategies on the basis of insights from critical reflection, including review of relevant literature.

Implement new strategies; collect data about the experience from a variety of perspectives.
Undertaking an Action Enquiry

- Can learner’s writing skills improve by using ICT, especially mobile phones?

- By developing an interest in creating messages on mobile phones, will this improve and/or encourage learner’s writing skills?

Experimenting in practice…
Phone literacy - Knowing your phone
Findings from my Action Enquiry

Through the learners’ eyes...

Many learners expressed a sense of pride in being able to text to their tutor and friends, receive messages back and read them. All of them said their confidence about writing had increased. Some people said they liked making their book about their own phone. They made the point that because they had created it, they could read it.

Tina Beales TQAL Module 3
Using Brookfield’s Four Lenses for critically reflective practice

- Our autobiographies
- Learners’ eyes
- Colleagues’ experience
- Theoretical literature
PEAR shaped

participatory  exploratory  active  reflexive
The online environment

- personal reflection
- buddy group chat
- learning centre

national TQAL group: resources and discussion
The VLE and the Four Modules
In a Social Practice Frame:  
The Adult Literacies Tutor:

- appreciates the complexity of everyday literacies
- engages with the realities of communities
- is in touch with change
- is ecologically aware
- is critically aware of power relations
- is a social actor, aware of their own embeddedness
- engages ethically with others
- is responsive and improvisational
- acts as a broker between informal and formal learning
- challenges the institutional walls round learning
Learning to read the world as well as the word.

Freire
‘We ask learners to go outside their comfort zones in their learning - without this it is difficult to progress - so why should we not be pushed outside ours? And it’s good to see how this feels (on reflection of course!) and be reminded of how valuable it is to face challenges.’
• As 'professionals' I feel we need to keep stretching the boundaries, doing the requirements of the job but always, always broadening this out to include a critical analysis of what we are doing, why and in whose interest - if we don't challenge these and put forward alternative visions then we are not active participants in anything, we are merely deliverers of governmental economic policy and we limit not only what we do but what literacies are!

• Student Comment
ALL MEN ARE BASTARDS