The Literacy and Development Group

The Literacy and Development Group at the University of East Anglia was formed in 2003 with the aim of bringing together researchers working in this field and to enhance the research environment. The group provides opportunities for researchers working in this field to meet and exchange ideas and collaborate on research. Taking a ‘situated literacies’ approach, we aim to engage actively with key policy institutions in the UK and internationally. In 2005-6 the group developed its international profile and activities. In addition to the Education and Development seminar series, the major event for 2005-6 was hosting an international research seminar on the topic of ‘Literacies, Identity and Social Change’ (see below). This extended the interdisciplinary work of the group, highlighting the potential for synergies between literacy research in anthropology and economics. The group also continued to contribute to policy making processes, completing its work with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and beginning new research on the topic of Migration and Education (with support of the DFID-funded Migration Research Centre).

Cover photo: Literacy use in Fisheries, Mali. Copyright Edward Allison.
Enhancing the Research Environment – Events and Conferences 2005-6

The major event for the group in 2005-6 was organising and hosting an international research seminar on the topic of ‘Literacies, Identity and Social Change’. This two-day event was held in April 2006 at UEA. The inter-disciplinary seminar linked leading researchers in literacy from the fields of education, economics, anthropology and linguistics, with key-note papers by Judy Kalman (Centre for Advanced Studies in Education, Mexico City), Kaushik Basu (Department of Economics, Cornell) and Dorothy Holland (Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina). The aim of the seminar was to extend theoretical understanding about the ways in which the acquisition and use of literacy impacts on agency, identity and social practice. The seminar combined formal presentation of papers, and ‘break-out’ workshops on the cross-cutting themes of methodological challenges in literacy research: gendered identities, and multi-literacies and multi-modality. The group workshops enabled in-depth discussion on the papers and contributions from seminar participants who were not presenting papers.

The following papers were presented at the seminar:


‘Literacies of Distinction: (Dis)Empowerment in Social Movements’. Dorothy Holland, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.


‘Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Literacy: Models, Co-relations and Causality’ Bryan Maddox, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia.

‘The Roots and the Growth of Peruvian Women’s Writing’. Mercedes Nino-Murcia, University of Iowa, Iowa City.

‘Literacies and Discourses of Development among the Rabaris of Kutch, India’ Caroline Dyer, University of Leeds.

‘Why Literacy Matters’: Exploring policy perspectives on literacies, identity and social change’. Anna Robinson-Pant, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia.

‘Never Reading and Writing’ in a Textually Mediated World’ Roz Ivanic, Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University.

‘Teacher Identity and Literacy: Social Positioning in Text’. Angela, B. Kleiman, Sao Paulo State University at Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil.

“‘You feel that the national curriculum hacks into what you do” [year 4 pupil] Teachers and pupils shaping identities through writing’. Jennifer Smith, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia.

Research and Policy Links 2005-6

Literacy in Fishing Communities

During 2006 Bryan Maddox completed the group’s work with FAO on the uses of literacy in fishing communities. This work highlights the scope for situated perspectives on literacy in applied development settings. This involved a review paper on literacy in fishing communities (focusing on South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa), and working with Edward Allison (UEA) and members of the Sustainable Livelihoods Fisheries Programme to produce a policy brief on the topic of ‘Promoting
Research on Migration and Education

With funding from the Development Research Centre of Globalisation, Development and Migration, based at the University of Sussex, Nitya Rao initiated a small research project to understand the linkages between migration opportunities and the educational outcomes of boys and girls in a context of globalisation, in April 2006. This exploratory study is being conducted in two villages each in India and Bangladesh. While the literature on migration shows a strong link between education and the likelihood of migration, there is also evidence to show that migration possibilities and choices can enhance educational inequality – it might create both incentives and disincentives for education (as in the case of growing global demand for cheap, unskilled/semi-skilled labour). At the same time, the importance of education seems to be well recognised in terms of securing a better return from migration. One therefore finds that remittance incomes are often used to finance education – the type of education however also being a subject of the research.

Changing Academic Literacies

LDG is currently developing a collaborative research proposal with partners in Mexico (Judy Kalman), New Zealand (Cathy Kell), Peru (Virginia Zavala) and Pakistan (Iffat Farah) on ‘Changing Academic Literacies’. The project has two dimensions. Individual empirical studies concerned with the production of textual practices will be conducted in a variety of cultural and institutional contexts, in Pakistan, Peru, Tanzania, Mexico, New Zealand and UK. These action-oriented studies will be developed by the individual researchers or teams based there in order to contribute directly to enhancing practice in their own institutions. The LDG project aims to provide an ‘umbrella’ for these individual studies through developing a conceptual framework informed by and informing the research in these differing contexts. The research studies would be linked through their exploration of the concepts of voice, translation/transitions, academic literacies, in relation to the production of academic textual practices within higher education and academic
The overall purpose of the project is to create a research environment of exchange and mutual support networks for learners, teachers, editors and researchers based in the partner institutions involved in the project.

Future Events

As part of the on-going research on Education and Migration the group is organising a research seminar on the topic on December 8th 2006. It hopes to follow this with a larger-scale conference in 2007. For further information please contact Nitya Rao [n.rao@uea.ac.uk].

The group will convene a panel on Literacy and Growth at the 9th UKFIET Oxford International Conference on Education and Development. The conference is on the topic of ‘Going for Growth: School, Community, Economy and Nation, and will be held in Oxford on 11-13th September 2007. Further information on the programme is available from www.cfbt.com/ukfietconference

Publications of the Literacy and Development Group (2001- present)

Literacy Related Publications


Robinson-Pant, A. (2005) ‘Can we transfer new ideas and approaches without falling into the trap of recipe paradigm?’ in Barton, D. and Papen, U. (eds), Linking literacy and numeracy programmes in developing countries and the UK, Literacy Research Centre, University of Lancaster


Robinson-Pant, A. (2003) (Editor) Set of five case studies on adult education and indigenous peoples (from India, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand and Burma) in the ‘Learning Beyond Boundaries’ series, Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE, Mumbai), available from: aspbae@vsnl.com


Rogers, A (2005) *Training of Adult Literacy Educators* paper prepared for UNESCO GMR Literacy Team (see www.unesco.org/education/)


Street, B., Rogers, A. and Nirantar (2005) ‘Literacy for Empowerment Through Training In Ethnographic Research (Letter): A Case Study From India’, India, 
_Literacy Today_, Dec 2004

**Wider Publications on Education and Development**


_Preparing to Teach: Learning from Experience, 
Routledge: London


Rogers, A. (2005) (with Knud Illeris), ‘How do adults learn?’ in Illeris Knud and Berri Signe (eds), Texts on Adult Learning Roskilde University Press, Denmark


Rogers, A. (2004) Non-formal Education: flexible schooling or participatory education? Hong Kong: CERC University of Hong Kong, and Dordrecht: Kluwer


During the year 2005-6 the group continued to convene the seminar series on education and development organised by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning and School of Development Studies. We were pleased to welcome presenters from a wide range of development and educational institutions in 2005/6:

Carolyn Dennis (Africa Education Trust), 'Basic Education in African Countries Emerging from Conflict: Initial findings from the four case studies; Eastern Cape, Northern Uganda, Somaliland, Southern Sudan'

David Theobald (British Council) ‘Building Capacity for Educational Consultancy Management’

Rosemary Preston (School of Health and Social Studies University of Warwick/ UKFIET), ‘Preoccupations with outcomes: trends in evaluation in trans-national educational projects’.

Stephen Carney (Roskilde University, Denmark) ‘Child-friendly schooling in Tibet: Western educational ideology and the prospects for educational reform in China’

Pauline Rose (University of Sussex) 'Collaborating in education for all? Experiences of government support for non-state provision of basic education'

David Baker (NRDC/Institute of Education London), ‘Understanding mathematics as social practice: possible implications for teaching and learning’

Angela Little (Institute of Education London) ‘Education for All; The Challenge of Multigrade Teaching’