

*1/ Introduction by John Stewart, coordinator for the National Adult literacy agency (NALA)*

What we are trying to do today is to identify key issues in quality for adult basic education. They are likely to differ and vary from country to country but I do think that there are probably some underlying key issues which will affect us all. I think it would be useful to explore what and we will be certainly able to learn about the different purposes for quality assurance within adult basic education and also different practises. And that's why we have got such an interesting array of presentation to make during the day. If we have time we would bring the discussion around to evidence : how do you know you have quality and what are key performances indicators for adult literacy practioners. We will hope at the end of the day to have some sort of shared understanding of the term quality. As you will notice from the short introductions that there are differents stakeholders here : there are managers, teachers, trainers, support agencies, there are also -varying experiences of quality, there are people who are working actively in quality and there are other people who have not being very active in the area of quality. And one comment we heard in the introduction where a tutor has said they dont know much about quality is and has never heard of qualification in basic education. I think it means that we have to be very clear of what we are saying and to allow for questions and exploration of the issues of quality.

In terms of quality adult basic education, I believe that it's must focus not only on the outcome but also on the process. The process of quality system is vital and very often it has rewarding outcomes but the outcomes and the evidences of the quality system are very important. Understanding of quality relates to an understanding of literacy. It does not seem possible to take models from other sectors or even within other parts of the education and to impose them on literacy services. There seems to be a great resistance to that, in Ireland, and it's also important that we actually try to understand what learning is and what progress is for an adult literacy learner, in order to arrive at quality systems which would then support and promote that.

Quality varies from person to person and from country to country. For a learner, quality is about having a rich learning experience focused on their needs. For a policy maker or a funder it is about improving adult literacy level. And in between the learner and the goverment minister, there are huge differences in perspectives on what quality is in adult basic education. We are here to explore some today and the quality system that we use should benefit particular stakeholders and should be of value to everyone. NALA's definition of adult literacy is not just focused on the technical skills, it's very much looking at literacy as an enabling circle of knowledge skills and competencies which enable a person to live a full and active live. Then, it's not just about developing reading or writing skills, it's about developing that critical awareness, knowledge and skills base that the person can use fluently and independently and in the range of suituations that they require. So it may be particularly important for them in terms of their worklife but also tremendously important as in their personal life, as a family member, as a community member and essentially that literacy involves development of the softer skills in terms of confidence. So people can reflect on their current situation and explore developments of new possibilities and change for

their own lives. So we would place it very much in terms of the social practice model rather than an economic model .

In terms of Ireland, one in four of Irish people are at the lowest level according to the International Adult Literacy Survey. A further nearly 30 % are at level 2 which means in a Irish context that the average reader and writer is much less able in terms of those skills than most people think. That includes policy makers and funders who develop literacy or provides for literacies services. Adult literacies is now a top priority in Ireland in terms of adult education. There has been immense developments since the publication of the international survey. So we moved from a situation where we had 5,000 learners in 1970-1998 to 35,000 in 2005. In 1998 there was 5,000 students and today we have 5,000 tutors and volunteers. But we now need to take that to the next stage one of NALA's focuses has been on trying to develop a quality system in terms of supporting development There is in Ireland a new national framework of qualification which provides accreditation for all learning including for basic education. And in order to offer the option of accreditation, the adult literacy basic education providers must get their quality assurance system aproved by the accreditation body .

I would finish by saying that in my view and I'm open to persuasion today, there are 3 purposes for quality. First of all it's for accountability, for policy makers, for the people who decide budget, for the people who plan social and educational services and for managers to make policies and to provide ressources in the most appropriate areas. In Ireland, it's the department of education, the main agent. They get six monthly report from all adult education services around the country.

A second key is to provide for accreditation and certification. This would be particularly important for certifying bodies and for providers . And so in Ireland, the body which certifies bodies is the Further Education Training and Awards Council (FETAC). If a provider wants to offer accreditation they must first get their quality assurance by FETAC. So it's very important for providers, for people who are offering courses, if they want to offer the option of accreditation, that they actualy have a quality assurance system which is credible.

And the final purpose is to support teaching and learning within an adult literacy setting. This must particularly interest managers, students and learners and the practioners. It's around providing a system where those people know that progress is taking place and can reference it to other stakeholders so that a tutor, a learner, a literacy server manager can actually describe progress in a meaningful way to learners and students. This is around services and providers getting involved in a process of self-evaluation. And I know here that there are a number of teachers and tutors and the key question is How do you know that learners are actually learning. It's been the focus on NALA's work and again the afternoon we have developed an Envolving quality framework for adult basic education. This is not focused on accountability, not accreditation, it focuses on self-evaluation, on teaching and learning.



## 2/The Evolving Quality Framework for ABE

*Claire O'Riordan*

*Quality Framework Co-ordinator, NALA,*

I want to explain about the quality framework we have in Ireland and that is working very well. It's really a system developed to assure quality for students who are perhaps the main interested in accreditation. It is quite a unique system. And it is focused on teaching and learning which is really about self-evaluation. It's what we are calling « the Evolving Quality Framework for adult basic education (ABE) ». It is an evolving, changing system because quality never remains the same. So I have to keep option opened on that. It is all the time responding to different needs, different changes.

The second aim of that workshop is to give you a chance to consider the key values that form a quality framework.

### What is the Evolving Quality Framework ?

What we did was NALA put a proposal to the European Commission on the Socrates program for transnational corporations to investigate what kind of quality assurance system would be good for ABE. We worked with Lire et Ecrire in Belgium, Collectif Alpha, North Essex adults Community College, the Institute for Continuous Education in Belfast. And we get fundings to look at how to develop a quality assurance system for ABE. This happened in 1999 and as in Scotland and in Wales, we decided that the best way to work for ABE was to ask to the people who were involved in the ABE. We consulted, we asked students, teachers, managers, key stakeholders what to them was a quality service and we came up with a draft framework which we tested in 2000 with a number of local literacy services. It went so well, in fact, that the literacy services tried this draft model. The government supported it. And today

in Ireland, most of the services are using it even if is a voluntary one. Since it was launched in 2002, 31 des 33 regional services are actually using this model.

It is a self-evaluation system : « what we are doing well ? what can we do better ? » It's basically a tool to help people figure out what they are doing well. There are evaluation teams who work on it, at each local center. On the team, you have all stakeholders represented : you have the students (at least 2 on each team), a voluntary tutor, a payed tutor and a manager. You also have a trained facilitator to work with the team on whatever quality issue they want to look at. This tool is to support practioners in reflecting on their own pratices : the working environment. It also contributes to planning the strategy for improvment of the program and to collecting evidences of quality.

### What are the guiding principles or the values of this framework ?

We have five core values. The first is that learners come to the ABE services voluntarily. And they set their own goals. They decide what they want to do. Confidentiality, respect and trust. This issue stigma around having a literacy difficulty is still there, unfortunately. When somebody come to the service; they don't necessarily want other, the neighbors, know that tey are getting help with the literacy. They also want to be traited with respect and trust by their tutors. The third value that we try to promote is that the diversity must be respected. What there are their religious believes, their different cultures, their different gender, all that must be respected when you go in the service. The fourth value is that, as everybody knows, you learn best when it's easy, when it's relax. Any involmment in a quality service would be informal and enjoyable. And the fifth, would be that students must be allowed to participate in all aspects of the service. Then, we try to engage them at all levels including evaluating the quality of the service and that's why it is so important that they run the team.



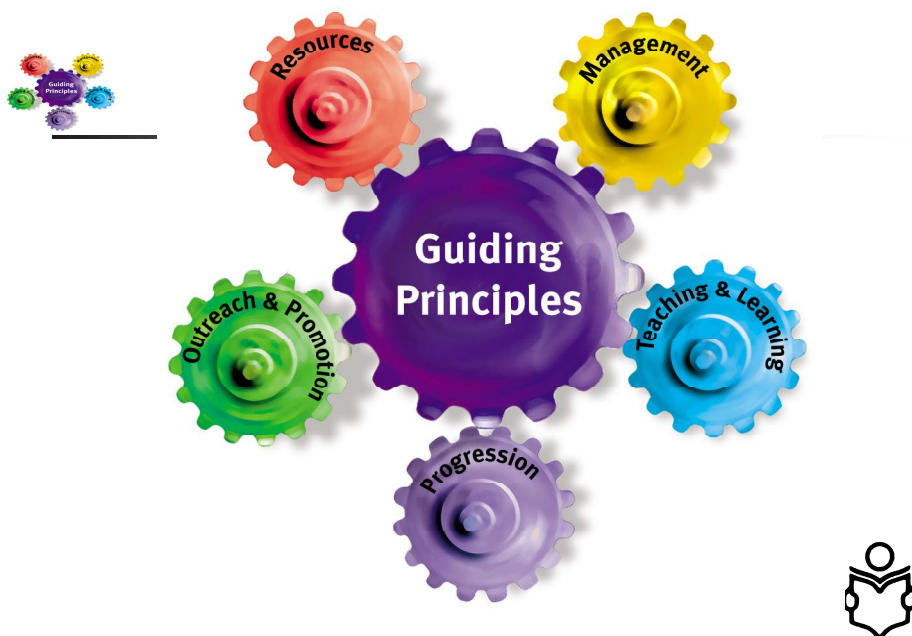
## Guiding principles

- n Voluntary attendance
- n Confidentiality, respect and trust
- n Diversity respected
- n Informal and enjoyable
- n Student participation in all aspects.



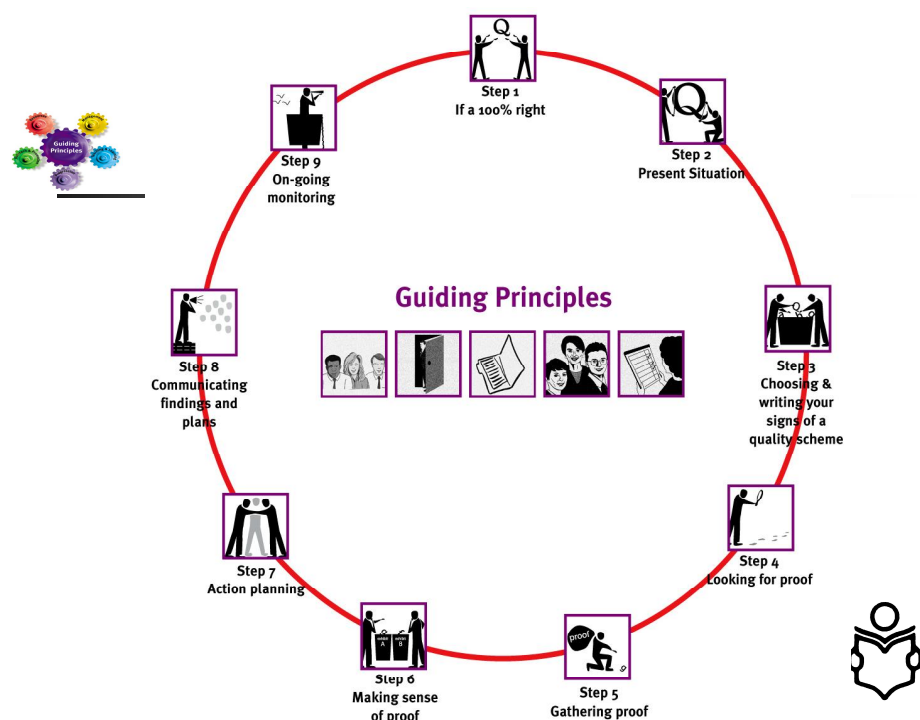
### Quality areas

The guiding principles are the central part of the quality framework in Ireland. The guiding principles work through all the areas of quality and the consultation process identifies 5 quality areas. There are resources, like fundings, premises. Support for teachers and learners, planning, communication, evaluation : that's all about management. Teaching and learning, it's including lack assessment, the learners and tutors relationships and so on. Progression : that would be guidance and learner accreditation. So well the quality framework isn't for accreditation and learners don't have to get accreditation. It doesn't necessarily mean that you can have accreditation. What ever you want as a learner is fine. The last item outreach and promotion : awareness rising, links with other groups. So we see these five areas has been any areas involved in quality. And in each of these areas are the national standards that through the consultation process were agreed. So you have got the guiding principles, the quality areas, and the standards the people want to achieve or that the service want to achieve for other.



What people do in their quality team or in their evaluation team ? So, basically, the team sits around and tries to figure out what area we want to improve. They can be helped by the facilitator (there is no co-facilitation in Ireland at the moment). They can choose whatever they want to choose : tutor support, funding for the service or premises. They decide : « Ok, we look at premises ! ». And the facilitator guides them trough an evaluation process. So you look at the premises and you have these nine steps evaluation process. It's very important that the guiding principles are in the center of that process. The first step of the process is the perfect situation. So you choose an area : « premises » and the team discuss that. And the team goes on to the second step : « what is the present situation » and the team then discuss at that. The third step then would be : what are the signs that we are successfully in relationships providing a quality service for premises ? What are the signs, what are the performance indicators ? The local services decide what are the signs of success: « We may change that, in the futur but it makes very relevant to your service. Ok, let's gather evidences to see how good you are doing in relations we are building and are premises ». The team actually goes

out and they say what do you think of the premises, of the furnitures you have, what do you think of the decor. And they gather all these kinds of informations. So step 5 « gathering proof » and step 6 « making sense of proof » are very much research based. The next step is that they have all these informations and they decide that « we need to take action. » What will we do, so they develop an action plan. The team decides that : « who is the best to do that. » All the people in the service may do that.. And the next step would be monitoring how it's going. Six months after you have made this action plan you'd go back and go through the process again to check. Obviously, the evidences that you collected from talking to the people and from the services is relevant to other areas of quality. There are a lot of connections.



### Echanges- Débat

Est-ce que les normes nationales définies le sont par rapport aux 18 critères ? Je ne vois pas l'articulation entre la définition des normes et le processus de critères de qualité.

*The standards were developed by the consultation process at the beginning and they were people saying that if we had the perfect scheme, each of the 18 statements of quality and the guiding principles would ??, be look like. Everybody is trying to get this perfect scheme. The fact that the government have said that it was a good service based on self-evaluation and continuous improvement is important. Also, there is a national development for vocational education and training under which ABE lies. They have areas that you will have to conforme with. This quality framework, it's 5 quality areas, are very closed to the broader vocational education national requirements as well.*

Est-ce que les 18 critères sont aussi les normes ? En Belgique, nous ne travaillons pour l'instant qu'avec les 18 critères, ce qui est à la fois intéressant et extrêmement vague puisqu'on n'a pas autour de ce critère des informations qui nous disent ce qui serait

souhaitable. Par exemple, si je prends le critère du local, on n'a pas d'indication sur la superficie en m2 qui serait nécessaire pour un nombre déterminé de personnes, etc.

*I think that the 18 statements are the standards. The best quality assurance system has an aspiration element to achieving them. As I said, the standards that you work on, the signs of success of that have to be locally developed but, in the future, we are going to focus down on specific performing criteria for adult education and we are working on that at the moment. Today, we have developed them from the ground up where they are specific signs. We haven't got specific dimensions for a room or a building. We wanted to see what the local services were doing in terms of what they thought were the signs. We are trying to identify core elements or criteria that would help people to work with these 18 standards. It's evolving and not fixed.*

### Activity

In groups of 3, thinking on your own context about practices factors in using the guiding principles that I have discussed to improve quality in your country. So for example, voluntary attendance. How would that impact on your country of learners in terms of quality? Or differences in diversity (languages, religions). Each group takes one of the guiding principles and discuss.

*Yes, that's true. It is not easily for learners to get involved in this process and it's also difficult for tutors to accept they might be evaluated. That's why the facilitator is very important and team building is very important.*

*(Suisse) La participation de tous les participants au processus d'apprentissage est bien sûr une valeur, mais nous devons trouver des espaces où ils sont réellement à leur place. Il ne faut pas mettre d'office des apprenants partout, mais trouver les endroits où ils se sentent à l'aise et peuvent s'exprimer.*

*(Belgique) Nous aussi on aimerait que tout le monde participe, mais chez nous, où la loi du consensus est parfois un peu floue, « y être » veut malheureusement déjà dire participer. La plupart des endroits dont je vous parle sont des endroits d'avis et non pas de décision. Pour qu'un cadre de qualité comme vous le définissez soit mis en place, il faudrait créer des espaces où les apprenants puissent réellement être actifs et décider.*

*(Belgique) je travaille pour ma part avec des adultes non francophones et nous avons créé un comité d'apprenants depuis un an et demi. Nous avons fixé, dès le début, des limites en stipulant que les participants ne pouvaient pas intervenir sur le terrain de la pédagogie, mais qu'ils remplissaient un rôle de représentants de tous les apprenants. Aujourd'hui, le constat est plutôt positif. Les apprenants estiment que ce comité est très important pour eux car c'est le lieu où ils peuvent parler et faire connaître leurs besoins. (et construire à partir de leurs besoins réels). Cette année, par exemple, il y a dans notre pays des élections communales en octobre et c'est la première fois que les étrangers non européens vont pouvoir voter sous certaines conditions. Pour transmettre les informations sur les modalités de cette élection, nous avons réalisé un travail d'approche et d'information avec le comité pour que les personnes de ce comité deviennent animatrices, avec nous, de cette communication. Dans le cadre du travail réalisé avec ce comité, on a également créé une petite bibliothèque pour les apprenants qui est gérée par eux, etc.*

*(Scotland) We have been encouraged to form what we called a « learners' forum » which is bringing learners together, basically to share experiences and to inform both the practise and the policy. People realize that they are not the only one. They realize that they are people from all area who might struggle in the way that you do. So that's very important aspect. Another aspect is about quality improvment because that's a forum for learners. It is by giving them a voice to say if it is a good quality framework or not.*

*The people have gained the confidence to intervene in other points. And, actually, we have two learners who attend a partnership meeting which are very formal, very structured meetings which are about policy . It's important to recognize that's not for everyone, but if you have learners and that you have their confidence, it's a very good way of informing both policy and the practise. And I'm interesting of what you said about your forum for the people who don't have French as the first language because we have not be able to make in route actually a forum for people for whom English is not their first language. And it's a big challenge for us.*

*Just to sum up then. There is a lot informations on our Website about quality framework (<http://www.nala.ie/publications/qualityframework.html>). What I will emphasise is that we developped it from the ground up. It's a very populair framework people are using . The facilitator is agreed. Learners actually love it but it takes time to get used to it. but they are learning a lot of skills, of vocabulary. They building confidence and the quality is also improving. A lot of stakeholders are involved.*

*If the objectives for learners is to improve, you ask the learners. NALA has, for example, a learner development comity where they actually decide policy in relation to learner's development. We have a learners' forum and we have a national executive with 14 members (where 5 are learners). So they actually decide the policy for NALA and they are very intend that they should be in the center of any developments in relation to. Even the learning of what the service should be and the quality of that service. This approach is a bottom up approach. The standards are defined by the stakeholders within their particular services, So the tutors, the learners, the managers from the services who are using this process actually decide what a good service is and that's the first step and the other step is how to get there.*

*2/ Margaret Tierney, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)*

There are two systems : one is internal moderation. It's for the tutors. Look at for the standards and their judgement of the work done by learners : « yes, these learners have achieved the bench-marks, or they have overtaken standards. » The judgements of tutors must be common to a centre – they all must share the same meaning of the national standards and apply them fairly to the learners' work. The judgement has to be valid and reliable for all staff who make this assessment. A centre is for example a school, college, workplace or project who is approved to deliver SQA qualifications.. The centre has to make sure that there is a common understanding of what that is. It is about trusting tutors to have a common understanding in the first place. They have been approved as professionals to deliver this learning.

We have a system of external moderation which confirms that the assessment of the tutors in the centres is correctly applied for those standards. We are the national qualification authority



with quality assurance responsibility for our awards. We are not inspectors. We are much more supporters, to help, to give tutors feed-back . The external system is supported, developed by practioners.

## Accreditation

- n National Core Skill framework & qualifications
- n 5 Core Skills – to be responsible, enterprising & active citizens
- n Approval criteria
  - includes centre quality system
  - internal and external moderation
  - Can work to standards or use standards to celebrate achievement ----or both

SCOTTISH  
QUALIFICATIONS  
AUTHORITY

The two systems have to come together. We work to that, we use our external moderation system to ensure that centres using their own internal system understand the standards and apply them. But it's also about a continuous improvement.

### Activity

A/ In groups of 3-5, they have five minutes to talk with each other and note some typical social practice activities that the learners want to work on or be able to do as result of the class. For example, when I was teaching and working with adult learners, one person wanted to be able to write a message from the telephone, another one wanted to measure curtains for the windows. This is the social approach, they don't come because you have free coffee, they come to make an improvment in their literacies. They recognise where and how they want to make that difference, not the tutor. It has to be meaningful for them.

B/ Look at you list of activities. Consider to what extent they map to the specifications for communication or numeracy.

C/ Think about any gaps might be covered if a learner wants national accreditation for their learning.

Evaluating learners achievements through SQA qualifications is what you have done just now. Having a qualification is about linking the assessment which comes from the French « s’asseoir », « to sit beside », and get feed-back. So assessment for us is very much about giving feed-back to learners on the standards.

To be accredited in a national system is like a passport that you can take elsewhere to employers, to colleges. It is portable and something that is recognized. It is an instant and trustworthy way of showing your achievements and skills to yourself as well as to others.



4/ Practices and approaches to quality in ABE

*Ursula Howard,*

*Director of the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC), England*

I come from the UK, but the UK is four different countries and there are different policies, strategies and practices in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. I’m speaking essentially for England. In England, since 1998 when the IALS (International Adult Literacy Skills) report was published, there has been a vast and extensive government interest in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. These subject areas are all included in one policy, called 'Skills for Life'. It is a ten year strategy from 2001 to 2010 which is highly ambitious and it has a formal 'Public Service Agreement' target which was agreed with the Treasury (Finance Ministry). Well over 2 billion pounds has gone into the strategy so far, and that money is spent in pursuit of the target. The aim of the target is that 10 million people will have improved their literacy, numeracy, language or ICT skills by the year 2010. It is not about how many people participate, it is not about how many people are in learning in some way. It is about learners’ achievements, measured by testing and other kinds of formal assessment. This is significant. Because Skills for Life is not only about engaging adults in learning, but about improving people’s literacy and numeracy and language, quality is critical. This is a challenge to all practitioners and learners. I have been teaching in adult literacy since 1974,

it's not always easy to know whether, if and how people are learning and learn best. It's not even always the prime goal of the teachers that people are learning 'hard' skills and knowledge. Sometimes, it's been enough to say: 'my learners have gained a lot of confidence'. This strategy is about the achievement of high levels of skills. Confidence building is essential to persistence and achievement, but the goal is qualifications and progression to further learning and employability. Skills for Life is a tough strategy, but it is a well funded one, and places learners at its heart.

### Why does England have this ambitious strategy ?

The strategy originated in research evidence – the OECD IALS survey which showed that the UK had millions of adults with literacy and numeracy problems. It is also the result of policy priorities. The Labour administration had won the election in 1997, a year prior to IALS, and the new administration was committed to social inclusion, employability and to making a difference in education. Education was the number 1 policy priority. The combination of policy drives and research evidence was a powerful combination. It created a powerful moment for changes.

Skills for Life has continued to be evidence based. A subsequent national survey by the Department for Education and Skills in England was published in 2003. You will find it on their website. The survey confirmed IALS and established that 5.2 million people had literacy skills below level 2 (There is a national system of 5 levels in England which was established in 'Skills for Life' 3 Entry levels, level 1 and level 2). 15 million were found to have numeracy skills below level 1. There are five levels in the English literacy and numeracy system and stop at level 2, which is the equivalent of the school leaving qualification that people gain in England at 16. So in Skills for Life we start at entry level 1 with people who are just beginning to learn to read, speak English or do maths, and the system goes up to level 2. The framework is based on the notion that if people have vocational or academic or literacy and numeracy at level 2, they have a platform from which to develop their learning, their work and their life chances further.

### What is quality and what is it for ?

I have tried to produce a brief list of what I think the key ingredients of quality are. The first is about accountability. And I mean accountability in a number of ways. We have produced a paper at NRDC about accountability which suggests 4 kinds of accountability. One is performance based, and which is really about outcomes for learners. Secondly, accountability is about the positive side of bureaucracy: the ability to trace paper to prove that something has happened or show how public money is being spent. There are professional accountabilities such as your accountability as a teacher to your learners and also adherence to the standards of your profession. And finally there is market accountability: to make the right provision which customers, in other words, learners, want. The English system is focused most on learners' outcomes, in other words, what are the achievements which learners make? How can adult learning organisations make sure that learners learn and achieve success?. Skills for Life makes them accountable for learners' progress, which in turn places emphasis on quality improvement.

Thus one definition of quality would be about ensuring that learners can achieve their goals. Effective practice or good quality teaching and learning support the first and fourth types of accountability. But I think there are wider goals in quality improvement. For me, quality is

about making a real measurable difference to people's lives. It's about linking quality to equality. There is inequality in our education system in terms of access to high quality education and learning, from birth right through to death. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes have to address inequality. I think quality is about inclusive social and cultural practices of which good literacy teaching and learning are part. Quality is also about ensuring everybody is able to contribute to their family life and literacy practices, to their own financial wellbeing and more widely to the economy ; and by continuing to be economically active in changing work environments, also continuing to be employable.

How do we best improve quality? I'm going to use research findings to suggest some ways. I will start by saying that quality improvement needs to involve a wide range of stakeholders working in partnership. If quality is to work it is about learners' achievement when there are a lot of interventions needed: from government, from inspectors, from employers and unions and families. Above all, from teachers and learners . A wide range of stakeholders have to be involved. Opportunities for learners must be flexible and suit learners' needs. Education must provide what learners want. Adults are voluntary learners: they do not have to come, nobody in England anywhere over the age of 16 has to engage in formal learning. Why should they bother ? What's in it for them ?

The next point I would make as a researcher is: how we can improve teaching and learning quality by transforming research evidence into better teaching and learning? This is a very difficult challenge and a complex process. It's easy to come up with research findings. Only turning that work into development activities which happen in practice, 'on the ground', with teachers involved, can turn research findings into better opportunities for learners. Another really important aspect of quality is how initial teacher education and professional development are designed, delivered and improved. Quality improvement means continuing professional development throughout the working lives of teachers. It is very important that we do not have a model of quality which is more about systems than processes, people and learning to do better. Whole organisations do need to work consistently and involve everyone who works in a college or learning centre on what learners need. But I think the main focus of quality has to be inside the classroom. There is still too little known about what goes on inside classrooms, or 'Inside the Black Box' as it has been termed. If quality is going to be about what learners experience, then we need to work inside the classroom and make sure that the learners' achievements are at the centre of thinking.

To return to the UK models. All four UK countries have made a serious investment in this area since Ireland (UK, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales). In England there has been a massive development of training, teaching and learning materials, national standards, a national curriculum for each of the subjects: literacy and numeracy and ESOL; a testing and assessment regime and qualification and skills levels: that's part of what we call the 'learning infrastructure'. It is a 'top down' model. Government has made this investment to be sure that change happens. In Scotland and to some extent in North Ireland and Wales, there has been a more 'bottom up' approach with more emphasis on social and community approaches compared to the more skills and work-related emphasis of the English model. In Wales, there has been a very specific commitment to seeing adult literacy as part of a whole lifecourse approach: 'cradle to grave'. It's really a differently ambitious model. All of the policies in all of the countries aim to engage employers . Scotland leads the way in having a community and social focus to literacy. All four countries have an external inspection system. Inspectors are appointed by government, which does not happen in all European countries. In all of the UK countries there are various agencies set up to run initiatives for development and to support

quality improvement. These are dispersed throughout all the regions and localities within countries, trying to make literacy, numeracy and ESOL policies work on the ground.

NRDC was set up by the UK government as a research and development center to support Skills for Life because there was a very low evidence base for the work we do. The government is committed to evidence-based policy, which is closely linked to a quality improvement approach. The UK needed to secure a strong research and evidence base to support the improvement of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in the future.

Presentation

I'm going to look at six different areas of quality through the research evidence we have been able to create at NRDC to try to support the effectiveness of the Skills for Life strategy.

### Raising awareness, engaging learners

What we found from our research is that there are serious barriers to the engagement of learners, and of course: no engagement, no learners, no quality. This research was with 10,000 adults across the UK, all of them born in 1970. These adults have been part of a study that traces them throughout their lives. Professor John Bynner and his team at NRDC tested and interviewed these 10,000 people to establish the level of their skills, their attitudes to literacy, their desires and many other aspects of their lives. We have discovered that far more people have problems than are prepared to recognise those problems. Obviously people need to gain awareness of the significance of their literacy problems and acknowledge their difficulties before they are likely to participate in learning. This is obvious but it's useful to have 10,000 people telling you, you can inform policy makers and others who can act on the basis of evidence. We also found that the more severe a person's problem, the more likely they were to improve their skills and make real gains once they start learning. We also discovered that increasing awareness increases two kinds of awareness-raising. Firstly, publicity campaigns: Skills for Life has a massive publicity campaign on television, in the streets and in pubs. The advertising is present everywhere. 93 % of the English population has been aware of the literacy publicity campaign since 2001.

Implicit campaigns are also needed. Some people may be put off by explicit campaigning. Implicit approaches are, for example, when somebody goes to a construction course or a hairdressing course and they need language, literacy and numeracy support to succeed in their courses. Implicit approaches make people aware through their other goals in life that they need literacy and numeracy support. When we say that the problem is great and we start talking about people with a low level of skills, I am not saying that everybody with low skills leads a difficult life or is a failure. On the contrary, many people with very low numeracy, literacy and language skills lead very successful lives, or they manage to overcome their difficulties. However a study of 10,000 people is a large number of people which provides a robust finding about tendencies, and that on average people are more or less likely to be affected by a number of factors in their lives. What the research discovered was that people at entry level 2 in the English level system and below were especially disadvantaged by low levels of literacy in their working lives, in their mental and physical health, and in their social and personal relationships. And numeracy has even more major impact on their lives than literacy. Working women are particularly disadvantaged in the area of numeracy and mathematics. If you are a parent with very low levels of literacy and numeracy skills, that is more likely to have an inter-generational impact. That is, the children of parents with very low

literacy and numeracy are more likely to be disadvantaged than people with even a slightly higher level of skills. The challenge for the English policy is that the national target for literacy and numeracy starts at entry level 3. In other words, learning which counts towards the target that which has been agreed with the Treasury starts at entry level 3. This means that although there is funding for those with the lowest skills, the priority is those who will reach the target relatively quickly. But our research shows that the people who might be missed, if you focus too much on entry level 3 upwards, are those who most need learning, the people who suffer the worst inequality whose skills are lowest, who may suffer poverty and whose problems would be transferred to their children. In the worst case scenario it is possible to have a massively well-funded 10 year strategy that does not actually reach enough of those with the greatest needs. But our government is listening to this evidence and thinking what we should do to address the evidence. This is really the first example of NRDC coming up with some evidences that suggested to the policy makers that we needed a shift in emphasis to Skills for Life.

Another research programme investigated disengaged young adults aged 16 to 25 years old with literacy, numeracy and language needs. We asked what helps them to engage in learning? They are growing into adulthood, and they are already at risk of social exclusion, criminal activity and drugs. Often they experience poverty and other negative influences on their lives. And we find that they are much more likely to engage in learning provision if the professionals and teachers who they meet respond to who they are as people: respond to their interests, their needs, their successes, their failures. That's much more important to socially excluded and 'at risk' young people than literacy and numeracy in the first instance. How we hook people in, how we attract their interest, is really important. We have also discovered that disengaged young people are much more likely to respond to implicit awareness-raising. They are much more likely to want to become carpenters or teachers or hairdressers or engineers than they want to be successful in literacy and numeracy. And therefore, education opportunities that blend and mix literacy and numeracy with vocational learning or recreational learning, sport or ICT for example, is a great way to attract people. Computing and other forms of ICT-related learning again and again come up as very motivating. On the question of maths, it has been very surprising to discover just what a strong impact low numeracy can have on people's lives and this tends not to get the publicity or the drama attaching to literacy in the discourse of adult basic education.

### Learning in the workplace

We found that learning in the workplace is a very important way to attract new people into learning, particularly men. I don't know how it is in all European countries but in England if you look at who returns to learning in colleges and adult learning centres, there are many more women than men. If you look at workplace learning programs, the opposite is true. The economic sphere is very important for the government in supporting literacy and numeracy and workplace learning is encouraged and funded. We found that trade unions are very important motivators for adult learning. Thanks to new legislation in UK, there are now trade union 'learning representatives' whose role it is to encourage people to improve their skills. And many men appear to find learning at work more attractive and more organic to their lives. Skills for Life has in this way reached new groups of learners very effectively. There are many other reasons why men don't participate. One is their self-identity, especially men who live in rural areas. They don't have a self-identity as learners.

Persistence, flexibility, time on task. One of the most important things we have learnt from NRDC's research into teaching and learning is that we do not give people enough time to learn. The provision is either extensive, in other words people can attend for two hours a week for five years, sometimes in the same classroom, without necessarily learning or progressing very far. They may gain confidence and form positive relationships with teachers and other learners, but they do not do much more than what we call 'tread water', or maintain their existing level of literacy skills and practices. They will not make much progress only learning for 2-4 hours per week. Research which is led by NCSALL, an American research centre in the USA, shows that you have to have at least 100 hours of provision in a year for most learners to show measurable progress in the GED examination (the school leaving examination equivalent for adults). Think about our own lives in this respect : if I want to spend 100 hours over a year to become fitter, as my learning goal, where am going to find 100 hours from outside my working life and family commitments? I belong to a gym which is open all the weekends so I can manage: but in England the centres for adult learning are not open at the weekends nor early in the morning, or late at night. Their hours do not fit in with shift work. So that restricts the chances for a learner to find these 100 hours. The research shows that learning for more than 100 hours over a reasonable time increases the rates of persistence and achievement.

Now we have discovered or we have been able to make a strong hypothesis that in the English system you are probably going to need 200 hours to be able to move up a whole level in the English 5-level system. So this is even more of a challenge for adult learning: how to ensure 200 hours of learning are available - without even more investment from the government.

So, helping learners to persist means encouraging them to spend more time learning and that learning either has to be more intensive. We believe that we have got to make the funding, and learning opportunities even more flexible. When we talk about supporting learners' persistence we mean making our systems more flexible to meet people's needs. This includes supporting their study at home, when their own commitments prevent them from coming in every week. At present, when they do not come we forget them or worry about them, but we do not offer them much support. We should be able to offer more flexible learning, including distance learning and self-study, using ICT, tutorial support and other means. Research in the States shows that learners do learn on their own with support from a learning center, even when their skills are at the lowest levels. It is a big challenge for us to make it more flexible and to create what the Americans call 'time on task'; you will not learn if you do not spend the hours applying. NRDC's research is showing that we have to pay attention to supporting learners' existing practices. Practising literacy leads to higher levels of skills and proficiency. Therefore the 'social practices' model of literacy and numeracy and the 'skills-based' model need to come together if we are going to support learners' achievements.

Now I am going to focus on teaching and learning. If a teacher thinks she has taught somebody something they may assume that person has learned it, but maybe they have not. How do we know ? That is a good question to ask in relation to quality. Again this goes back to how people practise their literacy and numeracy and how teaching supports their practices. In a lesson, there often emerges a 'teachable moment', something which arouses the immediate interest of learners, something that they are engaging in and want to learn about. Our evidence says that teachers need to be ready to drop their own lesson plans and engage with that which the learners want – there and then. This is common sense for any good teacher. But when you have a formal national curriculum, and written standards and

assessments and tests, many new or inexperienced teachers feel policed by these documents and regimes. They may not have the confidence or skills to adopt flexible approaches, lateral thinking or inspirational teaching into their practice. Therefore the teaching is in danger of becoming too programmatic and dull. So teachers need to blend a systematic approach with inspirational and responsive attributes to their practice. Another danger of a highly developed national strategy with formal curricula is that people will simply follow them mechanically, and the whole system becomes too driven by materials and worksheets. Young people we researched got bored by working through materials as a way of learning. It reminded them of school and secondly it did not relate to their personal goals in life. We found in our research in prisons with young offenders, that literacy divorced from practical, adult workshops reminded them of school. Young people returning to learning like informality. They do not like reminders of school, they see this approach as remedial and corrective rather than developmental. What they want to do is get their lives 'sorted out', get a job, and they want to have the skills to do that. The young like the practical workshops. They got restless and sometimes disruptive. Learners we researched got more involved when there was plenty of discussion, enough of the teacher's time and attention and a mixture of individual and social forms of learning in the classroom.

#### Effective teaching and learning, flexibility - embedding adult basic education

We found good practice in settings where teachers adopted a sophisticated, subtle approach to managing the different needs inside any one classroom. They successfully managed what we call a 'fragile classroom ecology': people with many different needs, many of whom are vulnerable, others of whom are not. Such teachers manage to engage with a very diverse set of interests.

NRDC has conducted five linked studies of Effective Practice in Teaching and Learning. These were three year studies. We have gone into classrooms to observe reading, writing, numeracy, ESOL and ICT. We have looked at many classrooms and hundreds of learners and we have done detailed logs, assessments of learners' skills and levels before and after their participation in learning. I am going to talk briefly about the key findings of the Effective Practice Studies. For us 'effective practice' means quality.

We found that balance of individual and small group work could be correlated with learners' progress and attainment. If learners spent too much time learning on their own they will not succeed as well as when they have the opportunity to work in groups with their peers. This is a challenge to educators, because a lot of our conceptual thinking, our education philosophy and our education and training policies for a number of years have been very focused on the individual learner, meeting an individual learner's needs. Meeting the needs of an individual learner should not mean 'learning in isolation', punctuated by one-to-one support from a teacher. The learning process needs to be enriched by whole-group and small group work.

Speaking and listening and talk are as essential as to literacy and numeracy as they are to English as a Second Language (ESOL). Learning ESOL, you would think, is all about talking. However, we found that in classrooms there is often too little talk. There is too much silence in our classrooms. Talking is correlated with attainment in reading and writing as well as speaking and listening. The only exception to that is in the area of writing where we discovered that learner-writers, at least initially, prefer to work quietly on their own. And we think that this may reflect fear of exposure of your writing and your handwriting to public



scrutiny. So teachers need to support learners to socialise their learning processes in writing perhaps more than in other areas.

I am going to move on to the work we call 'embedding' literacy, numeracy and language in other settings. In some countries it might be called 'contextualising', or 'integrating'. It means that the literacy and numeracy support a learner's other learning goals. Those may be vocational or work-related, recreational or personal goals. In our experience learning to support your children's learning and life, for example, is one of the primary motivators of literacy numeracy and language learning for adults. We have discovered that there is a strong correlation between learning and attainment if it is embedded in other learning goals. Learners are more likely to raise their skill levels if the learning happens in this way – rather than simply offering literacy or numeracy. Some people just want to get back to reading and writing. But the majority are more motivated by broader things in their lives which cause them to want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to help them to succeed.

Continuing with teaching and learning there is one very strong piece of evidence about what leads to greater attainment, and that is feedback . In the UK the 'Assessment Reform Group' and others have shown quantitatively and qualitatively that in identifying what contributes to learning progress, feedback loops and formative assessments are the strongest factors. So the message for us is that whatever teachers do, they need to feed back to their students regularly and positively. They need to engage learners in peer feedback. They need to use tests and qualifications in formative ways. Our research has shown that the 'summative' national literacy test, which teachers tend not to like (they see it as too simplistic and likely to destroy learners confidence), is popular with learners - but they only like it if teachers put it on the table and introduce it in conversation carefully, to check if learners would like to see how they have been progressing. Learners also like the 'badge of attainment' if they pass it .

So, NRDC's research and development work on pedagogy have researched approaches which avoid right or wrong answers all the time. In numeracy teaching, this is a particular challenge, as maths is deeply associated by learners with 'right' and 'wrong' answers, rather than exploring why misconceptions arise, or how problems are solved. In a project called 'Maths4Life', we are developing a new pedagogic approach to adult numeracy and adults' maths which has been very well researched at Nottingham University; it is called 'Thinking through maths'. Instead of focusing on mistakes, it helps learners to think about mathematical problems in a critical way and ensure learners are empowered by being able to discuss different ways of doing maths. It also involves plenty of group discussion work and learners thinking out loud together. This project has shown how to take away fears of learning maths that adults have carried from their childhood learning experiences.

### Dealing with diversity

We cannot treat adults over the age of 16 as a homogeneous set of learners. We talk about adult learners, but we are dealing with very diverse groups of learners. We must accept people as they are in order to help them. Social class remains the greatest determinant of success in the English educational system. If you are in social class one you are four times more likely to have achieved a level two in our system than if you are from class four or five. Poverty and class are still influential in measuring success in the UK educational systems. Obviously gender, age, ethnicity and your employment status all point to the need to personalise learning, focus on individuals needs and the cultural and social backgrounds of learners. We

need to take account of all the aspects of adults' lives. People from rural backgrounds have very different needs and different attitudes and identities from city dwellers. We know that migration and population change are changing literacy, numeracy and ESOL. There is a large influx of people from EU countries. We are finding that many learners of ESOL, whether they are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants are finding themselves in rural areas where there are not enough professional teachers. We need multicultural, socially and pedagogically inclusive approaches as well as a focus on individuals.

### Teacher Education and professional development

I think quality depends on the quality, and also the qualifications of teachers. None of the things I have said will happen unless teacher education provides for a reflective, flexible, knowledgeable teaching workforce. In England the quality of teacher education is variable, a lot of teachers are underqualified and they are thrown in at the 'deep end'. They have a poor career structure, they are often part time and they are paid hourly. Often, teachers cannot see how teaching literacy will lead to a professional sustainable job. There is a lot of bureaucratic paperwork and in England we have a system that has been slow to reintroduce the need for less qualified and unqualified teaching assistants and volunteers to support the highly skilled and qualified teachers we need to lead the learning of our most disadvantaged adult learners. We know from research that literacy and numeracy teachers are dedicated, caring, empathetic and rigorous: learners value these attributes. But overall the teaching profession in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL does lack some of the professional skills which we think that they need. At NRDC our view is that new teachers should not start teaching before they have participated in some initial training before they start work, even if it is one module or a short course. And teachers need to have an ongoing commitment to training, in pedagogic skill, in how you teach the specific subjects of numeracy, language, literacy to adults, and also enough subject knowledge themselves. Numeracy teachers need to be strong in maths, for example.

### An all-through approach to quality

We want to have a system of qualified teachers, supported by classroom assistants and volunteers. We want teachers to have the opportunity to engage in research and reflective practices. NRDC has succeeded, in all of our research programmes, in engaging teachers as researchers. This has been enormously beneficial to researchers and teachers and has changed the relationship between the two. Researchers are often too distant. They need objectivity, but they need also to absorb and understand knowledge gained from practice. So research opportunities should be available for every teacher to ensure reflective practice, that is our aim.

And just to finish where I started, you can see that what I believe in is that everybody needs to be engaged in quality. That the quality needs to start with teachers and learners in the classroom, supported by everyone in their organisation bottom to top; that governments need to listen to practitioners, and practitioners to governments so that the top or the sides move towards the middle. We all need to work together to improve our learners' chances in life and work.

Where to get more information about NRDC : [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk)

You have said that 80 % of the learning provisions are in colleges. In Scotland, each college has its own quality assurance system and I want to know if in England this situation doesn't create any conflict between an individual quality system and the literacy evaluation framework ?

*All providers of learning have to have a quality system in place (it can be a voluntary quality system or not). But the quality system in England is really driven by the inspection framework. All providers of learning are subject to inspection. This inspection framework is based on self-assessment. The system in England is based on two main concepts : one is quality - assessment which inspectors do and one is quality improvement because inspection by itself doesn't improve anything. In a recent government white paper, if institutions won't achieve certain standards and improve on them, they may lose their licence to practise including large colleges could lose their fundings*

**En quoi consiste ce système d'inspection ?**

*It means government's inspectors (since 1830). The inspectors assess the quality of provisions, of education. Its used to be just for schools. In the late 15 years, it has grown to be the norm that all further education colleges, adult education centers, prisons and other providers are inspected. The inspectors are part of the government. The colleges are inspected every four years at quite large scales (with a lot of interviews and reports in the public domain). The inspectors are also practitioners. They are for example teachers working for other organisations. People are terrifying by these inspections and the negative side of this inspection is that it tends to dominate people's life.*

*One of the features that is essential to any quality system is feed-back And inspection is one system for providing feed-back on the quality on what going on. In Ireland we don't have inspection. What happen very often in Ireland is when anybody enters a room, the teacher stops teaching and the learner stops learning. So teaching and learning only go on between the tutor and the learner when nobody else is around. Very often that creates isolation for practioners because we don't have enough resources on networks for better support for teachers. As I'm sure it this the case in other countries, we are speaking about a sector of education which is the most under resourced. In Ireland for each 1000 euros which is spent on education, 3 euros go into adult literacy. But there are issues on how do you support teachers to teach and learners to learn. And I think that Those go back to the issue of professionalization of the sector and appropriate qualification for tutors.*

*Wat we have tried to introduce in Scotland for tutors and adult literacies is a national quality network which is a circle of practioners they come together to discuss what are the issues in the classroom for practise. It is organized by the qualification authority because we quality not only in terms of qualification but for learners themselves. The only way to do that is to share experiences among practioners It's about creativity, it's about using what practioners researchs have delivering. It's also to raise issues and to find solutions to theses issues it's not being scared to have difficulties here it's about saying can you help me because I have 33 learners and no resources. Or I have a mixture of learners who have literacy needs, numeracy needs, English as a second language, all come together in one group. I need other people how to manage that. What works for you. That has started in the last 2 years. And it*

*has been very well received across the country and we now have a bulletin from the quality network, the people can share, can contribute to these as well.*

Could you invite somebody from France or Belgium just to reflect on the quality system that you have ?

*En France, la formation continue qui est le terme employé pour parler de l'éducation des adultes est très centrée sur l'aspect professionnel. La démarche qualité est très présente, mais dans le sens de certification nationale ou internationale (de type ISO 9000). Dans l'éducation de base, ce que nous appelons « la lutte contre l'illettrisme », des outils ont été développés à l'échelon national pour améliorer les interventions auprès de ces publics. Nous n'avons pas en France de corps d'inspecteurs de l'éducation des adultes. Il y a des contrôles dans ce secteur, mais dans la mesure où la formation continue est une taxe imposée aux entreprises, les contrôles effectués sont des contrôles fiscaux. On vérifie la nature de ces dépenses et leurs affectations, mais pas la qualité des formations délivrées.*

*5/ Frédérique Lemaître,*

*Chargée de mission à Lire et Ecrire Communauté française (Belgique)*

En septembre 2005, Lire et Ecrire a relancé un travail sur les critères de qualité, initié en 1998-2000 avec différents partenaires européens dont NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency). La première étape du processus a consisté à traduire le guide rédigé il y a 7 ans par l'agence irlandaise d'alphabétisation. Cet outil tombait à point nommé et correspondait à un besoin de plus en plus présent au sein de l'association d'auto-évaluer les différents aspects du travail d'alphabétisation, besoin qui n'est par ailleurs pas étranger à la professionnalisation croissante du secteur. Cette démarche s'inscrit aussi naturellement dans les prescrits d'un nouveau décret sur l'Education permanente.

Toutefois, avant de se lancer dans l'action, il était important de se réapproprier la démarche et de (re)prendre connaissance de son contenu. Un groupe de travail interrégional a été constitué. Ce dernier a rédigé une note de travail fixant le cadre de l'action et présentant globalement la manière dont le processus se concrétiserait.

#### Le groupe de travail "critères de qualité"

Un groupe de travail composé de personnes ressources – animateurs « critères de qualité » – issues de chaque régionale wallonne et bruxelloise ainsi que de personnes ressources de Lire et Ecrire Communauté française fut constitué dès septembre 2005. Depuis, il se réunit régulièrement à raison d'une journée toutes les 6 semaines.

L'animateur responsable de la mise en œuvre de la démarche 'critères de qualité' est membre du groupe de travail et/ou a été formé à la démarche *pour évoluer vers plus de qualité*. Il prend en charge la constitution de l'équipe-qualité au sein de sa régionale ainsi que l'animation de celle-ci.

Les missions du groupe de travail sont les suivantes :

- s'approprier la démarche *pour évoluer vers plus de qualité* systématisée par NALA ;

- aménager la démarche en fonction de nos pratiques et proposer un processus de mise en œuvre approprié à notre contexte ;
- soutenir les animateurs ‘critères de qualité’ dans leur démarche, notamment par l’échange de pratiques d’animation ;
- produire des outils pédagogiques facilitant l’animation.

Le groupe de travail est donc un lieu de référence, de réflexion, et de partage d’informations sur le processus et la méthode, mais non sur les résultats de l’auto-évaluation mise en place sur le terrain. Il est tenu à la confidentialité.

A l’heure actuelle, trois régionales (Lire et Ecrire Hainaut occidental, Namur et Verviers) ont entamé le processus ; les autres les rejoindront à partir de ce mois de septembre 2006.

### Les fondements de l’action “critères de qualité”

Développer une alphabétisation de qualité se concrétise tout d’abord par la mise en place d’une équipe-qualité composée des acteurs présents au sein de l’association, c’est-à-dire :

- d’apprenants
- d’acteurs pédagogiques : formateurs bénévoles ou rémunérés, coordinateurs pédagogiques
- d’acteurs politiques : directeurs, administrateurs
- de représentants des autres personnes actives au sein de l’association : secrétaires, comptables, coordinateurs administratif et financier, chargés de mission, agents de sensibilisation, agents d’accueil, techniciens de surface,...

L’équipe-qualité choisit un critère de qualité et met en route une démarche participative pour évaluer le critère de qualité retenu, l’analyser et formuler des propositions.

Ce travail s’articule autour des *5 principes de base* de NALA. Ils ont été légèrement amendés par le groupe de travail et peuvent être considérés comme valeurs transversales et fondamentales de l’action d’alphabétisation au sein de Lire et Ecrire :

- L’association soutiendra l’apprenant dans son droit à suivre les cours de manière volontaire (non obligatoire) et son droit à se fixer ses propres objectifs.
- Un code éthique de confidentialité, de respect et de confiance s’appliquera à tous les niveaux.
- Les personnes de cultures ou de classes sociales différentes se sentiront pleinement intégrées dans la vie et les activités de l’association.
- L’association veillera à créer une atmosphère conviviale, de plaisir et d’interaction entre les personnes.
- L’association veillera à ce que les apprenants aient la possibilité de participer à tous les niveaux de l’association, y compris à l’évaluation de celle-ci.

Suite à une proposition d’une régionale, un 6<sup>ème</sup> principe de base a été ajouté :

- L’association veillera à ce que la formation vise l’émancipation des apprenants dans une démarche d’Education permanente.

Le partage des critères de qualité en *5 domaines* (les ressources, la coordination et la gestion, la formation et les aspects pédagogiques, la progression, la sensibilisation et la promotion) a également été repris par Lire et Ecrire.

## La démarche mise en place dans les régionales

La note de travail rédigée par le groupe 'critères de qualité' (fixant le cadre de travail et présentant le processus d'application) sert d'outil d'information au sein des régionales. Sur base de cette note, l'information est organisée auprès de tous les acteurs de l'association (conseil d'administration, personnel rémunéré ou bénévole, apprenants...) par l'animateur de l'équipe-qualité.

## Accord et décision de l'association de s'engager dans ce processus

Adhérer à la démarche *pour évoluer vers plus de qualité*, c'est s'engager dans un processus d'auto-évaluation permanent qui s'inscrit dans les axes prioritaires de Lire et Ecrire. C'est également accepter, être prêt à piloter des changements, à entendre des remises en question en vue d'améliorer l'action. C'est se donner les moyens de mise en œuvre du processus en affectant du personnel au projet mais aussi du temps, un local...

## Création de l'équipe-qualité

Le processus est basé sur la constitution, au sein de chaque régionale, d'une équipe-qualité, c'est-à-dire d'un groupe de personnes (6 à 10) qui travailleront ensemble sur les critères de qualité de manière solidaire.

En la constituant, l'animateur 'critères de qualité' veillera à respecter, dans la mesure du possible, une parité hommes-femmes.

L'équipe-qualité devra être globalement représentative de l'association. Idéalement, les quatre types d'acteurs (*voir ci-dessus*) devraient être présents dans l'équipe-qualité. Les apprenants et les acteurs pédagogiques devront impérativement y participer, ainsi qu'un troisième acteur. Les participants viendront à titre personnel. Ils n'auront pas de mandat et ne devront pas rendre compte.

Idéalement, les membres de l'équipe-qualité seront actifs au sein de l'association depuis au moins 6 mois.

Ils se rendront disponibles pour participer à l'ensemble des séances de travail, c'est-à-dire une séance de 3h pendant une période déterminée de 7 à 8 semaines.

Ils marqueront leur adhésion à la note de présentation.

Les participants connaîtront suffisamment le français oral pour suivre une discussion et émettre un avis.

Dans la phase d'expérimentation du projet (c'est-à-dire en 2006), nous souhaitons que les apprenants qui participent au projet aient des bases suffisantes en français écrit. Cependant, le groupe de travail 'critères de qualité' construira des démarches en vue de permettre la participation des apprenants débutants tant en lecture qu'en écriture.

## Mise en route du processus

Une fois constituée, l'équipe-qualité choisit un critère et se met au travail. Nous avons choisi dans la régionale de Verviers le critère des locaux de cours et notamment de la propreté. Au début, certains ont trouvé ce choix relativement banal, mais peu à peu, en avançant dans le processus, ils se sont rendu compte que la propreté des locaux touchait à un thème aussi important que l'identité. Cette thématique a très vite suscité des débats culturels très animés. Par exemple, la question de la gratuité de la distribution de café pendant les pauses a permis de confronter des avis divergents : pour les uns, cette gratuité induisait un gaspillage, pour les

autres, elle était assimilée à une assistance, notion inconnue et rejetée dans leur culture. Au-delà de faits anodins, une réflexion s'est mise en place autour de l'identité des gens du groupe.

Les réunions seront co-animées, dans la mesure du possible et du moins en 2006, par deux personnes : l'animateur 'critères de qualité' de la régionale et un animateur issu du groupe de travail 'critères de qualité' ou qui a déjà été formé à la démarche. La co-animation se veut source d'enrichissement mutuel, permet un soutien réciproque dans le développement du projet et dans la systématisation des démarches proposées.

### Engagement par l'association dans l'action

La démarche 'critères de qualité' est un outil d'auto-évaluation, un moyen de se questionner et d'avancer, de recueillir de l'information pour prendre des décisions.

Une fois la démarche terminée sur le critère choisi, l'équipe-qualité propose donc un plan d'action aux responsables de l'association et au directeur qui, de leur côté, s'engagent à l'écouter et à dialoguer avec elle pour la mise en œuvre des propositions formulées dans le plan.

Le processus peut alors recommencer avec un autre critère.

### Bilan près quelques mois de fonctionnement

Il est certes trop tôt, après 6 mois de démarrage du projet, pour tirer des conclusions. Cependant, un questionnement et des réflexions sont en cours tant dans le groupe de travail que dans les régionales qui ont commencé le processus. Je vous livre ici des réflexions suite à mon implication comme co-animatrice dans l'équipe-qualité d'une des régionales. Cette équipe s'est jusqu'à présent réunie 7 fois et est donc arrivée presque au terme du travail autour d'un critère de qualité. Elle a déjà rédigé le plan d'action pour le critère choisi. Il lui reste à présenter ce plan au Conseil d'Administration de la régionale et à en assurer le suivi par la suite.

### La co-animation

Même si elle demande un investissement temps important (préparation et évaluation des animations), la co-animation est vraiment précieuse. Elle favorise la mise en confiance et le soutien mutuel des animateurs, permet la complémentarité des approches ainsi que l'analyse critique du déroulement des séances d'animation. Nous sommes partis de ce principe de co-animation avec l'équipe qualité de notre régionale de Verviers. Notre volonté n'est pas de mettre sur pied des animations uniformes dans toutes les Régionales, mais d'aboutir à un échange de bonnes pratiques. Dans ce contexte, nous avons tenu compte de l'histoire de chaque Régionale. Par exemple, à Verviers, où Lire et Ecrire dispose d'un grand bâtiment de trois étages, une ancienne usine de laine, nous avons opté pour une animation basée sur le dessin en représentant l'association comme une grande maison.

Outre la connaissance du processus, il me semble nécessaire que les animateurs puissent avoir une expérience préalable d'animation et une connaissance des mécanismes de la dynamique de groupe afin de les mettre au service de la démarche.

## La participation des différents acteurs

Une des caractéristiques essentielles de la démarche est d'impliquer les différents acteurs de l'association au sein de l'équipe-qualité. Cela permet à chacun d'étoffer et/ou de prendre connaissance de la réalité de la régionale, de confronter ses représentations avec celles des autres participants et par conséquent de les compléter.

Le choix d'un critère focalise l'attention de l'équipe-qualité autour de la construction d'un mini-projet aboutissant à la rédaction d'un plan d'action à présenter aux instances dirigeantes. Pour y arriver, il est nécessaire de dépasser son propre intérêt individuel pour construire une décision collective satisfaisante pour l'ensemble de l'équipe-qualité ET dans l'intérêt de la régionale.

## La construction d'animations

Le guide édité par NALA ne répond pas à toutes nos questions et doit être adapté à notre réalité, notamment en ce qui concerne les outils d'animation et la construction des séances de travail aux différentes étapes du processus. Pour l'instant, l'expérience étant encore en cours, nous échangeons et récoltons, au sein du groupe de travail, tous les éléments susceptibles de favoriser la participation des apprenants en difficulté avec l'écrit et l'oral : utilisation du photolangage, des symboles, reformulation avec des mots clés, relecture avec les apprenants du PV de la dernière séance,... Nous pourrions ainsi à terme produire et éditer des fiches pédagogiques en vue de constituer notre propre guide de référence pour développer une alphabétisation de qualité.

Rendez-vous donc dans quelques mois et pourquoi pas en 2008 puisque, dans le cadre de la 'décennie de l'alphabétisation' décrétée par l'Unesco, l'année 2008 sera celle de la qualité.

La version française du guide de NALA, « Cadre pour évoluer vers plus de qualité en alphabétisation et formation d'adultes. Guide pour la mise en œuvre », est disponible au Centre de documentation du Collectif Alpha : Tél : 0032 2 533 09 25  
Courriel : [cdoc@collectif-alpha.be](mailto:cdoc@collectif-alpha.be)

Pour tout renseignement sur la version anglaise « Evolving Quality Framework for Adult Basic Education : User Guide », contactez NALA (e-mail : [literacy@nala.ie](mailto:literacy@nala.ie) ou consultez le site web [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)

## *Echanges - Débat*

You have said in your introduction that you have a very little experience of quality and criteria of quality, I just want to know what have you taken from the last couples of hours and how is it enlighting your experience of quality. How do you know you are doing a good job ?

*(Lire et Ecrire Namur) Je pense que nous nous posions beaucoup de questions par rapport à la qualité, mais que nous ne savions pas exactement ce que ce vocable recouvrait, c'est-à-dire tout cet ensemble de concepts.*

*La deuxième chose à préciser est que notre travail n'est pas directement lié à une certification. Si je prends l'exemple de l'inscription des apprenants en début d'année, on a réalisé les premiers tests d'évaluation cette année. Nous commençons également à passer*



*dans les classes pour mieux comprendre ce qui s'y passe et voir si on peut imaginer une pédagogie commune. Nous prenons également des notes sur ce qui pourrait être fait dans le domaine de l'inspection. Nous sommes en train de réfléchir sur un certain nombre d'améliorations à apporter et chacun y travaille du mieux qu'il peut.*

*6/ Brigitte Pythoud,*

*Directrice de Lire et Ecrire Suisse romande*

L'Association Lire et Ecrire organise une centaine de cours par année pour un public en situation d'illettrisme ou d'analphabétisme, dans 24 localités de la partie francophone du pays.

Lorsque les autorités ont lié l'octroi de la subvention à l'obtention du label de qualité eduQua (voir encadré), le défi de faire coïncider les exigences liées à un label de qualité avec un travail en milieu associatif nous semblait un défi difficile à relever.

Le Comité de direction de l'Association a donc commandé en automne 2002 une étude de faisabilité qui a permis de découvrir que le souci de la qualité avait toujours guidé l'action sans avoir été jamais clairement explicité. L'étude a mis en évidence les points forts déjà présents et les points à améliorer pour correspondre aux critères minimaux. Nous possédions déjà certains acquis, notamment dans les domaines de la formation de formateurs et dans celui des apprenants. Par contre, nous étions en dessous des critères minimaux pour l'évaluation. A ce stade, nous avons néanmoins été rassurés car nous avons compris que le label nous laissait une grande liberté. En fait, si on l'abordait comme un processus progressif et adaptable à notre réalité, on pouvait espérer correspondre à un certain nombre de critères minimaux. Du coup, l'obtention de ce label devenait un but réaliste et souhaitable.

Le temps imparti pour présenter de façon cohérente l'ensemble de notre démarche pédagogique et institutionnelle était court (un peu moins d'une année).

Dès le début des travaux, en janvier 2003, nous avons choisi de rester fidèles au fonctionnement démocratique de l'association et d'impliquer dans cette réflexion tous les acteurs de la formation : les formatrices, les responsables des sections régionales, la commission pédagogique, les responsables de la formation de base et continue des formatrices, le Secrétariat général et le Comité de direction. Une des difficultés rencontrées a été d'associer les sections régionales qui travaillaient essentiellement avec des bénévoles. Pour elles, la démarche qualité s'est avérée très lourde. Le cahier des charges développé dans les processus d'évaluation était en effet identique pour les formateurs salariés et bénévoles. Mais, heureusement, ces nouvelles exigences n'ont pas trop découragé les gens, puisque nous n'avons enregistré que très peu de départ suite à la mise sur pied de la démarche qualité.

Tous ces acteurs se sont exprimés sur l'ensemble des procédures et documents développés dans le cadre de la certification lors de réunions ou par consultation écrite. Tous ont également contribué à la clarification des rôles respectifs dans le domaine de la formation.

En octobre 2003, la demande de certification a été déposée et l'Association Lire et Ecrire a obtenu la certification eduQua en décembre de la même année. Cette certification est valable pour une durée de 3 ans, renouvelable sur demande. Au départ, nous craignons les audits de suivi qui sont imposés dans le cadre de la procédure. Mais très vite, nous avons compris que

l'auditeur était là pour nous aider. Cette personne venue de l'extérieur nous pose les bonnes questions.

### Les innovations

Tout d'abord nous avons explicité le concept de qualité de l'Association. Par qualité, nous entendons le résultat de l'ensemble des mesures que l'Association met en place pour répondre de façon adéquate aux besoins analysés. De la même façon que toute démarche de qualité est essentiellement évolutive, ce concept n'est pas statique mais destiné à évoluer à mesure des améliorations décidées par l'ensemble des acteurs.

Parallèlement un concept de formation a été créé pour expliciter la démarche pédagogique existante.

Les innovations principales développées dans le cadre de la certification se situent dans le domaine de l'évaluation des cours.

La Commission pédagogique a développé un concept d'évaluation intégré qui permet, d'une part, une évaluation des cours à travers le regard des différents acteurs de la formation sur la pratique pédagogique et, d'autre part, une évaluation des progrès réalisés par chaque participant.

Le concept d'évaluation englobe trois types d'évaluation interactive :

- la visite de cours entre formatrices ;
- l'évaluation des cours par les participants ;
- l'évaluation formatrice.

### La visite de cours entre formatrices

Chaque formatrice reçoit une fois l'an la visite d'une autre formatrice. Et chaque formatrice visite une fois l'an le cours d'une autre formatrice.

La visite de cours se situe à mi-chemin entre pratique d'échange et pratique d'auto-évaluation. En tant que pratique d'échange, la visite de cours ouvre un espace permettant l'expression, la réflexion et la confrontation de pratiques différentes. En tant que pratique d'évaluation, le regard extérieur d'une autre praticienne permet à la formatrice qui reçoit la visite de s'auto-évaluer et d'évoluer dans sa pratique. Parallèlement, la formatrice qui visite le cours pourra réfléchir sur sa propre pratique en fonction de ses observations et de la discussion qui suit la visite.

### Evaluation des cours par les participants

Le but de ce type d'évaluation est triple :

- permettre aux participants de s'exprimer à propos du cours et en tenir compte pour une amélioration de la formation ;
- permettre aux participants de prendre conscience que le cours est fait aussi par eux et pas seulement par la formatrice, et qu'ils ont une responsabilité par rapport à leur propre dynamique ;
- donner à la formatrice la possibilité d'une auto-évaluation à travers le regard des participants.

Expérience faite, les participants ont tendance à mettre en avant surtout leur satisfaction et à ne pas s'interroger ou à ne pas s'exprimer sur les aspects à améliorer.

Il nous reste à trouver une démarche pour faire émerger aussi ces aspects.

### Evaluation formatrice

L'évaluation formatrice est une forme particulière de l'évaluation formative qui permet au participant d'avoir un rôle encore plus actif par rapport à sa propre évaluation. Elle vise en effet l'autonomie et la responsabilisation de l'apprenant face à son apprentissage. Elle repose sur les principes suivants : l'évaluation est vue comme un outil dont dispose l'apprenant pour construire son propre parcours d'apprentissage ; le formateur joue un rôle de médiateur entre l'apprenant et son apprentissage ; l'apprenant fixe ses objectifs d'apprentissage et s'approprié les critères de l'évaluation en pratiquant l'autoévaluation. La Commission pédagogique a créé un outil de référence pour soutenir cette pratique d'évaluation. On n'utilise pas une roue (comme en Ecosse), mais une grille d'items qui vont varier en fonction du niveau des groupes.

La mise en place de la démarche d'évaluation formatrice commence au moment de l'accueil du participant. Nous travaillons avec de petits groupes de 5 à 8 participants qui suivent des cours durant 2 à 4 heures par semaine. Cette phase d'accueil a une grande importance dans le sens où elle permet à l'apprenant et à la formatrice de faire le point sur les compétences déjà acquises, de faire émerger le projet qui a amené le participant à s'engager aux cours, de le mettre en relation avec des objectifs généraux d'apprentissage pour arriver à un projet de formation personnel et réaliste. Cette évaluation va permettre de dégager les objectifs de la formation et d'établir un accord de formation co-signé par les deux parties.

Une évaluation des progrès de chaque participant est pratiquée lors d'entretiens personnels. Ils ont lieu à plusieurs moments durant l'année scolaire. Ils permettent non seulement au participant de devenir de plus en plus acteur de sa propre formation mais aussi à la formatrice de réajuster sa pratique, si nécessaire.

A la fin de l'année scolaire, les formatrices rédigent un bilan annuel qui fait notamment ressortir les progrès réalisés par chaque participant au cours. Ce processus qui définit les objectifs atteints sous forme d'attestation n'est pas à proprement parler une démarche de certification.

### Des enquêtes complémentaires

Tous les trois ans, nous réalisons une enquête pour déterminer qui sont les participants et analyser différents points qui font partie du concept. On adapte le concept des cours en fonction des résultats obtenus. Nous partons toujours d'une analyse des besoins pour, ensuite, pouvoir mieux y répondre. Lors de notre dernière enquête en 2004, nous avons réalisé un volet sur l'utilisation de l'informatique par les participants. On a par exemple découvert que 70 % d'entre eux avaient un ordinateur chez eux ou dans leur proche entourage. Cela ne voulait pas dire qu'ils l'utilisaient pour travailler mais qu'ils en avaient un à disposition. On a aussi découvert que 84% avaient envie d'utiliser l'informatique dans le cadre des cours. Environ 34 % affirmaient également avoir déjà travaillé, seuls, avec un ordinateur. Les résultats de cette enquête nous ont poussés à lancer un projet pour intensifier l'usage de l'informatique dans nos cours et pour lequel nous avons déjà obtenu un financement.

### Les avantages du label de qualité

Améliorer la qualité est une démarche à effet de boule de neige qui entraîne l'ensemble des acteurs dans une réflexion constante autour de leurs pratiques.

Outre l'obtention d'une reconnaissance accrue de la part des autorités, la démarche de certification a permis :

- de décrire tout ce qui existait déjà et de mettre en évidence la qualité déjà acquise ;
- d'expliciter ce qui était implicite ;
- de repenser de façon cohérente la démarche pédagogique ;
- de clarifier les relations entre les différents acteurs dans la formation ;
- de bénéficier du regard extérieur d'un pédagogue expérimenté lors des audits annuels de suivi ;
- de mettre en place des mesures pour améliorer constamment notre pratique.

### Quelques mots sur le label eduQua

EduQua est un label suisse de qualité pour les institutions de formation des adultes.

La procédure de certification eduQua poursuit un triple but :

- garantir et développer la qualité des offres de formation continue sur la base de critères minimaux ;
- instaurer la transparence pour les apprenants ;
- fournir des bases de décision aux autorités en vue de l'octroi de subventions.

Six éléments, particulièrement déterminants pour la qualité des institutions de formation, ont été retenus par eduQua :

1. des offres de formation qui satisfont le besoin général en formation et les besoins particuliers des clientes et clients
2. des acquis de formation durables pour tous les participants
3. une présentation transparente des offres de formation et des options pédagogiques
4. des prestations orientées vers la clientèle, économiques, efficaces et efficaces
5. des formateurs et formatrices engagé(e)s, au fait des développements les plus récents en méthodologie, en didactique et dans la matière enseignée
6. Le souci de garantir et de développer la qualité.

EduQua a pour particularité de tenir compte de la diversité des institutions de formation et de leur public. Ainsi, tout en fixant des standards minimaux et des indicateurs possibles, la philosophie de ce label de qualité est de laisser une marge de manœuvre assez large quant à la présentation des démarches qualité propres à l'institution : « Il revient donc à chaque institution de transposer et d'appliquer les critères généraux de qualité en fonction de ses caractéristiques propres et de définir, dans le cadre de son propre processus de développement de la qualité, des indicateurs adaptés à ses spécificités et des standards précis. »

Autrement dit, eduQua laisse une liberté relativement grande dans la détermination de ce que signifie la qualité pour chaque institution de formation. Il s'agit cependant de prouver qu'il y a un souci constant d'améliorer la qualité et d'indiquer les procédures concrètes de mise en œuvre de la qualité au sein de l'institution. Le concept de qualité ainsi que ses modalités d'application doivent être connus et partagés par tous les acteurs impliqués dans la formation.

EduQua permet également une adaptation dans le temps : lors de la première demande de certification, il n'est pas nécessaire de correspondre à tous les critères mais d'indiquer des délais d'adaptation aux standards minimaux. Ainsi la réalisation des propositions d'amélioration peut s'échelonner dans des délais jugés raisonnables (pour l'institution qui demande le label et pour l'instance de certification).

Pour plus d'information sur le label eduQua, le site eduQua donne accès au Manuel d'informations sur la procédure et au guide de certification : [www.eduqua.ch](http://www.eduqua.ch).  
Voir aussi le site Web de l'association : [www.lire-et-ecrire.ch](http://www.lire-et-ecrire.ch)

### *Echanges- Débat*

**What kind of certification do you have ?**

*Dans chaque domaine, il faut répondre à certains standards minimaux décrits. Mais, en fait, chaque institution a la liberté de les adapter à sa propre pratique. Un de ces standards dit par exemple : chaque cours doit être visité une fois par an. Mais il ne dit pas qu'il doit être visité par un autre formateur, par un inspecteur ou par un expert. Chacun peut l'adapter comme il veut pourvu qu'il y ait un regard extérieur sur tout cela. En matière de formation de formateurs, le standard précise qu'au-delà de 150 heures de cours dispensés par an, le formateur doit disposer d'un certificat de formateur d'adultes. Les autres sont considérés comme des formateurs occasionnels et là, la certification demande qu'il y ait au moins un responsable pédagogique avec un brevet de formateurs d'adultes qui les encadrent.*

**Distribution aux participants d'un questionnaire d'évaluation sur la journée de séminaire**

Summary of the day by John

1/One of the key elements is to keep learning and teaching focused. These processus are not the end in themselves. The objective is actually to improve the situation for learners and learning.

2/How do we insure quality ? The continuous model improvment. This is particularly relevant in a sector which tends to be under resourced. You have seen a range of models acting in this way (Scottish, Swiss, )

3/developping a concessus in all the stakeholders. We need openness from the beginning. It means that we need a vision where we want to get to. The different participants have different managerial cultures, policy cultures. But everybody must be involved in the process. If the different stakeholders do that, its'a very important step.

4/What are good indicators for quality ? What are the signs we are doing a good job ? These are quality criteria, quality indicators. All these must serve all the stakeholders'interest. These must be developed from the bottom up. From there, you now have the difficult task to reflect on : what sort of process are best for your services ?

### Les idées fortes produites par les participants à l'atelier

- La démarche qualité doit être appréhendée comme un processus évolutif.
- L'objectif n'est pas d'obtenir une certification mais de réaliser des formations de qualité en alphabétisation.
- L'apprenant doit être au centre du processus quelque que soit le système d'assurance qualité mis en place. (importance de l'auto-évaluation qui devrait permettre pour chaque apprenant un processus de perfectionnement continu et importance d'un accompagnement de ce type d'auto-évaluation par des praticiens très bien formés).
- Toutes les parties prenantes doivent être impliquées.