

An Exploratory Study of the Development of Virtual Learning Environments for Adult Literacy Education.

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Appendix A

Initial Research Brief/ Proposal

Date: 25th April 2001

NALA Meeting Brief

April 2001

Tentative Research Title:

Using Computer Mediated Communication to support Collaborative Learning, with a particular focus on Collaborative Computer Based Learning in the Adult Literacy Environment

Primary Focus:

Develop a model for incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) into adult literacy programs and investigate the use of ICT's in the migration process from 1:1 tuition to group tuition in literacy programs

Needs Analysis:

- Visited 12 Adult Literacy Centres
- Meeting with Adult Literacy Co-ordinators/ I.T. Tutor at each centre
- Technology Survey

Findings:

- ICT's effectively used to provide students with basic computer literacy skills
- Adult literacy providers see the implementation of ICT's in their programs as a necessary tool for students in their working and living environment
- Need for review and evaluation of literacy software currently on market
- Need for literacy software to be developed for the Irish Adult market
- Volunteer Tutors have minimum exposure to I.T. in initial literacy training
- Refugees/ Asylum seekers are availing of the 'open door' policy in most literacy centres for ESL classes
- Need to provide Internet access and training in centres

Pilot Project Overview:

The pilot project will be implemented in 5 adult literacy centres. Six volunteer tutors and one group tutor will be given training in advance of the implementation at each centre. Equipment will need to be provided for tutors and students.

Students follow an integrated ICT and Literacy 1:1 programme with their volunteer tutor initially and progress to group tuition for the latter part of the programme. Six students will be selected at each nominated centre and their progression or otherwise throughout the pilot period will be closely followed. The ICT segment should take up approximately 45 minutes of the 2 hour allotted literacy class and runs over a period of 16 weeks.

The first component of the ICT programme introduces them to basic computing skills, the second to communication skills (such as email and the Internet), the third

Proposal for Funding

Using Information and Communication Technologies to support
Collaborative Learning, with a particular focus on Collaborative
Computer Based Learning in the Adult Literacy Environment

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Research Title:

Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to support Collaborative (Group) Learning, with a particular focus on Collaborative Computer Based Learning in the Adult Literacy Environment

Background:

An OECD publication in 1997 reported that one in four Irish adults are functionally illiterate, therefore approximately half a million people in Ireland have basic reading, writing and numeracy problems. Only twenty thousand adults are catered for in existing literacy programmes run by independent literacy providers around Ireland.

In Autumn 2000, the Irish National Adult Literacy Agency, NALA, used a television programme, Read Write Now, to promote literacy. The programme was supported with a learner pack and a free-phone tutor support line. It is interesting to note that ten thousand calls came from independent learners requesting a learner pack so that they could actively, yet independently, participate in the TV tuition programme. The independent learners did not wish to enrol in any of the existing literacy programmes run by literacy providers.

The Celtic Tiger Economy in Ireland has grown significantly over the past ten years, but many people have not benefited from the boom in the economy and continue to be marginalised. A digital divide has been created separating those who have access to or who can use the technology, and those who have not. This has further increased marginalisation of those with literacy problems.

The Information Society Commission recommended the expansion of adult literacy programmes to include ICT, as a learning tool, to expose the literacy student to technology and as a necessary tool in Lifelong Learning enabling the individual to cope with new skills in an evolving Information Society. Inez Bailey, Director of NALA, commented recently that the use and application of Information and Communication Technologies, ICT, in the literacy environment could also be used as an alternative form of access to literacy tuition. She sees the use of ICT ***‘as an attractive hook for people with literacy problems to re-enter the basic education program’***.

The proposed pilot project aims to investigate the potential use and application of Information and Communication Technologies both inside and outside of existing adult literacy programmes in Ireland.

Pilot Project Overview:

The pilot project involves the design and implementation of a literacy website, that will enable literacy students and tutors to interact remotely in independent literacy tuition, 1:1 literacy tuition and group literacy tuition.

This pilot project forms part of an in-depth investigation into the potential use and application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) both inside and outside of existing literacy programmes in Ireland. If the findings are positive, then the resultant model may be applied by NALA and independent literacy centres across the country to incorporate ICT into adult literacy programmes both as a learning tool and as an alternate mode of access to literacy tuition.

The findings of this pilot project may also make a significant contribution to an on-going Ph.D. research project investigating the broader issues associated with the use and application of Information and Communication Technologies to support collaborative learning (learning in group settings) in the educational context. The Ph.D. research is currently being undertaken by Charlotte Holland in the School of Education Studies in Dublin City University, and research publication is expected in September 2003.

Aim:

Develop a model for incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into adult literacy programs

Objectives:

- To investigate the effectiveness of ICT as a tool to aid students who want to embark on independent literacy study
- To investigate the effectiveness of ICT in providing an alternate form of access to literacy programs
- To develop design criteria for collaborative on-line software used in adult literacy programmes
- To investigate the use of ICT in the migration process into and out of literacy programs, and from 1:1 tuition to group tuition
- To develop specifications for software aimed at adult literacy students
- To develop ICT training requirements for volunteer tutors, group tutors and literacy students
- To develop specifications for organic website development

Implementation Sites:

The pilot project will be implemented in five adult literacy centres in Ireland over an eighteen-week period. The website will be hosted on an independent server, and will be open to access by students and tutors in the five nominated adult literacy centres and/ or literacy students who wish to embark on independent study. Five volunteer tutors and one group tutor will be given training in advance of the implementation at each centre.

Target Group:

The first four literacy centres chosen will monitor and support a sample of five students from each of the following populations:

- Urban Background, new/ existing students receiving 1:1 tuition
- Rural Background, new/ existing students receiving 1:1 tuition
- Refugee/ Asylum Seeker currently receiving ESL tuition
- Long Term literacy student receiving 1:1 tuition or Group tuition

AND, the fifth literacy centre chosen

- will monitor and support student/s who request help online, or by free-phone, from any part of the country choosing to learn independently online

No pre-requisite ICT skills are expected of students.

Description of Literacy Website:

The literacy website will be implemented in Hyper Text Mark-up Language (HTML) and JAVA. It will be a multimedia website where tutors and students can interact in literacy tuition. Universal design criteria, SMOG readability criteria and the BOBBY test will be utilised to ensure that the material presented will be accessible to adults with literacy problems.

The website will have inbuilt log files that automatically record the interaction of each student or group of students. The student will be given feedback on their progress via a progress chart or table. The tutor will also be able to access these to keep track of student progress.

The literacy website will be accessed via a secure LOGIN, students must enter their name and a prescribed password to enter. The student will have the option of adopting an alias and using this as their name in the interests of remaining anonymous.

Students then can view a tour of the facilities, with audio voice-over to help them understand what's available.

After the tour is over, the student can interact with any of the features outlined below.

Support material in the form of a manual will be supplied to each student so that they can practice aspects of the literacy tutorial.

Overview of Literacy Website Features

- Chat

Students can sign in via the chat-room and talk (text) to other students on line whilst the class is being set-up

- Message Board

The message board presents profiles of each of the students and also can be used by the tutor or student for posting messages to students. Students complete a simple and short questionnaire about likes and dislikes and explain their choice of alias on initial registration. The students then submit the profile and it is stored on the message board until the student decides to delete or overwrite it.

- Discussion Group

The discussion group is used for discussing topics and involves choosing topics from a range stored or else from the student or tutor. The students are then asked their opinions and the tutor mediates when there is a lull, with new questions or perhaps a different topic.

- Tutorial

There will be a number of different types of tutorials. They will all involve an element of individual work and/or group work. The tutorials are designed to take up to 20 minutes of a typical class.

The tutorials can be used as a tool in reading, writing and spelling for individual students or groups of students. There will be text designed for students of literacy level one, two and three in each tutorial. The student will be able to choose their level from a colour code in each tutorial for their individual work. The level is not emphasised or indicated for the group component. There will be an audio word reader to aid students who have difficulty reading the text presented in the tutorials.

- Games

Students will be able to play a number of games, such as the one described below.

Example: The game involves finding two/ three/ four/ five letter words from a chosen word. There will be an archive of up to 400 words, with solutions to each of them.

- Life-skills

There will be a facility to allow students to take part in activities related to real world life-skills, such as going to a Hospital, Post-Office, Bank or Job centre.

- Email

There will be a facility to allow students to email each other, or friends.

- Tutor

There will be a Tutor support option available on screen all of the time, which will give the student the option of emailing, phoning or otherwise contacting his/ her tutor.

Technical Development Team:

The technical development team will include a team leader, a graphic designer/ web-page developer and a JAVA/ HTML programmer.

The role of team leader will be undertaken by Charlotte Holland, who has ultimate responsibility for the technical development of the website. This role will include the definition of the website specifications and requirements, as well as co-ordinating its technical implementation and testing. The team leader, in conjunction with NALA and a panel of literacy coordinators and tutors from literacy centres in Ireland, will also be involved in the development and selection of material for display on the website.

The other members of the technical development team (Graphic Designer/ Programmer) will be subcontracted for the period involved.

ICT and Literacy Programme:

The students selected at the first four centres follow an integrated ICT and Literacy 1:1 programme with their volunteer tutor initially and may progress to group tuition for the latter part of the programme. The ICT segment should add approx 45 minutes to the 2-hour allotted weekly literacy class and will run over a period of eighteen weeks.

- In the first component of the ICT literacy programme the volunteer tutor and student interact face-to-face. The student is introduced to basic computing skills, (mouse control, keyboard, basic word-processing), and communication skills, (such as email and the Internet).
- In the second component, the volunteer tutor and student interact remotely via the literacy website. The student completes literacy tutorials online, under the guidance of the tutor.
- In the last component, the students at each centre interact remotely with each other and the group tutor via the literacy website. The students complete individual and group exercises, under the guidance of the group tutor.

The fifth literacy centre is basically a support centre for the independent learner. The independent learner will navigate through the tutorials/ literacy website at their own pace. The independent learner will have access to a tutorial that introduces them to the basic computing skills required to help them navigate and interact with the literacy website. Their interactions will automatically be logged as they navigate through the tutorials. This will be supplemented by information from tutors at the fifth centre with whom they interact.

Accessibility and Flexibility

All students will be supplied with portable laptop computers and printers for the pilot project. The tutors will be provided with either a laptop computer or a personal computer. (All computers supplied will be high specification multimedia computers, with modems for connection to Internet, and all necessary software pre-installed.) The students and tutors will be supplemented with five hours per week paid off-peak Internet access during the pilot phase.

The laptops will provide the students/tutors with the flexibility to access the literacy website from home both inside and outside of the time allocated by the ICT component of the literacy programme during the pilot phase. It will also allow students to familiarise themselves more with the computer and hence aims to increase confidence and promote further usage of the technology.

The website will be hosted on a server that has twenty-four hour access, allowing the tutor and students flexibility in the use of the literacy website.

Reaching the Target Group:

Students currently signing up or taking part in existing literacy programmes will be made aware of the literacy website by literacy co-ordinators and tutors and/ or local advertising using leaflets etc.

It is also expected an advertising campaign will be run on radio to advise on the availability of this website to those with literacy problems. This should reach those students who wish to embark on independent literacy learning.

Measuring on-going performance:

Assessment of the effectiveness of this project will be established with questionnaires distributed at certain stages, observations by tutors, from automated records of interaction in the online literacy software and from feedback from students and tutors before and after program.

During the development phase the team leader will take responsibility for documenting procedures and/or expertise required to progress the software development, whereas the web master will assume this role during the implementation phase.

There will also be a project manager to set milestones and monitor and assess progress through all components of the project.

Performance will be measured by criteria established from expressed aims and objectives, and evaluation will be ongoing from the beginning of the project.

A final report will be compiled and published at the end of the process detailing key findings and making recommendation on how to progress.

Projected Timescale for Project:

The project happens in three stages; development takes place from August to January 2001, this is followed by the programme implementation over a period of eighteen weeks between January and May 2002 and finally analysis of findings in the period June-September 2002.

Key Project Milestones:

Stage 1: Development

August- January 2002

- **Adult Literacy Web-site Development**
 - Requirements Definition and Specification
 - High-level Design
 - Low-level Design
 - Proto-type Coding
 - Implementation and Testing in-house
 - Manual/ Support Material
- **Volunteer/ Group Tutor Training Programme Development**
 - Design Training Scheme for Tutors
 - Choose centres for the pilot project
 - Select Volunteers Tutors
 - Select Group Tutors
 - Elicit attitudes of these volunteer and group tutors towards the use of technology in a pre-test survey
 - Train Volunteer/ Group Tutors
- **Adult Literacy Student Programme Development**
 - Choose students to participate in the pilot project
 - Elicit attitudes of these students towards use of computing in a pre-test survey
 - Establish a control group for the pilot project
- **Infrastructure**
 - Purchase Equipment
 - Install Equipment
 - Install Software

The programme outlined below will be implemented in mid-February 2002 and students and tutors will progress through the activities in the following eighteen weeks. The start and finish dates supplied below are meant as a guideline to students and tutors on when to progress. Students can progress at their own discretion, under the guidance of the tutor, either faster or slower through each section. Each weekly ICT slot is forty-five minutes long, which is in addition to the two-hour weekly literacy tuition slot.

Each student will have been provided with a laptop and printer, and each volunteer tutor with either a laptop or a PC, for their use during this eighteen-week period.

The web master will monitor, control and document interactions with the literacy website during this implementation period.

Section One:

The tutor and student will interact **face-to-face** at a computer for 45 minutes a week during the initial 9 weeks to complete section one of the programme. The student will be given basic computing skills in areas such as mouse control, keyboarding and word-processing and then is introduced to email, Internet and chat-rooms. The literacy website may be accessed at any time during this period for literacy tutorial work if desired.

Section One	Start	Finish
Pre-requisite Computing Skills- PC Skills [Mouse Control/ Keyboarding/ Basic Word Processing] Communications Computing Skills-CC Skills [Email/ Internet/ Chat-rooms/ Discussion Groups]	February 18 th	April 15 th

Section Two:

The tutor and student will interact **remotely online**, i.e. the tutor and student will be in different locations, perhaps their respective homes, and will be interacting for the 45 minute weekly segment via the literacy website on the Internet. The student will be completing literacy tutorials on the website, under the guidance of the tutor.

Section Two	Start	Finish
Remote Tuition 1:1 (RT 1:1) Collaborative WEB-based Literacy Software (in 1:1 setting)	April 22 nd	May 20 th

Section Three:

The student will be able to interact with other students in tutorial work **remotely online** for the 45 minute segment via the literacy website on the Internet. There will be a group tutor assigned to each group of students wishing to interact in this mode during the last four weeks or earlier if required.

Section Three	Start	Finish
Remote Tuition Group (RT-G) Collaborative WEB-based Literacy Software (in Group setting)	May 27 th	June 17 th

All those who participated (both students and tutors) in this stage will be interviewed in a post-test survey in the last week of June 2002.

- **Analysis of Results**
- **Key Findings**
- **Conclusions and Recommendations**
- **Publication of Report**

The final publication will include detail on how the pilot project can be mainstreamed in literacy programs in Ireland. The recommendations will outline technical information on the minimum hardware and software requirements, as well as guidelines on best practice in the implementation and monitoring of Information and Communication Technologies in literacy programs. The concept of developing a CD-ROM version of the website will also be considered with a view to reaching the broader population of adults with literacy needs.

Roles of Individuals & Associated Costs:
Project Manager – Charlotte Holland:

The role of the Project Manager is not just to focus on the pilot project parameters and its effective practice, but also to reflect on the borders of the conceptual framework i.e. the use and application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) within the context of literacy provision in Ireland and elsewhere.

- Project Management - Effective Practice
 - To monitor all aspects relating to the successful completion of the pilot project
 - To identify software requirement definition and specifications
 - To act as team leader in the development phase of the literacy website
 - To act as web master throughout the implementation period
 - To coordinate all phases in the development of the pilot project
 - To appoint people to various tasks within the training and development phases of the project
 - To develop milestones at which progress can be measured
 - To assess and review progress at each of the milestones
- Project Management - Reflective Practice
 - To research and identify elements of best practice from existing literacy and/or ICT developments in Ireland and other countries
 - To document roles of individuals involved in the development and implementation of the project, policies for best practice and identify relevant skills and expertise required to mainstream the project
 - To compile and publish a final report detailing key findings and conclusions and make recommendations on how the project can be mainstreamed in the literacy environment in Ireland

Project Management Costs Breakdown

13 hours average per week over 58 weeks (Start August 2001 – end Sept 2002)

Project Management Rate: £15 per hour

Project Management Cost: $58 \times 13 \times 15 = \text{£}11,310$

Web Access Cost for Project Manager:

40 weeks * 20 hours per week * off-peak hourly rate

Web Access Cost: $40 \times 20 \times 0.60 = \text{£}480$

Mileage Allowance:

2 visits to each of 5 centres – approx 2000 miles @ 0.30p

Mileage Costs: $0.30 \times 2000 \text{ miles} = \text{£}600$

Total Project Management Costs: £12,390

Literacy Website Development Staff

It is envisaged that a number of skilled people will be needed in the development of the literacy website and its subsequent implementation:

- **Technical Development**

A JAVA/ HTML Programmer and a Graphic Designer/ Website Developer will be sub-contracted to develop the literacy website components as outlined below:

Core 200 web pages	= £5,500
Graphic/ animation components	= £3,500
JAVA components	= £3,000

Technical Development Costs: = £12,000

- **Literacy Material Development for display on Website**

Ten literacy coordinators/ tutors from existing literacy centres and NALA will be involved in the selection and development of literacy material deemed suitable for display in this context. Two meetings of all ten coordinators/ tutors will take place to collectively review and select material for the website.

Literacy Co-ordinator/ Tutor Fee: $10 \times £300 = £3,000$
Mileage allowance for meetings: $2,000 \text{ miles} \times 0.30 = £600$
Food Allowance: £400

Material Development Costs: £4,000

- **Support Material/ Manual for website**

The development of a manual with instructions on how to maximise use of the website and its facilities and support material in the form of literacy worksheets or exercises will involve two literacy co-ordinators/ tutors and one of the websites' technical development team. The costs are as outlined below:

Literacy Co-ordinator/ Tutor Fee: $2 \times £300 = £600$
Technical Developer Fee: £400
50 copies for Distribution: $50 \times £30 = £1,500$

Support/ Material/ Manual Costs: £2,500

- **Technical Support**

Technical support technicians may be required to provide assistance with equipment at each of the centres nominated for the programme during the pilot implementation. It is envisaged that this assistance may be provided at no additional cost by existing technical support persons within the local VEC linked to each centre.

Tutor Trainer & Training Module Developer

Training will be provided by an ICT literacy trainer. Training will be provided to the five volunteer tutors and one group tutor over a four-day period at each of the five centres (24 hours) in December/ January 2001. The training material will be developed in conjunction with NALA ICT trainers and compiled in a manual. The costs associated with this are as follows:

Trainer: 24 hours * 5 Centres * £20 per hour = £2,400

Mileage: 1000miles* 0.30p = £300

Accommodation & Food Allowance: £200

Training Material/ Manual: £1,100

Training Development Costs: £4,000

Miscellaneous Costs

- **Report Compilation and Publication**

The final publication will be available in September 2002. The compilation of the six hard-back versions and 20 additional soft-back versions copies will involve costs as follows:

6 Hard-Back copies: 6* £100 = £600

20 Soft-Back copies: 20*£20 = £400

Total Report Publication Costs: £1,000

- **Web-Access Costs**

The students and tutors will be supplemented with five hours per week paid off-peak Internet access over a twenty-week period. Off-peak Internet access costs approximately 60p per hour.

Web Access: 5hrs*20 weeks*45people*0.60=£2,700

Total Web-Access Costs: £2,700

- **Insurance Costs**

As the tutors and students will be given the flexibility to take their computers home during the pilot phase of the project (approx. 20 weeks), insurance has to be provided in case of damages to or theft of any of the 45 computers. The amount allocated for this is £1,000.

Insurance Costs: £1,000

- **Advertising**

A publicity leaflet distributed to community centres, libraries and literacy centres and an advertising campaign on local radio will be used to advertise the existence of the literacy website. The amount allocated for this campaign is £3,000.

Advertising Costs: £3,000

Summary Details of Project Costs and Funding:

Estimated Total Cost of Project: **109,590**

Equipment Needed:

- 20 Laptops for student use 30,000
- 25 Computers (15 Laptops, 10 PC) for tutor use 30,000
- 20 Printers for student use 2,500
- 1 server hosting web-site + ISDN line or equivalent 4,000
- Software Applications: (most included with hardware) 500
 - MS Office/ Mavis Beacon/ Internet Browser/ Email
 - On-line Literacy software

Other Costs:

Project Management	12,390
Technical Development	12,000
Material written for website	4,000
Support Material/ Manual	2,500
Tutor Trainer + Training Module development	4,000
Report Compilation and Publication	1,000
Web Access	2,700
Insurance	1,000
Advertising	3,000

Monthly Costs Breakdown:

August 2001	Project Management	4,000
	Technical Development	4,000
September 2001	Material Written for Website	4,000
	Support Material/ Manual	2,500
	Tutor Training + Module Development	4,000
October 2001	Web-Server	4,000
November 2001	Technical Development	4,000
December 2001	Tutor Equipment	30,500
	Insurance	1,000
	Project Management	4,000
	Technical Development	2,000
January 2001	Advertising	3,000
	Student Equipment	32,500
February 2001	Web-Access	2,700
	Technical Development	2,000
March 2001	Project Management	2,000
June 2001	Project Management	2,390
August 2001	Report Compilation and Publication	1,000

Amount of funding required:

£109,590

Appendix B

Letter of Consent

LETTER OF CONSENT

I agreed to be interviewed as part of a Ph.D. study on developing and integrating technology in Adult Literacy Education, conducted by Charlotte Holland in the School of Education Studies at Dublin City University.

I have read the *transcript* or *summary* of this interview attached, and agree to findings being drawn from this information.

I agree that 'direct quotes' or 'summaries of quotes' may be used from the transcript in the research thesis.

I understand that my name will not be used in this research unless I give permission below.

The purpose of the study has been explained to my satisfaction.

I understand that, upon request, I may have a full description of the results of the study after its completion.

I understand that the researcher may publish the findings of the study.

I am aware that I can contact the researcher, Charlotte Holland by phone: 01-7008243 or email: charlotte.holland@dcu.ie if I have any questions about this project.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE THAT THE INFORMATION ATTACHED CAN BE USED IN THE STUDY.

Participant name (Please Print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date _____ Telephone number: _____

Do you agree for your full name to be used in this research? (Please Tick)

YES ☐

NO ☐

(If NO, then your identity will be hidden using coded numbering; eg: A teacher named Angela Smith could be coded as *Teacher8*)

Appendix C

List of Literacy Centres Visited in 2001

Questionnaire that formed basis of discussion in 2001

List of Adult Literacy Centres

Twelve centres participated in both 2000/ 2001 and 2004/ 2005. Thanks to all centres who participated in this survey. In the interests of maintaining the anonymity of those co-ordinators and tutors requesting anonymity, only five centres of the twelve participating centres are listed here:

- ❑ A.B.L.E., Adult Education Centre, Main St., Blanchardstown, D.15
- ❑ Dublin Adult Learning Centre, Dublin.
- ❑ Cavan Adult Literacy Scheme, 43 Church St., Cavan.
- ❑ WORDAID, Co. Kilkenny Adult Learning Centre, 9 Ormonde Rd., Kilkenny
- ❑ Donegal Reading and Writing Scheme, Adult Education Centre, Donegal Town.

Thanks to Columba O'Connor and the tutors at DALC, Sharon Hennessy and Ciara Lambe, Carmel Byrne, Mary, Siobhan McEntee and Martina Needham. Sincere thanks to the many other unnamed co-ordinators and tutors who have decided to remain anonymous, and thus are not listed here.

Thanks also to the three design teams who participated in this research; thanks to Bonnie McGrath, Vincent Sammon, Paul Walsh, Jennie Lynch, Janet Kehelly and Inez Bailey. Sincere thanks to the other unnamed design team members who have decided to remain anonymous, and thus are not listed here.

Technology in Use in Adult Literacy Program

Organisation Name:	Organisation Address:
Phone:	Fax:
Email Address:	
Participant Name:	Participant Address:
Participant Position:	
Contact Number:	
Email Address:	

Organisation providing the Adult Literacy Service

What type of organisation is it? Please Tick.

Community-based organisation ☐

Community College ☐

Volunteer Literacy Organisation ☐

Private School ☐

Public School ☐

Religious Organisation ☐

University Outreach ☐

Other, please specify.....

Are there outreach centres? Yes/ No If Yes, how many? []

What type of area is it located in? Please Tick.

Inner-city/ Urban area ☐

Suburban area ☐

Town ☐

Village ☐

Rural ☐

Other, please specify.....

In the past year, how many students in total were serviced directly in:

Head Office []? Outreach []?

How many students are there in each of the following age groupings:

16-24 []

25-39 []

40-54 []

over 55 []

How many full-time employees? [] Position: Admin [] Instructor []

How many part-time employees? [] Position: Admin [] Instructor []

How many volunteers? [] Position: Admin [] Instructor []

Inventory of available computer technology

How many computers are available for adult literacy activities? []

How many of these are: Stand-alone [] networked []?

What computer operating system is used? Please Tick.

Windows 95 ☐

Windows 98 ☐

Windows 3.1 ☐

DOS ☐

UNIX ☐

Apple IIE system ☐

Mac System 6 or below ☐

Mac System 7 ☐

OS/2 ☐

Other, please specify.....

What is the physical location of computers? Please Tick.

Stand-alone located in one room ☐

Stand-alone located in several rooms ☐

Networked across one room ☐

Networked across more than one room ☐

Other, please specify.....

Please fill in the following hardware inventory: (Tick where appropriate)

Device	Yes	No	Characteristic	Tick	Number
Colour Monitor					
CD-ROM					
DVD drive					
Modem			Speed <9900 bps		
			Speed 14400bps		
			Speed 28800bps		
			Speed 36600bps		
			Speed 56600bps+		
			Other:		
Scanner					
Zip Drive					
Printer			Dot Matrix		
			Ink Jet		
			Bubble Jet		
			Laser		
			Other:		
Touch Sensitive Screens					
Computer pen tablets					
Speakers					
Microphone					
Soundcard					
Videocard					
Hard Disk			Less than 1GB		
			1-4GB		
			5-9GB		
			10-15GB		
			Other:		
Processor Speed			486 or lower		
			Pentium Family		
			Celeron		
			Mac Processor		
			Other:		
Processor RAM			8MB RAM		
			16MB RAM		
			32MB RAM		
			64MB RAM		
			Other:		
Processor Speed			<75MHz		
			75-119MHz		
			120-220MHz		
			221-500MHz		
			>500MHz		

Communication:

Which of the following distance education technologies do you have?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Video-conferencing <input type="checkbox"/> | None <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Audio-conferencing <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, please specify |
| Satellite Transmission <input type="checkbox"/> | |

What type of external connection do you have: Please Tick.

- Dial-up service via modem ☐
ISDN ☐
Other, please specify.....

How many computers are connected to the Internet? []

Is there technical support available? Yes [] No [] If Yes, who provides it:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Full-time technology specialist <input type="checkbox"/> | Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Part-time technology specialist <input type="checkbox"/> | External Phone support <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Full-time staff member <input type="checkbox"/> | External consultant <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Part-time staff member <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, please specify |

Software Used In Adult Literacy Instruction

Please tick any of the following types of software used directly in instructional activity or instructional preparation:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Word-Processing <input type="checkbox"/> | Multimedia <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Desk-top publishing <input type="checkbox"/> | Authoring Tools <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Digitised Speech <input type="checkbox"/> | Simulations <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tutorial <input type="checkbox"/> | Drill and Practice <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Educational Games <input type="checkbox"/> | Database <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spreadsheet <input type="checkbox"/> | Problem Solving <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Internet <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, please specify.... |

Please tick any of the following areas where software is used for instruction:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Reading <input type="checkbox"/> | Vocational/ work related training <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Writing <input type="checkbox"/> | Guidance/ career options <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Math <input type="checkbox"/> | ESL <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, please specify... |
| Adult literacy <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Please tick which of the following are involved in choosing literacy software:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Board of Directors <input type="checkbox"/> | Students <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Management Committee <input type="checkbox"/> | Instructor <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Funding Agency <input type="checkbox"/> | Technology Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Program Director <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Program Staff <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Supervisors <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, please specify |

Please name specific instructional software currently in use in literacy programs:

.....
.....

Computer Usage and Access by Teachers

How many teachers use computers for instruction purposes? []

Is there formal technology training available? Yes [] No [] If Yes, How many hours per person per year? []

Who provides the training? Please Tick.

- Product Vendor []
- External Trainer []
- Internal Staff Member/ Program member []
- Community Trainer []
- Other, please specify

Describe the content of training.

.....

Please tick the following statement that best describes your instructors' access to and training in computer technology:

- Inadequate for present needs []
- Adequate for present needs but not for future needs []
- Adequate for present and future needs []

Computer Usage and Access by Students

How many students use computers during instruction? []

How many hours on average per week do students use computers? Please tick.

- Less than one hour []
- 1-5 hours []
- 6-10 hours []
- more than 10 hours []

In what types of instructional programs do students use computers? Please Tick.

- Adult Literacy Instructional Programs []
- Career Guidance for Adults []
- Lifeskills Adult Instruction []
- English as a second language []
- Other, please specify

In what contexts do students use computers? Please Tick.

- Technology skills classes(eg. Word processing/ databases etc.) []
- Technology as a Tool classes(eg. Internet as research tool etc.) []
- Private research/ drafting in class []
- Research/ Drafting outside of normal class-time []
- Other, please specify.....

Please tick the following statement that best describes your students' access to computer technology:

- Inadequate for present needs []
- Adequate for present needs but not for future needs []
- Adequate for present and future needs []

Promoting increasing Technology use :

Please tick the following statement that best describes the computer technology (hardware/ software) currently in use:

Inadequate for present needs ☐

Adequate for present needs but not for future needs ☐

Adequate for present and future needs ☐

Other, please specify

Please tick the following statement that best describes current Internet Access:

Inadequate for present needs ☐

Adequate for present needs but not for future needs ☐

Adequate for present and future needs ☐

Other, please specify

Please tick box 1, 2 or 3 to indicate the relevance of each statement as an obstacle to the use of technology in your programs, (1= Not Relevant; 2= Relevant; 3= Extremely Relevant):

Lack of financial aid to buy computer technology 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Lack of financial aid for staff training in use of technology 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Lack of adequate training for staff 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Lack of relevant software 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Staff/ Instructors reluctant to use computers 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Not enough time to train staff in use of technology 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Not enough information on how/ when to use technology 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Use of technology is not a program priority 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Other, please specify

Please tick box 1, 2 or 3 to indicate the relevance of each statement as an incentive to increase the use of technology in your programs, (1= Not Relevant; 2= Relevant; 3= Extremely Relevant):

Research that shows benefits of use of computer technology in adult literacy programs

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Evaluation and reviews of current software and hardware in use in adult literacy programs

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Training on the use of computer technology in planning/ instruction 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Recent case studies that show implementation processes and activities 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Help-line for programs that use technology 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Other, please specify

Please tick box 1, 2 or 3 to indicate the relevance of each statement as an obstacle to the use of the Internet in your programs, (1= Not Relevant; 2= Relevant; 3=Extremely Relevant):

Physical Location of computers not suitable for Internet use in class 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Connection to Internet is too slow 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Current equipment has too many technical difficulties 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Insufficient funds for ISP charges and telephone charges 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Not enough computers with Internet access 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Insufficient staff training in use of Internet 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Concerns about security in use of Internet 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

Other, please specify

Finances:

What is the annual adult literacy budget? []

Is there a formal technology plan? Yes ☐ No ☐

Is there a separate budget for technology? Yes ☐ No ☐

What is the annual budget for hardware/ software? []

What is the annual budget for technology training? []

**Are there additional sources of finance for purchasing computer technology?
Yes ☐ No ☐. If Yes, please outline source:.....**

Who is involved in making decisions on technology purchases? Please Tick.

Board of Directors ☐
Management Committee ☐
Funding Agency ☐
Program Director ☐
Supervisors ☐

Students ☐
Technology Specialist ☐
Other Program Staff ☐
Other, please specify

What is the average salary of:

Full-time instructors []
Full-time administrators []

What is the part –time salary/ rate per hour of:

Part-time instructors []
Part-time administrators []

Any Other Comments:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix D

Summary of Findings from 2001 Visits to Literacy Centres

**Preliminary investigation into the Information and Communication
Technologies (ICTs) used by students and staff in 12 Adult Literacy centres in
Ireland during the period December 2000-March 2001**

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- Inventory of Computer Equipment
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- Computer usage and access by Students
- Problems with existing software designed for use in literacy tuition
- Promotion of Technology
- Finances

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

This report is the result of a qualitative analysis of the application of Information and Communication Technologies by staff and students in Adult Literacy programmes, with a particular focus on the software in use and its application.

The findings of this report are:

- ICTs are being used effectively to provide students with basic computer literacy skills
- Adult Literacy providers see the implementation of ICTs in their programs as a necessary tool for students in their working and living environment
- There is an urgent need for evaluation and reviews of literacy software currently on the market
- There is an urgent need for literacy software to be developed or customised with an Irish Context and aimed at the adult market
- There is a need for a communication structure that would enable literacy providers to liaise with other providers and review each others experience on an ongoing basis
- There is a need to provide Internet access and training in all centres
- There is a need for information on ongoing research in the area of adult literacy and technology
- Refugees/ asylum seekers are availing of the 'open door' policy in adult literacy centres for ESL type classes
- Volunteer tutors have minimum exposure to I.T. in their literacy training; Significant when you consider that they are the first point of learning

The Recommendations of the report are:

- Review and standardise current training courses for volunteer tutors/ group tutors with an aim to include use of technology in literacy programs; including software evaluation; and at no cost to tutor
- Establish a pilot study which involves introducing literacy students(1:1) to computers with Internet access during initial literacy program; then investigate the progression rate from 1:1 tuition to group tuition; (tutors have completed the standardised training literacy course)
- A software evaluation/ review form be created by users of literacy software for users of literacy software
- NALA should add on a software evaluation and review page to their existing web-site, that allows users to post and access updates. The information should include whether there is a sample available, costs and where to buy.
- Existing software and support material be formally evaluated within the literacy environment; so that deficiencies of existing software within the Irish context can be identified
- Establish a flexible communication structure, perhaps in the form of a web-site, where co-ordinators and/or instructors can liaise/ conference/ meet remotely on-line or post information/queries/ email off-line. Monitor and publish findings on the outcomes of this project.
- Information on addressing issues associated with open Internet access be supplied by NALA etc
- Organic Web-site/ Software Development
- Investigate the effectiveness of using mobile units

Introduction

In order to establish the current use and application of ICTs, a number of Adult Literacy centres were contacted and meetings were subsequently held with the Adult Literacy Co-ordinator and/ or the I.T. Instructor.

Twelve meetings took place in Adult Literacy centres between December 2000 and March 2001 and each meeting lasted on average from 1.5 to 2 hours. Each meeting involved a qualitative analysis in the form of an interview, where the interviewee answered the questions on a prepared questionnaire as displayed in Appendix A. Several additional questions were asked orally by the interviewer during each interview and these questions have been listed in Appendix B.

Twelve centres initially took part in this survey, see Appendix C for more information on this.

The feedback from these meetings is considered with the use and application of ICTs as a tool in Instruction/ Preparation of Literacy Programmes in mind.

Profile of centres sampled

The Adult Literacy centres visited were all under the umbrella of the local Vocational Education Committee (VEC), except for centre 12 which is a limited company of charity status. Eight of the centres visited covered a rural area, whilst the other four encompassed an urban area.

All of the centres have outreach centres, although many had temporary access to community facilities rather than permanent outreach facilities. The permanent literacy facility was usually housed within the adult education unit, in some cases this was a separate building, in others it was part of an existing VEC college or headquarters. Centre 3 has seven permanent centres in the county and has temporary outreach centres in the community from each of these. Centre 9 has 3 permanent outreach centres.

The number of students serviced in each of the centres varied from 70 to 600, but there is a noticeable increase in all centres(except one) from students who are asylum seekers or who are awaiting refugee status. All centres reported a marked increase in overall student numbers in the previous year.

The student profile in most centres concentrates in the 25-54 age bracket with typically 20% in the 18-24 and 10-15% in the over 55 age bracket.(Exact figures were not available). Centre 1 centre reports an unusual 50:50 ratio of men and women on their programs.

Most centres have one full-time employee, typically the adult literacy co-ordinator. The centres have between 2 and 22 group tutors who get paid an hourly rate. All centres had volunteer tutors, who are used in 1:1 tuition. The number of volunteer tutors ranged from ten to one hundred and seventy.

Inventory of Computer Equipment

The number of computers available for adult literacy activities in permanent centres varied from 2-3 up to a room of 16 computers. The computers were networked in a number of centres, and this was usually across one room. Typically the stand alone computers were in the adult literacy coordinators office or a resource room. The operating system used tended to be Windows, usually Windows 98.

Centre 3 had a mobile computing unit consisting of 14 computers used to outreach in the community. Centre 5, Centre 10 and Centre 9 also had at least 1 mobile computer for use in their centres programs.

Computers in all centres(except Centre 7, where they were 5-6 years old) were at most 2-3 years old. Most had standard multimedia configurations, with CD-ROM, printer, scanner, modem etc. However whilst all had speakers, very few had microphones, DVD drives or Zip Drives. Touch Screen Technology or Computer pens were not used at all. Digital cameras were available in a number of centres. A few centres also had TV/ Video. One had an A3 plotter. One had headsets for students(Centre 8). And interestingly Centre 9 had a Palmtop for the coordinator.

Communication

Half of the centres did not have an Internet connection, even though only one of the centres didn't have a modem or ISDN connection. Of those that did have the Internet, a dial-up modem was used, except in Centre 11 and Centre 9 who had an ISDN connection. In one case the Internet was piped to the office only, Centre 8. Having only one phone line in building was commented on in some cases as an obstacle to use of Internet.

None of the centres used distance education technologies, such as video or audio conferencing.

Technical support varied across the centres. Four of the centres had a service contract with a company, two used a service engineer employed by the VEC, two had paid internal staff and the remainder relied on volunteer internal staff to help out when problems occurred.

Software Used in Adult Literacy Schemes

In all centres, the software used in instructional activity or preparation, included word processing, drill and practice, educational games and multimedia reference software. Spreadsheet and Database software was used in 83% of the centres, followed by Desk-top Publishing and Problem Solving software in 75% of centres. The Internet and authoring software was used in 30% of centres. No centres made use of digitised speech software.

The software was used for reading and writing and adult literacy in all centres. It was used for maths in 75% of the centres, and for assessment, english as a second language(ESL) and for work-related training in about half of the centres. One third of the centres used Careers software in their programs.

The literacy instructor and adult literacy coordinator were the main participants in choosing software. The software was generally chosen from recommendations by other instructors or from a NALA publication or workshop.

The following is a list of the software most commonly used throughout the centres:

MS office-Word/ Excel/ Access/ Ppoint	100% - All centres
Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing	75%
Issues in English	50%
The New Reading Disk	50%
Wordshark	50%
Starspell	42%
Superspell	33%
Numbershark	33%
Encarta	33%
Worksheet Generator	25%
MS Publisher	25%
Solitaire	17%
ECDL	17%
AA Multimedia	17%
Texthelp	17%
Alphabet	17%
Multimedia	17%

Software is usually bought through the following Distributors:

NALA

Discover

Jackson Technology

Andrews Award Software

Central Remedial Clinic, Clontarf

Problems with existing software designed for literacy tuition

Each of the centres highlighted a number of issues that they had with existing software.

Generally, there is perceived to be a lack of adult-based software for use in adult literacy tuition available on the market.

The Adult Literacy Organiser (ALO) at Centre 11 Adult Learning Centre commented that the content was unsuitable for use with adults. This was echoed by the other centres who added that the content was often geared towards children and childish topics and themes were presented. The ALO at Centre 5 Adult Learning centre commented on the lack of variety in the material that is included in a lot of software. This same centre also highlighted the problem with material being covered rapidly. The ALO in Centre 5 added that there was no real recognition of prior experience within the readings or worksheets presented. It was felt that there were better paper-based resources that could be utilised.

Also the content rarely addressed the 'Irish' context. The ALO in Centre 9 also reflected that the cultural experiences are different in software that has been designed for a target audience outside Ireland. She added that the greatest step in Irish textbooks was the introduction of Irish based texts, Irish Road signs and the Irish social welfare system. The ALO in Centre 5 Adult Learning Centre also commented on the New Reading Disk software saying that it was expensive, the situations were not Irish, the social issues were not Irish and the maps were not Irish.

The ALO in Centre 1 commented that 'English', 'Australian' and 'American' accents could be difficult to understand. The ALO in the Centre 2 Adult Literacy centre commented on particular difficulties with the English accent on the 'New Reading Disk' software. Also American spelling is different and this causes confusion for literacy learners. The computer tutor at Centre 8 Adult learning commented that the New Reading Disk was not good for 'beginner' literacy learners (those with low literacy levels), as the words were too long and there was a problem with the font used. In addition, the British accent and context didn't help motivate Irish learners. She added that an Irish version of software was needed for literacy tuition. The ALO in Centre 9 Adult Learning Centre commented that some students have a good ear for sounds and they would have a problem relating to 'foreign' accents on the software. She also noted the issue with American spelling in literacy tuition.

The ALO in Centre 2 commented that the software developed for adults was dull and boring. They pointed out that adults want more games. The ALO in Centre 10 commented that the New Reading Disk was good but that students got bored with it very quickly.

The ALO in Centre 2 further added that most of the software was designed for one particular literacy level, with no other levels within. The ALO in Centre 4 added that the literacy level chosen for particular literacy software was too high, and that students would find the software too difficult to use. For example in one piece of software that they use the first 100 words for a spelling exercise were too hard for the

literacy learner to spell. She commented that the spelling needed to be structured into appropriate levels of ability.

The ALO in Centre 11 commented that the feedback mechanisms were not appropriate in the majority of software packages available to literacy centres; most of the software was geared for children and the feedback was considered childish i.e. 'sound' or 'stars' or 'cheering/ Happy faces'. In addition, the computer tutor in Centre 8 Adult Learning centre said the menu on the Starspell software was confusing, that there was navigation problems and that the feedback was inappropriate within an adult context.

Another problem that was highlighted by the ALO in Centre 1 was that not all software providers provided a 'trial' version of software in advance of purchase. The issue here is that a lot of software was bought without knowing whether it was appropriate or not. It was too late to change your mind once the purchase was made. Samples of potential software should be made available for evaluation in advance of purchase.

The ALO in Centre 1 further highlighted that there were no booklets supplied with some software. An example here is the '10 to 10' series, which has no accompanying booklet. The ALO in Centre 9 also commented that a lot of time was spent reading manuals to find the value in software. She felt that it would be easy to miss out on 'good' functions in the software. She added that more training should be provided so that tutors become aware of the important aspects of each piece of software. In some software, the help-file wasn't visible onscreen. This made it difficult to progress if any difficulty was encountered.

Another problem highlighted by the ALO in Centre 3 was the expense of the software that was available, made it difficult for both the centres and students to buy. In addition, some software available on CD required network licenses or else a separate CD had to be bought for each computer, the costs involved in doing this was prohibitive for some centres.

The ALO in Centre 9 commented that some times technical problems with the computer caused software problems.

Good Software

The Centre 5 ALO commented on one piece of software that she had used in the past in traveller literacy tuition that she found very good. It was based on Elvis and was available back on 5.25inch disks in the late 1980's. The travellers loved it, as many were huge fans of Elvis. It helped reinforce their own experience. There was a section where you read about the life of Elvis. Then there were spelling tests, cloze tests, word squares and games. The games consisted of exercises such as finding words within words. In addition, there was a separate piece of software where students were encouraged to give words about Christmas, and then the software would make a story or crossword. If it was a crossword, the students would help design the clues.

Centres not using dedicated literacy software

In Centre 7 Adult Literacy Centre and Centre 12, the tutors were not using specific literacy software, and were focused on up-skilling the literacy students in using computers and software packages like Microsoft Word.

Centre who have no issues with software

In Centre 6, the computer tutors said that they had no problems with the software that they were using. They were using Starspell, the New Reading Disk, Mavis Beacon for typing and MS Office.

Computer Usage and Access by Teachers

Very few volunteer tutors used computers in literacy instruction but most used it in preparation. Each centre had at least one I.T. group tutors. The group tutors in general were usually qualified teachers or had a recognised teaching diploma. I.T. group tutors had some certification in computing.

Formal Technology training was available in 10 out of 12 centres and this was provided either by an internal staff(4 centres) member or an outside consultant(6 centres). The training was in Basic Skills, Internet, ECDL or NCVA. The number of hours training per tutor per year ranged from 2 hours to 40 hours, the higher number usually depending on whether ECDL or NCVA certification was being sought.

The volunteer tutors had usually a 10-20 hour course for literacy training, and this involved a few hours on using computers. All centres felt that more basic training was required in computing.

Four centres felt that their instructors access and training in computers was inadequate, three felt that it was adequate for the present only, whilst five felt it was adequate for now and any future developments.

Computer usage and access by Students

Typically students worked in groups of 2-10 during group instruction in technology. Technology in 1:1 tuition was also used in a few centres.

The number of students using technology in the literacy programs varied greatly across centres, typically from 15% up to 50%.

Each student had on average 1-2 hours per week of computer usage within literacy programs.

The computers were used for adult literacy programs in all 12 centres, it was used for ESL programs in seven centres, for life-skills programs in four centres and for career guidance in two centres. The context in which the technology was used was primarily for technology skills classes(Word Processing etc), however half of the centres did use the technology as a tool(Research/ Resource tool) and allowed students access to do private drafting inside and outside class.

Student access to computers was felt to be inadequate in three centres, adequate for the present only in seven centres and adequate for present and future in two centres.

Promotion of Technology:

Eight centres felt that their computing facilities were adequate for present only, with two centres feeling that their facilities were inadequate and two others feeling that their facilities were adequate for present and future needs.

When asked to rate obstacles to the use of technology the following pattern merged:

Lack of relevant software was recorded as the most important obstacle to using technology, followed by lack of information on how/when it could be used and not enough time to train staff and a lack of adequate training for staff.

When asked to rate incentives to increase use of technology, the following emerged:

All centres recorded evaluations and reviews of hardware and software as extremely relevant as an incentive to increase use of technology, this was followed by 75% recording the need for a help-line for programs using technology, a further 60% needing research/ case studies showing benefits of technology use and finally, half centres recorded training as extremely relevant.

When asked to rate obstacles to the use of the Internet, the following emerged:

Concerns about security in use of the Internet was recorded as extremely relevant by 50% of the centres and relevant by another 25%. This was closely followed by 45% of centres recording not enough computers with Internet access and insufficient staff training in the use of the Internet as being extremely relevant as an obstacle to use of Internet. 50% of the centres recorded insufficient funds for ISP charges and phone as relevant as obstacle to Internet use.

Internet access was recorded as inadequate in seven centres, with three centres saying that it was ok for present only and two other centres confirming that their Internet access is fine now and for the future. (Of the seven that recorded inadequate Internet access, six recorded insufficient funds as being relevant as an obstacle to use of Internet, and 4 recorded lack of computers/ insufficient staff training and concerns about security as obstacles to use of Internet.)

Finances

Most literacy centres did not have a technology plan(i.e. 1/2 or 3 year I.T. plan), and were not aware of the existence of a separate budget for technology.

Additional sources of finance were not in place, except in one centre where money was raised locally for technology purchases.

Adult Education Officer made decisions on large technology purchases, in conjunction with the adult literacy co-ordinator, who in turn liased with the I.T. Instructor and/ or other instructors.

Findings

The findings of this report are:

- ICTs are being used effectively to provide students with basic computer literacy skills
- Adult Literacy providers see the implementation of ICTs in their programs as a necessary tool for students in their working and living environment
- There is an urgent need for evaluation and reviews of literacy software currently on the market
- There is an urgent need for literacy software to be developed or customised with an Irish Context and aimed at the adult market
- There is a need for a communication structure that would enable literacy providers to liaise with other providers and review each others experience on an ongoing basis
- There is a need to provide Internet access and training in all centres
- There is a need for information on ongoing research in the area of adult literacy and technology
- Refugees/ asylum seekers are availing of the 'open door' policy in adult literacy centres for ESL type classes
- Volunteer tutors have minimum exposure to I.T. in their literacy training; Significant when you consider that they are the first point of learning

The Recommendations of the report are:

- Review and standardise current training courses for volunteer tutors/ group tutors with an aim to include use of technology in literacy programs; including software evaluation; and at no cost to tutor
- Establish a pilot study which involves introducing literacy students(1:1) to computers with Internet access during initial literacy program; then investigate the progression rate from 1:1 tuition to group tuition; (tutors have completed the standardised training literacy course)
- A software evaluation/ review form be created by users of literacy software for users of literacy software
- NALA should add on a software evaluation and review page to their existing web-site, that allows users to post and access updates. The information should include whether there is a sample available, costs and where to buy.
- Existing software and support material be formally evaluated within the literacy environment; so that deficiencies of existing software within the Irish context can be identified
- Establish a flexible communication structure, perhaps in the form of a web-site, where co-ordinators and/or instructors can liaise/ conference/ meet remotely on-line or post information/queries/ email off-line. Monitor and publish findings on the outcomes of this project.
- Information on addressing issues associated with open Internet access be supplied by NALA etc
- Inclusive Web-site/ Software Development process which would involve all participants in the design process
- Investigate the effectiveness of using mobile units

Comments on existing software for literacy Tuition

Centre 11

Existing literacy Software

Content unsuitable for adults
Feedback not appropriate, sounds or stars
No Irish Context
Doesn't include prior experience
Age level unsuitable
Cheering/ Happy faces for children not adults
Should be able to trial all software
Expensive

Centre 3:

Existing literacy Software

Need Irish version of software
Expensive to buy for both centres and students

Centre 1:

Existing literacy Software

Need Irish version of software, English, Australian and American accents can be confusing
American spelling different
Booklets with software
Samples for evaluating

Centre 2:

Existing literacy Software

No Booklet with 10 to 10 software series
Help-file not on screen; difficult to access
Problem with Eng accents on New Reading disk
No Irish based Content
Adults want some games
Feedback not appropriate
No Software out there, lack of adult based software
Software for adults very dry; too much work (New Reading disk)
Adult software very expensive
No levels within; designed specifically at a particular level
Some CDs require network or buy separate CD for each- more expense

Centre 5:

Existing literacy Software

Childish
Expensive
Limited application-2/3 weeks/ finished/ minor changes allowed in material
Very quickly get to know material
Better quality resources on paper
Novelty
Print master simple DTP. Makes cars stationary; posters GOOD
New Reading disk

- Expensive
- Situations Not Irish
- Social Issues not Irish
- Maps not Irish

Worksheet generator-Very useful
JC English-very few tutors use it
Before windows; 5.25 life of Elvis
Lots of travellers loved it; reinforced their own experience; Read life; Spellings; Cloze Tests; word Squares
Games Ok
Eg: Word Games- find word within word

Eg: Everyone gave word about Xmas; make story or crossword; computer fitted words; students thought of clues

Centre 4:

Existing literacy Software

Need Irish version of software
Expensive to buy for both centres and students
Levels too high
First 100 words too hard
Needs structured spelling
Mostly geared towards to primary Education

Centre 10:

Existing literacy Software

Words of different lengths
New Reading disk was good but got bored with it
Mixed ability
Measuring up- Sections americanised
Start write- very basic
The Alphabet is good
Issues in English- excellent

Centre 7:

Existing literacy Software

Use for basic computer skills rather than in literacy

Centre 12:

Existing literacy Software

Literacy tutors do not use software at present that's in the centre
Training in basic computer literacy is given by the IT tutor(MS office+ Internet/email)

Centre 6:

Existing literacy Software

Uses Starspell/ New Reading disk/ MS office/ Mavis Beacon for typing-no probs

Centre 9:

Existing literacy Software

Computers have technical problems that can affect software
American Spelling and Accents
Some students have good ear for sounds+ they will have problems relating to accents
Expensive
Cultural Experience is different
Greatest Step in Text-books was the introduction of Irish based texts-Irish Road signs/ Irish social welfare
So much time wasted reading manuals to find value in software
Need real-life demos
Training needed in how to use software
Software available tends to be more school/ child oriented
Unless focusing on a specific student problem, you may miss out on a good function in the software

Centre 8:

Existing literacy Software

Need Irish version of software
Expensive to buy for both centres and students
Menu on Starspell confusing/ navigation probs/ Star feedback not good
New Reading Disk-not good for beginner/ words too long/ problems with font/ menus/ British accent and Context
Number shark is more teenage oriented

Comments from Literacy Coordinators/ Instructors

Centre 11 Other Comments

More resources in terms of building
Borrowing rooms not good idea
NALA should be providing help line service
Volunteer Training 8-15 hour includes software
Time & Flexibility problem when training staff
Internet access should be in all centres
Fear of abuse of Internet access; monitoring

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Centre 3 Other Comments

Technology should not be forced on students; their choice; volunteer scheme
Trying to adopt a multi-sensory approach with keyboarding with Level 1
Try to get into groups from start; Intensive Literacy(IT component) Level 2
Try to get Level 3 in group immediately to up-skill
Students come to centre either for specific tasks, driving test or long term literacy
In-service for volunteers for computer technology
Practical Problems finding Tutors with IT skills
Practical probs with movement from 1:1 to group
When to move from 1:1? After 6-8 weeks encourage 1:1 to group by offering keyboards

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Centre 1 Other Comments

Use of Digital Camera with Travellers
Concerns on constraints that need to be put in place for Internet for Centre

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Centre 2 Other Comments

Volunteer 10week training course + 10 additional inservice hours
Computing Skills offered at initial interview 1:1; some never take up offer
Computers in room-doesn't mean functioning as group-loose group dynamic
Refugees only option is too take ESL at literacy centres
Lack of space in Centre 2

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Centre 5 Other Comments

Tutors don't have computer skills-natural fear
Training Scheme offered by VEC to VTOS/Youthreach/ Adult Literacy and AEO; offered to group tutors and management
Asylum Seekers/ refugees 4 -1:1 tuition; Computer tuition also available
Source software by word of mouth/ No time to go to store/ bought sight unseen
Adult learners leave hang-ups with reading books being when using computers/ Breaks down barriers/ enjoyment and success
Concerns on Internet use when adults not known that well
Motto: to meet the individual needs of every adult initially
Summer-school 5 mornings: mixed students and staff; broke down barriers
Cant afford the second phone line
No Computers at home
SMOG readability formula doesn't work if context unknown-Teagasc
Context queuing is a much better indication than SMOG

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Centre 4 Other Comments

Only starting to introduce the technology
Have recently started recruiting volunteer tutors also
Shortage of rooms
Drive from budget constraints to migrate 1:1 to group
Fear that adults might abuse Internet access

Some staff are nervous about using technology

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Centre 10 Other Comments

Starting use Solitaire for mouse control and Mavis Beacon for keyboard skills

NCVA level 1

Source software by word of mouth- can be hit and miss- Tutor meetings

Students are aware that computers are available and that they don't need to have any prerequisite skills

Try to move into computer group as early as 3 weeks or could be months

Literacy classes can be held in computer room or any other room- no distinction

Tutors do a 20 hour course-NALA accredited

Can't send volunteer tutors on ECDL

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Centre 7 Other Comments

Computers should be part of the class from the beginning

Integral part of the furniture

Important as a tool in learning

Budget restraints on purchasing and training for non-permanent staff-staff have had to pay for own training in ECDL etc

Some concerns about security

Partnership to raise money locally for computer purchases

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CENTRE 12 Other Comments

Literacy should be introduced around 6 months in literacy or directly for return to work
Use of PCs too impersonal in beginning; first have to develop independent learning; build on skills;
advance on these and practice; Human Touch Important
Training could be improved
ECDL training 24 hours available each year
Tutors are availing of Internet for course preparation

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Centre 6 Other Comments

NCVA Foundation Level on offer
Students don't have open access
Ran NCVA for tutor training
Sources software from NALA/ Mail-shots from companies
Don't use specific software for ESL students
IT person has JEB qualification

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Centre 9 Other Comments

Literacy should be integrated into community/ parenting/ cooking/ budgeting
Literacy should not be isolated
Issues in Groups:
Confidentiality
Don't want to meet others
Not getting individual attention in group
BUT
The group pluses are offset by social experience
Increase in confidence and self-esteem
Literacy skills may not improve
In country areas students are afraid that they will be recognised-wont take tuition locally
Radio programme was piloted from Tipp FM originally 2 years ago- good because followed book exactly
TV good but problems matching book with broadcast

Cont. Centre 9 Other Comments

Each coordinator and centre is a separate entity around the country; instead of reinventing the wheel they should learn from each other; find an appropriate communication method to stay up-to-date-email
Sourcing down to luck-hit and miss-mailing list or NALA
Need NALA type in-service in evaluation and best value or best practice from software
Group is structured so that IT is introduced early on
1:1 depends on the individual focus but computing is necessary and useful as a life-skill
Irony that its relatively easy to get money for technology but not a paper based program
Concerns over Internet access and control; don't know what exactly is supposed to be blocked

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Centre 8 Other Comments

No time or funding to go to Dublin to investigate software
Training for permanent staff only
Physical room unsuitable for 1:1 tuition/ corner of the computer room sectioned off
Volunteer do a 10 week course and there usually a 1 hour demo, offered outside course this year and so only 1 of 80 volunteers signed up for it
Feel that staff are less
Need an additional phone line
Only one Internet connection in office
Source software from NALA news letter or word-of-mouth
At the new Reading Disk Launch in UL, commented on menu probs and felt completely ignored

Appendix E

Agenda for Visits to Literacy Centres in 2004/ 2005

Meeting at Adult Literacy Centres

Location: 12 Adult Literacy Centres

Date: 2004 / 2005

Type: Interview

Participants: Co-ordinator and/ or Computer Tutor

Topic: Discussion about the integration of technology in Adult Literacy Tuition and Support

Agenda

- Background to the Literacy Centre: Students/ numbers/ courses etc
- Own role and responsibilities within literacy education at the centre
- Technology facilities at the centre – Internet facilities? Software?
- Programmes that offer technology
- How are students introduced to technology at the centre?
- Tutor Technology Skills
- Tutor/ Student use of technology at the centre
- Challenges with software being used
- Opinion on the integration of technology in literacy education
- Other comments

Appendix F

Summaries of Notes/ Transcripts for Visits to Literacy Centres in 2004/
2005

Summaries of notes, and transcripts, where available of interviews for follow-up research from June 2004– February 2005

Centre Interviews from June 2004 – February 2005

1. **Type:** Centre 1 Interview Summary (Tutor1/ Coordinator1)
2. **Type:** Centre 2 Interview Summary (Coordinator2/ Developer2)
3. **Type:** Centre 3 Interview Summary (Tutor3/ Coordinator3)
4. **Type:** Centre 4 Interview Summary (Coordinator4)
5. **Type:** Centre 5 Interview Summary (Coordinator5)
6. **Type:** Centre 6 Interview Summary (Tutor6, Tutor62, Coordinator6)
7. **Type:** Centre 7 Interview Summary (Coordinator7)
8. **Type:** Centre 8 Interview Summary (Tutor8/ Coordinator8)
9. **Type:** Centre 9 Interview Summary (Coordinator9)
10. **Type:** Centre 10 Interview Summary (Coordinator10)
11. **Type:** Centre 11 Interview Summary (Coordinator11)
12. **Type:** Centre 12 Tutors Focus-Group Transcript (Tutors12)
13. **Type:** Centre 12 Interview Transcript (Coordinator12)
14. **Type:** Centre 13 Students Focus Group Summary (Students1-5)

Type: Meeting at Literacy Centre 1
Date: 29th November 2004
Duration: 1 hour approx.
Participant/s: Tutor1/ Coordinator1
Mode: Hand-written notes/taped
Format: Interview

Met with the literacy tutor, Tutor1 a literacy co-ordinator for 40 minutes, then with the centre co-ordinator (ALO) for a following 30 minutes.

Centre1 Literacy head office is in the centre of town and has a number of tuition centres around the city and outreach centres throughout the county.

The majority of students come voluntary for help and for the most part choose either 1-1 or group tuition depending on level of competence and confidence. Groups are also formed through referrals e.g. FAS/VEC Return to Education. This referral process involves supervisors identifying potential students and then Literacy Service is invited in to explain what they do. They have a number of groups at present, including a men's group of 7/8 at an outreach centre in the county, a mixed group of 8/9 in Centre 1 city. There is also an interagency group (VEC, Home Schools Liaison Officer and Dept. of Social and Family Affairs as partners) of 20 single parents and all work on computers as well as a group of refugees/asylum seekers.

Tutor1 is the main technology tutor. Some students complete FETAC Computers Foundation level or level 1 and a number of students have completed ECDL. This is a great confidence booster for some students who would believe they have no chance of employment. When students come in some can read well enough and some who can write well but have difficulties with spelling. While others have fairly severe literacy difficulties e.g not able to write their own name, address, don't know the alphabet or the art of sequencing.

The technology at one of the city centres comprises of nine computers and a scanner in a single room with a computer also in another tuition room that can be used for 1-1 sessions or with someone who has special needs. There are two other computer rooms in the city. Typically the students cover word-processing, spreadsheets, database and graphics. They are not connected to the internet in one of the centres. However they do have internet access in their other centres. If they want to use the internet for ECDL, they go to [another location]. This connection used to be dial-up and was quite slow, but recently they have converted to broadband, which is much faster. There are six computers at [location]. Typically in classes where the internet is used the students would access the Ryanair website to try to get cheap flights, or look at the history of Centre 1, or look at the local paper online (albeit a week late). The tutors do print off some of the worksheets on the NALA 'literacytools' website.

Other than this some specialized software is used such as Starspell. Because they are gearing the students towards FETAC, they gear the module towards the FETAC module rather than focusing on specialized software. In other words they focus on using Word, Spreadsheets, Database and Graphics. Tutors use the internet to gather information that can be used to create worksheets eg. on Food and Nutrition. The benefits of using the internet for this is that the information is up-to-date. The

language can be simplified by the tutor and tailored to an adult context (not childish). Tutor1 uses e-mail to keep in touch with other tutors. Tutor1 has completed professional training with ECDL. Computers are in all tuition rooms and at halting sites where tutors work with the travelers.

Online is useful once they have the basic skills and the confidence to use it. Prior skills needed by students who intend to use the internet: Confidence – usually fear of breakages or doing something wrong, other than that mouse control skills are needed. Students are taught to use the mouse using paint or solitaire. This could take up to a few sessions, depending on the student and their level of confidence.

Tutors usually print-off from software rather than use it directly with students. They do this as the focus is on getting accreditation from FETAC and they don't have time to go through specialized literacy packages. Students need material that suits their day-to-day needs. The NALA website is user-friendly, not too much reading or writing. Students need basic skills eg. If something sticks in the printer or if the computer crashes they need to know that it can be recovered. They need materials that is relevant with adult context. Also they need worksheets to re-enforce learning such as anagrams and cloze exercises. They also need to be careful that material isn't overly simplified.

The students rarely access the internet outside class, their children often access it for them. One student thought that when her son didn't turn off their computer it would blow up. She ran out after him to get it to turn it off.

At Literacy 'google' is the main search engine used, they may be asked to look for a florist in Centre 1 for example. The internet is used with those who are enrolled for the ECDL course, three men and two women at present. None of these would have used it at home before. However they are now more confident and two of them have actually bought computers at home.

Other ways in which technology is used at this centre includes – using the video and digital camera to take pictures, eg. Student changing nappies for a FETAC module called 'Caring for Children' or showing students setting a table for a four course meal for FETAC 'Food & Cookery module. Students are also encouraged to bring in their own photos or poems or stories and these are scanned and laminated.

Literacy is known as a literacy program and is marketed as such. Due to funding mechanisms, a percentage of students at Literacy are required to progress to FETAC Foundation or Level 1 particularly with FAS/VEC Return to Education. This can happen gradually over a period of months or it can take up to 3/4 years for a student to gain FETAC qualification if they attend 2/3hrs a week on a consistent basis. Success at the centre is primarily measured by the increase in the level of confidence of its students.

'Sometimes I get very angry, because of funding; accreditation is a requirement particularly on the FAS Return to Education Programme. This can take from what we are all about "student centred". If I have a student and at the end of the thirty week or sometimes longer, they are confident to talk within a group or confident to go into a shop and ask for what they want, to me that's success. It's not all about

accreditation but that little piece of paper is valued....but unless the learning is their own even if it takes 3, 4 or 5 years then that's good....it must be their work, it must be their learning, a lot of it is about confidence building' Tutor1.

Literacy began over 18 years ago. There is a students centred approach adopted in learning at the centre. Initially a small number of students doing basic reading and writing tuition but as funding increased more programmes were offered but 1-1 tuition is still the done of students coming in off the street. Technology is used at the centre to enhance the learning process and it attracts students. Students prefer to say that they are going to a computer class rather than going to a literacy class. For every seven students at least one or two of them must produce portfolios under funding regulations for FAS. Portfolio's of work completed can gradually be built up for FETAC modules. At Christmas/Easter/Valentines time students enjoy making own cards to bring home. Many students don't like their own handwriting they prefer using MS Word. They love to see their own portfolios.

The centre is advertised on local radio, local businesses, at libraries and social welfare offices. In addition to this, the literacy tutor is sent out to programmes being run by FAS/VTOS/Youthreach etc. to advertise the services offered by Literacy. Reading, writing and spelling is advertised and also computers. Literacy tuition training still has stigma attached to it, so often the computer course looks more attractive. However computers is offered only as part of the literacy programme, otherwise Literacy service would get mainly those who want to up-skill in computers which is not their target audience. Students who sign-up are aware that Literacy service is primarily a literacy centre. They have a literacy awareness week each year where they promote the service.

Policy from ALO in terms of using technology:

Coordinator1 talked of the natural progression from 1-1 to group learning. Most students want 1-1 initially some wouldn't consider computers until well into the programme. 'Don't say never, down the road you may change your mind....and some of the students do' Coordinator1 'depends on student and degree of literacy difficulty'.

This changed when computers were placed in the 1-1 tuition rooms in 1999-2000. Students got used to seeing the computer and gradually agreed to try it out. Now there is a computer in every tuition room. It's left up to the student if or when they want to use the computer. Students who present with learning difficulties usually benefit from using computers from an early stage. It can also work well for those who are speech deficient – one student whose speech isn't great has found computers very beneficial. It's left up to student whether they do computers or not.

Majority of the full-time staff have ECDL. The three full-time staff are co-ordinators and 30 or so part-time tutors. Majority of the part-time staff have computers skills. Twelve tutors have trained with NALA in working with IT groups. Three tutors are ECDL testers for student courses.

Tutors don't use specific software for reading/writing or spelling. Most of the software that exists presently for use in literacy learning is too childish. Tutors make worksheets that are relevant to their students also it re-enforces what has been covered

in the class. Most of the software doesn't match in with what they have learned in class. You can make the worksheet very simple to start with and you can upgrade them depending on how they are progressing. Students do use the internet as the information is up-to-date and they can work at their own pace. Coordinator1 believes that ;Literacytools; is a good resource in particular the printable worksheets in areas such as First Aid. Tutors can make best use of the internet by developing materials for their own students. Literacy service did fill in a questionnaire sent out by NALA to evaluate the literacytools website but didn't have any other involvement.

The future of technology is in having it available at the centre if someone needs it or want to use it. Students are encouraged to try it out and get over their fear of using the computer, mouse etc. Importantly students should have a clear function for using the computer. 'There has to be a reason for going to the computer'.

The emphasis on FETAC qualification is a good and a bad thing. It is good because it can be used as an opportunity to progress students and in doing so help build their confidence. It can be bad as it turns some students off when you mention accreditation and it can take a long time to complete (2 hrs a week – 6 years to complete a FETAC module). Initially you can get them to do worksheets and then they are working towards the module unknowingly, suddenly they have half a portfolio done. However it could take 7 years to complete a FETAC Communications module depending on level/skills and commitment of student. Only 2-3hrs week for most groups. The centre has an innovative way of assessing students progress by using a LOGBOOK. The students write down their own perceptions of their progress, their tutor tutor/s adds in their comments on how the students have interacted and progressed. This is reviewed every six months. It is difficult to measure increase in levels of confidence but the LOGBOOK is seen as a step in this direction. It records unplanned learning and the things they do now that they didn't before. The students themselves are the ones who can best judge their confidence and tutors can also see the amazing difference in a short space of time. Building a student's confidence goes hand-in-hand with technical skills.

Coordinator1 commented that funding is more readily available, that White Paper on Adult Learning highlighted this issue and so funding was increased from Europe and other sources. Coordinator1 also mentioned a photograph in her office of a group of literacy students where most of the faces have been tippexed out. Many in the photo have a fairly high profile (in business) in the local community and did not want to be identified. Confidentiality at Literacy service and literacy is the key to lifelong learning and participation in community life.

Type: Meeting at Centre2 Adult Learning Centre

Date: 14th December 2004

Duration: 2 hours 30 mins approx

Participant/s: Adult Literacy Organiser and Website Designer

Mode: Hand-written notes/ not taped

Format: Interview

Met with Coordinator2 (ALO) 12.30-3p.m.

Student numbers slightly down in CENTRE2 since 2001, was over 300 now around 290 students. The centre has moved to a more central location in Centre2 town, beside Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) centre. There are a number of outreach centres and partnership projects in Centre2 town with Traveller Education groups, Special Needs and Young Mothers. The link with Traveller Education involves students coming to the centre for 8 hours each week to learn about a number of areas including Health Education. There is a multi-agency approach taken in tackling literacy problems, with agencies such as FAS, DFSCA, VEC and organisations such as CANDO involved. They also offer an outreach service to Psychiatric hospitals, REHAB and NTDI and ESOL for non-nationals. The number of non-nationals has increased to 60, and there is a waiting list for ESOL at the CENTRE2 centre. However the majority of non-nationals do not have a literacy problem, less than 3% come from non-literate societies, using alternative scripts such as cyvillic..

There are approximately 50 students in 1:1 tuition at the centre getting tuition in literacy, spelling and numeracy. The remainder comprises of groups (usually 6-8 students per group), including the Basic English Group, FETAC Communication Foundation Level Group, FETAC Personal Effectiveness Foundation Level Group, FETAC Computers Foundation Level Group, ECDL group. The centre focuses on providing accreditation at Foundation or Level 1 at most. Students who want to progress are referred to BTEI or other programmes. The funding for CENTRE2 is capped, can't put forward any more than 10% of overall enrolment to FETAC Level 1. The reason behind this is that they don't want duplication of services, so they must refer students who wish to gain FETAC level 1 accreditation to other centres such as BTEI. Students who complete FETAC module at Foundation, Level 1 or Level 2 along with ECDL can progress to further education programmes. (CENTRE2 can provide a start along the path to further education by offering FETAC foundation level to its students).

One of the difficulties with literacy students is their low self-esteem and low levels of confidence. This confidence can be eroded if student is moved too quickly into another centre. At CENTRE2, they try to reduce this by inviting staff from BTEI centre next door in for a coffee regularly so that the CENTRE2 students become familiar with staff from BTEI and hopefully this would make any transition much smoother.

In terms of the partnership, partners want students wishing to do level 1 FEATC or higher to take it at their centre. This means that CENTRE2 can lose a cohort of students suddenly on completion of Foundation level modules. In addition, FAS will only provide funding if particular FETAC modules are chosen, eg. They may not fund communications modules but may fund pottery modules.

Technology is introduced by the centre to students. There are a number of technology related courses on offer including; Introduction to Computers, FETAC Computers Foundation Level, ECDL, technology section within the communications FETAC module – use of ATMs, Mobile phones, FAX, phone, email and Internet. The confidence levels of new students is very slow, avoid anything that is text-based. They don't think they are capable of engaging with computers.. can't teach an old dog new tricks 'I'm beyond that'. They may gain the confidence of using computers by making a friend in class and by making a joint representation to take-part in computers.

Initially, in the first few weeks, the students would concentrate on learning how to use the mouse and keyboarding skills. Solitaire and/or Pool are used to get the students used to the notion of clicking. Also the mouse-control option in the 'Control Panel' is used to get the students to click faster and slower. For keyboarding skills, the students are encouraged to start typing. Students want to see results, even if it just a piece of paper with their name on it. The students use Microsoft Word tools to change font size, colour, bold and print off to check their progress.

For the first academic year, students are allowed to engage in Basic Computer module in areas that they prefer. They are also given a taster of what could be done. In year 2, the students are offered FETAC computers Foundation Level, a few may decide to take this. A few others may take the ECDL. One of the tutors at CENTRE2 is a certified ECDL trainer and the students can go the local Adult Education ECDL testing centre to do the actual examination.

Technology is integrated into the literacy programs in CENTRE2 in the following ways. Firstly there is a computer in the 1:1 rooms at the centre. Student might request some tuition on computers. Normally start with Microsoft Word. Sometimes use Starspell or Numeracy software if appropriate to needs of student. The main difficulty is in finding appropriate software for use with students. A lot of software being used is derived from the remedial curriculum. There is plenty of software for adults with special needs, but not for adults who have low literacy levels.

The tasks need to be relevant for literacy students, they need to be relevant to context of literacy student – such as Word searches 'My Mary has to do Wordsearch for school'. Also if the overall importance not immediately apparent, it can cause motivational problems for the literacy learner.

Coordinator2 reviewed software recently that looked good but wasn't. It purported to be interactive and enable discussion – in reality it encompassed closed text based on discussion. The topics examined in the software were very controversial, euthanasia or vivisection. The cost of the software was prohibitive, huge cost for user licenses and software.

Coordinator2 commented that there are not that many suppliers of adult literacy software in Ireland. Software was found by looking on the Internet for companies selling software. Also looked for recommendations from websites of Literacy Organisations. Also checked family literacy websites to see what software they recommended. Also review catalogues such as the one by PrimEd. However PrimED

is geared towards primary education, has things like animated rabbits that wouldn't be appropriate in the adult context. However the levels within the primary software and the tasks are usually fine.

CENTRE2 also uses NALA literacy tools website. They use it with students at end of year, students have reported favourably on using the NALA website. Centre2 has also accessed British literacy websites for use in class, particularly those with interactive tasks.

In addition, CENTRE2 are developing their own interactive website. There will be interactive tasks, similar to 'Who wants to be a millionaire', as well as Wordsearch etc that can be downloaded and printed for use in class. It is anticipated that the activities would be updated regularly. The purpose of the CENTRE2 website is two-fold; it gives CENTRE2 a profile on the Internet and it will also provide access for those students wished to extend their learning from CENTRE2 at home and provide focused learning opportunities for our students. The problem with using the Internet at present is that it presents unfocused learning opportunities. 'It's a bit like saying to someone who has never been shopping in the supermarket, go shopping.. too vague..' It is also envisaged that the web-site would be accessed by students who do not want to come to CENTRE2.

The CENTRE2 website will be a learning tool. It's in the early development phases. They have looked at some literacy websites and some business/ training websites to get ideas. The designer is local.

The influences for the website came from NALA initially. Ideas such as having interactive exercises similar to those on NALA website were good. They also reviewed American and Canadian websites. One corporate website that dealt with improving language skills was particularly useful. Users were drawn into using the service with simple exercises, then they had to sign up for the more advanced sessions.

Centre2 Literacy service has had difficulties in developing the South of the county. Currently they are running a scheme to up-skill tutors to work in this part of the county. The problem is that the potential students live in remote parts of the county and there is no regular bus service to bring them in to CENTRE2. There are also issues of anonymity. The development of the CENTRE2 website is seen as a partial solution to the needs of students in the Southern part of Centre2 county. It should highlight what the basic services are on offer at CENTRE2, whilst providing a 'hook' to getting people to join the literacy service.

The quality framework initiative is being implemented at CENTRE2. It involves getting feedback from learners in a number of areas. This has proved labour intensive. An electronic survey has been designed for students at CENTRE2, it has 20 questions for students to give feedback on. The information is gathered and collated. CENTRE2 hope to put it online eventually. CENTRE2 think this is a good idea, as students can get a feel for the e-voting experience. It helps build confidence around using electronic media. The option to print off the survey and manually fill it in is still an option.

The frame of the CENTRE2 website is as follows: Publicity area, Link to [other literacy websites] and NALA, Staff section – with names and pictures of staff so that potential students can become familiar with individuals within the organisation, it's less intimidating, Notes section – with specific worksheets, downloads, Link to the main VEC website.

The Design process:

Who was consulted in the design process?

First Phase: Coordinator2 decided it was important for centre, so spoke with web designer Developer2 – They had a loose conversation around whether this could be done. Coordinator2 had a vision in her head of what she wanted but wasn't sure how practical it was. Coordinator2 and Developer2 had a further series of meetings together and with staff at the centre around what they wanted to do and what they wanted to get out of the enterprise.

Coordinator2 spent time explaining the ethos of the centre to Developer2, as this would have been an unusual design process for the designer. Developer2 then broke down the 'ramblings' into a structure. Coordinator2 felt he did an excellent job interpreting her ideas. Then a number of templates were prepared.

The website is not live yet, they still need to register a domain for the website.

At present, they are still working on the content. For this phase, they intend to 'put-up a 'scaled-down' version first, which would consist of the homepage and further pages on services, staff, courses, section for downloads and a links page.

They intend for students and staff to test this proto-type, experiential approach, they intend to survey staff and students to find out what they think.

The content will be decided upon and designed by Coordinator2 and research workers, Coordinator2 feels it's important to keep the number of researchers down from her workplace as she will need some staff to review the website.

It is anticipated that the website will go 'live' by mid-end of March 2005. The main problem at moment is trying to get the right domain.

Future of the Internet in Literacy Education

The amount of people coming through literacy programs with NO ability in text is rare. Reaching isolated populations is important. The Internet could be used more effectively if Irish Government provided the technology infrastructure. 'Mum's at home with small children can find it difficult to access literacy courses – The internet would certainly be an option for them.

The main barriers to using the Internet at present are as follows:

1. The target group don't have technological facilities and won't have. Other strategies need to be put in place so that farmers in isolated areas can have access to literacy services.
2. The cost of computers have dropped so cost as an obstacle is diminishing.

3. Homes in urban and semi-urban areas have computers and Internet access generally.
4. Self-confidence is a huge barrier to using Internet. Many literacy learners have a fear of computers.
5. Internet is less text-dependent than other modes of learning. This would appeal to those who have problems reading text.
6. Many using computers fear they can 'break it'

There is an increasing use of computers/ Internet in schools so there is an increasing need for parents of school going children to become computer literate. Programs such as Read, Write, Now are raising an awareness of the importance of technology for literacy learners.

The biggest development that will impact on literacy learners is the development of voice recognition software which can be used to read content on web-pages.

Coordinator2 would consider the CENTRE2 website to be successful if it brings in new learners and if other 'recognised' literacy providers have a link from their website to the CENTRE2 website.

DEVELOPER2 – web designer joined in discussion now..

Developer2 is in the process of designing an interactive game similar to 'who wants to be a Millionaire' as a 'hook' to bring students back to website. There will be about fifty questions graded in difficulty from 1-5, a random question generator that picks the question to be presented to learner.

He anticipates that the learner would start with basic questions in reading, writing or arithmetic. There would be ten different levels, so it wouldn't matter what level you are at it would always find something. The learner would have to choose from four possible answers, a, b, c, d. There would be immediate notification if answer is right. There would be 15 steps to the top. If the learner can't answer a question, then they would have to go back to the first question. There would be 'Hints' instead of phone a friend or Ask the Audience. Developer2 feels that this game would serve as a 'hook' to get learners to use the website, and that the more that would come, the more publicity would be generated.

Developer2 watched the Read, Write, Now series to get ideas on the best way for literacy learners to learn. In particular, he noted the structured set of steps that were presented for learning spelling etc. He feels that it's important not to make the exercises too easy, as learners would get bored. He feels that by developing well-structured questions, it would keep it challenging for all learners with varying abilities of literacy. He said that he also anticipates including grammatical guidelines with the exercises.

Developer2 feels that if there is too much content that the learners would get lost. He tried to simplify the content into basic steps and then build it back up.

The first step in the design process was researching other websites to see what was online. He then talked with Coordinator2 about good and bad features of existing

websites and discussed down to last detail what could be learned from these websites. The main learning was that the content had to be divided into steps, that you 'can't cut corners' in terms of grammatical guidelines.

Then both Developer2 and Coordinator2 agreed on what the aim of the website was and how that fitted in with the ethos of CENTRE2. They came to a common understanding on this, but there is no written brief. The process involved a 'conversation over months'. They agreed that the design and features had to be driven by the vision for CENTRE2 and feed into that vision.

'Worst thing that anyone can do is to hand me a piece of paper and say, do that'
Developer2

'Ideas flow more fluently in conversation, can elaborate on some point if needed'

Developer2 led the technical design. He emphasised a clean design, which consisted of an uncluttered interface with careful consideration of colours used. The visual aspect was very important. Also it was very important that the website was accessible to target group.

'More information came through conversation' Developer2

'Given a flavour of what was needed' Coordinator2

They had lots of informal meetings and casual conversations. After numerous meetings, they spiralled inwards to agree on the design of the website. Coordinator2 felt that she was 'vague and nebulous' at times, whilst Developer2 came back with 'structure'.

Developer2 feels that it's important that no stigma is attached to the website, it should be open to everyone. He emphasised that the wording won't offend anyone and that the learning resources will be open to all 'everyone can learn no matter what level'.

He avoided design overkill – no bells and whistles. There will be no audio, no jingles as he feels that these would detract from intention of website. The games do require the use of Macromedia.

Coordinator2 has worked with other web designers in the past but she felt that they went overboard by having too much content. They were ineffective as a learning tool.

What constitutes success:

Firstly, if the test version is launched, this would be progress as it would allow correction to material presented. They would also measure success by the number of hits to the website. They would also ask students entering this centre how they heard about the centre, and this could be used to determine if the website is useful for raising awareness of existence of CENTRE2. If ten people get value, then that's sufficient – they are not concerned with getting 250,000 hits a month. Developer2 added that if other educational outlets have a link to CENTRE2 that would be good.

Developer2 doesn't see an end-date for finishing work on the website, however for phase one he anticipates July/ Aug 2005. He intends to up-skill staff at CENTRE2 on uploading information to the website. He feels that he can always contribute more with the development of new technologies – website can always be improved.

Coordinator2 feels that in terms of pedagogy – waiting for the technology to catch up so that the website can cater for multiple intelligences etc. She feels that at the moment, website are only catering for visual, linguistic and text based intelligences, there are opportunities for use of audio. But kinaesthetic would be applicable in this context. She feels that there may be room for development of chat-rooms/ message boards sometime in the future. However she feels that management of discussion groups can cause legal problems ‘grey area’, and they can be difficult to moderate. She feels that ‘message boards’ would be much more manageable. She also feels that it would be useful to have some facility for ‘voice to text’ online but there would be huge problems with that due to regional accents. Multi-user functionality would present a real problem here. I thanked Coordinator2 and Developer2 and the meeting ended around 3p.m.

The web developer came up with an innovative way of demonstrating how to form numbers and letters to literacy learners.

Type: Meeting at Centre3 Adult Learning Centre

Date: 6th December 2004

Duration: 1 hour 20 minutes approx

Participant/s: Adult Literacy Organiser and one Adult Literacy Tutor

Mode: Hand-written notes and taped

Format: Interview

Interview was delayed for an hour, so reviewed software on offer in Resource Room with a tutor from centre as described below:

Software currently being used at the centre include Ultimate Phonics – reading Program, by Spencer Learning; Official Driving Theory – perceived as good, only problem is that no Printable Option must print screen; Issues in English 2 by Protea – helps students prepare for IELTS – they have a 5-user license, ESOL students find this useful; It Could be You – developed by the Prison Group – very popular piece of software. Tutors use a variety of software, headphones are available so that learners can learn without distraction. Tutors use variety of software. The Internet is also used – NALA literacytools websites – the printable sheets very useful, Also there is a website called ‘lhelper’ which is also very useful. They have the Videos and DVD’s from the Read/ Write/ Now series – DVD more popular because the users can jump directly to section they need. NumberShark and Starspell are also used. Texthelp is used, as is NetDays for Europw which is an EC publication. ‘Tell me more’ supplied by Diskovery Education Services is used by some students. Students use the software in 1:1, groups or on their own.

12a.m. Interview with Coordinator3

Coordinator3 is the co-ordinator for the Basic Education Service in Centre3. Centre3 region is large, and there are many outreach centre across the county. The learners at centre are either in 1:1 or group tuition (groups of 6/7/8).

There have been a number of changes since 2001. Firstly the quantity and quality of software available has improved. Students can access the service more readily, and there are more rooms available for students to use. They have access to computers and the Internet now. Before they had to book when the VTOS computers were free. In Centre3 town, they have their own computers. In one outreach centre, there are 6 computers. Generally they are very spread out, altogether there are 3 literacy centres. Provision varies depending on the centre.

Their first incursion into using software was using Starspell. The asylum seekers had extra time and wanted more access to computing facilities. This led to the development of the ‘Self-Learning’ unit. The software proved invaluable for this service. They liked to use ‘Issues in English’ to improve on their language skills, at whatever their level as there were 4 levels on offer. The students booked in for 1 hour at a time outside of regular classes. This service was soon extended to all students in the literacy service. The idea is to top-up tuition given in regular class. The students can borrow a copy of software, there is always two copies of each piece of software – one for use in centre, one for loan. All software at centre is licensed. The students are very responsible, they do return the software promptly. There is also a diary system for booking the room operated their administrator– no such thing as double booking. They don’t guard the software diligently.

In-house tutors and voluntary tutors all have computer skills. There is an in-house programme to upskill volunteer tutors in using technology in literacy education. There is a 2 hour IT training session every 18 months, where tutors go through software and explain how it should be used and they discuss ideas for using it with their students. Normally the tutor will look at the software in advance of training session.

The Driving Test Theory software is very popular with those students who have a provisional license or who want to get a full-license. It focuses the asylum seekers for something, even if it is only a provisional license.

Issues in English is mostly used by non-nationals. It's very good for vocabulary building. There is a good structure to the content, it shows real situations presented at four different levels.

Starspell and Numbershark are very popular with Irish Nationals who are trying to improve on their spelling or numeracy. Our own students present usually with spelling difficulties.

Students are offered a 10 week basic class IT once a year. Students in 1:1 tuition are encouraged after 6 months to move to a group by offering 6 (1:1) students a computer class as a group. Computers are a good way of getting 1:1 Students to progress to group.

'It's enticing them into a group, using the computer itself to build-up the keyboarding skills which helps their spelling.'

Mavis Beacon teachers typing is used to start the students on the computer. As the students learn to type, they also learn to spell.

'when you learn to type, you learn to spell'

Computers is only taught in a group, not offered outside group.

The last session in their normal literacy program would involve using the Internet (Usually around week 10/11). The students would be shown some websites and brought to the NALA literacytools website. They had difficulties with students accessing sites that they shouldn't have accessed.

The centre has a magazine called TutorTalk where they mention the NALA literacytools website. We recommend that they visit the NALA website.

The tutors use the Internet/ NALA website to download materials for handouts. Canada and Australia are good for Basic Education programmes. Some tutors use the Internet at home. No tutor at the centre uses interactive internet programmes. They are using it to download materials that they can use in class. There are good sites on Dyslexia. We have an assessment worker who specialises in Dyslexia.

Coordinator3 commenting on the biggest change since 2001, mentions that it feels on reflection that 'looks as if were barefoot' in terms of resources available. The biggest improvement was the addition of the resource rooms dedicated to literacy, our own

classrooms dedicated to literacy, 1:1 computers as well as computer rooms and the 1:1 computer rooms. We also use our own software. We are certainly using the software as a tool.

They don't advertise the service using computers as the hook. The services are advertised by raising awareness amongst night class students, through 'Learning for Living' programme, through 'Family learning' programme and also by word-of-mouth and through a network of people in the Home School Liaison Service, FAS and the Social Services. Through the family learning programme they offer basic computers for parents. Family Learning is the largest area of growth in the last two years. Students coming to the centre would be aware that it's a literacy service. There is a poster advertising the 1:1 services, which clearly states Reading, writing, spelling and Grammar. The centre introduces the students to computers after they enter – students don't normally request computers on entry. The VEC also advertises the service on its website

The Home School Liaison Officer identifies parents with literacy problems, and advises them of the services on offer at the centre including computer literacy and Irish literacy as this is a Gaeltacht region. They have access to parents in the home and so can directly advertise our services. They also have a number of 6-week courses that can lead to Junior Cert English/ Maths.

'Using information technology or computers as a way of getting people in.., you could get someone with a phd who knows nothing about using a computer.'

Some students do travel long distances to maintain their confidentiality. They may travel from one end of the county to the other.

One student 'got the Foundation certificate in English & Communications at FETAC what am I going to do with it but he wouldn't take it home because he hadn't told anyone what he was doing'.

Some require basic literacy in Irish as well as English. The Irish Literacy program is called 'breacadh'.

The centre has a learning journal which was designed by an Advisory group for the Literacy service. This advisory group had three literacy organisers, six tutors and four learners on it. The learning journal is reviewed once a term. The student and tutor reflect on the progress to-date. The journal has green pages as Dyslexia students find it better to read off green pages. The tutor and students review their progress to date and discuss goals. Each week the date, topics covered and comments are inserted by the student into their journal. It is not used for assessment. The learning journal is needed for quality controls at the centre and gives a chance to tutors and students to record their experiences. There are often times when tutors will bend your ear to let you know what's happening in the classroom and students will also do this, whilst at other times they will say everything is fine. The learning journal is useful for keeping track of progress. 'It gives them a chance to record 'fine''

Accreditation is offered at the centre for its courses on an optional basis, for example FETAC Communications module at foundation level and Junior Certificate, but not a lot of students are interested. Some proportion do take up the offer and move as far as

level 1 FETAC, however they are then progressed to BTEI or VTOS schemes if they are eligible.

The number of students in the Centre3 literacy scheme has moved from 400 to 1600. There is 95 staff (group tutors – some do 2 hours a week, some do 8-10 hours per week). This is the first year that the numbers in 1:1 tuition are slightly down. The centre is far more open about its services – they used to say it's confidential etc..now they have 'come out of the closet'. They clearly advertise their services at the front door and say to students on entry that their classes are the same as normal night classes except they are a lower level.

There are 300 non-nationals, 476 family learning and 800 at less than intermediate second level education who have just 'come-in', including about 50 in workplace literacy programmes.

What caused the increase in funding?

The budget for the service has improved dramatically. The publicity of the literacy service has improved. The Home School Liaison Co-ordinator has brought in a lot of learners through their post-primary initiatives, whilst the 'Breaking the Cycle co-ordinator- has brought in learners through their services at the primary sector.

Nationally more people are accessing the literacy services. Learners are better supported in VTOS/ BTEI schemes, they can continue with their programmes and drop into the literacy service for literacy tuition. The students are referred from BTEI and VTOS to Centre3 Literacy Scheme.

Most non-nationals are looking for English Language tuition. There are less asylum speakers than in previous years in Centre3, and more migrant workers accessing Centre3 literacy service. The migrant workers are from Poland, Latvia and some are from Brazil. The increase in migrant workers is linked to the expansion of the EU. The nationalities have changed.

Technology helps by extending the learning beyond the classroom.

'I think it compliments and extends the learning with the tutor'.

Learner can sit-down at computer and add or re-enforce what's being done in class using software. For Dyslexia students, now they are much better at recognising dyslexia and the computer can be used to help the student. The Centre3 literacy service has developed a four-hour course for training tutors of dyslexia students. The computer with the highlighters on it and the ability to change font are all very useful for the dyslexic student.

The use of the Internet is not as important as software available on CD. The Internet is a useful tool for organisers and tutors of literacy students however.

'It keeps them up to date with what's happening out there'.

Asylum seekers can use the Internet to access information on what's been happening in their own countries.

Meeting with Tutor3, IT tutor at Centre3 Literacy centre 1.00p.m.

Tutor3 deals with a mixture of students, some have special needs, others basic literacy eg. Reading. She uses computers in her literacy tuition depending on access. Within

1:1 tuition, she uses Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing to build students confidence with keyboard skills. She also uses Microsoft Word for alphabet skills and keyboarding skills. 'It depends on the stage that the literacy student is at'

She feels that the Internet is best used with the better-able student. They can research the local area and find information on farming for example. The younger students love using the Internet, she tries to find a point of interest for them first for example: rally cars. When Tutor3 worked in Youthreach, she used a website that allowed the students to compose stories and people add bits to the story from around the world. They really enjoyed this, particularly seeing their piece in the story. Microsoft Word can also be used with better-able students.

Tutor3 up-skilled herself in using technology. She accesses the Internet for resources. She uses secondary school websites and primary school websites. She particular likes a website for ESOL students called boggleworld. Google is the preferred search engine when looking for materials.

The students use Microsoft Publisher to make leaflets/ menus, WordArt and Clipart – for the FETAC module on Communications. In Youthreach, the students did do the FETAC IT module.

In Centre3 Literacy centre, adults who haven't used computers are afraid to use them. 'Getting adults first of all to work on computers can be quite difficult compared to younger people, because for a lot of them they have never worked on a computer before, younger people would have more of an idea, they are not afraid of it'

It can be hard to get access to computers for them to use, especially if you are giving tuition in an outreach capacity in a hospital for example.

'It can take a wee bit more work with adults, they certainly need more time on it'.

The adults do enjoy using the Read/ Write/ Now DVD and the Phonics DVD. Using technology involves more work and more time when you have adult learners.

Tutor3 isn't keen on Starspell. Generally she finds it hard to get software that's geared towards adults without it being too childlike. She finds the phonics software good. The criteria she has for 'perfect' piece of software is something like Mavis Beacon, where you have lessons/ outlines/ takes you into classroom/ rewards/ levels and a good approach. It's also adult based but could be used with a younger group.

'Adults can be quite sensitive if handed worksheets or books that are quite childlike' 'trying to find balance between what's very basic and what's adult-like'

Tutor3 would like to see software that can take the students through levels and that also records the level that they've been working on.

Type: Meeting at Centre4 Adult Learning Centre

Date: 30th November 2004

Duration: 1 hour approx

Participant/s: Adult Literacy Organiser

Mode: Hand-written notes/ taped

Format: Interview

Met with Coordinator4 the Adult Literacy Co-ordinator at 2p.m.

The Centre4 Literacy Service has moved into bungalow beside the VEC centre.

Coordinator4 assesses new entrants or one of the other tutors assesses them and matches them with a tutor. There are 3 full-time resource tutors and voluntary tutors within the service. Most literacy learners opt for 1:1 tuition first. Their confidence is gradually built-up in the 1:1 tuition and most students progress to group tuition when they are ready. If students have a low level of confidence then it can take 1 or 2 years before they join a group. The groups usually consist of anywhere between 2 and 5 students.

They try to look at what programmes would suit each group. If there are a few different students with the same needs, then they try to get them agree on a particular course.

There are a number of courses on offer including a Creative Writing Group where the students put words on paper to express themselves, Spelling Group and a Basic Literacy Group. The Basic Literacy group covers the technical side, such as punctuation, spelling, grammar etc. Students are allocated to the group depending on their needs. There is a numeracy class that hasn't developed into a group setting yet, still at 1:1 tuition. The student would learn to use the calculator, they would use interactive worksheets from Internet, and do some interactive games on the Internet on a website that allows them to check their answer.

There is also a Computer group. The computer groups are using technology all of the time. The students like the software 'It could be you' which is all about an Irish syndicate that wins the Lotto. There are Crosswords, Word searches and a Cloze test. It has been designed for 3 levels of literacy ability and is designed for an adult context. It was designed about 3 years ago. It's on CD.

The students have used the BBC website and software like Hot Potatoes online. However it isn't feasible to use these with some of these within group context. You can also run out of time with the 1:1 tuition, (1:1 is just one hour per week) and it mightn't appear to be constructive to be playing games with the student. 'They mightn't feel as if they are doing anything quite as constructive, if they are playing games on the computer, especially with adults, even though it could be adult-based material'.

Some primary school material is used, like Storybook Weaver where the students interact with pictures and words and write their own cartoon. It is useful for developing the imagination.

There are 5 laptops that can be used either in a group setting at the centre or in 1:1 tuition. The students may use the laptop to write a letter for example, which is

particularly useful for those students with dyslexia, who have spelling difficulties or who may have poor handwriting.

The computer room is small, about 4 students with their laptops would fill the room. They are connected to the Internet. They also have access to a computer room in the main VEC building which holds about 15 computers. Some of these computers have been bought out of the literacy budget. The Internet connection is broadband. Every room has a network connection. They have a group tuition room also.

There are two computer classes each week, one based at students with none or basic computing skills, a second for those who want to progress geared towards FETAC foundation computers.

The aim for those with low skills is to familiarise them with the computer. Microsoft Word is mainly used for basic typing. They are also shown how to use the Internet. They are taught basic computer housekeeping skills, like how to save, load, and file. They are shown how to use email, taught how to search on the Internet and brought to the NALA website. They did dip in/ out of NALA, the NALA website is not used in the IT class. The computer class does focus on computer skills. Every student at the centre must be computer literate to function outside.

In the 1:1 Tuition, technology is incorporated into the literacy tuition. The technology is incorporated more closely to the needs of literacy tuition for the student.

The move towards accreditation is not the main concern of Centre4 Adult Learning Service. Accreditation is offered as an option. The centre works closely with BTEI, CE, VTOS schemes (which are in the main VEC building next door), students can progress onwards onto these courses. A lot of those courses offer accreditation. 'We would look at progressing people on, rather than push accreditation here'. 'We try to build confidence first so that they are better able to handle their own education in the future'

Likewise, these schemes refer students who have literacy problems to the Centre4 Literacy service, reciprocal relationship. Sometimes literacy students come back to the literacy service from courses that offer accreditation as the groups are too big. 'We've seen people going over to other courses and coming straight back, as they weren't ready for it. Either their confidence or their skills weren't at a stage where they're ready to deal with it.'

They have the Return to Learning scheme operating in centre and they can progress onto CE schemes from it. At the centre, they offer FETAC Communications up to Level 1 and FETAC IT at Foundation Level.

They have a guidance service called SAGE in the centre. The students are referred to Coordinator4 for assessment – usually literacy or maths. Sometimes the students have too high a level of Literacy for the literacy service, and are referred back to SAGE for advice on where to progress from here. Also the literacy service refers their students to SAGE to get them to progress onwards from the literacy scheme.

The Internet is used at the centre for tutor research and throughout the programmes on offer. They use the NALA and government websites to gather information. They also look for information for special needs students.

Coordinator4 has used the BBC Skillswise website but doesn't think that the other tutors have used it. Coordinator4 has given out worksheets and informed them about it - a few people have used it in tuition. Coordinator4 found it useful whether in 1:1 Or with groups but it can be a bit basic. The BBC post-primary section isn't as childish and the students can focus on their maths or communications.

'Some of the stuff is gas actually, some great ideas there.. even just for developing your own materials'

'Creative writing using adjectives- you might have to write a little poem about yourself for a dating agency which is great fun, particularly if you have a group'
Also the BBC adult learning sector is useful for students.

The Internet hasn't been used very much in class. The most successful classes have been teaching someone to use email on the Internet.

Coordinator4 used to work in Youthreach where there wasn't enough computers and the students weren't as co-operative.

'It's not always the most conducive to using interactive games.. either because not enough computers in the room or the students not as co-operative on the day'.

'You want to be very sure of what you're going to (on the Internet).. you need to have your literacy built up to it, your spelling as well'.

'you have to be really sure that your exercises are appropriate for the class and that you have covered everything that they would need'.

If you are going to use the Internet you need to be sure of what you are going to do. You also need to prepare IT classes carefully to incorporate literacy exercises, spelling etc. You should also give out worksheets that correspond to the online learning in-class. Time can be an issue if using the Internet. If doing research, preparation takes time and not everyone is quick on computers.

'Another few years I'd say it'll take off' (Comment on computers)

Huge change in the use of technology at centre. Coordinator4 gets emails from tutors with notes attached instead of phonecalls. A lot of learners are asking for training sessions on how to use the Internet, email and Word. Employers expect that job applications are typed and this involves computer skills.

They advertise the literacy service in school diaries. They also place 'very vague ads' adverts in local newspapers. The adverts usually contain the words Reading, Writing, Numeracy, ESOL and Computers offered at centre. Students do know on entry that it is a literacy programme.

There were 466 students at end of June 2004 and about 336 in September 2004. Around 40% are new students. There are huge numbers of ESOL students. They stopped taking in ESOL students last November as there is not enough staff or funding to cater for more. The new asylum seekers take classes in an outreach centre. They can't access tuition anywhere else. This programme has just started. There are migrant workers and foreign students living in Centre4 (IT) area and they want to do

ESOL. Centre4 IT is very keen to work with Asylum seekers/ Migrant workers as they consider them to be a very good resource of knowledge.

‘Can find highly qualified people who don’t have the language skills’

The literacy service has to look after asylum seekers as they can’t access tuition anywhere else.

The IT skills of the three full-time staff would be good – one female tutor has very good IT skills and she taught IT, another would have quite a bit.. There is an IT tutor, who has lots of IT experience, and he does a lot of up-skilling and training.. It comes up at Interview panel, they do ask if you are computer literate. In terms of the volunteer tutors, some have computing skills. It isn’t necessary for them to have a high degree of computer literacy. They should be able to use and understand how all that works - the Internet, email, compose Word documents, flyers, letters etc – really focusing on day-to-day literacy skills.

For the Basic Skills course, don’t need a high degree of literacy, once they know the alphabet. They would tend to use more icons to navigate around the Internet. The literacy students tend to have an excellent memory and have relied heavily on imagery/ pictures to cope so far – compensate for their literacy deficiency by good visual skills. They remember detail very well-visually. This makes it easier for them to learn computers.

‘I have seen people with low literacy cope better with computers, than someone who can read but can’t follow pictures.’

There is a connection between the age of student and degree of computer literacy. Many older people may want to use the Internet to communicate with relatives abroad.

For the Back to Education schemes, the students need to be able to research on the Internet. Also for a number of FETAC modules, the Internet needs to be used for various assignments.

‘The Internet has broken down a lot of barriers – needs must’

Thoughts on the future of technology in Adult literacy Education

‘It’s only going to become ..If not more important, more useful’

The use of technology in adult literacy programs has a lot to do with the training and confidence levels of staff and students.

Software used at Centre4 Literacy Centre includes ‘It could be you’ which was developed by the teachers centre at a Dublin Prison. It has an option to read out any text displayed on screen. There are worksheets that are interactive. In Centre4, they have not printed these out for use in-class. It’s very simple to use and fast. Also it’s a complete package, the exercises are tied into the storyline.

They also use the Read, Write, Now Series 5 disks. A lot of people signing up have got the package and used the workbook before coming in.

Driving Theory Test was translated from Dutch. There can be some language problems, it can read out any text on screen but this still isn’t enough.

Skills for Life, British Learner Materials Pack, is also used.

Type: Meeting at Centre5 Adult Learning Centre

Date: 24th November 2004

Duration: 30 minutes

Participant/s: Adult Literacy Organiser

Mode: Hand-written notes/ taped

Format: Interview

Met with Coordinator5, the adult literacy co-ordinator

They have moved to a new centre in Centre5.

Coordinator5 is the ALO for Centre5 and County. The literacy programmes offered include Family Literacy Education, ESOL, Read, Write programmes, Return to Education (FAS). There are no workplace literacy schemes in operation at present. They also offer an outreach service to Asylum Seekers in a local facility. The needs of learners are identified by this facility. Sometimes the problem stems from literacy problems in their own language. They offer literacy tuition in 1:1 or group settings.

There are 1:1 or group settings. The initial assessment comprises of small exercises in oral, reading and writing skills. The students are then given an option on what area they want to concentrate on, it could be reading and writing.

‘Sometimes they are really nervous, and you are really comprising them by asking them to do it’ (re assessment on entry)

Some would say on entry that have reading and writing difficulties. Some of them may want to know how to do timesheets, others may have difficulty writing their own name. A lot do request basic computers.

‘Some are in their 50’s and would say, do you think I’m too old to learn’

‘If they go to another program elsewhere,.. there are probably too many in the group and that they (course providers) don’t take into account the pace of learning’

Many would have attended other providers for basic computer training. The emphasis to begin with is on familiarising the student with switching on or off the computer, using the mouse. Solitaire is often used to improve co-ordination/ motor skills needed for using the mouse. Some students use the computer for FETAC Foundation level IT module, they learn to use Word and other MS OFFice applications.

Software designed specifically for literacy programs often tends to be childish, might be useful for learners with special needs.

‘more suited to special needs than adult context’

The Centre5 centre is connected to the Internet. In Centre5 town, they have a programme on how to use the Internet for Senior Citizens. Many of these want to learn how to use email so that they can keep in touch with family members.

‘Part of being illiterate is not being able to use the technology’

The NALA Literacytools website is being used. Coordinator5 has downloaded worksheets for use with ESOL classes in the past. She did say that one worksheet on Irish Sayings isn't very useful as it's geared more to an American audience – May the road rise to meet you.

'I would have been more inclined to include little idioms they use.. if they had taken them from a specific local area.. related to the locality.. it would have made more sense to me'

Tutors have been made aware of the website, and if they want to download exercises that's fine. They would have had written correspondence from NALA re the website.

'The Internet has been of benefit, you can go on it and find out what others have been doing.'

The Internet is also used for research into other literacy centres or areas. It is a useful resource for tutors. Coordinator5 anticipates far more use of Internet in the future.

Coordinator5 feels that technology is useful as a 'hook' in attracting students to the centre. Once they are in, they are far more likely to admit having a problem with reading or writing or maths.

There is an Art course on offer in Centre5 town, not in Centre5 centre which is good at developing the students levels of self-esteem.

At this centre 10 years ago, there was one computer in the office. There are also twelve computers in computer room, and one each of the tutorial rooms.

The Read, Write, Now program is very useful as a distance learning tool for literacy education. Also the NALA literacytools website.

When recruiting tutors, they are asked for a short CV and what skills they have which would include computing skills. Most tutors come equipped with IT skills. 'not all IT as such, you are trying to integrate some literacy work into it'.

In terms of integrating technology into literacy programmes, Coordinator5 feels that Word is useful for creating Cloze tests. However the spellcheck on Word is not always reliable. She feels that it's important that students don't become over-reliant on Spellcheck as it doesn't correct Grammar errors.

Type: Meeting at Adult Literacy Education in Centre6

Date: 19th November 2004

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Participant/s: Adult Literacy Organiser and two literacy tutors

Mode: Hand-written notes/ tape failed

Format: Interview

Met with Coordinator6, ALO, and then two tutors afterwards

Coordinator6 is the adult literacy co-ordinator for literacy education in Centre6. This job is shared with another organiser. Coordinator6 also tutors IT at the centre, and has been involved for 6 or 7 years.

There was a slow start to integrating IT in adult literacy programmes. The premises were established 6 years ago. They have a high tech computer room. Classes now run 4 or 5 times a week, with groups including the Literacy group and Return to Education groups.

In one of the smaller rooms, they have created an Open Learning Centre where students can come in on their own time. Also tutors can use this room in 1:1 or 2:1 tuition, the tutors would use literacy software.

Up to 2004, they didn't have Internet access at this centre. Many tutors are currently still not up-skilled in using the Internet. The centre plans to up-skill tutors in the near future.

In terms of the Literacy software that's used, Superspell is popular and also one that can be used for 'Story-telling'. They also use this software with special needs student.

The format of class would normally be 2 hour sessions in the evening, with reading and writing. The sessions are student centred, based on the needs of the student. Tutors can introduce spellings based on what they know.

Some students progress to FETAC Computers Foundation Level. Others complete basic computer skills programme, in programmes such as Return to Learning and Workplace Literacy Group. The Workplace Literacy Group consists of county council men where they are released for 2 hours a week for the first year.

The centre did have some involvement in the development of the NALA literacy tools website. They were asked for their thoughts on what should be included on the website at the initial stages.

Coordinator6 sees the inclusion of technology in adult literacy education as a 'Fantastic route', particularly with students who have low confidence. If they can overcome their fear of ICT, it's great for their motivation levels.

In terms of progression, it's up to the student. The student can choose not to do exams or to progress to FETAC or Junior Cert courses. At ABLE, literacy students are encouraged to progress. For literacy students in 1:1 tuition, this could take 2

years. They feel very comfortable with their tutor and can be reluctant to move. Sometimes a student is added to the 1:1 setting to encourage movement, 2:1 tuition. The students in the 2:1 scenario would be matched based on their needs. Also there can be tutor shortages at particular times. From October through to December, the centre normally train tutors. There can be a turnover of tutors, might start with 20 and end up with 16 or 18 at end of course. They are always looking for new volunteers.

The Read, Write, Now series of videos and books is used at the centre within class. Students are also encouraged to use it outside of class, particularly promoted within small groups.

The greatest change since 2001 has been the increased access, far more students accessing the service. This has resulted in restricted access to some facilities, and impacted on timetable, restricted funding available for tutors and restricted funding available for buying software.

The profile of students is the same, but there has been an increase in numbers – there are now around 350 students accessing the literacy service, more than once a week.

There is software developed by Equal Skills Initiative in the UK, which is available on Disk. It used to be available online – need to check this. Coordinator6 uses this with the Return to Learning group.

They have had broadband access to the Internet since Sept/ Oct 2004. Before this access was very slow and the computer room was booked a lot, so it was difficult to use the Internet.

In terms of designing website for online literacy learning, Coordinator6 feels that the emphasis should be on simple, easy access. The steps should be broken down into small, manageable stages and there should be a 'general literacy priority'.

Tutors normally work with students for some lead-in training on using computers. If they haven't, the students attend a basic computing course. They can also go to the Open Learning Centre for some extra time on the Computer- they can book in for one hour at a time. Tutors are very open to involvement of technology in literacy education.

Meeting with Tutor6two & Tutor6, tutors at this centre

Tutor6two works on the adult literacy programmes, she also works on the Return to Learning Programmes teaching Communications and Maths. She has 11 literacy students. The groups that she works with comprise of 5/6 students.

The students do FETAC foundation level Computer Literacy, which involves some word processing using Microsoft Word, and spreadsheet and data base work using Excel and Access respectively. She hasn't used the Internet as it's not part of the FETAC foundation level course.

There are no real barriers to using technology at present. There are two computer rooms, the smaller room has Internet access.

She has used the Equal Skills disk, which shows the students how to brose, gives good opportunity for improving mouse skills and also increases the confidence levels of students. They also Solitaire and Free cell to improve mouse control skills.

They have a group of foreign nationals. After they improved their mouse skills, they progress quickly. They also have an IT literacy programme that runs with the National Schools. More software has been brought in because of this. Foreign nations do ESOL programme at centre, they are not allowed to access the ABLE programme as this is for Irish nationals.

If the students want to progress to FETAC, they must have foundation level before they enter the computer class.
She has devised guidelines for tutors, and tutors are involved in setting up the class.

There is dyslexia software available with coloured handbooks.
There are worksheets and assignments for ECDL.
There is a literacy book for IT, tends to be a bit repetitive.
Literacy students have requested to use technology. They are granted access if timing suits, and if they are doing something connected to literacy programme.
They have used the electronic dictionary.

Tutor6two has looked at the NALA literacy tools website. She was interested in the materials presented on the website.

Computers are used a lot at the centre. There are computers in the classroom that could be used. However there are still issues around security and funding.

She has used the Read, Write, Now materials in the classroom.

Inputs from Tutor6..

Tutor6 is the outreach co-ordinator for centre. She also gives literacy training.

She uses Starspell with her literacy students. The computer room is available on Tuesday or Thursday nights. She also uses maths software, especially with the men. The integration of technology into the literacy programmes tends to be tutor-led, even in the Open Learning Centre there is a tutor in-situ.
She also uses Equal Skills so that students can improve their mouse control, access the Internet (particularly emailing). The centre is also licensed to run ECDL training, however there has to be at least 10 students to make up a class for ECDL.

The literacy programme does have a workbook online. Students sometimes aren't ready, they are afraid of messing things up.

Tutor6 has found that parents involved in outreach programmes are looking for training in how to use the Internet. However many schools are cutting back on Internet access due to the cost factor.

Internet access is provided free in local library. Students are taught how to search the Internet, a lot of them are interested in music (words of songs), wedding information and holidays (travel agents).

Two of the schools that Tutor6 travels to don't have Internet access.

I was given a copy of an anthology of student writings that had been compiled by this centre, and published by the county VEC. This anthology contains many inspiring accounts of students accessing the adult literacy service in Centre6, and some detail their first encounter with computers.

Type: Meeting at Centre7 Adult Learning Centre

Date: 21st January 2005

Duration: 1.25 hours

Participant/s: ALO Coordinator7

Mode: Hand-written notes/ taped

Format: Interview

Coordinator7 is one of the Adult Literacy Organisers for Centre7 in an urban area since last year. Coordinator7's background is in community development and working with mature students, which she thinks is very useful with her current profile of students. (she was a manager of an Arts centre for 10 years as well) In the locality of Centre7, the adult learners tend to be elderly and in an inner city the learners are mostly non-nations looking for ESOL tuition. She is a development worker for the inner city but ALO for both Centre7 and its environs.

Coordinator7 has been involved in Centre7 for the last 2 years, and says there is a huge population of mature students. Most of the classes for the Centre7 centre are run in a second-level school adjacent to the adult learner unit. Not exactly useful with adults returning to education to have classes in post-primary building - 'The lads and the girls are a bit obstreperous at times running in the corridor..'

The adult learner unit is based in a portacabin that hosts a crèche.

The Centre7 centre offers a range of courses including 'Personal Development through Art', which is a taster course for those students that want to improve on their literacy.

'it takes away from the whole stigma of people coming back and looking for literacy'. This isn't explicitly stated in the brochure but is part of a hidden agenda to identify those who have low literacy levels. Literacy is a catch-all.. It's like being on a trawler, dragging in the nets, you loose some..people you get you try to work with at whatever level they are at'.

'In some cases, with men in particular, we've had to come up with technology as ways of getting them in and getting them interested.. they seem to have more of a mindset for that of women'

They also offer a number of technology courses, including basic computer courses which includes literacy tuition, which attract men in particular. In some centres, the men would be aware that the basic computer course is connected with literacy tuition. In one particular outreach centre, the men would do one hour computers followed by one hour literacy. The students have the option to do more on literacy if they want. 'When they come in initially, I wouldn't have announced, well that the reason we're doing this is because some of you have literacy problems.' Now they do understand and if some of them want to spend more time with the literacy tutor they can.

'I found some people going into basic computer class, very basic and in some cases no knowledge of read/ write skills..I found that they were typing up with two fingers and they didn't realise what they were typing. They didn't know what they were actually printing. They weren't communicating with the paper.. It's much better now that they can go in and know what they're doing'

Students vary in their literacy level and this impacts on their entry to computer classes. Some students can only recognise the alphabet, they would have low literacy levels. In one centre in the North-west, students are attending literacy scheme for occupational therapy reasons – they may have had a head injury and need to relearn how to read etc..

There is currently a lot of liaison with state agencies, such as NAHB Headways. 'We all try to form small partnerships'. Headways Ireland is based in Guirtn, and patients with head injuries or mental disorders attend this centre. The literacy scheme makes individual assessment and tries to form groups at tea breaks. At present, one of the patients is helping to set-up a library. He chooses a book and reads it as part of the story with a discussion afterwards each week – this encourages the students to return, encourages them to be interested in learning to read, increases the motivation, and overall attendance at the meetings is improved.

The centre is also forging links with VTOS, BTEI, Career Guidance Counsellor at school, School Liaison services – they are trying to start a forum to discuss progression routes and trying to eliminate the dependency culture and progress students onto part-time formal educational courses, such as the Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate or other adult courses.

'The hidden agenda is getting rid of the dependency culture. This is the big problem that we have.'

'You bring people in and some of them just come themselves, some are recruited.. we don't throw the baby out with the bath water,.. while you have them in you try to progress them on to do part-time further education... they might do their JC, their LC or then go on to a mature students course.. So there is a progression route, which wasn't there.'

They also network in the surrounding area with educational and community development groups. They meet new groups that are formed and offer to do a Literacy Awareness group, that will explain to them how to identify those with low levels of literacy, how to refer them to the literacy service and where to refer them to within the literacy scheme.

They also work with the community employment (CE) Scheme, with FAS. They meet with the FAS supervisors and promote the literacy service. Some CE supervisors attend a literacy training scheme, where they get the statistics etc. They can do a literacy tutor training course which is available for free through the VEC.

The crèche in the portacabin is used for those students who are in community education. A lot of those who work in childcare have literacy problems, the Centre7 crèche supervisor has completed the literacy training course. The supervisors intend to help the girls with any projects they have to do for their childcare courses.

There are problems with integration of the services provided within a socio-educational context. Principals need to be included, including career guidance counsellors, in any meetings/ decisions that are made. Many referrals come from counsellors in the region. It's a reciprocal relationship, the literacy service make referrals to the counsellors as well.

‘ There are a lot of psychologically damaged people that actually come into the literacy schemes’.

Students with low literacy levels often present with a series of health problems, for example they may not be able to see – need glasses. They may have challenging behaviour, in which case they would be referred to Guirtin. If under 18, they are not really supposed to be turned away even though it is an adult literacy service.

‘if they have challenging behaviour.. you can refer them to Guirtin..’

‘If a young fella comes in here that maybe his reading/ writing skills might not be bad.. but might be interested into an apprenticeship... we can move him into a FAS training course or CDVEC, or maybe ring up one of the Youthreach.’

The programmes offered in Centre7 include English (FETAC/ JC or LC), similar for Maths, ‘Preparation for Work’, which is a 9 hour course that teaches them how to apply for a job, write a CV etc, that is FETAC certified. They also have an ‘Arts and Craft’ course, which is effectively literacy through personal development. The students learn basic literacy and numeracy skills by completing worksheets on measuring canvas, mixing colours etc. whilst creating a piece of art/ craft. It’s a social gathering ‘so we make room for a break.. try and have a longer break than normal, so that people can interact with one another’.

One activity ‘Storysacks’ is based on a book called ‘Clotty Malotti’, which was a book developed by the traveller movement for children. The literacy learners read the story and create props to match the story. The materials are handed over to a children’s library. ‘The hidden agenda of these courses is to get people that we can refer.. what we have done, the people that we have identified that don’t have a literacy problem are moved on to the leisure/ pleasure courses in community education’.

‘The mention of art is a huge attraction.. you don’t necessarily get the people you are looking for.. so the first thing you do is have an assessment’

The scheme re-directs any learners who don’t have literacy problems into other schemes.

In the introductory basic computing course, the literacy students learn how to switch on a computer and recognise the basic computer components. They can then progress to learning keyboard skills in Word and complete the FETAC foundation computer literacy course. The scheme had 250 students in Centre7 and 500 in outreach facility taking FETAC foundation course.

An example of how this might work, is that they may use the NALA Read/ Write/Now workbooks for letter writing in a 1:1 setting and then they would shown how to type up this letter in computers and print it out and insert it into a portfolio that would eventually be submitted to FETAC. Some students don’t opt to do FETAC (4 out of 12 in some cases)

‘pps numbers are people’s personal identification which is need to register for FETAC and JC and LC’.

At present, students are requested to submit their pps numbers to register for FETAC exams. This makes them traceable and does put some students off progressing to

FETAC. This is also required for Junior Cert/ Leaving Cert. Could talk with Dymphna McCarthy at the CDU in Sundrive Road to find out why their date of birth and pps is necessary.. Many are afraid their details will be passed onto the Social Welfare. ‘..big brother is there to take all the information about you and some people are really very squirmish about giving their details and I don’t blame them’.

Also if they change centres it causes huge confusion.

‘Students for FETAC exams, collect the details, collect the names but It’s a nightmare.. some people just do not want to give it, and if they don’t give it.. they can’t do the exam... they have to give their date of birth and their pps..’

The other computer courses on offer are the Foundation IT course at Level 1 FETAC. However different funding is used to fund students taking ECDL or Level 2 FETAC, as it’s seen as outside the normal funding for literacy schemes. The additional funding is sourced from community hours, the DES will not fund the centre to provide ECDL training.

The centre uses software, some examples include ‘Let’s Start Programs’ and ‘a very good one, it comes with tapes, It could be You’.

One community based locally allows the literacy scheme to use their laptop computers, they have one set of computers. ‘We give the tutoring hours for adult learners’

Problems with existing software.

‘For our service, the software is not basic enough’

There is a good grammar package, it gives you options, it’s like a quiz, does present and past tense’

Software is not basic enough for adults, tends to be more useful for people who have been with the literacy scheme for a year that ‘would have the confidence to use it’. Students who present with eye-sight or migranes can have problems with computers. Health problems around computers force tutors to ask questions such as does anyone have ‘do you suffer with tennis elbow’ or ‘do you suffer from migraine’.. Also there is the Health and Safety aspect, such as anti-glare screens and suitable chair etc. Tutors are briefed on health and safety procedures.

Some of the centres have the Internet. Internet usage is always supervised. In one outreach facility, there is just one machine connected to Internet, but the students do have access to it at the digital hub. ‘Nobody uses it without supervision’.

In programmes offering Internet access, the students are shown how to use online encyclopedias/ dictionary. Last year, students with a ‘mild disability’ booked a holiday online to Gran Canaria. They had a savings club, where they logged the names of those who wanted to go and went through the whole procedure themselves, including the online booking. They were supervised whilst banking etc.

‘they booked it online, they looked at hotels etc’

A group from Centre7 went away for a weekend to write a book, a thriller. It's going to be used as a workbook as well. They stayed two nights and each wrote a chapter. The whole trip was booked by them online in advance.

The students have also entered Art's competitions, sketching, watercolours, using oils etc.. done through all the VEC colleges.. there were 3 winners in the area this year??? Generates interest..

For FETAC modules, such as Communication, the students download the module descriptors from the Internet and fill out the forms. They also learn how to fill out forms for licenses/ passport forms etc are downloaded from the Internet to fill out.

The students have used NALA literacytools website. They have used it for reading and grammar at two centres, not necessarily Centre7. The tutors make up workbooks to go with web-site. The web-site isn't simple enough. 'I still feel it very hard.. I'm making up my own workbooks.. I think in some cases they don't make things simple enough'

Coordinator7 feels that it's better to use the Internet as a group project, as it creates a good group dynamic and takes the fear out of it for the individual student. Coordinator7 feels that the integration of the Internet would be 'better as a group project, because they all have a say in it.. It's important that they support each other when they use it, it takes the fear out of it when there is gang of them..4/5 of them around it.. creates a dynamic in the room'

Coordinator7 also feels that current policy of Department of Community and Family Affairs Social Welfare to push 1 in 3 back into education isn't working. They want them off their books. 'it's blackmail to make them come.. when people are forced to do something you don't genuinely get the best out of them'

At present, group tutors can't be employed unless they have completed the WIT/NALA literacy methodologies diploma in adult literacy. Also time management is a big thing as it is run on a voluntary basis.

NALA training is not meant for anyone who isn't full-time in attendance.

'Look for something that is user-friendly for starters and simplistic.. I would then look at the different levels that people here are at.. some of them been here a year and someone only starting and then would make up my mind whether it was good and useful for them'.

Software is often sent into the centres. The evaluation process is that the software is normally given to a colleague and the support person, as well as to students and a tutor, including the ALO. They have a meeting once a month with tutors and students and school liaison officers, psychological services and this may be discussed after main business completed. They have a recent report on the strengths and weaknesses of their services (to be forwarded to me).

They mostly want to find out if it's user-friendly, if it has a number of levels through which students can progress, if their progression can be monitored. Also how it can be used? Can the material be printed out? Could it help with an exercise book?

The strengths and weaknesses of the scheme:

At present not all the rooms are accessible/ issues with logistics. In Centre7, the 20 computers are nearly obsolete and they have to use the adult education room, which is upstairs in the post-primary school. This can be off-putting for adults.

They have dial-up access to the Internet in both the office and at a local post-primary school. However they must ask when they can use the Internet. A lot of the non-nationals want to use email facilities, which can be a problem.

'got to ask the AEO if you can use the Internet and when you switch it off'

In Centre7 adult learning scheme there are 400 (250 students back in 2001)

Back to the issue of quantity vs. quality. 'We're hoping to go for more quality.. we're hoping to return to the grassroots literacy.. become very wieldy.. a lot of students can only come during the day.. a lot of the tutors can only do the night..'

They have a crèche in Centre7. Non-nationals demand their rights, the crèche is full of foreign nationals. Coordinator7 would prefer to see a balance in favour of Irish nationality. The Irish do not seem to see the value in education.

In Centre7 there are 400 adult learners of which there are 50 non-nationals.

In one outreach centre there are 200 non national and 100 national students, non-nationals are referred from Sporaish and Beliskien (which transports them to centre). Non-nationals want ESOL mainly, and they are not particularly interested in computers. 'One student uses the Internet to learn about materials..' FAS sends up migrant workers (Russians/ Latvians/ Poles) because they can't get a job without learning English. 'If you teach them basic English.. then you don't see them once they get a few words.. FAS should be providing classes for them'

Some of the other programmes on offer by the centre, include gardening which is popular with those learners with challenging behaviour. The gardening course is FETAC certified. They would be given worksheets to complete whilst planting in a pot or using a trowel. They learn numeracy by measuring quantities of soil and pricing materials, as well as literacy.

The programme 'Living in a Diverse Society', informs students of their rights, voting. Multicultural living. CSPE leads to Junior Cert qualification, includes aspects of personal development, gets them to demand more and teaches them how to live in a civil society. They also have a creative writing course, they did a book on student writings (have a copy).

The future of technology in literacy education: Coordinator7 feels that technology more popular with the younger student. Technology is here to stay, such as computers/ text/ phone etc all around/. 'Text is creating a language all of it's own and you can't write like that' For older people it may not be that useful, they would need access to it at home. For elderly people it could be like TV at some point in future,

links to police or chat-rooms may prove to be very useful –‘could be company for somebody’.

Type: Meeting at Centre8 Adult Basic Education Learning Centre

Date: 20th January 2005 11.30-1:20

Duration: 1 hour 40 mins

Participant/s: ALO & Learning Support Tutor

Mode: Hand-written notes/ taped

Format: Interview

Met with Coordinator8, who is the adult literacy organiser in Centre8. Tutor8 is the Adult Learning Support Service person. She also tutors and develops materials for adult literacy classes.

Also one tutor is involved in Adult Education, as the Technology Development Officer in Centre8 Adult Learning Centre. He procures IT equipment and upgrades equipment and software. Particularly involved in integration of technology in maths. There is an Open Learning Centre, where students can meet on a 1:1 basis. They have access to the Learn Direct through the open learning service. This is linked to Adult Learning, rather than adult literacy.

Centre8 VEC has a website

The centre offers Adult Basic Education, about 102 students are in 1:1 tuition and the remainder are in group tuition. The services on offer are reading and writing classes, some of the courses are Accredited (such as Equal Skills/ or FETAC Foundation levels – Communications/ Computer Literacy).

‘FETAC foundation, we get directed by the department now – not to go any higher than foundation level in terms of our accreditation.. look to BTEI and VTOS and others in terms of moving on..’

The AEO is looking the integration of all their programmes.

The accredited course usually feed into VTOS/ Youthreach courses. ECDL certification is offered in VTOS/ BTEI initiatives. Other courses are non-accredited.

There are two main VEC buildings in Centre8 city and several outreach venues.

Adult Education courses normally take place within the two main centres.

There are guidance counsellors on-site to guide the students towards progression.

‘There are very clear opportunities for progression for the students’

Youthreach is down stairs, with students 14-20. They now have their own literacy support person.

Those on literacy programmes can be supported to Leaving Certificate, some progress to BTEI, some to VTOS, occasional person who progress to Access courses to University level. They can do a year first where they do a taster of modules in the University. Some leave the service altogether.

What has been the greatest or significant change in your centre since 2001?

The most fundamental change has been the addition of core full-time staff and 1.5 Guidance service – everything flowered out from there. Also the Budget has increased.

The themed literacy programmes, which involve learning literacy through cooking and driving theory have been successful.

‘The IT dimension has expanded... the IT provision is less hap-hazard’

In terms of IT, there has been a more strategic approach to the development of IT at the centre. There are Beginner Computer classes, that last up to 15 weeks. FETAC certified courses (Foundation) are also available. EqualSkills service has been good. The Open Learning Centre has also been introduced, there is a facilitator present, not a huge take-up as many students have computers at home.

‘Then we have an Open Learning Centre where people can come and practice their skills if they don’t have access to a computer at home.’

The profile of students attending the centre are as follows, 34 non-nationals (asylum seekers/ refugees), not currently taking migrant workers – developing a policy around migrant workers at present, 565 nationals across centres in Centre8 city accessing from one up to 9 hour literacy service. 197 national are in-house at this centre.

We have improved way of capturing numbers, keeping a database of anyone registering with the service.

There are improved tracking mechanisms. Resource worker is trying to get data from the outreach centres, this can be difficult to get.

The main issues are monitoring and progression.

197 students are in-house at this centre.

The VEC have improved guidance counselling service. Counsellors spend half-time in outreach centres in different communities in the last couple of years. Guidance service is better linked with the ALSS, now with AEGS rather than literacy.. Adult Education Guidance Service.

The AEO, Adult Education Officer, is very conscious of the importance of guidance service, assigned guidance to literacy service, 6 days per week contact directly with the literacy service outside of AEGS. Participants can meet up at the end of the year, a lot of the students take up options such as personal development.

Before 1998, there was a total reliance on volunteerism, a lot of effort involved in the management of this service.

‘We are in the happy position of getting a lot through phone-calls’ Coordinator8 The TV programme Read/ Write/ Now has also been useful in raising awareness.

They advertise programmes using word-of-mouth/ phone calls. They also network with agencies such as FAS, Social Welfare, LES to build awareness.

‘All FAS supervisors .. are very tuned into this’

Literacy is on everyone’s agenda, there is a recognised need for literacy tuition.

Students do an initial assessment of about 1.5 hours.

Volunteer – There was an over reliance on volunteerism in the past. They haven’t trained any new volunteers in the last year or two, and don’t ask them about their computer skills levels. They have offered computer software training to tutors in the last few years in ‘It could be You’, ‘Superspell’ and a number of other computer programmes – list supplied. They had a demonstration and then got the opportunity to practice on software.

They have just upgraded computers at this centre. They have 11 with Internet Access. They have had broadband access for about a year. They use the Internet to access Equal Skills programmes.

Another tutor is involve in integrating maths and ICT. This programme ran across a lot of different programmes in the VEC, with students on VTOS, Youthreach and Prison Service. Some of the Adult Literacy Support Service personnel use numeracy?... He piloted a program with students and reported back on this – recognition of how to integrate IT into subject related areas, pool ideas and share them..

Using ICT as a tool: The older computers have been stripped down, and will be inserted into tuition rooms. There are one/two computers in smaller rooms, up to four in the bigger tutoring rooms. The students can use Word etc for presentation of their work on this stripped down computer. They hope to integrate the web...

NALA LiteracyTools website:

Centre8 was used to pilot the NALA website.

It's an Irish based website, with Irish experience. Some of the materials used on NALA literacy tools website was based on a literacy resource called 'Lifelines' that was developed by CLVEC Literacy service.

On the website tour, the synchronised voice is off-putting for adult, pity they didn't use an Irish accent.

There needs to be level 2/3 reading.

The website is mainly text-based, which is difficult for students who can't read text.

Also you have scroll-up and scroll-down to read text on screen.

It is easier to check your answers and have another go at trying it again (try again) and that has been integrated since then.

A lot of the scenarios aren't all that attractive or interesting,.

The website is not suitable for basic learners.

The scenarios on offer are not that attractive.

Hadn't noticed that the Read/ Write/ Now website is also available.

Read/Write/Now – link from NALA Literacy tools website to Read/ Write /Now

There was a tutor and a learner from Centre8 VEC featured in one of the series.

'Very encouraging for our students'

A few calls have come through from TV- a few would have said that they their number from NALA after watching Read/ Write/Now. They do use the Video/ DVD format in class. 'Now that Read/ Write/ Now is on the web, I would be very interested(now that's its on the website) in showing the programme that featured our learner.. because I told them about it and they were very excited by it'.

They feel that the quality of the program has improved over the years, aspects such as the life-story aspect is very popular, however not sure about the learning value from the program, certainly increases awareness of the literacy schemes. 'I think they like the life-story of the learner' 'Just because people watch it and are interested in it, doesn't mean they learn it' Coordinator8 They particularly like when the life story

starts with a learner explaining what level they started at and where they're at now and how long it took them to get there. 'It's really like an advertisement for the literacy service'

It could be You! (Tutor8)

CLVEC were early users of this software, they bought 14-20 packages.

'It is an Irish voice on it and is designed for adults', both of which were recognised needs in the literacy software at the time. There are also a range of media included from tapes/ CD/ Books and worksheets. They have used it and continue to use it.

There are several aspects that they would love to change, such as the size of the font on the CD is too small to see, size 12 font, the programme also only takes up 2/3 of the computer screen. 'A lot of our learners have issues with sight, ... and it (type-face) looks to be a 12, whereas if it was much larger it would make it more legible and usable by our learners'.

In addition, the size of the pictures are so small that you can't make some of them out. A lot of the pictures are so small that the students start trying to guess what's in the pictures.

Tutor8

The lighting in pictures is a problem, the contrast needs to be improved.

There is very little in it for basic learners, a little on alphabet work, it needs to be more basic. 'It's aimed at level 2 or 3 readers' 'Need something on a more basic level'.

The context is still current. The pictures in the actual books themselves look plasticine, need pictures of real people. This software is used a lot by tutors in home and the community.

'The pictures in the actual books themselves are almost like plasticine-type figures. I think it would have been lovely to have pictures of real people, as these are adults and they are often very sensitive about the materials that you've produced and you've got to work hard at making sure their dignity or your respect for them doesn't look like it's been compromised by the materials that you're working with.'

It's used a lot by tutors both in-house and in communities.

'It would be fantastic to take the next step and work the last few things out.'

The topic is very good, the idea of doing the lotto, and the Irish accent. Tutor8 interested in contributing to a 2nd edition of this software,

Coordinator8

There is a stigma attached to literacy. She feels strongly about the de-stigmatisation of those who have literacy difficulties. She feels that the word 'literacy' should be not be avoided, but that the word 'illiteracies' should be removed. 'WE should not avoid the use of the word 'literacy'.. but still be sensitive with learners.. it has connotations with the word illiteracy', we should get rid of that word as there's no such thing.' We need to be mindful of letting learners hear the word at national platforms, maybe not in the classroom.

Learners get in touch themselves or else a referral agent gets in touch about someone who has literacy difficulties. Usually it's a phone call, an appointment is made, it's explained to them that there is a 1- 1.5 hour informal assessment, where they have a

few exercises to do at the end. Most literacy learners present with a huge thing about spelling.

For those that want to do Basic Computing courses, their literacy levels are assessed. There is no point in having people with high literacy levels accessing free computer courses. 'Difficult to know what to say, as it is the new literacy.. but we have to focus on the dis-advantaged adult'.

Technology will play a huge part in literacy education. Tutor8 and two other tutors in CLVEC have developed a literacy pack to be used with Word. It can be used for those contemplating Level one. The centre is going to run training on this for all tutors. There is more focus on computing than reading and writing in some centres, and the purpose of this course is to target the outreach tutors who are focusing on computers not on literacy.

The role of NALA is to co-ordinate, campaign and develop literacy at a national level. ALOA, Adult Literacy Organisers Association, started in 1999 is an organisation that promotes the work of ALO's. ... ALOA has influence on policy formation, with more money more people are getting interested..political perspective.. Irish Vocational Association very interested now in work being done in literacy. ALOA worked with the TUI on benchmarking, members of the Executive are on sub-groups, such as National Adult Literacy Implementation Group (NALIG) now called the Advisory group There were also on Advisory groups that looked at recommendations in the White Paper and commented on recommendations/ Guidelines. There are also members on the Irish Vocational Association (IVA) and ESOL group, and in the NALA Training Group. They also have regional meetings.

Intensive literacy Programme, involves 1.5hours for literacy and 1.5 hours of computing. They discovered that this was better with level 2 or level 3 readers rather than level 1. The learners usually want to learn how to use computers, Internet or email. Level 1 learners can't read, variety of abilities in class, have to change the pace..

DES/VEC support programmes based on EU funding. Level 1 know alphabet but... They don't look at the developmental stages.. progression.. evaluation.. programme plans improvement.

Integrating Literacy activities using the computer is a programme where training is given to in-house staff in March/ outreach staff in April. The pack will be released in April 2005. There is alphabet, greeting cards and days of the week. The learners may create greeting cards in-class and then do a number of exercises on the computer, they can print off these activities and use as workbook. It is hoped that this programme will address issue of literacy not being done in outreach centres.

www.A+ Maths.com is an American website that is not childlike, and involves using computers as a tool, even though it is designed for children.

In one outreach facility, level 1 learners use computer resources to parallel what's being done in class. 'If they are working on the alphabet, then I'll work on the alphabet..' This is a good model, working on literacy primarily, possibly with those who have learning difficulties and can tailor the level for particular students.

'Learner-centred at its best' Coordinator8

Literacy levels in Ireland

It's impossible to measure literacy on a doorstep, How well speak or read?

Personal Development in the broadest sense, organising classes, necessary to break-down into groups, progression?

Not accredited, then the students have an Individual Learning Plan. This is only in its infancy at the VEC. Tutor sits with learner and sets goals for six weeks, each learner has his/ her own learning plan. Students sign off after 6 weeks, some items on plan may be on-going, some may be completed. The goals are small enough to be achievable over a six-week period. They enhance motivation and encourage the learner. It's being used in Computers, but it's more difficult as computer courses tend to be prescribed. Learners do love the IEP, find it affirming.

Type: Meeting at Centre9 Adult Basic Education Learning Centre

Date: 20th January 2005 2.15-3:45

Duration: 1 hour 30 mins

Participant/s: ALO Coordinator9

Mode: Hand-written notes/ taped

Format: Interview

Met with Coordinator9 at Centre9.

There are 6 outreach centres altogether, in one town there is a youth workshop, in another they deal with students with a mental disability.

They have a network of service providers such as FAS, ADM, Social Welfare, Health Clinics, Probation Service and Youth services that act as a referral service for the literacy service.

The literacy tuition on offer can facilitate 1:1 tuition or group tuition. In terms of progression, the literacy service in this county see themselves as supporting what's happening within other education centres. They provide training for tutors on how to integrate literacy tuition as part of 'normal' delivery in other education centres. 'rather than saying to them you have to go out for English for an hour' They provide short-term support for students in VTOS with low literacy levels and also raise awareness amongst VTOS tutors of literacy issues. They also provide paid tutors to work with VTOS students who have low literacy levels. In addition, they have a volunteer tutor service.

'if it were a manual program, then the literacy service would provide a tutor as part of the literacy service'.

The FAS Return to Education hasn't 'got off the ground' yet in North of this county. This is a rural area. The focus of the Return to Education programme is not realistic given the age profile of the people they are attracting, better to re-focus it for people in their 50's to 60's and call it the 'Preparing for Retirement'.

Those involve in the Community Employment (CE)schemes are entitled to up to six to eight hours a week of basic education, including literacy and numeracy and computers and job-seeking skills. This take-up of Basic Education from CE schemes depend on the top-level FAS personnel involved and their relationship with the VEC, and then the supervisors within the FAS scheme need to be aware. The full support and advocacy of FAS supervisors is needed, otherwise they won't push it enough to make it work. Issues such as childcare agencies being unwilling to let students go are often put forward as barriers to participation in basic education schemes. The profile of people accessing CE schemes used to be Higher Educated younger people, however now the level of literacy amongst those who sign up with CE schemes is much higher, trying to tap in to help these people.

'What's the point of learning this, I'm not going to get a job'.

In North of this County there are 300+ students, approximately 50% are active students, a percentage are 'on hold' (taking time out from a few weeks to a year or two) and a percentage are pending (trying to match up with tutor or a group of students). There is good flexibility in the scheme to allow 'time out' and completion

of modules on FETAC over a longer period of time, for example for some students it can take 7 years to complete FETAC foundation maths or ECDL.

‘A student who did Foundation FETAC maths and it took her seven years, now she an absolute genius.. she has done the ECDL.. she had so many ups and downs, illness herself, with the children.. if the scheme hadn’t been there to pick up every time she came back, .. she’d have thrown in the towel.’ Need flexibility in the scheme!

There are not as many non-nationals in the scheme, asylum seekers or refugees. In one outreach centre, they offer ESOL in residential services to a mixture of non-nations, from Africans with a higher education, to Central Europeans with less education. Typically Romanians would have no schooling, Latvians would have 10 years schooling at least, as would Polish.

Migrant workers are seen as self-funding within this scheme.

For refugees that have been granted status and nationals, they can continue through to programmes such as the BTEI. The migrant workers tend to be self-funding. There are many challenges with the variety of cultures in classroom situation, mechanics of it means that maximum group size is 4, many work as individuals within groups due to cultural biases – analogy of the Dublin 4 person in a class with Traveller.

The ESOL groups are very keen on technology, the technology classes tend to be a great ‘leveller’, nobody seems to mind what group they have come from.

In One outreach centre, there is a café that is EU funded with computers that non-national and nationals can use. The students were transported down there once a week. They tend to access their own newspapers online, email family and generally browse the Internet. There are sufficient computers and they have a creche, ESOL students want facilities for child minding.

‘ESOL students are not going to go very far from their children’.

This can be a problem as having children nearby can be a distraction between genuine needs of having children in next room/ in people’s housing, and not being able to concentrate.

As part of the millennium initiative, the Area Development Manager (ADM) and the Town Community Network (NCN) got EU funding to provide a crèche facility??

ESOL is offered in Outreach Centre3, this ESOL group was combined with the Migrant workers group from Outreach Centre 4 to make it a viable group size. Migrant worker mix didn’t work, they had a different focus, wanted classes delivered in different way. ‘I want to learn spelling and grammar and I want to learn it the way we were taught in school. They wouldn’t like the relaxed way in which we (literacy schemes) offer tuition, and they wanted measurable outcome at the end of each session’. The Asylum seekers had a lot of trauma and baggage, so the ‘up in court every second week, group could go to pieces’. In Outreach Centre4 they had all the computers together, with a creche and canteen.

‘As educationalists, we tend to be the most backward as regards technology, I couldn’t believe how unadventurous the VEC as a body is.. we should be at the forefront (of technology) not behind it..’

In County VEC, the attitude towards technology has changed in the past few years; it's only in the last year or two that emails have been communicated from management to staff at coalface. Up to then, everything was by memo.

'They weren't taking it on board that it (technology) is a whole ethos or way of life if you like.. it's included in all of life whether you like it or not'

Administration is slow. Tend to have one or two innovative people that get things started. They would say that's a good idea but move no further than that.

This year will be the first year that the VEC launch their website , the literacy service will be mentioned on the website.

There is Internet access at head office. They have had broadband for at least a year in the office, One of the county towns was a pilot area for broadband.

There are 20 computers in the computer room at head office, there are also computer rooms in the outreach centres. Outreach centre one has the smallest facilities, as the centre is based in a gate lodge in a local College. There are 2 computers there with access to laptops. In outreach centre two, the literacy service is based in the Community College. There is a Lifelong Learning centre set-up there as well. There are 12 computers in the main computer rooms, with 6 laptops available. The focus is 'work-based learning'. They also have limited access to the computer room at a nearby school. In Outreach Centre three, there is a computer in the office. In Outreach centre 4, they have their own computer room due to an millennium initiative. In Outreach Centre 5, they have two computers of their own and access to shared computer facilities.

Most students do FETAC Foundation or Level 1 modules (as these are more flexible), some do Junior or Leaving Certificate or progress to other schemes.

'The department are trying to pull any level above level 1'

'Literacy schemes shouldn't progress to Leaving Certificate'

'Students mightn't be ready to do to night-class at LC level, need an awful lot of support, could take 7 years'. Problems with the existing mainstream education service is that it's rigid(Sept to June), disciplined and lacks flexibility.

You have to be available for exams on particular days.

'I can see the department's point on this.. EU funding – what's literacy and what isn't literacy?- should you be delivering LC and beyond if it's a literacy scheme'

'Some students want a Leaving Certificate'.

The tutors encourage students to become familiar with computers, 'to become comfortable with them and realise that they aren't frightening' so at least some part of each class involves computers. In one town group, the first hour is a core literacy class and the 2nd hour is computers. This group consists of individual all of who were formerly in 1:1 tuition but who were ready to move into a group learning situation.

'It can be very hard to get a group together that can meet at the same time in a particular place'

The stigma of literacy is still an issue. One example is a man who has been in 1:1 tuition for 2 years in one town and he lives in another town (he won't have tuition in the local area) and travels to another town for tuition.). His tutor needs to change, but he's very nervous of meeting a new tutor and he won't come back if he's forced into a group setting. His centre manager keeps saying he must be ready for a group. He only enters/ exits the literacy centre through a side door, and is 'not ready yet' to do groupwork. He may be ready for a group in September. Coordinator9 feels that 'we have to be sensitive.. couldn't believe that issues of confidentiality and lack of confidence is still there'.

Tutors can get sidetracked by administration, projects or VEC strategic planning, now lifelong learning.

'I found myself almost sliding into been lulled into being told that we are now into lifelong learning, everybody's doing it, all the students are ready for it.. what are you on about students having problems.. began to think I was old-fashioned..my bones were telling me that something not right.. students weren't ready to move out into open'.

Students voiced concerns re retention of confidentiality. Long-term students were confident, but were not ready to go into group tuition unless they knew the group. Management level don't recognise this, they don't have the 'gut feeling' around literacy, they don't understand huge issues around confidentiality that students expect.

Students are given certificates but most don't want any sort of publicity even if it's ECDL.

Some students have accessed the Internet, one in particular was very interested in Limosine cattle, he was thrilled to bits when he got information on the Web, improved his reading level as he would spend hours reading material online. Other students can take or leave using the Internet.

Students generally write a piece of text, then type it up using Word. When they see it printed off it makes a huge difference. A group of students went to a retreat centre for a week to write a book. After the retreat centre, the anthology of student writings, focused on Irish writers and poetry/ creative writing. In total there was 13-15 students. The centre has been doing weekends like this for about 10 years, started with weekends where the first night would provide students with an opportunity to gel, and now have overnight trips.

The focus this year in the retreat centre was to set-up a proper student organisation, one student is already on the NALA executive. There is difficulty in getting students to meet to discuss their views. They rented out lodges at a nearby Hotel.

Generally students have 2 hour weekly group sessions, or 1 hour 1:1 sessions. The 2 full-day sessions would enable the participants to complete 3 months worth of work. The students would support each other, they see each other as characters other than in-class. Their confidence levels quadruples on this 'away' trips, and their personal development skills improve.

The biggest barrier to progress in literacy tuition is personal development skills, learning will happen if their self-confidence is improved. They come home on such a high after the weekend trips.

Adults can participate in workplace literacy schemes. Nine out of 10 people are now in part-time or full-time employment. They are willing to send their staff on a computer training course but not literacy. Students tend to hide their literacy problems from employers, as there is generally a lack of awareness about literacy problems amongst employers and they don't see the value of literacy tuition. In the county councils, some supervisors 'can't afford to let him go for 4 hours tuition a week because they have a job to do,.. but they would let them off to do a 4-hour forklift driving course'. One person, who is currently involved in a workplace literacy project, has reported back positively on the Basic Skills programme, even where the skills are not used 'hands-on' in the job. Employers need proof that it will work for them.

'It could be You' Software

It's a pity there isn't more software like 'It could be You'. 'I wish there were more (software) like it.. it's brilliant, it's great'. It's brilliant, uses Irish language? (sayings), there are three stages beginner, middle and advanced. There are a huge variety of ways in which it can be integrated. There is a work-book, which can be used with or without the CD. It's fully interactive. It's very user-friendly. It's easy for the tutor to learn how to use it and easy for the individual. The mouse is all that's required to 'drag and drop'. There's a voice-over on it, so you don't have to know how to read everything on-screen. It also allows the user plenty of options. The feedback is good, not negative – Try Again. The story is nice, it's a great talking point, you can bring up discussion or debate on anti-gambling or squandering your salary. 'Every one will have an opinion on it (topic)'. Across the board, this software is popular, it's got tapes as well, which haven't really been used by students at this centre (haven't needed to use the tapes).

There is also some good software available from PrimED. This software is really focused at the 10-16 year old group and is school focused. However some of the topics are fine, like the rainforest or electricity. It's not too childish and the students tend to get fascinated with trying to get around it.

Kurweil – Speaking Software isn't used widely, just one or two tutors with students who have a disability or language difficulty.

When tutors start at the centre, Coordinator9 does ask if the volunteer tutor has computer skills but this has no bearing on uptake. Coordinator9 does feel that it is good for all tutors to have computer literacy skills, as part of the program does integrate computers.

Students join in computer classes and some tutors don't realise that they need to slow down a bit. Some students use computers in their job. Some workplaces like in Teagasc they may not be aware that the reading level is weak. They may be slow picking up the computer skills because of their low literacy levels.

NALA Literacy tools

One or two tutors have used it and liked it.

She also feels that there is a need for both DVD software and Internet based programs.

Coordinator9 feels that they need to be level 2 at Reading to use the Internet for email, searching, etc at work. One retired group used email to keep in touch with their children and haven't stopped emailing since. They also use digital cameras for digital photography of their children and send them off by email to relatives.

Example: Lorry driver has learned (from a hand-held computer screen in his cab) what buttons to press on various screens that he would have to interact with, he can read but his comprehension is weak. His reading level would still be weak for the Internet but if you give him the instructions, 'press this button, that button', then he will be able to get where he needs to.

'the reading level tends to be quite high for any of the stuff that I would be looking for (on the Internet) you have to be fairly on the ball to follow it through.. it's okay to search for something, you get a huge chunk of information and you don't quite know where to go from there.. that can be a bit daunting (for the literacy student)'

A student's reading level can be quite high, but he/ she would need to be on the ball to read everything. Generally once they know the name of the website, they follow topic headings.

Coordinator9 would like to see online technologies being used to enhance distance learning particularly in a rural area. Some students would have access from computers available at literacy 'outlets'. Otherwise a mobile unit using laptops could be used. Powerpoint software becoming quite popular with tutors and students.

Thinking of using technology to increase accessibility in rural areas.

'What's the use of technology, if you can't access it.. in a rural area, it is hard to reach people..there's a lot of people(with low literacy levels) that we are not reaching'

In the workplace literacy scheme are getting a group of young and old with low literacy levels. Some of these can progress to Youthreach, but only up to 18/19 years of age. Many are highly intelligent but have low literacy levels.

Quite a few have basic skills and have been coping but there is a huge gap – not sure why they aren't accessing this service – the service may not have been available before in a way that suits them or they haven't known that they could access the service or they haven't had the confidence to take it further. Many students appear to be missing the basic building blocks of vocabulary and grammar. They can read and write but not well –they are a bit above the basic literacy program i.e. above Level 2 but below Junior or Leaving Certificate level in English.

'They don't appear to have learn the strategies to deal with sentence formations'.

'They don't have a sense of.. the language'

' I don't think that the providers/ funders are aware of this problem or deficiency in the existing system'

They don't have the skills to determine when a passage 'reads right' or 'feels right'. The age-profile of people with this problem is right across the age spectrum. Health and Safety documentation has become a huge challenge for many of these people in

the workplace – quite often they will be missing on the day the ‘written’ test comes up. They don’t have the fluency or the confidence to tackle this problem.

Type: Meeting at Centre10 Adult Basic Education Learning Centre

Date: 27th January 2005 2.15-3:45

Duration: 1 hour

Participant/s: ALO Coordinator10

Mode: Hand-written notes/ taped

Format: Interview

Coordinator10 works with students mostly as ALO in the West Centre10 area, she is the ICT co-ordinator and trains tutors. She makes sure that the tutors have the skills to prepare for class and deliver computers in-class.

The Quality Framework.. Training needs analysis required, this was done informally before.' As part of the Quality Framework, we are doing a training needs analysis of all out tutors in the area of ICT.. it's a work in progress.. would have done it informally before'

Many volunteer tutors within scheme. They would have been asked openly at the training day if they had IT skills.

'if you asked the tutors.. Have you IT.. they would say yes.. it(their computer skills) was very work oriented, as opposed to the packages we would have here'

The package that they would use is design specifically for work, so we find that they need training to be able to deliver it at FETAC level 1.

Most students want to do FETAC level 1 Computers, younger people tend to have better skills than older people.

The younger tutors would tend to have better IT skills, their families would have grown up and they have come out of the home to do some volunteer work.

Learners interested when computers integrated with literacy education, they see it as an incentive. The promotional materials promote 'Basic English through computers'. 'We don't want people coming forward who just want basic IT training, because that's not what we do... the literacy difficulty has to be there'

Students progress to FETAC Foundation level computers Literacy. For those that are interested and capable they can progress to FETAC Level 1 in Computer Applications and IT, which are two different modules. FETAC Level 1 is almost as high as ECDL. Those interested in progressing to FETAC Level 2 or ECDL must go the Centre10 College of Further Education or elsewhere.

'At Level 1, the standard is so close (to ECDL) and there is so much emphasis here on people learning at their own pace, by the time they actually complete Level 1, they know it.. not time limited.... They should be very confident joining any group that they have the skills to do.. the bit extra that's asked of them'

They shouldn't have a problem transferring into IT courses outside of the literacy centre, if they go into courses other than IT the literacy centre offers support if someone feels that they need it.

At FETAC Level 1, students learn at their own pace, those that are very confident progress to ECDL, there are no problems with progression to IT. The centre continues to offer support to their students if they feel they need it.

Current programmes on offer at Centre10 Basic Learning scheme include: Basic English through Computers – they use software like ‘It could be you’, ‘Starspell’, and ‘Issues in English’ on this programme. Issues in English is an excellent package. They also offer FETAC Foundation and Level 1 in Computer Literacy, and IT.

The profile of students attending the centre include migrant workers, whose main priority is Communication skills – the centre hopes to offer technology to this group soon, they come for Communication Skills. Generally the migrant workers don’t have a literacy problem in their own language. The literacy service offers all the ESOL classes to asylum seekers/ refugees and migrant workers. Since the Eastern Block opening, many more students attending centre, it’s difficult for them to cope.

There are approximately 700 Irish and foreign nationals county wide accessing the literacy scheme. There is an Intensive Literacy programme.

‘As much work is done at the desk first’

Technology is integrated into the literacy program in a number of ways. Firstly, a student could write a letter in class and work through some of his literacy issues. Then they would type it up on computer using Word, and use the spellcheck to check spelling etc. They could also use dedicated software to test their comprehension, or to do cloze exercises or spelling and reading.

‘All the things that they would do that is paper based is also available to them as software’

Finally they could use the Internet. Generally they would be given an introduction in how to use the Internet. The more experienced student would do IT level 1 FETAC: which includes learning how to email/ use the Internet, how to access educational sites, newspapers related to what they are discussing in-class and perhaps learn how to book a holiday online.

Tutors also have access to technology, which they can use to prepare or research resources offline or online. Tutors would access NALA Literacytools or BBC Skillswise to look for ideas or materials. They use it to design their own worksheets. The tutors use information gathered to design their own materials.

The Centre10 literacy centre have their own website, it highlights the programs on offer, contains a resource directory with sample worksheets, and has links to NALA website and Centre10 VEC website. It is a relatively new design.

‘Feel that there’s quite a lot on their resource directory and may want to remove some and put up more worksheets’

At present they do have an ISDN connection, but they are moving to broadband. The literacy outreach centre has broadband, it’s a relatively new addition to the centre. There are two computer rooms, with eight computers in each room. There is one computer room in this outreach centre with eight computers in it, although there are also laptops in the tutorial rooms.

The literacy service in Centre10 has developed so much in the last few years. There isn't the same stigma attached to literacy tuition. Many students go straight into groups. The intensive literacy program has been a great way forward for the literacy service. The usual literacy is only 1 hour per week, the intensive literacy programme is 10 hours per week. Students come from the Return to Education scheme, via the Community Employment scheme which is managed by FAS. The Return to Learning initiative is organised by the County Councils and is 4 hours per week for 20 weeks. The BTEI involves 9-10 hours of tuition per week.

'Still have people who want the 1:1 tuition, but they are fewer than they were'

CE participants profile has changed 'you're talking about the ordinary man on the street now'.

CE participants would have very basic literacy levels, however the age profile does vary, can also have a spectrum of abilities. It is a very similar experience with participants from the County Council RTL scheme, the age group and literacy levels is varied. The BTEI scheme is a voluntary scheme, and participants don't lose their social welfare entitlements whilst in tuition - 'this is an incentive'.

With FAS, cost is a factor, some parts of the county the programme didn't run because of funding problems. However they do recognise the need for literacy tuition. The literacy service run a training programme for FAS supervisors, the supervisors know their own people so there is no stigma going to Centre10 for literacy tuition. 'The supervisors are quite aware of their own people, as it is a small rural area, .. and they would have a fair idea of who might need it (literacy tuition).. and they are very supportive.'

It could be you Software - Voice-over sounds funny,

Literacytools- Voice-over on Literacytools is a problem, tutors use the worksheets/ like the 'live' interaction

Maths software available- very American, so don't use them

Some of the tutors don't mind, there are some maths ones down there and they are very American orientated.. they don't use them.

The ones that are being used here are 'It could be You', 'Starspell', and 'Issues in English'. Literacytools is used as well.

Literacytools is both used live and the tutors download the worksheets. It would depend on what the tutor has planned for the evening.

Classes are only 2 hours, which results in a maximum of one hour on the Internet per week per tutor.

There are 80-90 voluntary tutors and 25 paid tutors(2-10 hours work per week)

In the intensive courses, they can do 3 hours of computers on a 9-10 hour course per week. They would make use of the Internet, particularly when they get to the stage of Level 1.

Technology is here to stay. Most students aren't aware of technology on entry to the literacy program. The majority of students come for help with literacy, and are gradually introduced to technology through programmes such as the 'Basic English through Computers'.

They have 125 tutors, of which 80 or 90 are volunteer tutors. The numbers accessing the service is increasing, this is putting pressure on staff and management. Only the ALO is permanent, everyone else is part-time.

The greatest change in the last four years has been the increase in numbers, they are all working more hours.

NALA Read/ Write/ Now

The NALA Read./ Write/ Now has raised awareness of literacy problems. The most recent course has taken an IT slant.

The work-books are excellent, they use it on the IT course. The video is used more than the DVD. Coordinator10 is aware that NALA Read/ Write/ Now is now available as a website but they are not using it at the centre.

'NALA are going very much towards the e-learning and IT, the integration of the two (literacy and IT.. there's an awful lot of development work in this area..'

Coordinator10 think it's useful for even those people who are particularly interested in this area as 'it's another means of learning.. it's different.. rather than sitting at a table with pen and paper, it introduces a new element to it(literacy tuition)'

Some of their students do have access to Internet at home, particular younger people or younger families with young children. 'Young children before (IT) literate very quickly,.. and they want to have some understanding of what they're doing'

The students with children want to know what their children are doing when they are on the Internet.

'What would have happened over the past few coming up to Christmas, they are considering buying a computer.. that they would have some knowledge of what a child is actually doing.. this is another reason why someone may be interested in computers'

Technically the centre serves anyone who is not in full-time education. For those students in Youthreach, some come into the service for tuition for the Driver Theory Test, the DVD is very popular,

The age profile in the centre is 16-60. The centre offers support to Youthreach students who have low literacy levels. Coordinator10 has travelled out to the Youthreach centre in the county (Youthreach has brought in the literacy tuition), with software for students to use.

One of the biggest changes has been the improved links with agencies, and a lot of work has gone into raising awareness of literacy issues and the service available. The Return the Education by FAS was the first programme, the Return to Learning is based on the FAS model and run by the County Council. Some people who should be

eligible for funding in BTEI are not getting it, and are losing out from the benefit of Intensive Literacy programmes. 'Someone in the home whose husband is working for a normal wage, they are not entitled for free tuition in BTEI, so they have to pay themselves.'

Type: Meeting at Centre11 Adult Basic Education Learning Centre

Date: 16th February 2005 9:30-10.20

Duration: 40 minutes

Participant/s: ALO Coordinator11

Mode: Hand-written notes/ taped

Format: Interview

Coordinator11 is the ALO, we met at the centre in Centre11.

They have a new computer room in Centre11, 10 computers recently installed there, with a data projector on the way. They used to rent accommodation in various IT centres around the town,... but now that they have their own facilities they can do a lot more.

The new computer facilities in the centre opened in the last few months, the connection to the Internet is still a dialup connection, all the computers are online, broadband not available yet.

In one outreach centre, they have a computer room with 16-20 computers and in another outreach centre they have a computer room with 12 computers. In the former, the adult education service has withdrawn from the centre so they now have better access to the computing facilities.

The number of students attending the literacy service is about the same as back in 2001. There are 450-500 students across the county, with 100 non-nationals in a serviced accommodation. At present they are reviewing the IT section at the serviced centre, most of the computers 'when we put them in first they were cannibalised from banks and other institutions'. Now trying to decide whether to get rid of them all and buy new computers. The number of foreign nationals has tailed off. The migrant workers, mostly Latvians, 'seem to be getting on fine and are not bothering with language tuition'. A year or two ago they would have had 20-30 students in a class. 'It seems that the paid classes look more attractive, they are not coming to the literacy (Service), they are coming to adult education and paying the 50 euro instead of free classes'.

They don't look for technology training when they come in for ESOL training, language more important, conversational aspect they are more interested in.

They do use the Andrews Award System and a few different distributors to a wide range of software.

Literacytools has just arrived on CD, i.e. the website is now on CD, 'they have sent out 60 of the CD's and want to see what the uptake on it would be'. This will be a big help to new tutors, as it has lesson plans and other ideas.

There is one computer in each of the tuition rooms at the centre, students can work independently or in groups.

They do use the Read/ Write/ Now TV program in their tuition.

They have one TV and they plan to get another one (42inch) for the computer room.

Funding has increased but last year they found it tight because of the extension being built, but now they can put money into ICT facilities.

The Internet is used for researching topics that students might be interested in. The tutor would show the students how to get on the Internet and how to research different topics.

They haven't used NALA Literacytools a lot, not used at present. Coordinator11 dipped into quite a lot just to see what was on it, and it would be referred to in Tutor Training Courses. Tutors also dip into it at home on their own computers, or they can use the online facility in the resource rooms.

All tutors have access to the resource room, where they can go online.

It Could be You Software

The storyline is good, - someone winning the lotto, the language is simple, well-written for the target audience. It's well-presented, the spacing is good. It is very popular amongst users. Coordinator11 rang them to get further copies but there are none available.

Lectra32 Software

They also used a shareware product called 'Lectra32'. They lost the right to use this software as payment had to be made online, and they don't have a facility that allows them to pay for software online. This piece of software allows students to enter any piece of text. There are 16 icons at the bottom that you could click on with different exercises on the piece of text – it could be a cloze test, missing words, spelling test, could be re-arranging the sentences. Exercises are generated from the text that the students enter. This is very popular with students. Tutors also like it as exercises are automatically generated.

Issues in English is also popular with better-able students.

Generally there is a dearth of software for the target group. They currently use a catalogue which is aimed at school children, either primary or secondary level, as it is difficult to get suitable software for adults. They have bought lots of CD in the past, that weren't suitable for adults with low literacy problems.

How do you feel about online learning in literacy tuition as opposed to CD version? It's hard to beat having a tutor across the table from student. 'Computer is not going to replace the literacy tutor'. However technology can be a useful tool, another weapon in the battle in the process against low literacy levels. Technology can attract students into scheme. Even the student would rather sit down opposite someone instead of using a computer all the time.

The Return to Learning programme is on offer at the centre, they offer computers, maths and English as part of this program. They often come for computers and stay for maths and English. 'It was the computers that drew in most of the people but they stayed for the maths and English – we try to sell it as a package – those that come for computers only we tell them that it's a package'

On an outreach basis, the literacy service has been contracted to work on a Return to Learning programme with FAS and the local authority to help with students who have low literacy levels. 'Computers are an important part of that, particularly with the local authority people'. A lot of the local authority people come to us quite literate,

no problems with literacy or numeracy, but the computer element would be very important to them'. 'The FAS people would be (have difficulties) across the board, literacy, numeracy and computers'.

Return to learning programme is advertised as a return to learning program, more time was spent on the phone explaining what the content was afterwards. Some people said that it wasn't for them. People would sign up for RTL rather than Basic Literacy. RTL or a computer course in VEC sounds a lot better than a Basic English course.

Technology is attracting more people to the literacy service. They have no difficulty admitting problems they may have with technology level.

The centre runs a basic Tutor training course, where the trainee tutors have access to software currently being used in the centre. The tutor training course is typically a 20-hour course and does introduce aspects of e-learning.

The Return to Learning programme has just been advertised, the literacy aspect wasn't made too obvious, but the content was explained.

The advertisement for the service doesn't tend to be a 'catch-all' advertisement. Students would tend to shy away from basic literacy, but do want to do a computer course.

In one local College, it's a very busy centre – you can hide in the crowd, and nobody really knows - there is a basic literacy programme, which offers photography. Students can hide in the crowd, no one knows that they are literacy students.

In Centre11 literacy scheme, they bring students up to the level 1 in FETAC. About 10% of students may go as far as Junior Cert (English and Maths) or do single subjects in the leaving Certificate (English).

There was a circular letter from the DES to say that 10% of the students could progress beyond Level 2 FETAC, JC or LC.

'The basic literacy student needs the support all the way along'

The biggest change is that 'computers are attracting more people into the scheme.. there is no difficulty in admitting that you are a basic computer person.. but to say that you have problems with numeracy or literacy, particularly literacy, there is still a stigma attached to it... with computers you can get over that.. do your literacy and numeracy work on the computer, it looks like you are learning computers, or you can you are and you are but you can do the two at the same time.. a lot of students come in on that basis.'

In terms of tutor skills, there is a 20 hour course, talk to them about using software in their tuition. Anyone who wants to learn ICT skills can also do that.

They also have Communities Online together. A list of sample local websites that are popular was also supplied.

Type: Transcript of Meeting at Centre 12

Date: June 2004

Duration: 1 hour approx

Participant/s: Literacy Tutors

Mode: Hand-written notes/ Taped

Format: Interview

All Tutor names have been replaced by Coded names.

Q= Researcher

A = Tutors12

[Tutor12one], [Tutor12two], [Tutor12three] & [Tutor12four]

A I'm [Tutor12one] and I'm a computer and literacy tutor so I have...mostly I've a few basic classes which are for beginners and then I am taking level 1 FETAC in information technology. The program that I would use is Microsoft word and paint and excel and access.

Q Is your remit to teach the up skill in how to use computers or literacy or both.

A No it's focused on computers...

Q Its upskilling the computer.

A Yeah

- Hi I'm [Tutor12two]...and I teach a lot of computer classes too, basic computers like foundation level for FETAC and I have one level 1 class, I did also a little bit of ECDL with a small student group but we're not really focused on that, we're kind of more focused on level 1, its too difficult I think really, we're not really doing that anymore, I'm also a 1 to 1 tutor and I have done computers with my 1 to 1 students.

Q And its upskilling as well or is there an element of both.

A There's an element of both, more so with my 1 to 1 students who have no reading.

Q Ok

A But mainly it would probably be more...literacy, myself and [Tutor12one] would be more...

- A little bit of literacy actually, it does...sometimes but more probably upskilling.
- ...to use computers.

Q How to use the computers.

A Yeah

- My name is [Tutor12three] and I'm the co-ordinator of the basic education unit and there's about 10 people in the group but we have computers one morning, we work for 3 mornings and its very much literacy through computers rather than learning about computers, so we'd really integrate computers into what we're doing already so for example if we're using Microsoft word we type up maybe a story or something they've written on one of the other days. Because the people in that group, it's the first time they've ever used computers so we do a lot of work on star spell, you know that program and issues in English like just this year there is 3 people from Nigeria who they have language issues as well as literacy issues so we use the issues in English program so some of the skills around the keyboard and using a mouse and things like that would be important because a secondary and we use Skillswise, the BBC web site as well, we use that a lot.

Q And would you use that, how long have you been using it for, the skills wise web site.

A About 2 years.

Q Since it first came on line.

A Yeah its very good, so quick and everything, so that's really it, its really integrated, we wouldn't do excel or anything like that.

Q So its using it as a tool in literacy education.

A Exactly yeah.

- Hi I'm [Tutor12four] and I co-ordinate the women's education program, so computers is again one morning of the 3 mornings that they have and we I suppose actually, a lot of the women, it depends on the group profile but a lot of women this year would have had some computer skills through having been in the...

Q Right so there's a progression is there.

A Its not necessarily always the case that people progress but it sometimes does happen so the main focus this year was getting people competent to work with Microsoft word independently, so it was about competence, independent competence and I suppose that has been my main focus, however we would have used it as a learning tool a little bit as well, we would have used skills wise at different times and we would have used the driver theory test program.

Q Interesting, is that on...

A Yeah.

Q That's very interesting.

A We use that...

- Because its relevant and people are really interested in it its very popular.
- Especially in a group as well, its probably the only morning where people can get to work on what they want to do themselves or work on their own, there's one fella who wants to do the driving theory, because they're part of a group he couldn't really do that any other morning other than the computers, they get to work on their own.

Q And do they ever go up to the rooms themselves outside of schedule or how does that work.

A We actually have what we call...

- (all talking together).
- ...the open learning centre.

Q The open learning centre ok.

A Yeah, we've 8 computers in the room and it was successful there for a while but there's been a huge slump in it.

Q Why do you think that is.

A Just the time I don't think really suits, people tend to come in on their set mornings and anything outside of that, or the can't make it for childcare and all that kind of stuff.

- Because it's in the afternoon.
- Yeah
- And it's the only time available.

Q And how long is it.

A About 2 hours.

Q 2 to 4.

A Half 2 to half 4, there used to be a stipulation that they could only use it for an hour when it was busy but now whoever comes they can stay there for the 2 hours. At the moment we just have one man using it...and we have pass papers, junior cert on CD...

Q This is from the last time.

A Yeah

- I think there's been a slump as well because it's not like a class where people have to work.
- Yeah as well as that I suppose another thing would be that the classes, when we were doing an introduction our basic computer classes would be at least 10 weeks or something, that has changed in the last 2 years, people are getting 2 terms of computers so there's not as many people available until the 2 terms are up, it's more that I think and the time and maybe we haven't really been advertising that much, I tend to inform people about it.
- In the classes.
- Yeah

Q Do you think they're better equipment coming in, would you say that they've a higher level of competence arriving into your centre than they may have had in the past.

A No.

Q They're still coming with low levels of computer literacy.

A Yeah

- Yeah.
- Maybe the odd person.
- But just on the open learning thing, the computer room isn't always available to deal with classes but on certain nights it is and we'll find one to one students will use it and they will do different things like star spell or a driving theory would be the most popular.

Q What's the second one, star spell.

A The driving.

Q Oh the driving theory sorry yeah.

A Maybe just for using the internet and stuff like that because there's internet access all the time.

Q Can I just very quickly are you still using any of these, you were using word sharp, would you still use that.

A No

- I don't
- No I never used that actually.
- No neither did I.

Q Just out of curiosity is there any particular reason.

- A I think it's a little bit childish.
- I never actually looked at it.
- Q A little bit childish ok.
- A I don't know.
- ...quite a lot of game things on it and adults don't really want that games thing
- Q So not interested in the games.
- A Star spell sort of has games but it doesn't seem childish.
- No.
- Q So star spell is used.
- A Yeah
- Q What about the grammar show, you probably don't know even know of its existence.
- A Grammar show?
- Q Measuring up is still being used, you mentioned that, issues in English.
- A Yeah
- Yeah we've used that yeah.
 - And...we'd use that.
 - Yeah
- Q Is that the second language is it.
- A Yeah and we have computer classes as well.
- Yeah
- Q There's one here called learning land, again doesn't ring a bell.
- A No
- No
 - I've heard of it but we don't use it.
- Q Digbe the dog.
- A No.
- That's a bit childish.
 - (all talking together).
- Q Its interesting isn't it the move.
- A Yeah
- Q Number shark.
- A No

Q Not really.

A No.

Q And Mavis Beaken...

A Yeah absolutely.

Q That is used.

A Yeah

- Yeah

- (all talking together).

Q What's it called.

A (inaudible)

- It was kind of developed by the VEC and in conjunction with a prison [education unit], its books, tapes and CD but we would use it on the computer and it covers the 3 books and there...

- (inaudible)

- Yeah.

- It's very good.

Q the VEC did that with the prison service.

A Yeah

Q That's interesting.

A It's sophisticated enough as well.

- It is

- (all talking together).

- Even the worksheet that they have on the computer, there's that success rate all the time with the students because it's a drag and drop and if it doesn't fit in it won't drop so...

- (inaudible)

- ...success all the time for students on that one and visually the colours are quite clear and it's easy...

- (all talking together).

- The CD, there's 3 books as well that move up to different levels.

- To different levels yeah.

- ...book 1 and whatever.

Q On the actual CD.

A Yeah

Q You're reading a book are you.

A Yeah there's ear phones with it that you listen to.

Q And how many pages are in the book.

A I suppose the first one there's probably about 2 sentences on the first page, beginner reader and then it progresses to maybe a maximum of 8 to 10 sentences on a page. Now the amount of pages I don't know, about 20.

- The thing about it is you don't have to listen to it, you can just click on, if you don't know the word you click on and the computer tells you the word so you can develop...
- Its good yeah because...
- And the worksheets are good that go with it.

Q That's the one, is there any other ones that have come out there that I wouldn't have mentioned that you would use.

A There isn't an awful lot.

- No there isn't an awful lot of software out there for adults anyway.
- No

Q Nothing on CD.

A Not with an adult base.

- ...skills wise...the easiest to use because you can access it immediately.
- Yeah
- Yeah
- You don't even have to...
- Absolutely
- And its got quite a range of levels and different activities, games and word searches...

Q You've raised a very interesting point there about the level, I remember when I went around in 2001 they hadn't really developed a levels system, literacy wasn't divided up.

A In computer classes is it?

Q Well within literacy education, there wasn't really a level 1, level 2, has that come, I'm probably talking a little bit out of your context.

A Within...now in terms of...literacy and language there is, the level system that we would use is adopted from the London language and literacy unit, and they talk about entry 1, entry 2, level 1, level 2.

Q That's right yeah.

A So we would actually follow that level in terms of...students to an extent, however its not really formally in place.

Q So within the Irish literacy education.

A Yeah there's a new thing NALA are developing, an assessment framework and its been going on for about 2 years now and it actually hasn't been formalised yet, there's still kind of a pilot stage but what they're doing is, its supposed to, well first of all its supposed to be a level kind of below FETAC foundation because they realised FETAC sort of covered a level up to a certain point or whatever but that there was nothing for a more basic literacy.

Q Pre FETAC.

A Yeah so the assessment framework is looking at 3 levels, so there's a beginning level and a middle level and an upper level, so it's trying to set its own level really below FETAC.

Q Can I ask you do you feel there's a need for that, in terms of literacy education do the students feel a need to see progression through levels or.

A Yeah I think so, I think they need to be able to...

- (all talking together).
- Group students definitely...
- Yeah

Q Group yeah ok.

A My literacy student its one to one and we're still far away from that, so levels and anything is very personal to achieving certification at any level, its not important to them at all so there wouldn't be that with one to one, level just doesn't come into it.

Q And I'll come back again to the Skillswise but in terms of the, that's another thing I was talking about when it first came here, this whole idea of the progression from one to one tuition to the group, is there still a significant number of people that you work with on a one to one basis or how is that working out, in terms of the centre is it a high percentage of.

A (all talking together).

- Yeah it depends on the level of the students when they come in on one to one level, they might come in looking for one to one and its more a competence thing.

- Yeah
- And you would find evening students are coming in outside of their work hours, so then they don't have the time to maybe go into some of the activities that are maybe more based during the day, so that wouldn't really apply.
- Definitely the centres would encourage progression.
- Yeah

Q And when I came here before, I just saw it written there, when I was talking to the [ALO}, I think it was down that sometimes it took 3 to 6 months, is it still within that or sometimes longer to move...

A (all talking together).

- It very much depends on.
- Usually it's 1 year...
- (all talking together).
- I'm now heading towards my second year working with...I couldn't tell you in 2 years time maybe if even he would be at a stage where he could participate in a group.
- I think it depends very much.
- He could be another 2 years before you would even think about it...confidence thing, he would integrate now into a computer group.

Q That's interesting yeah.

A During the summer we got him into and I had...student as well, into a night time group, my one to one student who has absolutely or definitely last year had absolutely no reading, integrated into a computer group which was huge.

Q For him yeah.

A I mean getting him in the door into a room...in an English group...

- (all talking together).

Q And is that a male thing.

A No his abilities would not be good enough.

Q But would you have found that with, would there be any difference if your working one to one with a female, would you find that, I'm just wondering, you know the psyche of the woman, chatter box syndrome...its an open question.

A I think in my experience I would agree with that actually.

- Yeah
- Because at the moment I have 2 one to ones and one of them I've been working with for 2 years but he was in a one to one for about a year and a half before that, basically been in a one to one for about 3 ½ years but like what [Tutor12two] said he went in, I think its like a confidence thing, he did a computer group for 8 weeks and like that he wouldn't have gone into a kind of a reading and writing group, he was more likely to go into a computer group but another one to one I have, he's actually well able to move into a group but its like a confidence thing as well, he just doesn't want to be in a group and I encourage him loads of times but I think really that's kind of the way the centre works, I suppose we try and give people what they want as well, I wouldn't...go into a group.
- (all talking together).
- I do think there is a point even where students have very poor literacy or very little literacy and actually learning computers and learning to actually work computers, they can see their progression much more readily, much more quickly with the computers, it's a great confidence booster, even in the women's program this year, the woman who would have the weakest literacy skill would actually probably be one of the quicker learners on the computer, she would be very.

Q That's interesting.

A She has a great retention for processes and how to do things, her literacy doesn't inhibit her with learning the visual, she may be slower sometimes with typing because she has to concentrate more on the words that she's typing but even I actually think that copying and typing is in itself, while its not very actively encouraging literacy skills, I still think it does help people to develop their literacy skills because the act of writing is taken out of it so even when your not using the literacy software or the program...even just using copying...I think literacy develops through their confidence.

- Absolutely
- And the fact that they are actually copying and they're reading in a different way, a less threatening way, it's not about the reading.
- The confidence thing would be a huge thing...and just from my experience of one to one students would feel that maybe they've lived this life without

doing anything, they have never read or done anything and all of a sudden to see that they can actually do something...they can achieve something and they can do it from memory...look you can do this from memory and you're a visual person and your looking at all...and the confidence goes up and especially if they're in a group situation and maybe they hear that somebody is calling the tutor all the time and they're not and they're remembering, you click on file and you go to print and...they're not reading the words on the screen and it's a huge confidence boost.

- Yeah
- Especially with the writing, to see things printed out.
- Exactly.
- (all talking together).
- ...he hated writing.

Q Really.

A (inaudible)

- So even a piece of writing that they've done in class, if they then see it typed up and a boarder on it and a picture, people just feel much more proud of their work.

Q So the presentation aspect of it.

A Yeah

Q Just to move on then to the on line, the web site and so on, what kind of experience would you feel they have on line that's different maybe from using say a CD.

A I think that the Skillswise is fairly user friendly but even so...

- (all talking together).
- ...its not that easy, I would find, depending if we were doing a half hour of skills wise at the end of a class, even for the speed I might sometimes just to get people up and running, I might, because you'll be doing skills wise before you've maybe got to the internet point, where your doing...you do find yourself actually bringing up on the screen for them sometimes...
- (all talking together).
- There was another web site that I found that actually was quite good but it was for a higher level of literacy, its an American, its called...

Q Oh yeah.

A It's at a higher level but it wasn't actually that, it was really

- Leaving cert sort of.
- I'd say upper intermediate kind of language learners as well, there was quite a strong language...I did use it with my literacy group for a little while but they found skills wise much better, we did the 2 sessions...

Q And just in terms of accessing the internet, is the connection here fast, is there ever any problems.

A No

Q When I was last here it was the dial up.

A There's a huge difference.

- (all talking together).
- But the internet would be built into all the computer classes at the end when they're pretty competent with their saving and printing, they would do the internet and they would probably...

Q What do they do.

A (all talking together).

- ...again it depends on the level of the group, their own competence because very much with the internet you can only show so much, your dependent on someone navigating a site so depending on the site they found and the confidence to do a search, but you find now that you try to show them how to use a search engine and key words to use and if they're comfortable enough with spelling and your trying to explain.

Q How it works.

A (all talking together).

- ...they wouldn't probably be as independent with the internet.
- No, that's true.

Q And there would be a tutor.

A Yeah

- (all talking together).
- They can get quite independent with hot mail though for example.
- Oh absolutely.
- Yeah

Q So they use that for e-mails do they.

A Yeah

- I was going to say that as well actually my group need an awful lot of guidance actually with using the internet.
- They've heard so much about it...
- Yeah
- Even getting your head around a lot of the concepts like what is the internet or a search engine, even with my group now we were doing the www and you know the thing where you don't take a space between, people found that really difficult and then they were wondering why they couldn't get into the internet, even trying to copy the actual, some of the web site names could be really long. What I do very much with the internet is if I did up a worksheet it would be very much step 1, step 2, step 3 because just last week we used a thing called behind the name dot com and it was to look up your Christian name...you know when you can hit print screen and you can give people instructions, people would need a lot of guidance because there's a whole lot of writing and then there was search and you type in Mary or whatever and it would give you the...

Q ...a little bit complicated.

A (all talking together).

- ...so much writing.

Q Too much.

A Yeah

- Even hot mail actually.
- Yeah
- Even if you do something like look, the thing with the internet you'd need to really break down the steps, you couldn't say go and find a web site on booking a holiday in Spain because its just, you'd need to really break down.
- Which is where the web quest come in actually,....

Q She's from XXX isn't she.

A Yeah, she's doing the web quest

- (all talking together).
- And she had approached [Tutor12two] to see would the centre be interested in doing a web quest project...
- (all talking together).

Q How did it work out.

A (all talking together).

- ...and the idea of using web quest is really exciting...
- (all talking together).
- ...I had a note for yourself and for [Tutor12one] to kind of have a look because XXX wanted us to get other tutors to see what we thought...to show you the one she designed this particularly for a group on...
- (all talking together)
- Absolutely brilliant.
- (all talking together).
- ...definitely interested in the future in the whole are of the web quest...

Q And producing those.

A It's the way to go definitely, really, really made it much easier for students to find...

- Did you use it...
- (all talking together).

Q And did the students enjoy using it.

A Now there has been a gap, because my mum died I had been out for a little while and when XXX was designing it we had done a session on, we'd been doing a session on Irish mythology and we said we'd look at other myths and mythology and try and find comparisons and links with the different continents. By the time we got to do the web quest the context for doing it was a bit lost...and also we were very...a lot of them were doing the junior cert, so unfortunately it was just the time we did it meant that I should have...but I felt I had to, to XXX, it would have been useful if I had done a half an hour even lead into it, it would have been much easier in terms of what we were...

- But I think in terms of using the internet.

Q Effectively.

A That's the way forward

- The way to go yeah
- Because the design and the lay out, everything is there for them.
- Yeah.
- (all talking together).

- ...on to a framework that is the web quest and it's actually a genius...
- ...do a few weeks before she'd done it...
- (all talking together).
- Is it like a search engine.

Q No what they essentially do you define web sites that you want to have a look at and then really just link them into a different page, so they build an exercise around them so they can go off and they have to look at particular web sites and find information from it

A Great.

- That's very good.

Q It's a good idea but in terms of training then, just wondering in terms of your own training, would you have got a lot of training say in web development or

A No

- No
- No

Q Do you want to each to fill me in on.

A I have no desire to learn about.

- (all talking together).
- ...web design...

Q Just a web page, the web quest is effectively a web page, single web page.

A I suppose where my interest would be lying now...I would love to be able to do that now, I can see the potential of...and get away from this Google search engine.

- Exactly.
- Yeah
- ...but we don't have them skills here.
- Yeah
- ...computer tutors, literacy tutors, we're not technical.

Q You all did ECDL

A Yeah

- Yeah

Q Did you do any other courses say in specific packages or.

A No

Q So you're self taught are you.

A Absolutely.

- Yeah
- (all talking together).
- There would have been, XXXX would have been the web designer here and if she were here still she probably would be doing web quest but I do think the ALO was saying that they are interested in designing web quest with XXX I think in the future aren't they.
- Yeah absolutely.
- And yourself.
- Yeah
- (inaudible)
- That would be cool.
- But there would be no reason why if any of us, I mean the centre would very much encourage if any of us wanted to go off and do...
- (all talking together).
- I wouldn't have been a huge advocate on the internet, I would not have been at all.....(end of side A).....just see how we could use the internet much much more and in fact...being open and the idea...ok there's a lot of work into developing it but once its there it can be used again and again and changed and modified.
- (inaudible)
- But there's a whole system of getting this portal that's in America somewhere, its only...that gets put on to this portal, that's basically the way XXX was explaining it, its not everybody's web quest...and then there's probably millions out there that we could even tap in and use but to develop them for the programs that are in existence here would be huge and then I would see the internet...as a huge...

Q Were you involved at all in the NALA, in the development of literacy tools.

A The materials.

Q Yeah

A Did you do materials.

- Oh no I didn't...
- (inaudible)
- She developed some of the work sheets, quite a lot of the work sheets.

Q That were put up on the.

A That were put up yeah, we were just kind of like the guinea pigs for using and criticising it.

Q Did you want to have a chat about that.

A I'm not as familiar.

- I did an evaluation, one morning we got the group to use it and we weren't, we were kind of critical about it because you know if you have to do an exercise it doesn't tell you whether your right or wrong, it just goes on to the next page, its not very nice looking either but if you spell a word, you could spell the word any way you like and it doesn't tell you whether your...
- ...a few months ago, some lovely guy from [] with the new look...and I was involved in that with one of my groups and it was a little bit better than the last time...
- (all talking together).
- ...a few negative things, getting back to the...it could be you, if they're trying to get people to fill in words, prefixes and suffixes say and they didn't know if they were right or wrong when the exercise finished where with it could be you...get it right all the time with the drag and drop and I was just talking to the guy about that and I said well I would feel very strongly about that, now to be honest with you I'm only back since last week and I haven't looked at it yet...
- (all talking together).
- The big launch has been done but I haven't looked at it, I wasn't pressed with it at all, as [Tutor12three] was saying about when you complete an exercise you didn't know if you were right or wrong.
- No feedback at all.
- (all talking together).
- But in the beginning I think we were very much told that they know all this is wrong, there's a lot of things wrong with it graphically and visually, the colours, a huge amount and I haven't looked at it, to my shame I haven't looked.
- I know this sounds really critical but you kind of think if there's a really good resource like the skills wise for example, that's really fast and it

looks great, why would people need to do something that's sub standard, unless it could be more relevant and culturally relevant or whatever.

- You see that's it, I think...look at that...
- (all talking together).

Q And in terms of the types of exercises that are available on it, are they relevant within an Irish context.

A The BBC one?

Q No the literacy...BBC one I take it they are...

A (all talking together).

- They do have sometimes news topics, like they'll have an easy to read article on a news topic that you can look at, they're not always terribly relevant but I would...the skills wise, I would mostly go on to the spelling end of it, I have to say the spelling is probably the only one that I would use regularly enough and that you see then the cultural implications are not relevant there.
- (all talking together).
- The thing about the...the last time I looked at it was there just wasn't a huge amount of variety, there was very much little stories on maybe if your going to the doctor or something about gardening, just there wasn't a huge variety of stuff, I'm talking the last time I looked at it, the very first, so the stuff was relevant, it was the design of the web site, if you were using these work sheets and the stories on it in a book with a class it would be fine.

Q And were you printing the work sheets off or were they doing them...

A No never...personally I didn't.

- I think I did, the treaty of Nice, or not the treaty of Nice, I think the stuff on the treaty of Nice and the extension countries recently I think I did print off, it was fine.
- (somebody leaving).

Q [Tutor12two] and [Tutor12four] have headed off, maybe in terms of, have you had a look at the literacy 2 web site.

A Not in a long time and I did use it with some students and actually abandoned it, I think there was only 2 or 3 people in but they did find it hard to navigate.

Q Hard to navigate, that was the very initial one then.

A The very initial one.

Q And in terms of the way it looks, what advice would you give, what would you like to see, how would you like it to look, that's probably very difficult question is it.

A (all talking together).

- Its really interesting because just myself I was going to, I'm studying at the moment and I was going to do something around technology and literacy learning but I think its very hard, you kind of want to develop something that will suit all needs and I don't think that's going to happen, the way we do with our group we feed into different resources, like we might do 20 minutes of skills wise so I think its very hard to determine what would be a good resource pack for everybody.

Q But for example even the design of the home page or what makes skills wise maybe attractive.

A I think its good if people get instant feedback with each exercise they do or each input and probably something that kind of develops keyboard skills and maybe stuff with the mouse as well.

- But even looking at it, you don't want something very cluttered.
- Yeah
- Simple sort of snappy.
- Yeah exactly, like you know the silent invaders, you know that skills wise thing, its just kind of like a video game, you have a word with a silent letter, it could be the word...and the word floats along and you have to click it before it hits the little men who are going to eat it or whatever, so it looks really nice but its very simple as well because you only have one word on the screen.

Q And would your adult students like using that.

A Yeah they would actually.

Q It's a game but one that they like.

A ...developed for adults...and I think they're very strongly linked to the adult literacy...and a lot of the work sheets and all the things link back to the different modules that they have in their syllabus that they have over there on literacy which is...

Q Ok assessment though on the, for example work sheets and that on literacy tools or on BBC skills wise, do you feel that students prefer to fill it in on screen or this option that you can print off, what would your thoughts be on that, you know the way in the NALA web site you have the option to do it interactively, in real time or you can print it off and do it, how do you feel about that.

A I think its good just to reinforce stuff and as a revision it's good to be able to have the option to print...

- I think people do like doing stuff on screen as well if they're in a computer class.
- Yeah
- We'd often print things off.

Q So you'd feel that they'd...

A Not really no.

- But I would print stuff, if they were looking at something on the internet, like the soccer web site they might print it out...information people like to print out.
- It depends, some of the learners, specially the people who...issues in English, they love printing things off and doing it at home then...
- (all talking together).
- Because its exactly the same on the work sheet, star spell is good, again its limited in terms of sometimes it can be a bit childish, sometimes if they have words beginning with FL, you've words like fluff and words that you'd never actually use...that's good because you can put in your own words...

Q Would any of your students use the internet at home or what's internet access like for your

A A few.

- Yeah
- A lot go to cyber café's actually.

Q Is that the foreign or...

A No...a few people who go to a cyber café.

Q And what do they use that for.

A There's one guy in the group, he's always looking up these web sites like how to make a bomb and stuff like that, seriously all these things because we've parental controls and he can't access...like he's really into Buddhism and stuff so he'd be looking up stuff on that.

Q There's a contradiction there.

A You'd find out what people what to look up but he's unusual in that he'd have loads of interests on whatever so he'd love to look up stuff but again its probably that people, they wouldn't know what they want to look for either...

- (all talking together).

- ...people that have the internet at home, its their kids or sons or daughters, they might have access to the internet but then...oh I tried to get that site that we were using the other day and I couldn't do it.

Q What's the profile of your student, is it 18 plus or do you have 16 year olds.

A No all over 18, the average would be about 30, 35 probably but often it's the people who've got loads of interests, soccer and things like that, that they'd be interested in.

Q I might just run through these questions, these are the ones I asked Lisa 3 years ago, the first part of it isn't going to change, the second part, how many computers are available for adult literacy activities.

A About 18 and then a few you can use in some of the offices as well for one to one students in the evenings.

Q What operating system

A Windows, 1 or 2 have XP on them but a student wouldn't usually use the XP one.

Q In terms of the computers the way they're set out are some of them networked, the 10 that would be in a room.

A Yeah those 18 are all networked.

Q And then the other ones are stand alone, the other few.

A Yeah

Q Do you have any distance education technology like video conferencing.

A No.

Q Your external connection is ASDL isn't it.

A Yeah

Q How many computers are connected to the internet.

- A Those 18 and then 1 in a colleague's office.
- ...say another 4 or 5 are connected as well.
- Q They're tutors offices are they.
- A Yeah.
- Q Technical support is that in house or is there.
- A [Tutor12two] does...but we do have an external company that comes in to save us time, switch on, switch off, we had a problem...we probably should have a back up person, even [Tutor12one]...
- Yeah
- Q Who is involved when your choosing literacy software, who would make the main decisions on that, lets say you wanted to buy a CD ROM or.
- A [Tutor12two] probably...
- But you'd get a group of people together, we have looked at software and when...was here and when [Tutor12two], we got stuff sent out from the educational software company...but there wasn't really much there that was.
 - No, a lot of the stuff we probably had already.
 - Yeah
 - (all talking together).
- Q So...for your new software like skills wise, are you using the internet then to find programs for literacy.
- A I never really find anything.
- ...word of mouth, someone would say that this is a good web site.
 - We do have to wade through an awful lot of rubbish and just, not rubbish but just stuff that's not great.
- Q How many teachers use computers for teaching, would actually use it, would all your tutors or just in their...obviously if your upskilling you will...
- A Yeah, it's really the people who are with the programs like myself and [Tutor12four] because they're a program that come 3 mornings a week that we use computers...
- Q So tutors that are attached to formalised programs.
- A Exactly yeah and then one to ones and group tutors not really, I don't know, I mean there's maths classes, I don't know if they use computers.

- XXXXX does use the computer sometimes and then there's me, [Tutor12two], three others... who else teachers the computer...
- (all talking together).
- XXXXX actually does doesn't she.
- Yeah

Q So would you say that the majority.

A Probably the majority.

- (all talking together).
- ...don't use computers.
- Exactly, the one to ones probably in the evening and day time wouldn't really, depends, the computer rooms are nearly always full.
- ..interested in doing computers they're sent to the computer class rather than and then groups might dip in and dip out.
- One time there used to be a computer actually in the resource room, the little library upstairs that tutors would use with one to ones but there isn't really that facility anymore.

Q And is there formal training available in computing every year or is it something that you just go off and do yourself or.

A ...the ECDL...

- Oh yeah ECDL but there was a Saturday that [Tutor12two] did software for one to one tutors.
- One to one tutors and then group tutors, I think most people would have looked at all the software.

Q And did [Tutor12two] do the ECDL training as well.

A [Tutor12one]...

Q [Tutor12one] and [Tutor12two], ok, how would you feel about your access to technology here and your level of training would you be happy enough.

A Yeah

- Pretty much yeah.
- We do have access to the computers...the internet...

Q For your own.

A For printing worksheets and...being able to have the luxury of sitting down and wading though things, it's really good

- It really happened in the last couple of years because we used to make work sheets out of our heads...
- What we do now is we take stories maybe from newspapers or web sites, cut and paste them and then make...so that means you don't have to sit down and type everything up.
- Exactly.
- Its brilliant
- Or even if you do a work shop even in your own class on St. Valentine's day or something you can get all the history.
- The information you need.
- (all talking together).
- Yeah it's great.

Q And in terms of your students, how many of the students out of, how many have you got here now.

A You'd have to ask XXXX.

- 150 or something.
- During the day is it.
- Yeah...500 people come through the centre every year, some huge number that I remember... and I was shocked.
- My god.
- I think so now, you'd have to ask her.
- Probably...students in that...

Q How many hours per week would they have computer tuition say in the formalised program, would it be an hour a day.

A 3 hours a week.

- About 2 ½ with the break.

Q You've already explained that you do use them within adult literacy, do you ever use them for career guidance, would the students ever come in.

A No

- Not really.
- We have [a person] here.

Q You have a person.

A Yeah, she's got a data base of information, she's great.

Q And English is a second language, would they use it for, say specific software for...

A Just the issues in English.

Q Issues in English would be.

A They looked at some...software but I don't think it was much.

- Yeah

- I don't know if they used it.

- I don't know, I know there's loads of web sites actually.

- Yeah

- Usually when I do...classes I do classes in the summer where you'd use things like all the newspaper, collect all the different newspapers and then people are able to go back and look at their own national newspapers online which is really good or radio stations as well, we used to have great craic when somebody would be from the Congo and they'd go ah the radio station...

Q That's a great idea and how do you feel about your student's access to technology, would you feel it's inadequate, adequate for now.

A I think it's very good.

- I was saying that to my group, they can use the internet and Microsoft word and that's as much as any of us can do anyway.

Q Just the final question really is how do you, what are the obstacles that you see to using the internet in literacy education, like using web sites.

A I think its just that you'd need constant tutor guidance, I know with my group you couldn't say look up this web site and find this information without a lot of guidance, you'd need a lot of competency to do that.

- Yeah

Q And at what level are your particular student's, are they at entry 1 or level 1.

A A lot of them would come from one to ones so they'd probably be the most basic group in the centre but they're not very, very basic either, they have a certain amount of reading and writing, its just more about competency and independence and that sort of thing, they wouldn't need a lot of guidance with reading and writing...

- Mine would be level 1 students now and there's 1 or 2 of them will come in beforehand and use the internet, depending on the profile of the student.

Q So lets just say that we were to take the British entry 1, entry 2, level 1, level 2, lets say that skill was here, at what point do you think so much would be in terms of their literacy to use the internet, to use a literacy tools web site or the BBC skills wise.

A Its very hard, I don't know, some people could use it better or more independently than others, if someone is very basic, a girl started and she is very basic, I did some star spell with her and the put her on skills wise but again I had to do a lot of the guidance and sit down beside her, its not that she couldn't use it, whereas someone else could do it themselves and open it up themselves and whatever.

- I suppose its that thing about whether you want to use it as a resource or you want people to be able to actually do it independently...when they're in...
- I think a lot of it is to do with how much tutor input kind of thing but just with the levels.

Q You know the way in England, you were explaining earlier about the London, there's entry 1, entry 2, then level 1, level 2, therefore entry 1 would be absolute basic, I'm just wondering is there a particular, should somebody be at one of those particular literacy levels before using for example the skills wise web site or does it matter.

A It doesn't really matter...

- You have the support, the tutors support then its fine but you'd know yourself whether you want to ask people to do it independently or not.
- Exactly.
- I mean like [Tutor12two] was talking about, his literacy skills are quite poor but he's still able to do an 8 week course in computers, I think we did a bit of internet, depends on what they want to get out of it really...
- Yeah
- ...have materials to suit the needs of the student.
- Yeah exactly, I mean you wouldn't throw people in the first day on to the internet.
- No.

- You might start...only one word on the screen or even a bit of Microsoft word typing but I think even, its like that I think people are less hung up about levels when they're on the computers.
- Yeah
- You could get somebody to type away on the computer on Microsoft word but then if you took them to say skills wise they could be completely over their head, the material in that would be far too advanced for them because I have some students that would be very alphabet, learning their alphabet, there would be nothing on...
- (all talking together).

Q Thank you.

Type: Meeting at Centre 12

Date: June 2004

Duration: 1 hour

Participant/s: Adult Literacy Officer - Coordinator12

Mode: Transcript - taped

Format: Interview

Q= Researcher

A = Coordinator12

Q Basically what I want to ask you is what your vision is, is that a difficult question to start on.

A On the technology front.

Q Yeah where would you see it going.

A We'd kind of be open to just anything that comes along that enhances the learning, at the moment we really just are kind of drawing ideas and anything that comes from anywhere we'd be interested in and we do get approached by people who ask us, for example that.

Q ...

A Yeah the web site and also we have a connection in [local college] and sometimes we do projects with students there who are doing their finals. And we are at the moment or our visionary plan is to try and develop our own computer software based on our own computer program that we developed, to teach, when a beginners class come in that we will have an interactive computer program that will mirror what is being taught in the class so they can all sit at a computer and on screen they will have the instructions and also there would be a tutor in the room at the same time which means that you could go off then and do it on your own somewhere at another time.

Q And are you developing that in house.

A We are trying to develop that in house.

Q What sort of technology is being used there.

A Well what happened was last year we had this student from [local college] who did a kind of a prototype, what we had done was we had already written the program, as in we had written a program that was delivered orally in a class and he put some of those ideas on to a disc, a multimedia thing, sound and its not interactive enough, we wanted to, we would click, obviously the

page...but when we looked at it there were a whole load of things that we don't like about it, the thing was very good, we wanted it to be very, very simple so that once you could click you could basically move on the pages very easy. That there would be simultaneous sound and words on the page to explain things, that really would be it, so that once a person, really mouse skills are so essential that once you can use a mouse that you will be able to get your way through this program having...first through a class with a tutor.

Q That's very interesting, how has it worked out, have you tested it.

A We did test that now when he was doing the...and they all, I'm sure [Tutor12two] may have said this to you before, our students are just phenomenally positive about everything all the time, its very difficult then sometimes to know where your going wrong because people are a bit too positive about things and sometimes that's because they're beginning a computer class so its very difficult to say no that's not very good, so myself, [Tutor12two] and a woman who actually developed a web site, she worked, This woman particularly worked very closely with this guy from the local college and it was grand but at the end of the day it was a student project. He had to do certain things to show that he could program in a certain way and we wanted certain things so through that experience we have now discovered the certain things that we want are somewhat different than we thought they were. And XXX actually is working on that at the moment, so she is trying to come up with a very specific brief about what exactly he is supposed to do for every part of the program and things like his graphics, we asked him to do simple ones but they're simple to the point of dull and or weird, there's an ear, its actually an ear so its really simple, so your supposed to click on that... And XXX actually is very good on the visual aspect of things so she is going to try and, the graphic element, how pretty things look and that's not his strength, he seems to be pretty good on programming.

Q How difficult, I think its very interesting, the transfer, trying to get a programmer to understand your needs, how difficult was that process.

A Well now to be honest XXX was the person who would have done that but he in fairness to him is very nice chap and he came in and he talked to a lot of the students and he spent a lot, well he wouldn't have spent a huge amount of time but he sat in here for a number of hours with various people and he did

understand where this was coming from and he knew that what he had to do was very simple and he did not put in, also the program was already written so he had a very good idea, he looked at a lot of the software that we already had and this one was being targeted at the very beginning so they weren't as glamorous as some of the other ones, but we wanted it to be as pleasant to use and as fun as Mavis Beaken but at the same time as simple as something else. He did actually understand that but I think the thing is he's quite determined...like everybody else, he wants a piece of work that is his own in one way but really we need him to do it our way, what we want is a programmer who will do what we ask as opposed to a person who thinks that certain programming things would be interesting to do, they're not from our point of view.

Q And would you have found that, you see part of my interest is in the whole process of communicating...would you have felt that took a while to get or.

A It didn't at the time because it was all very time bound because he had to finish the thing, now we will be able to tell you more about that in 6 months because at the moment his old mentor or lecturer is a friend of mine, he spoke to XXX and then he spoke to us about what we should ask XXX because now XXX is no longer there so if he does this for us he will be doing it as a job.

Q Ok interesting.

A So we would want to know that he is technically good enough, which he probably is but when you look at those Disney, if you look at something like that they're just so fantastic, the things for children are stunning, so obviously that is people putting in millions of pounds into something that they're going to sell whereas our project is a small thing. But I think he... told us to give him a very, very strict brief about exactly what we want so we're actually in the process of doing that. Through the process of having done the first thing and realising its deficiencies we're probably in a better position to give him what we want and he can do it he can do it and if he can't he can't.

Q And how did you become aware say of the difficulties with the first one.

A We actually sat down ourselves and used it as if you were a student, now the last time we had said to him will you do this, will you do that, will you do the other and he had done this, that and the other, so when we were going through the program he was showing us how it worked and we would say oh yes that's

what we asked for, that's what we asked for, that's what we asked for and he did actually what we asked him to do but when you seen, you know when you get what you want you may not like it, it may not actually be what you wanted. So myself and [Tutor12two] actually sat down one day and played on it and it was really frustrating because its very difficult to move from page to page, you had to go through the home, you had to go through the 7 pages before you could go back and that sort of thing, so we thought we can't have that, you have to be able to go back to the page before really simply and all those sort of things. And also we thought to have proper pictures of things so that there'll be a real photograph on the computer in front of you instead of a graphic which he did do but they're very static and they just don't look pretty enough. So you want them to look attractive while at the same time being real, so XXX has a much better vision about what she needs, she wants to use real photographs, real scenes, she thought it would be nice to use photographs of our own building, the computer room and that sort of thing so that when your in the computer room doing the computer program the computer room is on the computer program.

Q Personalising it.

A Exactly, so she's going to take photographs, she's going to probably maybe do something with...camera so we'll see how the next phase goes.

Q And its on CD this program is it.

A Yeah, we hope to have it available on CD when its all done and dusted.

Q Very interesting.

A It will be great, it will be brilliant because a lot of those programs are great...Mavis Beaken is great but obviously your skills when you get on to Mavis Beaken are pretty good and they're fun and they have exercises...people just enjoy them but there isn't, programs teaching the computers themselves are much more difficult and they're not really targeted, we haven't found a piece of software that's targeted at our particular audience.

Q In terms of the internet, is there a drive on to use that within the centre or do you see it just as one of many tools that can be used.

A One of many tools, the problem with the internet for a lot of our students is that even once you get on to certain web sites the language is too difficult so that's a permanent barrier, as far as the staff are concerned a lot of people

would do research on the internet, for classes and that sort of stuff you get stuff off the internet, we do that all the time.

Q Staff use it for research.

A Yeah maybe not research but if they were doing, if they wanted to do classes, preparation.

Q Preparation.

A Information and that kind of stuff and if people ask queries you would do it and also, I don't know whether you want to know this or not but you could do banking on line, we do that on line.

Q Do you show them how to do that here.

A No we use the package ourselves.

Q Oh do you, here at the centre.

A Yes, so that's when we're using the technology, all of our wages go through, that's only in the last year, we've just done that because the bank wanted us to.

Q Which is an interesting development.

A It does make life much easier.

Q What do you feel about say the drive for, I understand NALA is, its not an umbrella organisation, it's a separate entity isn't it to each of the literacy centres or has it changed, that's what it used to be.

A Its more like, it's a lobbying policy, it drives policy or tries to drive policy anyway and it develops things like strategies on numeracy, strategies on family learning, dyslexia, all those sorts of things and it does an awful lot of training, it trains an awful lot of literacy tutors and various things so there'd 2 types of training, there's training that NALA deliver themselves and then there's the NALA...they do in fairness provide a lot of training and they often would come out with very large pieces of work like the assessment framework, equality framework and then they would try and train all these people in all these various other schemes. So they're really like a support agency for schemes.

Q Such as yourselves.

A Yes we would be one of many.

Q And how do you feel about their movement to maybe developing something like literacy tools, you know an on line web site.

A They're best placed to do it because they don't interfere with schemes trying to do their own thing and on the other hand their resources are such that they're in a much better position to do it and in fairness to them they're also a very, they do do a lot of focus groups and research at grass root level before they do anything.

Q You were involved, the centre here was involved in developing materials is that right for the NALA web site.

A They gave some stuff, to be honest I don't know a whole lot about it, they did give,..., we did do that and also the guy came out from, I can't remember his name.

Q

A That's right, [Tutor12two] probably told you that, he'd spoken to her beforehand.

Q Yeah and then he followed up.

A Yeah

Q Just maybe really a final question, what do you think about technology in general, has the buzz gone out of this sector, is it still an important, where is it in CENTRE12.

A Well at the moment, it's a funny kind of a question, I mean to ask that question because we are trying at the moment to do up our, we're thinking of looking at our mission statement...maybe 2 or 3 years because we have a strategic plan that ends in 2005 and our definition of literacy at the moment relates to basically reading, writing, spelling, communication, general social interpersonal but in fact in many ways IT is becoming a very basic literacy skill so it has to be in there somewhere, as far as we're concerned it's a fairly fundamental thing but on the other hand maybe not as fundamental as the actual teaching of hard literacy skills but it doesn't mean that you can't use it, I'm not saying that it's not a basic literacy skill but on the other hand it's more important that people can read and write, but we would consider it very, very important and we do a lot of classes and we find that it gives people a huge amount of confidence when they actually find that they can use the computer program and people get a huge kick out of it, it's a great impetus kind of thing to improving literacy skills and you do have that potential for improving your skills yourself, self directed learning which when you've only got 2 hours a

week that isn't a huge amount of time whereas if your upskilling people on...use those computer programs you could probably get away with doing a load more, they would anyway. And also did [Tutor12two] mention we have an open learning centre, which is on..

Q Yeah that's interesting, she just briefly mentioned it now, so do you want to.

A Well up until last year, we had it open for about 2 years and it was open twice a week in the afternoon so there were no classes on, well there wouldn't be that many classes on but the person who would have been more involved in it is on a years leave but is coming back this year so we have identified the fact that a lot of people don't in fact know that we have an open learning centre and we want to make it much more appealing to people. So the idea of the open learning centre is that you can go up there and obviously use the computers but also that there is a tutor on hand so that if you kind of get stuck you just call the person over but its not a class, the person might be in an office and they just...

Q And they can use it, what has the take up rate been like.

A Well it was very bad this year I have to say, but I think that was partly because the person who was very into it and keen on it went for a year but we actually decided, we did this sort of communications audit around the building and we discovered that a huge amount of students actually did not know that we had such a thing, so they may have used it had they known so we have to do a big awareness campaign on that. The year before actually it was very popular, but part of our problem was that a lot of, particularly eastern European students had come in to use the e-mail which was not our intention, so we had to clamp down on that and when we clamped down on that...reduced the amount of numbers but at one stage it was very popular.

Q And would you find that adult literacy students like the independent aspect of that, being able to go up, in the beginning...their first year.

A They did like it, I suppose the thing is that there's still, there's a man who comes every week, loves it so he is very keen on it so it just proves that if other people knew more about it that they could and also we have the driving licence, which is a very handy...men do that, it's a men's group and obviously that's something you can do yourself any time you liked...students used that but I don't know if they necessarily used it at that time but it was available.

So I think that we need to market that properly really but I think it would be very good.

Q And they have open access in that to the internet.

A They do yeah.

Q The full range.

A The only thing is we do obviously have one of those nanny net things.

Q Just in case.

A Yeah and also that's another thing we had to do, we don't have any protocol at the moment on the use so we're going to introduce one.

Q Thank you.

Other: Legend for Meeting with Men's Group in December 2004

Type: Meeting at confidential location in Centre 13

Date: 17th December 2004

Duration: 2 hours

Participant/s: Literacy Students men's group/ Tutor1/ Tutor13

Mode: Hand-written notes/ not taped

Following the meeting at Centre1 Literacy centre, it was suggested by the adult learning co-ordinator that a visit to a confidential location to meet a men's group would prove beneficial to my research.

This meeting took place on December 17th 2004 in the Family Learning Centre in this confidential location.

The co-ordinator of the literacy program, Tutor13, met with me briefly before I entered the meeting. She had already spoken to the men with regard to my visit, and they were happy to facilitate. There were normally 8 or 9 men in this group, but 5 were in attendance, a sixth left to go to meetings as I arrived. The group were here for their Xmas party, so the organiser felt that it was an ideal opportunity to chat with them as it was very informal. The co-ordinator advised me that the men considered they were on a computer literacy course not a 'literacy' course.

The co-ordinator of the FAS programme gave me a quick tour and history of the centre whilst I was waiting on the men's group to gather.

The centre was formerly a primary school, which hadn't been used for many years and had become dilapidated. FAS had renovated the old school building and the Family Learning Centre was established in 1999.

Initially the centre ran programs for the elderly and young mothers in the community. The crèche was established to facilitate those with children. There is also a full laundry and ironing facility within the centre to encourage community use of the centre. There is a large hospitality room with nearby kitchen, which can be used as a location for community events such as funeral dinners etc. (The catering for funerals is organised on a voluntary basis, with minimal costs based only on cost of food not cooking or serving.)

The computer room is currently used by a wide range of users in the community, from older adults users to young children from the nearby primary school. Two computer tutors were present when I viewed the room. These were former students of computer programs in the centre and had gradually gained ECDL and other qualifications, before becoming full-time tutors there. The room was equipped with around 12 personal computers and various peripheral devices. They are connected to the Internet. The centre is an approved ECDL centre, so they can award their own ECDL certificates. There are various day and evening computer courses on offer to the community.

The FAS manager explained that the ethos of the centre was focused on maintaining a sense of community. He explained that they tried to employ people from the locality that had come through their programs and that understood the centre's ethos and local culture. He said that most of the students came through Community Employment or

FAS schemes. The services offered are advertised through local post-offices and childcare facilities.

The informal meeting took place around 11 a.m. in a classroom at the back of the building. Four of the men sat on stools along a side wall, whilst the fifth squashed in beside me at a large table. Tutor1, the literacy tutor, was also present. The FAS manager stayed for about 45 minutes before heading off to a meeting.

Tutor13 introduced me to the men and asked me to explain briefly why I was there. I explained that I was researching the use of technology in adult learning, and that I was here to learn what had worked well at this centre in terms of technology. I was careful not to use the term 'literacy', instead chose the word 'learning'. The group felt that it was better not to use the Dictaphone, as there was a lot of movement and food was being eaten etc throughout the session as it was the Xmas party.

To begin with, we all chatted informally about Christmas preparation. Tutor1 had just bought a 'toy' laptop, which had programs for basic reading and writing in English and Spanish, and this became the focus of discussion. Two of the men became very active in trying to get the games working.

The FAS manager explained that all of the men of this program had been referred through FAS programmes that he ran.

A profile of the men:

Student1: Student1 was in his mid-forties and had been a student of the primary school that had been replaced by this centre. He recalled a very difficult time in primary school here, and talked about the brutality of the master. He spoke negatively of his primary education at this school. Student1 was quite withdrawn for most of the meeting and seemed anxious to be back at work outdoors. He has been in this program for about a year.

Student2: Student2 was in his early-fifties and came from a nearby town. Tutor13 mentioned in advance of the meeting that he could multiply six figure numbers in his head, and re-enforced this at the meeting by commenting every so often about how quick Student2 was in learning computers. Student2 has family with young children. Student2 was quite reserved and really only engaged in discussion towards the end. He has been in the program about six months.

Student3: Student3 was a family man in his late forties who had also been a pupil of the primary school that had been once stood on the grounds of this centre. He also spoke of the brutality of the master, and his negative feelings towards 'schooling'. He pointed to a wall that divided the old school yard behind where I was sitting and spoke of the division of the male and female students either side of the wall. His wife had been at the other side of the wall for eight years and he never saw her. They were beaten if they as much as looked in the direction of the school wall. Student3 is a Cabinet maker. He was very chatty and seemed to enjoy taking part in the discussion. He has been in this program about twelve months.

Student4: Student4 was in his mid-fifties and had just recently joined the centre, about three weeks previously. He was not from the area, and experienced quite a culture shock when he joined the program. Student4 was very quiet throughout the meeting.

Student5: Student5 was a single man in his mid-thirties, and was anxious to get the discussion going from the minute I entered. He sat very close, reading what I was writing down, and asking the men to join in/ speak-up from time to time. Student5 was jumpy to begin with but relaxed considerably as the discussion began. Student5 has been in the program about a year.

FAS manager (FAS co-ordinator) led the discussion for the first 40 minutes. He explained about the centre and what his role in the centre was. He explained again in detail the services that the centre offered and how students were recruited. He highlighted how the centre was used by families to access computer training so that they could use their home computer more effectively, the homework club that ran for children in 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class, how the students from the local national school came for an hour every Friday for computer class, and how people in their 60's, 70's and 80's came to use computers and sometimes to gain their ECDL. He also explained the intricacies of the funding mechanisms, how for example that at least 10% of students must gain FETAC accreditation in order for the course to get FAS funding etc.

FAS manager also briefly described the local website which provided information on the whole parish, the services offered by the local churches, schools, GAA clubs, handball alleys, hurling and soccer clubs.

After FAS manager left, I asked the men to explain what they thought of computers. Student5 explained that he found using the mouse very difficult to begin with, but that he came to grips with it when using Microsoft Word. He said he really wasn't that keen on the Internet, but that he had used it to access information on 'Kylie Minogue' and Horse racing. He accessed the 'go-ireland' website regularly and placed bets on horses online. He felt that you really needed access to the Internet at home to make better use of it.

Student3 explained that he wasn't that fond of computers although he did know that they could be very useful outside. He said that he was aware of CD's that were available for Cabinet Making, and that he would only have to put in the measurements and it work out costs. He said that he would like to be able to use these type of CDs.

Student1 explained that he had a huge fear of computers when starting out. He had now completed FETAC foundation level computers. He didn't use computers outside of the centre. Student2 was very comfortable with computers, but didn't use them outside of the centre. He had also completed Foundation level 1 computers.

Student4 was very new to computers and said he was still learning how to use Microsoft Word. He doesn't use the computer at home, although he said that his son has a laptop that he could use.

They also spoke of another classmate not in attendance who regularly used the Internet to access information on machine parts for Farm Machinery in the UK.

The local men described how useful the local website was, and said that they regularly accessed it to check on football results etc. They also mentioned using websites such as Ryanair to compare prices and to book cheap flights.

The men were very supportive of each other, often saying 'you're very good at that' etc. They are also extremely supportive of the two female tutors. However they don't want women students in their group. They are also open to new male members joining their group, there was some conversation about a new recruit who was wheelchair bound and the men immediately launched into a discussion on access for wheel chair users etc..

The men from the community unusually attend their local 'Family Learning Centre' for literacy classes embedded in computer training sessions. There is a high degree of community enterprise evident in this centre and a high degree of support for its learners. One of the men in the literacy group is a local county councillor. He is accessing computer-training session so that he can use his laptop at council meetings, and send email etc. These local men do not seem unduly worried about maintaining their anonymity in this men's literacy group, as the community support for all its learners appears to be very strong.

The men in the group not from the community, come from neighbouring 'friendly' communities. There are a number of computer literacy initiatives in centres less than 2 miles away that would be more convenient for some of the men, but they chose not to attend these centres due to 'tribal' feelings towards neighbouring districts. The men also said that potential students from these areas would not come to &&&& because of similar feelings. I asked whether these feelings had emerged due to a particular incident in the past. The local men replied that this is the way it always has been this way. ...

The tutors mentioned that they don't use the NALA website a lot with this group, as they want to keep costs down and the Internet access does increase costs. However they do download worksheets from NALA websites to use in-class. The computer sessions include basic sessions on using the mouse and on using Microsoft Word, which they emphasised is particularly useful for checking spelling punctuation etc. Then if the men wish they can progress to doing activities for FETAC Foundation computers.

I thanked the men for facilitating the meeting. The meeting finished up around 12.30p.m.

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Appendix G

Agenda for Interviews with *It Could Be You* Design Team in 2005

Meeting with the It Could Be You Design Team members

Location: various

Date: Team Member1: 18th March 2005 at 10.30am
Team Member2: 26th February 2005 at 10.30am
Team Member 3: 1st April 2005 at 2.30pm

Type: Interview

Topic: Discussion about the development of the **It Could Be You** website

Agenda

- Background to the development of *It Could Be You* software
 - Own role and responsibilities within the *It Could Be You* development process
 - Describe how *It Could Be You* was developed
 - Challenges in the *It Could Be You* development process
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Appendix H

Summaries of Interviews with *It Could be You* Design Team in 2005

Interviews with the 'It could Be You' Software Design Team (TeamB)

1. **Type:** Summary of Interview with TeamB Member1
2. **Type:** Summary of Interview with TeamB Member2
3. **Type:** Summary of Interview with TeamB Member3

Type: Meeting at Prison Education Unit
Date: 18th March 2005 at 10.30a.m.
Duration: 1 hour approx
Participant/s: TeamB Member1
Mode: Hand-written notes/ Taped
Format: Interview

The Education Unit in this prison has from 250-377 students. Each student is given an individual learning plan, based on an initial interview. There is no set course. Most students come to the Education unit for 6 months. The initial interview examines their literacy level. There is no formal assessment.

The International adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1997 did not include an examination of the levels of literacy in Irish prisons. 'For a long time those who have worked in prisons have felt that it (literacy) is much worse here than outside' The situation in the prisons is much worse than elsewhere. 'We would go to in-services and find that we were talking about people who couldn't read or write at all'. 'We had a meeting where we decided that we would like some sort of a survey done.. Mark Morgan who had designed the original IALS was brought in on it.. we introduced a lower level.. and carried out the survey in all of the prisons in the country... we discovered the figure in the prisons was 52.8%.'

There are students in prison who can't read or write at all, very low levels of literacy. Outside the prison service the levels of literacy seem to be higher.

The prisons decided to do their own survey to find out what the levels of literacy were like in Irish prisons, Mark Morgan was brought in on it. The IALS tools for establishing literacy were not adequate or sensitive enough to test the literacy levels in the prison service, so they designed tools that could measure lower levels of literacy than had been examined in the IALS. The survey was carried out in prisons in 2001, 52.8% of the prison population had the lower level of literacy. The report was released in 2004. We had always thought that more than an a third of our students had lower literacy levels, but we were surprised at the extent of the problem.

The design and development of the software 'It could be You' predated this survey. The prisons got EU funding, with which they established Open Learning Centres in a

number of programs such as 'Pathways' project and other prisons. There was money available for some sort of a project to do with IT. Access to the Open learning Centre was quite restricted, 9.30-12, 2.30-4 and 5:30-7. It was envisaged that a software pack could be developed that would broaden and extend opportunities for students with low literacy levels to extend their skills – this led of the development of 'It could be You'.

'There is no full-time education here.. it's very difficult to give as much provision to a literacy student as you would like to do because access to them is actually quite restricted'

The students with very basic literacy levels need 1:1 tuition. There can be huge numbers of students requiring 1:1 tuition so it gets very difficult to give the literacy students adequate literacy tuition. However it was difficult to get adequate provision within the prison service. This resulted in the putting together of a set of readers, with tapes supplied for those who needed help to read the readers, and the reader were closely linked with core material on CD. The idea was that students would first attempt activities/ exercises on paper before moving to computer.

' Most of these guys wouldn't have touched computers before, so they're so scared of the whole notion of computers, so that if they had done a little bit of text on paper first which is a much less threatening form of media, that they would feel more comfortable when they went to the computer'.

' I had worked in the open learning centre and literacy is my area.. with all of the imported material you had to use the keyboard, .. so instead of concentrating on what was on the screen, people were using all their energy trying to figure out where things were on the keyboard.. I totally empathised with that..'

When working in the Open Learning Centre, a lot of the software was imported, some Australian etc. With all of this software, students had to know how to use the keyboard. A lot of time was wasted by students trying to find keys on keyboard. TeamB Member1 wanted to design software where a keyboard wasn't needed.

We had a project meeting because of the EU funding and I went off and wrote a proposal. I contacted other Education Units, formed a team of 6 that dwindled to 4.

The software was developed slowly over a 2 year period.

The project meetings were the proposal was put together. TeamB Member1 contacted the other Education Units and persuaded 6 people to get involved initially. This number subsequently dwindled to 4. Everyone worked on this project in their spare time. They didn't have a clear time-span in mind when they started out, although they did think they would have completed it much faster than in reality.

First on the agenda was the search for a suitable theme for the package. XXX came up with the theme, he read somewhere that 67% of the Irish population played the lotto. The underlying philosophy for the literacy program was 'Language Experience approach', which believes in immersing learners in a context that they are familiar with. If they can read the first word, their confidence levels increase.

'We knew that we could come up with all sorts of phrases that people knew before they even needed to read them, and that's a huge boost to people's confidence'.

'Once we got the theme, we were able to move forward'

The process that followed after the consensus on theme was tortuous. In one case, deciding on the position of the word 'only' in a sentence took three hours.

'There was all sorts of stuff like that.. people disagreeing.. we literally paired back the verbiage' 'It was hugely focused on the language experience but we also focused on the Dolche list, that we were repeating words.. all of those sorts of technical things' Each member of the group had a different forte, and there were a lot of arguments about theoretical aspects of the language. Sorting out the levels was also time-consuming, had to write each exercise for three different levels of literacy in the Readers. All of the initial work was done on paper and in total, it took about a year on a part-time basis.

It was designed on their own time, extra to their own work.

For the first year, TeamB Member1 and three colleagues met every Saturday morning for 3 hours and sometimes had follow-up lunchtime meetings during the week to design the materials that were to be used in 'It could be You'. The readers were written first, and then these were edited as needed. Images to go with the readers and exercises were also described in detail and positioned beside text boxes.

'There was a lot of argument about theory' 'didn't really keep records'

Did you have a fixed plan at the outset?

‘ We didn’t have a clear time-span, at the same time I think we thought that we would do it faster..’

‘The number of revisions was just amazing’

‘Quite a bit of travelling around was involved for lunchtime meetings’.

At the end of the first year, one tutor emigrated, which left just three of them working on the software. During the first Summer, all the exercises for the CD were written based on text in Readers. There was a gamut of exercises that literacy students work on, reflecting exercises that had been tried and tested in-class, prepared for insertion on the CD.

‘there’s nothing revolutionary there, they’re all tried and tested.. the thing about them is that when there are in a different format.. for a lot of people they work in a way that they don’t work on paper.. because it’s visual’

In September, at the outset of the 2nd year, TeamB Member3 brought TeamB Member1 to meet the two programmers to program the exercises, TeamB Member2 and Tom. TeamB Member1’s first impressions was that they were each speaking a language that the other didn’t understand. She had brought a diagram, illustrating the main components of the program.

‘It was like they were speaking a language that I didn’t understand and I was speaking a language that they didn’t understand’

‘When I first went along to them, I tried to show them that the text was at the centre and all of these things came out from it.. and they could not get their heads around that.. they couldn’t figure out how this would work’.

When TeamB Member1 showed them the second diagram in the follow-up meeting ‘they immediately could see what I was talking about’.

The diagram in the initial meeting showed that the textual material, i.e. the readers, was central to the program, and 18 different types of exercises radiated out from the core text.

The exercises radiated outwards in three distinct regions illustrated by concentric circles.

- In the inner-most circle, 'sentence building', 'comprehension' and 'cloze' exercises were the main types of exercises illustrated.
- In the second-outer circle, 'contractions', 'digraphs', 'beginning consonant blends', 'consonant blend endings', 'initial consonants', 'y', 'vowels', 'words in words', 'syllables' and 'b+d' were examined.
- In the outer most circle, 'homophones', 'opposites', 'word squares', 'alphabetical order' and 'compound words' were examined.

TeamB Member1 commented that the programmers had great difficulty in understanding the 'terminology' and the design requirements from the initial diagram. Likewise, TeamB Member1 had difficulty understanding what information the programmers needed in order to implement the exercises that had been designed. So, a second meeting was planned.

At the second meeting, TeamB Member1 re-presented what she wanted to implement using a 'hierarchy' type diagram, displaying what may appear on a main menu or drop down menus. At the core of the diagram was the main menu, which was represented by three headings 'Readers', 'Word Attack', and 'Sort it Out'.

- From the 'Readers Menu', users could access three different types of exercises focused on sentence building, cloze tests and comprehension.
- From the 'Word Attack' menu, users had to choose from two options, 'Look' or 'Listen'. Word Attack looks at 'how words are made – looking at the bones of words'.
 - From the Look menu, they could try out four types of exercises on 'Words in words', 'b+d', 'contraction' and 'compound words'.
 - From the Listen menu, they could access exercises on 'initial consonants', 'vowels', 'consonant blended endings', 'beginner consonant blends', 'y', 'digraphs' and 'syllables'
- From the 'Sort it out' menu, they could access exercises on 'alphabetical order', 'opposites', 'homophones', 'word-squares' and 'numbers'.

'what I thought was interesting, the first time we met, the second time and for a while.. it was like we were talking different languages , when I started talking about

cloze, they didn't know what I was talking about.. there was a lot of that sort of explaining'

'[TeamB Member2] did the programming, he was the real computer head, then there was a [second programmer], who actually got really interested in the materials and used to come along and say to me 'are you sure that's right'.. so he got involved in the whole language thing and I thought that was really interesting'

'An awful lot of work was done in TeamB Member2's garage and he had a little one of 9 or 10 that would try out the exercises'

'It took two meetings before we began to understand each other.. I'm coming from a non-technical background, it took a while for me to figure out how to explain and for them to figure out how to explain what they were doing to me'

The programmers understood the requirements from the second diagram that was presented.

'They said to me they couldn't understand the initial diagram, and they asked me did I have a map in my head of how it would actually work, so what I did was I went home and figured it out.. this would become the template'

'the diagrams were a big help.. for example.. I would have written exactly what I wanted to do.. because the first thing for me to do is to write not to draw pictures.. and they couldn't make head nor tail of that.. words didn't work for them'

'we got used to working with each other and that helped understanding.. we got to see a lot of each other'

Each exercise that was to be designed was firstly hand-written, then typed by the secretary and then handed to the programmers to implement. Each set of instructions for each exercise was also hand-written, typed and then presented to programmers for implementation. There was discussion over exercises that couldn't be implemented in a particular way, and a consensus was reached on what changes had to be made so that it could be implemented. Decisions were also taken by the 'educators' on how the Homepage and other screens should look.

TeamB Member2, programmer, worked from home and had young children under 10 who tested the software.

It took the first two meetings in order for them to begin to understand each other. The diagrams were a big help, everything was also written out so that the programmers

knew exactly what had to be input. TeamB Member1 felt that the second diagram was particularly useful for the programmers. Text didn't seem to work for them. TeamB Member1 said she got used to working with the programmers, and it took about a year for the exercises to be implemented.

Meanwhile, the team were still working on the Readers. Trying to get illustrations was a problem. 'We ended up with pretty awful illustrations' Everything had to be done on the cheap, so they hired someone in a [local college] to produce the graphics. They would ideally have liked better quality images but they had no money in budget so had to accept the images they got.

Also TeamB Member2 and Tom were paid in the region of 20000 Irish pounds for their work, which wouldn't have covered the time and effort that was expended by them. Enormous amount of work and they didn't understand that.

TeamB Member1 did samples for the programmers, with hand written instructions for the users. TeamB Member3's secretary typed up these in Microsoft Word.

'It's physically drawn out what will be shown on the computer'

All the exercises were designed for use with a mouse not a keyboard, they all had 'Click and Drag' elements.

The secretary would mis-understand some of the things that were hand-written so TeamB Member1 would have to go back and re-check everything to ensure that it was correct.

The programmers then looked at the exercises to see if it could be implemented in it's initial format. If it couldn't be implemented, then they would try to make changes to it in consultation with TeamB Member1.

If a user is interacting in an exercise, the way they know what they're doing is right is if it stays in place on the screen after they drag it into position. There is no other feedback, such as 'well done' etc.

'The literacy student would know it was right because the instruction on the screen would let them know'..

There is an audio facility on the CD and on the Readers. It only reads one word at a time, the students have to click on the word. If the sound facility was turned on all the time, the students wouldn't bother to read the text. The student can't click on a whole piece of text to be read by the audio facility, instead they can only click on single words. It forces the student to read more than they otherwise might.

'He recorded some of it in the studio in RTE in his spare time.. afterwards he wanted to kill me, tedious process..' Recording the instructions weren't too bad because he should said them slowly, but recording the words for the Readers was desperate because he had to pronounce every word separately..'

The audio was recorded in RTE using a [actor] to read out each word. Every single word had to be recorded separately for the Readers, which was extremely monotonous and time-consuming for this person.

'I don't think any of us that got involved in it realised how much work would be involved.. and the amount of time that it would actually take..'

The time-span for development was as follows:

- 1997-1998 Team worked on developing materials for the CD
- 1998-mid-1999 Team worked in conjunction with programmers to implement materials for CD

Some exercises had to be re-thought, such as the contractions.

'It was more that I had had to think about how it could be done'.

TeamB Member1 had to re-think about an exercise on joining compound words. She began to think visually, trying to imagine how the software would look. She compares this path as the 'Blind Innocent' 'sheer stupidity got me into this.. nobody told me that I couldn't do it and that's why I did it'

For the main part, TeamB Member1 had to do the thinking about how it could work. All the exercises were doable after a re-think.

She would have liked to use 'morphing' which is commonplace now in certain packages.

She did trial the package with some students in the prison service. There were all sorts of quirky things or mistakes. There weren't too many on the CD but certainly in the accompanying workbook. They trailed the software a few times during its implementation. [Two tutors] tried it out at one prison, and TeamB Member1 tried it out in her own Prison workplace, the students there liked it instantly. 'We had a copy of it before it was published.. there were loads of mistakes.. there still are mistakes'

TeamB Member1 feels that with more money they could have made a more marketable product. The budget was low and so the whole development was kept low key within the VEC.

There were some mistakes made with the final package; more readers should have been produced (not just a set of readers and a work-book) as these tend to disappear in practice. They are currently trying to get funding to do another 'run' of 'It could be You'. We would certainly look at doing a set of the readers separately.

The pack consists of a Reader/ Audio Tapes/ Work-book and CD. They are all interlinked. Some comprehension exercises are repeated in work-book and CD, however the majority are different. The workbook moves beyond text in Readers, there are word puzzles. There are also opportunities in the workbook for personal writing. The CD is completely language, very functional.

The Audio tapes are for the Reader, side A has an extremely slow reading of the text, whilst side B has a slightly faster reading of the text in the Reader. The idea behind including audio tapes was to allow the user bring it back to his cell, and if there wasn't somewhere there to give him a hand he could use the audio tapes. However very few students now have tape recorders – the technology has outgrown audio-tapes.

The students can complete exercises without using CD.

The whole pack looks at reading and writing using a range of media.

Were you worried that students wouldn't use the CD? Yes, you could use it without the CD, but it was recommended that they would use the CD.. people learn in a variety of ways.

One tutor involved used the pack in a further prison. The tutor had a student who had huge difficulty using b+d in normal literacy class for years, and couldn't overcome it using normal channels. However after one session on 'It could be you', he completed the exercises in 'It could be You' related to 'b+d', he hasn't made a mistake since using 'b+d'.

'For some reason,.. visually he figured it out when he saw the two things moving separately on the CD.. he had done exercises on paper but hadn't been able to figure it out'

Some students can't handle lists, tend to have problems with days of the week and months of the year. They don't have dyslexia but have similar problems as dyslexic students. The software is useful for these students.

Teaching methods similar in literacy tuition as in dyslexia tuition; must figure out the learning style first and go along with that.

TeamB Member3 handled the distribution of the software, and other than contact from his secretary informing her that there were requests for more copies, wasn't aware of wider popularity.

The good thing about the software is that it does what we set out to do. The context is Irish, so the language experience is familiar, the students know the text before they use the software. It is very important that they don't need to use the keyboard to interact in the exercises – it's all 'click and drag'. The teachers are very familiar with the types of exercises that have been included in the software, as they are similar to what's done with students in-class – cloze tests, contractions, homophones. The software is not threatening. The text is presented very simply.

'The exercises aren't new, the way we got them to work on the screen is new'

In Issues in English, you need to be quite literate to use this software, whereas 'It could be You' has minimum text.

They can't use 'live' online software such as NALA Literacytools in the Education Unit as there is only limited access provided to the Internet. They can only use offline versions. Staff do use the Internet to source materials. However there is a huge nervousness around Internet use in prisons. They do have an Internet connection, and some students are allowed restricted access to computers to complete computer exams online. This may change in the future, with strict safeguards in place, teachers need to be enormously careful who is let near the Internet.

'There is a huge nervousness around using the Internet in prisons'.

TeamB Member1 hasn't come across any piece of software that is as comprehensive as 'It could be you'. A lot of their cohort of students are total beginners, and there is no software out there at that level for them. It's either too childish and insulting for them to use.

'For our guys the fact that they can see something on paper and feel comfortable with it on paper before they ever go near a computer screen is hugely important'.

The good thing about 'It could be You' is that it can be used by the self-directed learner as a stand-alone piece of software. The aim of the software was really to support students outside the Open Learning Centre, it extends the classroom learning experience.

'We would get a lot of people who are total beginners, there isn't anything out there at that level or if there is, it's very childish'

Can 'It could Be You' be used as a stand alone self-directed programme?

It could if someone is very motivated. However it was designed to be an extension of what work done in existing literacy tuition in-class.

Generally the teacher would give a student 1:1 tuition by starting to work on text, then gradually introduce the student to computers in the Open learning Centre, then the

student can take the tapes back to his cell, and could complete some of the exercises in his workbook.

Type: Meeting
Date: 1st April 2005 at 2.30p.m.
Duration: 40 minutes approx
Participant/s: TeamB Member2
Mode: Hand-written notes/ tape (sound quality poor)
Format: Interview

'I wouldn't have thought that 'It could be You' was earth-shattering, I thought it was clever'

This project was undertaken with 'Great Vision-very poor funding'

It was initially designed, it wasn't storyboarded'.

Most CBT programmes are heavily designed around the graphical content.

TeamB Member2 hadn't worked with CBT products before working on 'It Could be you', he had worked on commercial business applications – he was a software developer at the time.

The target audience was unusual, the basic assumptions you make about the target audience may or may not be flawed.

Age is the first issue, a lot of people would have tried to make it childlike because they would have assumed that the audience wouldn't be capable of tackling anything else at a technical level, but the audience were much more sophisticated than that.

They just have reading difficulties, or learning difficulties. 'It's challenging in so far as it is sometimes very hard to get your head around this'.

So you have to think about how happy the literacy students will be, how computer literate was the adult literacy student or how comfortable will they be using this software with a mouse, keyboard and a graphical/ images.

'I thought it was weak in so far enough work wasn't done on that, on designing the images that was going to be used, the technical exercises were really good'

The target audience were adults with basic literacy.

This premise may or may not have been flawed. How computer literate were they, with mouse or with keyboard. There wasn't enough done on finding out about the target audience in advance of the design.

The technical design of the exercises was very well done.

‘If I were to do this again, I would do a prototype which would be a front-end prototype, which would be very low on content but just get people familiar with going through (navigation)’

No storyboards were done to mock-up the designs. This would have been useful to ‘run past’ users.

There wasn’t a prototype of the software designed, a front-end version which was low on content should have been produced.

‘in the first phase, all the content was put into it, and then all the exercises were done, then in the second phase the sound was added and in the third phase the graphics were added.. Now in real terms, you should put the graphics in first... The look and feel is very important’

‘You mean the graphics that surround it, the buttons, the icons..’

When dealing with an audience that are not familiar, you have to guide them intuitively, ...you can’t give them a manual on how to use it, you can’t use written instructions, you’re limited to given them a very limited introduction and a sound introduction.. how do you express ‘press’ the icons or press this this.. you’re very limited.. you can’t say press the help button, the design work involved is quite complex..’

It was designed first as application:

first came the content, then sound, then graphics..

The graphics should have been done first, i.e. the buttons, navigations as well as images to be used.. We needed to guide the audience on how to use it as there was no user manual. A user manual wouldn’t have been useful for the target audience as they had low literacy levels.

The design work was very complex. TeamB Member2’s kids at home tested the product, they loved it, particularly it’s ease-of-use and it’s consistency.

‘They eat it up, they gave quite good inputs, very good in terms of use..

Potentially uncomfortable environment they were operating in..

It was almost a kiosk type operation.

In a centre, they may be using this for one hour a week, so if they don’t have the ability to become comfortable with it, that will impact on use’

If not used on a daily basis, they don't have time to become comfortable with the application, so there is pressure in designing the software to be instantly 'comfortable' to use.

The other difficulty was that its design was very different to common applications like Microsoft Office that some of the target audience may have been familiar with. It was a unique CBT product.

Seven years on from its design, TeamB Member2 feels that there are more good examples now on what good or bad in terms of graphical user interface design. There wasn't much effort put into research, nobody had set aside 3 weeks work done on what products were good to use or bad to use.. 'What most people do if find something that was used before, and say 'that was great' and tell others 'word-of-mouth'.

'Nowadays there would be a lot more research on what's available in the area'

'That's(second diagram) a more traditional mind-map, that's mapping the traditional flow, the drop down menu, where you are progressing from one piece to the other.'

'We would have discussed it out (at the first meeting)'

Mapping the traditional flow with drop-down menus. Most programmes have a menu bar, with sub-menus, cascade style.

Traditionally, software is a very 2-dimensional world, 3-dimensional aspects not common. The industry has difficult getting their head around them (3-D) databases) – it's a very flat world'. Conventional CBT products are graphically based, whereas commercial software tends to be more data driven and structure driven.

In a commercial world, the software tends to be data driven, all objects are 2-D.

The content of an 'object' is highly 2-dimensional.

What advice would you give programmers designing for adult literacy?

One of the difficulties is that the software for 'It could be You' was very structured in terms of segments of learning, so the students were brought through the software in a serial fashion. There was a beginning, middle and end. This may not be 'best practice' in terms of teaching and learning, may need to blend the learning experience

to cover multiple things at the same time. The reader was also designed in this serial fashion. From a design perspective, it was a bit boring for the user. You were doing the easy, middle and hard bit all on the same subject. The software tended to drive the learner through the exercises in a straight way.

The quality of audio on the CD was poor, there could have been more audio.

'There's nothing you can't do with software, but within a budget you're limited to what you can do'

The limitations of the project were as follows:

The Budget was the main limiting factor

The version of Macromedia probably version 5 was an early edition, which didn't have a lot of add-ons.

The graphics could have been better.

In terms of feedback to the user, you did well, you did badly or you had to do it again, there could have been a randomly picked message for feedback could have been presented. They could have been better presented.

It took a couple of months to design, spent a fair bit of time going over and back.

'It was a learning experience for everyone so a lot of 'to and fro'.

Type: Meeting at a Prison Education Unit
Date: 26th February 2005 at 10.30a.m.
Duration: 1 hour approx
Participant/s: TeamB Member3
Mode: Hand-written notes/ Taped
Format: Interview

'Teachers hated a day-off, anything that came out of education Curriculum development, NCVA etc also came from Ballyfermot in 1970's.'

TeamB Member3 has worked in prison education since 1976. In the mid-1970's there were no materials for adult education, so the prison education unit started to devise their own materials. TeamB Member3 came to Mountjoy in 1978. They had a lot of students who were educational disadvantaged and many with special needs. There is possibility to make considerable progress educationally whilst in prison. They know from the initial application forms whether they have literacy problems.

'There were no materials.. in the mid 70's.' 'If a guy wrote a story.. you wouldn't need to be a scientist to see they had difficulties writing'

Prison authorities commented that tension in the prison was reduced with the introduction of the prison education scheme; prison offices would informally comment on this at the time.

'He knew his job was easier because they were going to school'

The prison education unit operates on first-name terms, informal system.

It is also a totally voluntary system, students opt to attend education in the prison education unit. They are not paid extra to attend the education unit, and a criterion for acceptance into the education unit is that the student must want to be there.

'We would get a guy to talk to a tape-recorder and then type up the story, and that would become the (classroom) material'

The prison teachers have pioneered real adult education in Ireland. They have devised their own materials. Each student is interviewed individually on entry. Most have expressed a negative experience of school. The fact that they are on first-name

terms has helped. Also positive experience at the Education unit is spread and students come through word-of-mouth.

They offer a large range of subjects from Art to Maths from very basic level up to 3rd level, each student follows their own individual timetable. The education Unit is open from 9:30-12:15, followed by a 2 hour lunch, and then runs from 2:30-4 and from 5:30-7:30. Some students attend all day every day, others come for 2 or 3 mornings or afternoons a week.

The home-economics course is popular.

‘What makes it different in here, each fella follows his own individual timetable.’

Whilst attendance at the Education Unit is voluntary, it is not a ‘drop-in’ centre. If they present more than 3 times with implausible excuses, then they are withdrawn from the service – unwritten rule (always a healthy waiting list).

If the students are working on material they enjoy, they may progress onwards. In terms of literacy, they could be in 1:1 tuition to begin with and then progress to group tuition of 2 or 3 or four. The students on literacy scheme tend to have good peer support, it’s considered positive to be in the education unit. Also they do attend classes on a voluntary basis, so if they don’t like what’s on offer they will ‘vote with their feet’.

‘There’s peer pressure for them to attend.. if they’re still coming after 2 weeks they’re getting something out of it’.

There are not the same hang-ups about reading and writing in prison, the students develop a sense of camaradie. They’ve also a lot of humour. They are also extremely honest, ‘unadulterated honesty – can’t have ‘phoniness’ in prison’ .

‘You can’t get phoniness in here because they’re at the bottom of the heap’

Many of the people that are spearheading change in mainstream and further education sector have backgrounds in the prison education service.

.....

When NALA was small we used to do the Readers for them.

'NALA was a natural progression out of what was being done here.'

The Pathways Project is an EU project, funding through EU Integra, with partners in Europe. 'The beneficiary seem to be the providers.. our needs created the job'

In terms of getting honest feedback from students on materials presented, 'They wouldn't be do it to bull-shit me, they'd be doing it because it's not every day they get the chance for their opinion to be heard.. they can sometimes exaggerate the positive'

Two websites that are currently popular are www.penandclink.com and www.irish-prisonart.com.

They had questionnaires, filling in the blanks, that is a misnomer, our education is not geared towards improvement, it's geared towards redressing educational disadvantage.

'Literacy to most people is reading and writing, it can be dry, ...but this was a developmental approach, so how do you make it interesting... articles would have been adapted for use in class'

They got the money to produce 'It could be You' from EU funding, it didn't include the cost of the postage for sending out the materials to literacy centres around Ireland. TeamB Member3 feels that the package doesn't need to be up-dated. However he would order more of just the Readers as these seem to be very popular. 10,000?

The program Pathways was set-up by the CD VEC service to provide additional support to prisoners when they leave prison. In general 70% of prisoners re-offend. In pathways, they are individually evaluated to ascertain their strengths and weaknesses from an educational perspective. 241 have gone through the Pathways project, only 10% have left the service and only 8% have re-offended. The teachers in Pathways were prison service teachers so the in-mates felt that they were approachable.

One of the biggest developments in 'It could be you' were the Readers, they were A4 in size so they were easy to photocopy. The development of the Open Learning Centres was also significant.

Most of the material available in the literacy scheme were from England and not relevant to Irish Culture.

In 1996, the proposal for re-integration of offenders in society was approved with a condition that technology had to be included in the project. There were two aspects – pre-release and post-release phases. We decided to develop interactive software with multi-media aspects in three distinct areas – one in literacy 'It Could be You', one in electronics using Authorware and one in Irish. We wanted to also start 'Open Learning Centres' in some of our centres, so that students would have better access to facilities. They had a budget of about 25000 Irish punts for the three programs, and found 4 teachers willing to work on the project on Saturdays.

'I bought Authorware for 3000 pounds, .. we got it finished.. but it became an in-house project'

They discovered that 60-70% of the Irish population at that time played the lotto. TeamB Member1 in a Dublin prison established an Open Learning Centre there and agreed to become involved in the project. TeamB Member2 was brought in to program the software. They decided that they wanted a voice-over in an accent-less Dublin accent. It was recorded in the music room at another Dublin prison. The illustrations were done at a local college.

They stored the program on CD, but at that point had run out of money. The National Reading Initiative had finished after one-year and they had some money left over that they were willing to sponsor the 'It could be you' project.

It cost 27000 to print 2000 Readers. The Irish project cost 35-40000. The initial quote from XXX wasn't an excessive as we thought.

The good thing about 'It could be you' is that it's Irish Based and adopts the language based approach. It's also the nearest thing to a proper multi-media interactive program. There are 3 readers and 3 cassettes, one side of the cassette reads the Reader

slowly, the other side reads the Reader normal. The prisoners could use their walkman to listen to the Reader back in their cells. The Readers are very popular.

The teachers Handbook can be photocopied and relates to the three readers. The CD relates to Readers and the cassettes.

The CD forces them to be active, they must point cursor to each word in order to hear the word or to progress through a passage. 'You have to put the cursor on every word, in order to hear the sound'.

TeamB Member1 had 22 computers in her Open Learning Centre. She had a lovely colour scheme in her open learning, Green or Red for books of different levels of reading.

Students could put their earphones on and learn along side other students who were doing Open University courses, there was no stigma attached and it was 'independent learning'.

'There was no discrimination, they had their earphones on and were working away.' They don't come in for just literacy, they do art, creative writing, music etc.

There are 20 non-nationals from South Africa/ Brazil and other parts of Africa - Refugee/ Asylum seekers- currently in prison education unit.

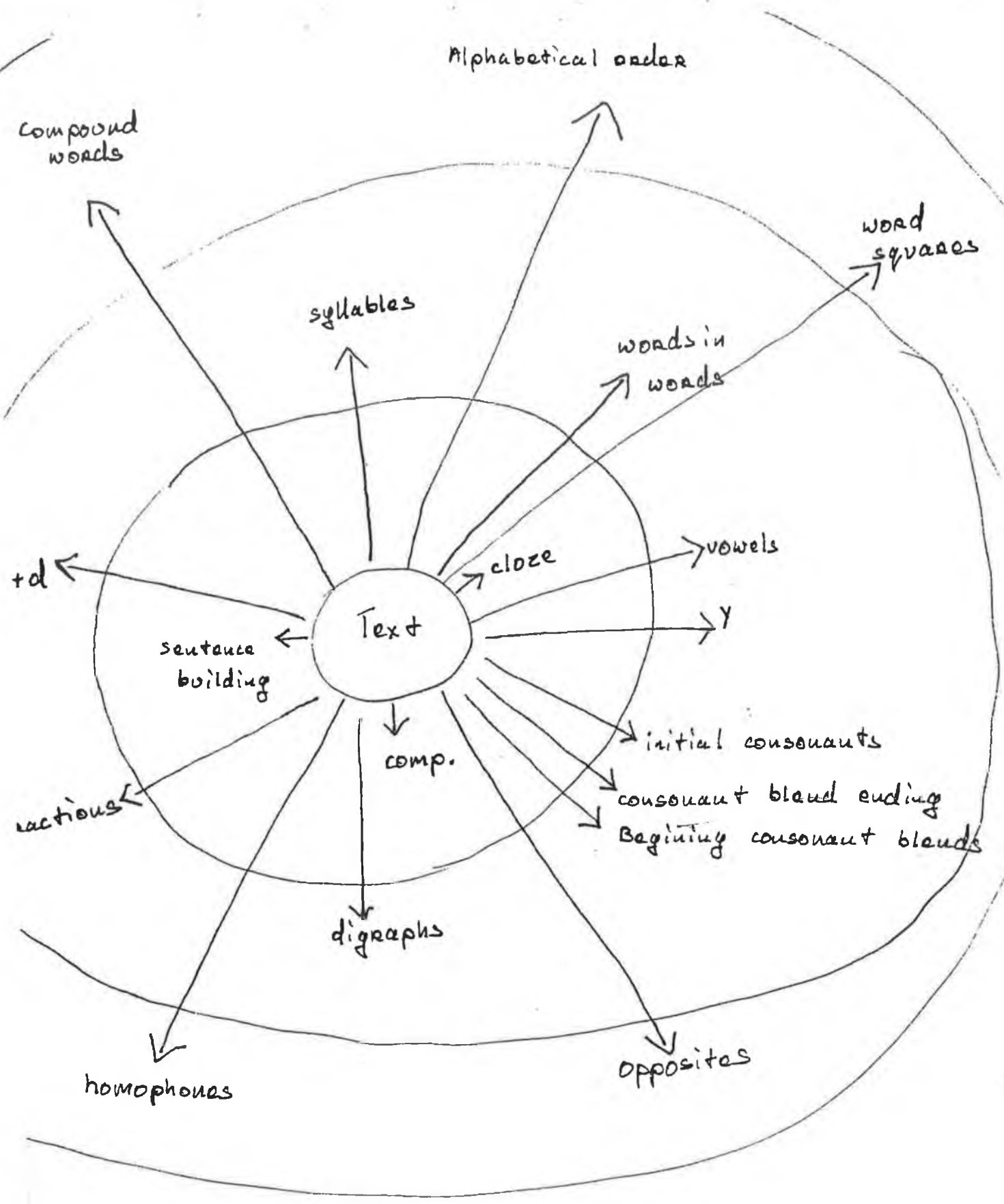
The software development process took about 2 years. It was launched in Dublin Castle by Minister Woods. They gave away more than 1000 copies and forwarded one to each literacy scheme in the country, also they sent to St. Michaels House and even to a centre in Belfast. It costs 5 punts to send/ copy out further copies, which have since sold out.

The underlying philosophy in prison education is honesty in relationships between each other.

Appendix I

Samples of Materials used in the development of the *It Could Be You* software

Screenshots of *It Could be You* Software



[Note: emphasis this aspect of conflict between Pat and the rest of the syndicate. More text needed!]

P. 11.

The others look at their
numbers every week.

~~at times~~ They talk ~~at work~~ about what
they would do if they
won the jackpot.

Bill wants to do up
his house from top to bottom.
~~wants to~~
John ~~says he would~~ sell his old house
and buy a new one.

P. 12.

Ann says she would buy
a new car
and take two months off work
~~go~~
to ~~travel~~ around the world.

~~Ma~~ Martin ~~dreams of~~ ~~paying~~ off
his £50,000 mortgage.

Illustration:

"I would take a long, long
holiday."--Statue of Liberty,
trains, planes, kangaroos etc.

CONTRACTIONS

- A. 1 - 6 recognising which letters to omit in contractions and where to put apostrophe. Clicking on letters with mouse here deletes letters - but only correct letters. Student clicks on letters in left column move together/contract.

One blank letter space remains where letters are deleted. Apostrophe falls into blank space. Contracted word changes colour in left column. Contracted word disappears from right column.

- B. 7 - 10 Student clicks on a word block. It highlights. Student clicks on its matching contraction. If correct it also highlights and both word block and contraction disappear from screen.

If incorrect match is made nothing changes. Information button tells student what to do. Option to move backwards, forwards, repeat

Word List

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. you're
can't
don't
it's
didn't
he's | 2. there's
I'm
let's
we'll
I'll
she's | 3. you'll
we're
we've
wasn't
we'd
what's | 4. they're
you'd
I've
weren't
couldn't
aren't |
| 5. doesn't
she'll
that's
he'll
isn't
I'd | 6. he'd
they've
here's
wouldn't
hasn't
hadn't | Lists 7 - 10
random selections from
previous lists | |

CONTRACTIONS

1.

Y O U A R E

C A N N O T

D O N O T

I T I S

D I D N O T

H E I S

YOU'RE

CAN'T

DON'T

IT'S

DIDN'T

HE'S

2.

T H E R E I S

I A M

L E T U S

W E W I L L

I W I L L

S H E I S

THERE'S

I'M

LET'S

WE'LL

I'LL

SHE'S

3.

Y O U W I L L

W E A R E

W E H A V E

W A S N O T

W E H A D

W H A T I S

YOU'LL

WE'RE

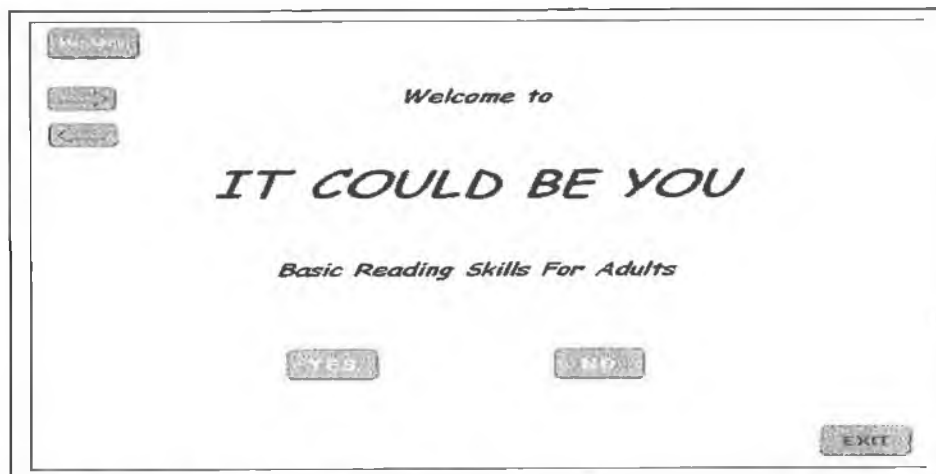
WE'VE

WASN'T

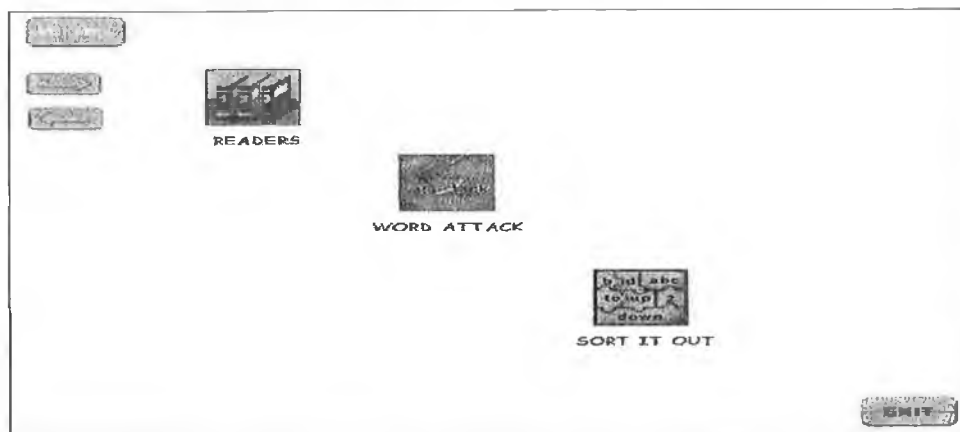
WE'D

WHAT'S

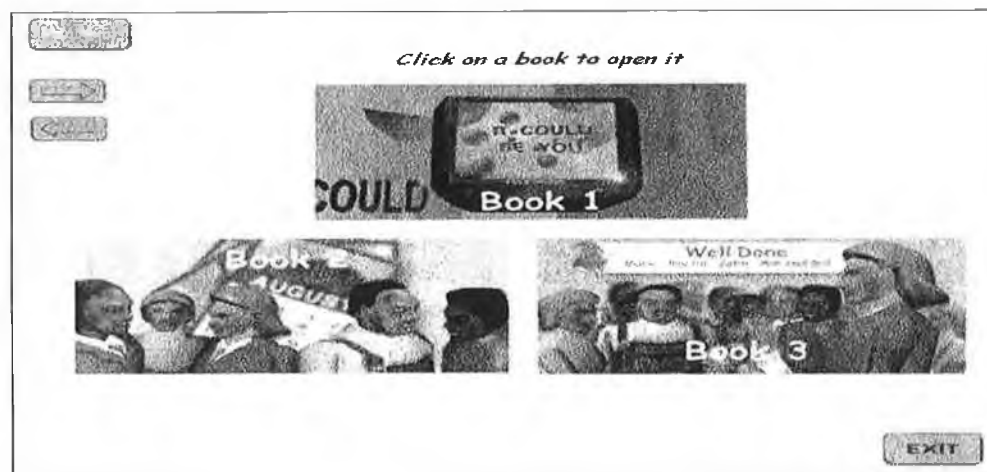
Screenshots of It Could Be You Software



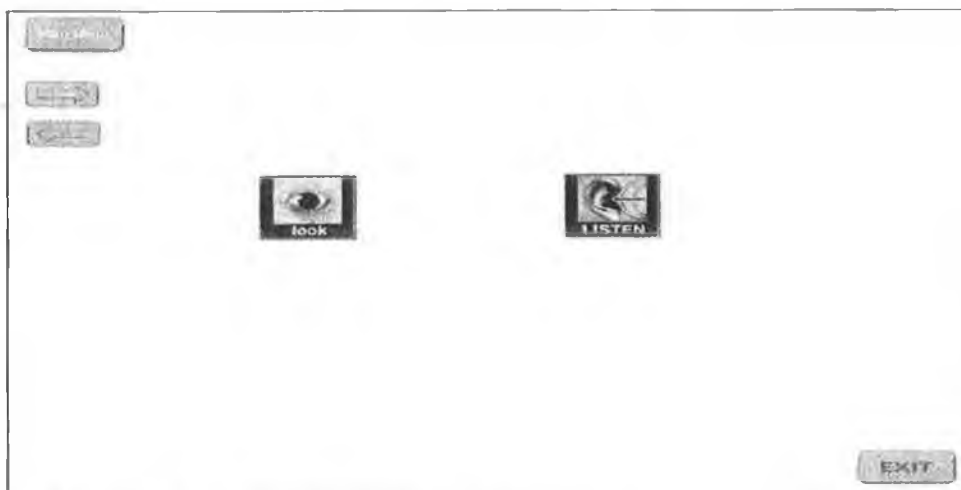
1. It Could Be You -- Homepage



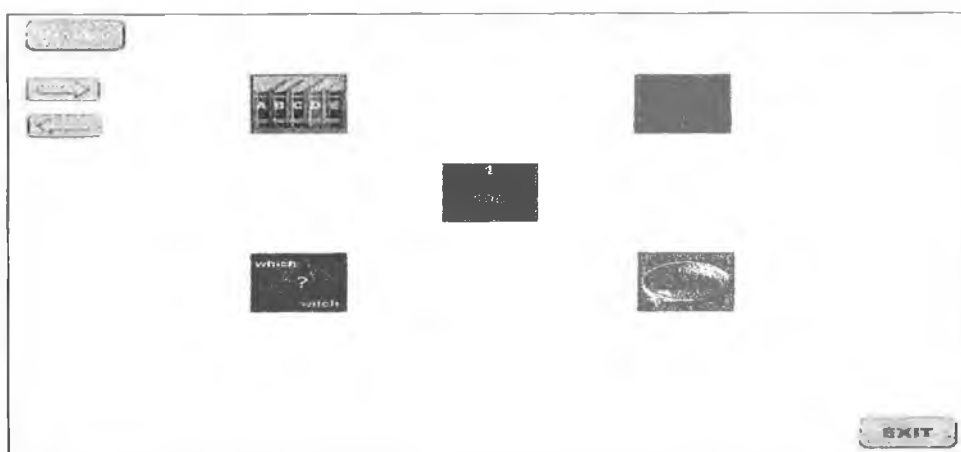
2. It Could Be You -- Menu Page



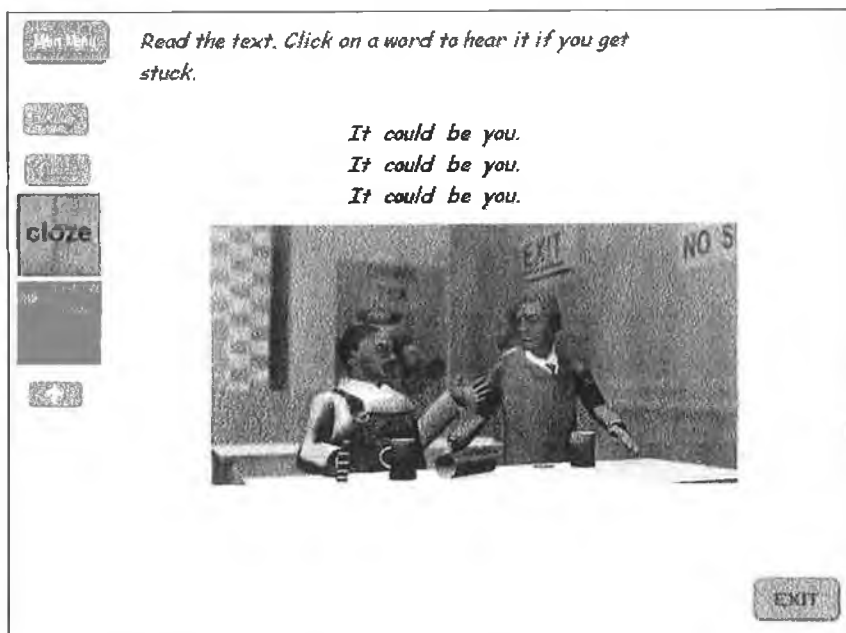
3. It Could Be You -- Readers section



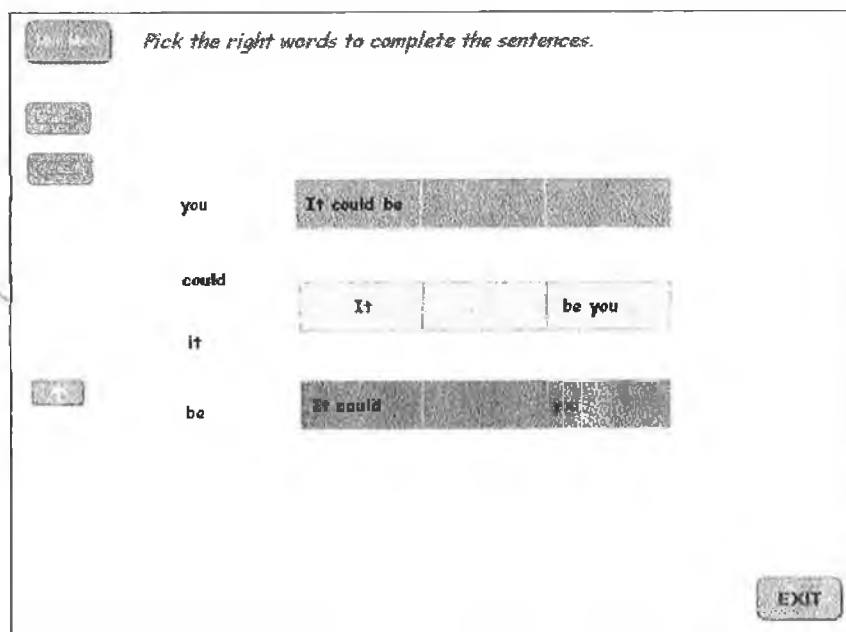
4. It Could Be You -- Word Attack Section



5. It Could Be You -- Sort It Out Section



6. It Could Be You -- Layout of the Reader Screen



7. It Could Be You -- Sample Cloze Exercise

Find the Pairs Find the pairs. Drag the words on the left to their match on the right

about

beside

bob

did

bad

bed

dob	about	deside
bad	aboud	bob
dab	adout	did
deb	bib	bed
beside	ded	bid
bod	bedside	bab

EXIT

8. It Could Be You – Sample Find the Pairs Exercise

Find the Pairs Some pairs of words sound the same but they look different and have different meanings. Drag the words to the correct spaces.

two

of

buy

to

by

off

Martin would like to		a new car.
Pat goes away on		weeks' holidays.
John would like to pay		his mortgage.
Bill goes		the local pub.
Now they have five out		five.
Pay your money to Mary		Tuesday.

EXIT

9. It Could Be You -- Sample Words that have different meanings

It Could Be You Screenshots

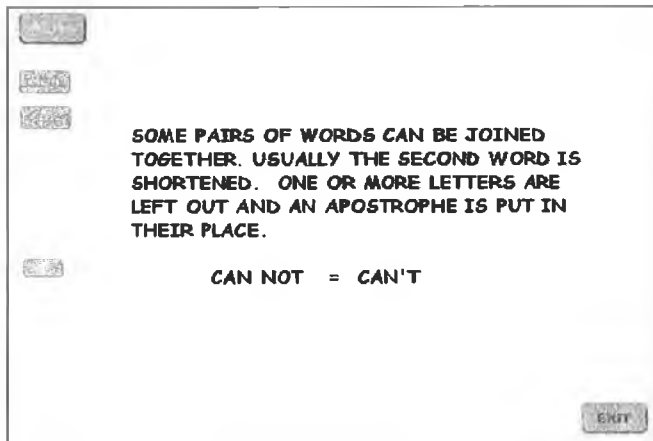


Figure 1: *It Could Be You* Contractions Instructions On-screen (Instructions are read out)

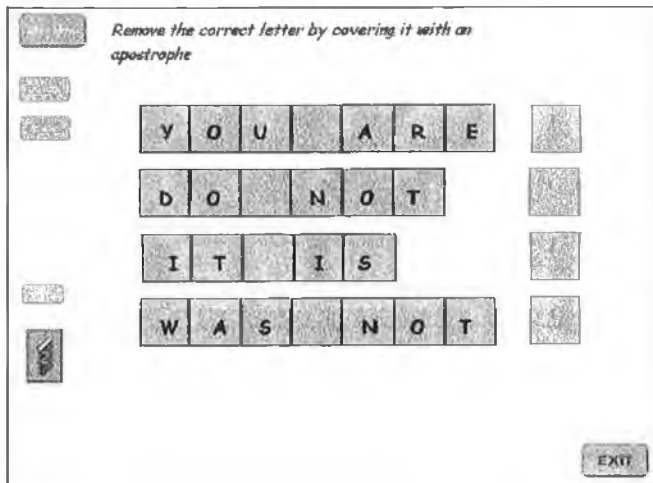


Figure 2: *It Could Be You* Contractions Exercise

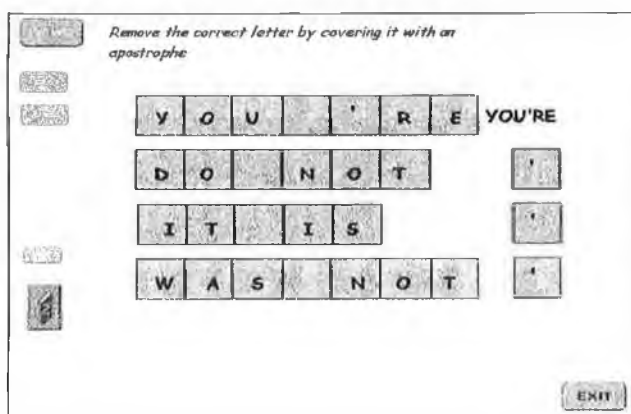


Figure 3: *It Could Be You* Contractions - Click and Drag to correct position

Appendix J

Summaries of Interviews with the *Micro website* Design Team

Interviews with the 'Micro' website Design Team

Interviewees:

- **TeamC Member1**
- **TeamC Member2**

Type: Meeting at Centre2 Adult Learning Centre

Date: 14th December 2004

Duration: 2 hours 30 mins approx

Participant/s: Adult Literacy Organiser and Website Designer

Mode: Hand-written notes/ not taped

Format: Interview

Met with TeamC Member1 & TeamC Member2 12.30-3p.m.

TeamC Member1 reviewed software recently that looked good but wasn't. It purported to be interactive and enable discussion – in reality it encompassed closed text based on discussion. The topics examined in the software were very controversial, euthanasia or vivisection. The cost of the software was prohibitive, huge cost for user licenses and software.

TeamC Member1 commented that there are not that many suppliers of adult literacy software in Ireland. Software was found by looking on the Internet for companies selling software. Also looked for recommendations from websites of Literacy Organisations. Also checked family literacy websites to see what software they recommended. Also review catalogues such as the one by PrimEd. However PrimED is geared towards primary education, has things like animated rabbits that wouldn't be appropriate in the adult context. However the levels within the primary software and the tasks are usually fine.

CENTRE2 also uses NALA literacy tools website. They use it with students at end of year, students have reported favourably on using the NALA website. Centre2 has also accessed British literacy websites for use in class, particularly those with interactive tasks.

In addition, CENTRE2 are developing their own interactive website. There will interactive tasks, similar to 'Who wants to be a millionaire', as well as Wordsearch etc that can be downloaded and printed for use in class. It is anticipated that the activities would be updated regularly. The purpose of the CENTRE2 website is two-fold; it gives CENTRE2 a profile on the Internet and it will also provide access for those students wished to extend their learning from CENTRE2 at home and provide focused learning opportunities for our students. The problem with using the Internet

at present is that it presents unfocused learning opportunities. 'It's a bit like saying to someone who has never been shopping in the supermarket, go shopping.. too vague..' It is also envisaged that the web-site would be accessed by students who do not want to come to CENTRE2.

The CENTRE2 website will be a learning tool. It's in the early development phases. They have looked at some literacy websites and some business/ training websites to get ideas. The designer is local.

The influences for the website came from NALA initially. Ideas such as having interactive exercises similar to those on NALA website were good. They also reviewed American and Canadian websites. One corporate website that dealt with improving language skills was particularly useful. Users were drawn into using the service with simple exercises, then they had to signup for the more advanced sessions.

Centre2 Literacy service has had difficulties in developing the South of the county. Currently they are running a scheme to up-skill tutors to work in this part of the county. The problem is that the potential students live in remote parts of the county and there is no regular bus service to bring them in to CENTRE2. There are also issues of anonymity. The development of the CENTRE2 website is seen as a partial solution to the needs of students in the Southern part of Centre2 county. It should highlight what the basic services are on offer at CENTRE2, whilst providing a 'hook' to getting people to join the literacy service.

The quality framework initiative is being implemented at CENTRE2. It involves getting feedback from learners in a number of areas. This has proved labour intensive. An electronic survey has been designed for students at CENTRE2, it has 20 questions for students to give feedback on. The information is gathered and collated. CENTRE2 hope to put it online eventually. CENTRE2 think this is a good idea, as students can get a feel for the e-voting experience. It helps build confidence around using electronic media. The option to print off the survey and manually fill it in is still an option.

The frame of the CENTRE2 website is as follows: Publicity area, Link to [other literacy websites] and NALA, Staff section – with names and pictures of staff so that potential students can become familiar with individuals within the organisation, it's less intimidating, Notes section – with specific worksheets, downloads, Link to the main VEC website.

The Design process:

Who was consulted in the design process?

First Phase: TeamC Member1 decided it was important for centre, so spoke with web designer TeamC Member2 – They had a loose conversation around whether this could be done. TeamC Member1 had a vision in her head of what she wanted but wasn't sure how practical it was. TeamC Member1 and TeamC Member2 had a further series of meetings together and with staff at the centre around what they wanted to do and what they wanted to get out of the enterprise.

TeamC Member1 spent time explaining the ethos of the centre to TeamC Member2, as this would have been an unusual design process for the designer. TeamC Member2 then broke down the 'ramblings' into a structure. TeamC Member1 felt he did an excellent job interpreting her ideas. Then a number of templates were prepared.

The website is not live yet, they still need to register a domain for the website.

At present, they are still working on the content. For this phase, they intend to 'put-up a 'scaled-down' version first, which would consist of the homepage and further pages on services, staff, courses, section for downloads and a links page.

They intend for students and staff to test this proto-type, experiential approach, they intend to survey staff and students to find out what they think.

The content will be decided upon and designed by TeamC Member1 and research workers, TeamC Member1 feels it's important to keep the number of researchers down from her workplace as she will need some staff to review the website.

It is anticipated that the website will go 'live' by mid-end of March 2005. The main problem at moment is trying to get the right domain.

Future of the Internet in Literacy Education

The amount of people coming through literacy programs with NO ability in text is rare. Reaching isolated populations is important. The Internet could be used more effectively if Irish Government provided the technology infrastructure. 'Mum's at home with small children can find it difficult to access literacy courses – The internet would certainly be an option for them.

The main barriers to using the Internet at present are as follows:

The target group don't have technological facilities and won't have. Other strategies need to be put in place so that farmers in isolated areas can have access to literacy services.

The cost of computers have dropped so cost as an obstacle is diminishing.

Homes in urban and semi-urban areas have computers and Internet access generally. Self-confidence is a huge barrier to using Internet. Many literacy learners have a fear of computers.

Internet is less text-dependent than other modes of learning. This would appeal to those who have problems reading text.

Many using computers fear they can 'break it'

There is an increasing use of computers/ Internet in schools so there is an increasing needs for parents of school going children to become computer literate. Programs such as Read, Write, Now are raising an awareness of the importance of technology for literacy learners.

The biggest development that will impact on literacy learners is the development of voice recognition software which can be used to read content on web-pages.

TeamC Member1 would consider the CENTRE2 website to be successful if it brings in new learners and if other 'recognised' literacy providers have a link from their website to the CENTRE2 website.



TEAMC MEMBER2 – web designer joined in discussion now..

TeamC Member2 is in the process of designing an interactive games similar to ‘who wants to be a Millionaire’ as a ‘hook’ to bring students back to website. There will be about fifty questions graded in difficulty from 1-5, a random question generator that picks the question to be presented to learner.

He anticipates that the learner would start with basic questions in reading, writing or arithmetic. There would be ten different levels, so it wouldn’t matter what level you are at it would always find something. The learner would have to choose from four possible answers, a, b, c, d. There would be immediate notification is answer is right. There would be 15 steps to the top. If the learner can’t answer a question, then they would have to go back to the first question. There would be ‘Hints’ instead of phone a friend or Ask the Audience. TeamC Member2 feels that this game would serve as a ‘hook’ to get learners to use the website, and that the more that would come, the more publicity would be generated.

TeamC Member2 watched the Read, Write, Now series to get ideas on the best way for literacy learners to learn. In particular, he noted the structured set of steps that were presented for learning spelling etc. He feels that it’s important not to make the exercises too easy, as learners would get bored. He feels that by developing well-structured questions, it would keep it challenging for all learners with varying abilities of literacy. He said that he also anticipates including grammatical guidelines with the exercises.

TeamC Member2 feels that if there is too much content that the learners would get lost. He tried to simplify the content into basic steps and then build it back up.

The first step in eth design proves was researching other websites to see what was online. He then talked with TeamC Member1 about good and bad features of existing websites and discussed down to last detail what could be learned from these websites. The main learning was that the content had to be divided into steps, that you ‘can’t cut corners’ in terms of grammatical guidelines.

Then both TeamC Member2 and TeamC Member1 agreed on what the aim of the website was and how that fitted in with the ethos of CENTRE2. They came to a common understanding on this, but there is no written brief. The process involved a 'conversation over months'. They agreed that the design and features had to be driven by the vision for CENTRE2 and feed into that vision.

'Worst thing that anyone can do is to hand me a piece of paper and say, do that'

TeamC Member2

'Ideas flow more fluently in conversation, can elaborate on some point if needed'

TeamC Member2 led the technical design. He emphasised a clean design, which consisted of an uncluttered interface with careful consideration of colours used. The visual aspect was very important. Also it was very important that the website was accessible to target group.

'More information came through conversation' TeamC Member2

'Given a flavour of what was needed' TeamC Member1

They had lots of informal meetings and casual conversations. After numerous meetings, they spiralled inwards to agree on the design of the website. TeamC Member1 felt that she was 'vague and nebulous' at times, whilst TeamC Member2 came back with 'structure'.

TeamC Member2 feels that it's important that no stigma is attached to the website, it should be open to everyone. He emphasised that the wording won't offend anyone and that the learning resources will be open to all 'everyone can learn no matter what level'.

He avoided design overkill – no bells and whistles. There will be no audio, no jingles as he feels that these would detract from intention of website. The games do require the use of Macromedia.

TeamC Member1 has worked with other web designers in the past but she felt that they went overboard by having too much content. They were ineffective as a learning tool.

What constitutes success:

Firstly, if the test version is launched, this would be progress as it would allow correction to material presented. They would also measure success by the number of hits to the website. They would also ask students entering this centre how they heard about the centre, and this could be used to determine if the website is useful for raising awareness of existence of CENTRE2. If ten people get value, then that's sufficient – they are not concerned with getting 250,000 hits a month. TeamC Member2 added that if other educational outlets have a link to CENTRE2 that would be good.

TeamC Member2 doesn't see an end-date for finishing work on the website, however for phase one he anticipates July/ Aug 2005. He intend to up-skill staff at CENTRE2 on uploading information to the website. He feels that he can always contribute more with the development of new technologies – website can always be improved.

TeamC Member1 feels that in terms of pedagogy – waiting for the technology to catch up so that the website can cater for multiple intelligences etc. She feels that at the moment, website are only catering for visual, linguistic and text based intelligences, there are opportunities for use of audio. But kinaesthetic would be applicable in this context. She feels that there may be room for development of chat-rooms/ message boards sometime in the future. However she feels that management of discussion groups can cause legal problems 'grey area', and they can be difficult to moderate. She feels that 'message boards' would be much more manageable. She also feels that it would be useful to have some facility for 'voice to text' online but there would be huge problems with that due to regional accents. Multi-user functionality would present a real problem here. I thanked TeamC Member1 and TeamC Member2 and the meeting ended around 3p.m.

The web developer came up with an innovative way of demonstrating how to form numbers and letters to literacy learners.