

Literacies matter! Scottish and Global Perspectives 10th Sept 2010, University of Glasgow

CHAIRS & SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES AND SUMMARIES OF PRESENTATIONS

Professor Kay Livingston: Director, International, Research and Innovation at Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and member of the UKNC for UNESCO Scotland



Biography:

Kay Livingston is a professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow holding the Chair in Educational Research, Policy and Practice. She is currently on secondment to Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), which is the public body that has the lead responsibility for the development of curriculum, assessment and technology in Scottish schools. She is the Director of International, Research and Innovation in LTS and her work includes research and development projects in innovative models of teacher professional development, international education, intercultural education and leading and influencing strategic change in Scotland and beyond. Central to her work is the development of learning and teaching strategies to encourage teachers and students to take an active role in the learning process and prepare them for life and work in a global society. In both these current roles Professor Livingston works closely with researchers, policy-makers and practitioners at international, national and local levels to improve the quality of education. She has been Principal Investigator in a number of funded research projects in Scotland, other European countries and USA and provides advice on education policy and practice drawing on her knowledge and experience of education in a global context. Professor Livingston is leading the development of the Confucius Classrooms in Scotland and she is a member of the Scottish China Education Network. She is a member of the UNESCO Scotland Committee and the UNESCO UK Education

Michael Cross: Deputy Director, Further and Adult Education Division, Scottish Government



Biography:

Michael Cross has worked in government service for over 30 years, arriving with the Scottish Government in May 2001. He is currently a Deputy Director in the Scottish Government's Lifelong Learning Directorate. Since March last year, Michael has led on the Scottish Government's relations with two of the public bodies at the heart of the Scottish skills agenda - the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland. Michael is additionally responsible for policy, legislation and relationship (both bilaterally and collectively) covering Scotland's 43 further education colleges; and for oversight of policy on adult literacy and numeracy, community learning and development and English for speakers of other languages. Before taking up his current post, Michael led delivery of both Determined to Succeed, the Government's strategy for enterprise in education; and of More Choices, More Chances, the Government's approach to reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training. Before moving to Scotland, Michael held a range of positions in what is now the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Summary of Michael Cross' address:

Michael Cross, Deputy Director, Further and Adult Education Division, Lifelong Learning Directorate, Scottish Government will outline the Scottish Government's developments in literacy and numeracy policy.

Nearly ten years on from the *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland Report (2001)*, the Scottish Government is planning to refresh its approach. Using key findings from the recently published *Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009*, Michael will outline the Scottish Government's future plans for adult literacies against a background of economic challenge. Michael will comment further on the forthcoming Literacy Action Plan and the updated Scottish Government's Skills Strategy.

He will highlight how literacies cannot sit in isolation within government - that it is recognised as a contributing factor to a wide range of government ambitions such as health and well being, financial capability, employability and citizenship. Also, he will emphasise the need for stronger partnership working to plan and coordinate provision and ensure resources are fully utilised so that learners can access the best learning opportunities.

Dr Adama Ouane: Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)



Biography:

Adama Ouane is Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg. He was the Director of the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) in Hamburg from 2000 until its closure in June 2006 and transformation into the

UIL. 1995-1999 he was Senior Programme Specialist as well as leading specialist responsible for literacy, adult education, non-formal and basic education at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. 1977-1982 he was Deputy National Director-General for Literacy, Adult Education and applied Linguistics in Mali, Professor at the École Normale Supérieure in Bamako and Consultant to UNICEF, UNDP, the Agence de la Francophonie and The World Bank.

Dr Ouane has been the main author of a number of major education papers and reports prepared by UNESCO and has published many books and papers dealing with literacy, post-literacy and continuing education, adult and lifelong learning, mother tongue and multilingual education. He was Executive Editor of the world's longest-running, international journal of comparative education, the *International Review of Education* 1985-1987. He coordinated the UNESCO NGO/Civil Society Consultation on Literacy and Adult Education and has organized major events around the world to promote adult education at policy and professional levels. 2008 he has been admitted as Member of the Hall of Fame for International Adult and Continuing Education. Having been one of the key organizers of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) he had full responsibility for preparing and conducting CONFINTEA VI.

Summary of Adama Ouane's address:

Literacy: Where do we stand today?

Literacy is central to quality education. It is essential for sustainable development and is becoming key to survival at all levels of life, work and learning in an increasingly complex, changing and demanding society. As an integral part of the right to education, literacy is an instrument for achieving other rights, and is the foundation of lifelong learning. Yet literacy remains a challenge. There are 759 million illiterate adults in the world today – and around the same number again has only limited overall literacy proficiency.

This keynote will look at the status of literacy today in a world characterised by rapid transformations. It will begin by examining the broad understanding and conceptualisation of literacy as the basic knowledge and skills needed to respond to change throughout the lifespan. In this respect, it is a constantly evolving concept that is moulded by socio-economic circumstances, as well as by technological and societal changes. The crucial role that literacy plays in equipping individuals with the learning competences needed for personal and community development will be discussed. The developmental relevance of literacy will also be reviewed.

The central question that this keynote will raise is not “What can literacy do for people?” but “What can people do with literacy?” Its benefits are numerous and multifaceted but cannot, and should not be, limited to its external impact and influence, for the acquisition of literacy skills has an “intrinsic relevance” to each and every one of us under various life contexts and individual circumstances.

The keynote will draw on evidence from the 2010 UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, as well as a number of examples of good practice. It will also offer a brief review of UNESCO's flagship Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) (2006-2015) and a summary of the pertinent recommendations and commitments laid down in the Belém Framework for Action (CONFINTEA VI). Finally, it will close with a call for intensified partnerships and increased investments that will generate and maintain high-quality literacy programmes supported by appropriate data and indicators. It will argue that the current economic, financial and social crisis should not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle to literacy and an “excuse” to abandon our efforts to take the cause forward. Instead, we should view it as an opportunity to

create truly sustainable systems that will promote literacy for all, today and in the long term.

Ralf St.Clair: Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Social Sciences and leader of the Adult Education postgraduate programme, University of Glasgow



Biography:

Ralf St.Clair has been working in adult literacies and adult learning for around twenty-five years in the UK, Canada and the United States. He continues to be involved in practitioner research and issues of accountability in all three countries. He is based at the University of Glasgow, where he is Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Social Sciences and leader of the Adult Education postgraduate programme. Ralf is widely published, and his book “Why literacy matters” will be published by NIACE in the autumn of 2010.

Summary of Ralf St Clair’s address:

Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009: Two key messages

In 2009 the Scottish Government commissioned a team of researchers across Europe, lead by the presenter, to measure the literacies levels of the Scottish population using the same instrument as the 1996 UK version of the International Adult Literacy Survey. The report was published in mid-August 2010 as the Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009. This presentation focuses on two key findings from the survey of almost 2000 Scottish residents.

The first message is that measured literacies skills are not as weak as the results from 1996 suggested. Comparisons are not possible because of different sampling approaches and analytical models, but the 2009 results point to a population with strong average literacies capabilities. Almost three quarters of people meet the OECD’s threshold for modern industrialised societies and only 4% face serious challenges in their interactions with text.

The second finding is more subtle, but is perhaps yet more important. There is very strong evidence that the distribution of literacies capabilities follows that same gradients as other indicators of poverty. In other words, the poorer a person is, the more likely they are to face challenges in their use of written language. It is not possible to state which way round the causation is, but the relationships are strong and clear.

The good news about overall skills levels is balanced by bad news about who actually has those skills. People who are advantaged tend to have stronger literacy capabilities as one of their advantages, a strong argument for literacies to move up the social justice agenda.

Professor Bridget Fowler (replacing Prof. Gerda Siann): Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences, University of Glasgow



Biography:

Bridget Fowler is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Glasgow. She specialises in social theory, Marxist-feminist studies and the sociology of culture. She first wrote about literacy in a book on women and popular literature called *The Alienated Reader* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991). Since that book - which lent on Pierre Bourdieu for its theories of literary tastes - she has explored further the work of Bourdieu. She has published *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (Sage, 1997), and edited a collection, entitled *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture* (Blackwell, 2000). She has also applied Bourdieu's theory to a major cross-national study of obituaries (see *The Obituary as Collective Memory*, Routledge, 2007). At present she is continuing to writing on popular literature, including a critical engagement with Bourdieu's ideas on the subject.

Professor Lalage Bown: Professor Emeritus of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Glasgow



Biography:

Lalage Bown is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Scotland, Fellow Special Category, Educational Institute of Scotland and holds a meritorious service award from the WEA Scotland. Working for over 30 years in African universities gave her an interest in Literacies, including taking part in the establishment of a UNESCO literacy institute at the University of Ibadan. In 1990, she was commissioned to undertake "ground-breaking" research on women's literacy, which remains a research concern. In 2009, she gave the International Literacy Day Lecture at UNESCO, Paris.

Summary of Lalage Bown's address:

"Literacy, like education in general, is not the driving force of historical change. It is not the only means of liberation, but it is an essential instrument for all social change". Declaration of Persepolis, 1975.

This quotation from a major international consensus on literacy reminds us not to overclaim for the results of literacy acquisition, but also gives a starting point for discussion: literacy is an essential component of any strategy for change and development, whether in Scotland or elsewhere. Accepting this, I will make three main points. First, international commitment to UPE will not have the expected impact unless school education is supported by adults who themselves have and value literacy and numeracy skills of varying kinds. Investment in schools will be fortified by complementary investment in adult literacy.

Secondly, in modern societies, persons who don't have access to skills ranging from reading digits on a mobile phone to following written instructions, to keeping records, to IT are at a lifelong disadvantage compared to those who do. Besides affronting human dignity, such imbalance is unhealthy for societies and communities as a whole. Worldwide, the majority of those without access are women.

Thirdly, literacy at any age carries a cultural component. As Dr Vincent Cable says: "Philistinism doesn't advance economic development".

Professor Michael Omolewa: former Ambassador of Nigeria to UNESCO, and member of the Commonwealth Advisory Council on Teacher Mobility, Recruitment and Migrations



Biography:

Prof. Omolewa was President of the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO, former Dean of the Faculty of Education and Head of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria; he is also former Deputy Chairman of the Governing Board of the Commonwealth of Learning and former Ambassador of Nigeria to UNESCO. He is currently a member of the Commonwealth Advisory Council on Teacher Mobility, Recruitment and Migrations.

Summary of Michael Omolewa's address:

Interpreting the world through the written word

This paper begins with the observation that in spite of the fruitful research and excellent progress made by educators and literacy studies scholars who have worked in the field of literacy, there is still room for the advancement of literacy discourse. Apart from suggesting that the role of the written word in development may have been underestimated, the paper explores the content of literacy, touching on the composition of letters, the written word, the reading texts and materials. In addition to examining the major elements of literacy: the written word and the reading of the word, the paper recognises that literacy seems to have defied a single definition of literacy and many practitioners have continued to define literacy simply as the ability to read and write. The paper also identifies the global benefits of the written word and underscores the dominant role literacy has played in the development of man and society. It cites the findings of specific literacy projects carried out in the rural, poor and excluded populations of the developing world and underscores the potential of the written word in the promotion and improvement of global peace and society's social and political circumstances. The paper also explores the continued relevance of literacy in the eradication of poverty and issues related to immigration. It further underscores the crucial role of literacy in the provision of an efficient health care service and observes that a person's capacity to search for, and read vital information, such as drug prescriptions, and a patient's ability to make good choices among the various choices available within the health care delivery could make significant contributions towards the running of an effective

health care system. It then concludes by highlighting the continued societal benefits that come with a greater investment in literacy. The paper ends with an acknowledgement of the special role which Scotland had played in promoting literacy around the world, and most particularly in parts of Africa.

Dr Cesar Guadalupe: Head Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme, Assessment of Learning Outcomes (LAMP/ALO), Acting Head Science, Communication and Culture, **UNESCO Institute for Statistics**



Biography:

Peruvian Sociologist (BA and Licenciado –Pontifical Catholic University of Peru; MA Social and Political Thought and Doctor of Education –University of Sussex, UK) with an extensive experience in policy-oriented social research. He has developed his professional life conducting activities at sub-national, national, and international settings (in Latin America and at a global level) in both academic institutions as well as in the national and international civil service. Cesar has led multidisciplinary research teams since 1992. He joined UNESCO in 2001 where he led the regional programme on education statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean until 2007 when he was transferred to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics’ headquarters in order to lead this Institute’s activities in the field of assessing learning outcomes (particularly, the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme- LAMP). Cesar is 47, married and has a daughter.

Summary of Cesar Guadalupe’s address:

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics is conducting the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) which is intended to measure reading and numeracy skills of youths and adults. This programme started by relying on previous experiences in North America and several OECD countries. Nevertheless, the linguistic, cultural, and institutional diversity of the countries where the programme has already been validated (ten languages from six different families, using three scripts and two numeral systems) posed several conceptual and methodological challenges.

The presentation will touch upon some of these major challenges and explore how these are intertwined with significant cultural, political and ethical issues. In so doing, the presentation will show how technical approaches to measuring skills can not be seen detached from the realities and perspectives underlying them.

Finally, the presentation will briefly discuss about the feasibility of measuring reading and numeracy skills in a comparable manner, and the linkages between literacy skills and the discussions on the literate environment and other “literacies.”