

International ELINET Symposium 2018
“Literacy in the 21st Century: Participation – Inclusion – Equity”.

July 23-24, 2018, Cologne, Germany



Section V Adult literacy programmes. New practices and perspectives

Chair: Aydin Durgunoglu, University of Minnesota Duluth

Monday, July 23, at 16.00–17.30 **Location:** Seminar Building / Room S 24

LITERACY CHANGES LIVES.

Benefits of engaging in adult learning: the views of adult learners in Ireland

Presenter:

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Abstract:

The National Adult Literacy Agency is committed to supporting people with literacy and numeracy difficulties so that they can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. Literacy enables people to take part in a meaningful way in society. It opens up opportunity, enriches life experience and promotes equality. People with good literacy are more likely to be employed, to earn better incomes and to have better health.

NALA carries out research to show why literacy matters to Irish society, to inform policy and practice and to help improve teaching and learning. Our most recent research projects have captured literacy and numeracy practices among practitioners and the views and experiences of adult learners. In this session we present the findings from research carried out in 2017 with adult learners. We explored with them their perspectives of engaging in adult literacy tuition and the benefits it has had on different areas of their lives including personal development, health and wellbeing and family.

The research explored these and other key issues using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This involved using an anonymous online survey, carrying out a focus group and conducting individual interviews. In total 32 learners took part in the research and these were:

- Adults learning in the distance learning service delivered by NALA
- Adults learning in education programmes delivered by a homeless agency
- Adults learners who are part of the NALA student subcommittee.

The research uncovered uniformity in the responses of the learners. They reported that engagement in learning has been beneficial to their lives in a number of ways. Alongside developing their literacy skills they reported an increase in their self-confidence and in their health and wellbeing. Their accounts provide an invaluable insight on the benefits of engaging in learning from a uniquely learner perspective.

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References:

Education 2030: Sustainable Development Goal 4

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656E.pdf>

3rd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)

<http://uil.unesco.org/system/files/grale-3.pdf>

Bio Note:

Tina Byrne has an MSc. in Applied Social Research and a B.A. in Sociology and Social Policy, both from the Trinity College. She is currently serving as Research Officer at the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) in Ireland, carrying out managed and commissioned research into adult literacy issues. Before NALA, she served as a Research Officer at the Children’s Research Centre at Trinity College. She has published numerous papers at these research centres on topics such as adult numeracy, literacy, financial literacy, motivation, English as a Second Language Learners, tutor development and translating research into practice.