Why Literacy Matters
Understanding the Effects of Literacy Education for Adults

Ralf St Clair
September 2010
£24.95 (+P&P)

Why Literacy Matters offers a contribution to the continuing debate about both accountability in adult learning in general terms and the specific development of systems in adult literacy and numeracy. In recent years, a number of arguments have been advanced in support of adult literacy and numeracy programmes, such as suggestions that they contribute to a more productive workforce and address the inadequacies of schooling. There have been ever-increasing demands for such programmes to prove their worth, but a lack of hard evidence. Through a presentation of the wider outcomes of literacy and numeracy learning, discussing the complexities and potential of such work, this book is an attempt to address some of these questions, by firstly examining the research evidence, then looking at what would be a useful step in understanding the effects of literacy education, with strategic suggestions.

Dr Ralf St Clair has worked in adult literacy in the UK, Canada and the United States. He currently teaches at the University of Glasgow, and works with partners around Europe, North America and Asia on understanding the effects and the significance of adult literacy programmes.

Order online at http://shop.niace.org.uk, by emailing niaceorders@omsg.co.uk, or by calling 0870 600 2400

(Telephone order line is open 8am–9pm Mon–Fri and 9am–6pm at weekends; for full terms and conditions see http://shop.niace.org.uk/terms)
Contents

Introduction

Part one: How can we think about the effects of literacy education?
1. Three ways to look at literacy: A brief review
2. Literacies as capabilities
3. Understanding outcomes
4. Measuring matters

Part two: Reviewing the evidence
5. The literate mind
6. Economic effects
7. Literacy and health
8. Family values
9. Social and political impacts

Part three: Reflections and conclusions
10. Literacy matters

References