

Is This Research?

by Margaret Chambers

■ Here are my rambling ruminations on research. (I like alliteration.) They are in the order in which they came to mind; not in chronological order.

What enables this level of informal research to take place in our program?

- A very supportive board who have always allowed staff a great deal of leeway to be creative
- A dedicated staff who want to deliver programming that works
- Funding from NLS
- Support from Province of Manitoba funders

What may block this kind of informal research from happening?

- Not recognizing that problem-solving, when

approached in an analytical way, is research

- Seeing problem-solving as someone else's responsibility and therefore not becoming engaged in the process of looking for solutions
- Not always having time to work on solutions
- Being afraid of trying new ways of doing things in case they don't work. ■

MARGARET CHAMBERS was instructor and coordinator at the Interlake Adult Learning Association in Manitoba for many years. These charts are from the wildcard she produced for the national framework project, *Focused on Practice*. To read the full wildcard, go to www.literacyjournal.ca, click on Crazy Wisdom, choose Wild Cards, then Manitoba.

TRIGGER	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	ACTIONS	RESULTS
Helping learners move along			
<p>Very few of our learners were moving from literacy programs to mature grade 12 accreditation. They told us they weren't confident of success. They also said that they preferred to stay in the literacy program where they felt safe and supported.</p> <p>The adult learning centre where mature grade 12 credits are offered often has adults registered who have gaps in their learning and aren't succeeding in credit courses.</p>	<p>How could we make the transition into adult learning centres safer and seamless for our learners?</p> <p>How could students registering in adult learning centres who would rather drop out than go to a literacy program be supported so they would stay in school and succeed?</p>	<p>We asked two adult learning centres to partner with us and have a literacy program situated in their centre.</p> <p>Literacy and learning centre staff worked as a team.</p> <p>Learners were comfortable and could move seamlessly between programs.</p>	<p>The concept worked very well in one centre and has been going for a number of years now. Some learners presently registered in the literacy program are also taking some credit courses and some students in the adult learning centre are getting literacy help to fill in some of their learning gaps.</p> <p>In the other centre, the project wasn't as successful and the partnership has dissolved.</p>

totally different. And a lot of what we do in practice we can take into our research.

I hope some of the discussion in the current *Guide* will also be of interest in terms of practice. There's a chapter on social location and identities that applies to practice. I think the discussion on ethics applies as much to our practice as to research. As I was writing the *Guide* I thought of how questions about ethics come up a lot in research and people really work through them. Some of the questions apply equally to practice, yet I don't think we've always taken them up as fully. ■

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If you'd like a copy of the *Revised Traveler's Guide to Research in Practice* please contact learningcentre@shawcable.com.

TRIGGER	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	ACTIONS	RESULTS
<p>Supporting people in entry-level jobs</p>			
<p>Most employable Canadians at Levels 1 and 2 of ALLSS are working.</p> <p>Very few are enrolled in literacy programs.</p> <p>Most of these adults work at entry-level jobs, which often require long hours, shift work and physical exertion.</p> <p>Many have families and recreational activities that are higher priorities than evening literacy classes.</p> <p>Many had negative learning experiences as children and don't want to go back to school.</p> <p>Many think they are incapable of further academic advancement.</p> <p>Employers spend most of their training dollars on higher-level people in their companies.</p> <p>Employers may not want to invest in training for people in entry-level jobs.</p>	<p>How can we create opportunities for these adults to improve their literacy skills without requiring them to attend literacy classes?</p> <p>How can we persuade employers to be part of the solution to the problem?</p>	<p>Identify an organization to undertake research that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persuade government to offer employers an incentive they can't refuse to offer on-the-job training to people in entry-level jobs; • design genuine workplace training that includes topics such as workplace safety, using a forklift, communicating with customers, and using computerized equipment; • have a literacy specialist work alongside the company trainer so that literacy development can also happen in all training; • not require participants to self-declare as literacy learners or be identified as needing literacy development; • develop assessment and progress evaluation tools to audit the success of this kind of training. 	<p>No results, this research is still in the conceptualizing stage.</p>