



Why Literacy Matters: Understanding the Effects of Literacy Education for Adults

Ralf St Clair

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Why does reading and writing matter in modern societies? How do we know adult literacy education does any good? Why Literacy Matters pulls together a wide range of evidence to build a powerful and convincing argument about why literacy matters to all of us. St Clair explains that we can look at literacy as a set of capabilities, leading to an inclusive and open way of thinking about what people do with written language. The book sets out to present the evidence and to provide clear insights for policymakers, practitioners and others interested in the vital questions around literacy today. It 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.

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