

# Numeracy-Meets: Professional development and networking for adult numeracy practitioners

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**NALA**

**National Adult Literacy Agency**  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

# Importance of Numeracy

- The development of a numerate society is an international priority in education (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [UNSDG], <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>).
- We live in a ‘number drenched society’ (Hooglang & Díez-Palomar, 2022). Numeracy skills are critically important for the adult population to meaningfully engage in the world (Carpentieri, Litster, & Frumkin, 2010; Parsons & Bynner, 2005).
- Adults who struggle with numeracy are more likely than others to have lower incomes, have trouble finding employment, and suffer from poorer physical and mental health (Carpentieri et al., 2010; Parsons & Bynner, 2005).

# Issues with Adult Numeracy In Ireland



The image shows the top portion of a news article from RTE. At the top left is the RTE logo. To its right is a horizontal menu with categories: NEWS, SPORT, ENTERTAINMENT, BUSINESS, LIFESTYLE, CULTURE, PLAYER, TV, and RADIO. Below this is a dark blue navigation bar with the word 'NEWS' followed by a right-pointing arrow and several sub-categories: Covid-19, Climate, Ireland, World, Business, Politics, Nuacht, RTÉ Investigates, and Programmes. The main headline is '40% of adults struggle with basic maths' in a large, bold, black font. Below the headline, on the left, is the text 'Originally Published / Monday, 6 Sep 2010'. On the right side, there are five circular icons for social media and sharing: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Email, and Print.

**RTE** NEWS SPORT ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS LIFESTYLE CULTURE PLAYER TV RADIO

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## 40% of adults struggle with basic maths

Originally Published / Monday, 6 Sep 2010

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When Ireland took part in PIAAC (2012), it revealed that over one quarter (25.3%) of adults in Ireland scored at or below Level 1 on the numeracy scale (OECD, 2013).

# Teaching of Numeracy

- Carpentieri et al. (2010) determine that in numeracy teaching it is sometimes easier to quantify “bad practice” than to define “good practice”.
- Very much and under- researched and under-resourced area.
- In Ireland, adult numeracy provision is provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) through their local adult literacy service.
- Research carried out by NALA (2013) found that over 60% of adult numeracy tutors reported that they did not have enough training in teaching numeracy to adults, and 15% reported that they had no training at all.

# Good Practice in Integrated and Standalone Numeracy Provision at Levels 1-3

## Background Report, Guidelines and Recommendations

2021

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# Relevant Recommendations

## 9. Provide numeracy-specific professional development

Providing professional development for adult numeracy tutors was identified as a pressing need by interviewees participating in this study. Professional development needs to be widely promoted and accessible to tutors, and this could be done by offering regional workshops and informal meetings in different locations throughout the country as well as via online webinars. The professional development may involve tutors in sharing their practice as well as learning new teaching approaches. Professional development should be coordinated with the aim of establishing communities of practice across the ETBs while raising the profile of adult numeracy provision.

# Relevant Guidelines

## Guideline 4: Supporting and developing adult numeracy tutors

### 4.1 Plan for adult numeracy tutors' professional development

Adult numeracy tutors need to possess excellent understanding of elementary mathematics; digital literacy skills; understanding of programme design, development and assessment; and “mathematical eyes”, or a view of mathematics as part of everyday life. ETBs should consider ways of supporting adult numeracy tutors to develop these qualities, and of making such opportunities accessible to tutors in their local area while avoiding costs to tutors in terms of time and financial commitment.

### 4.2 Create networking opportunities for adult numeracy tutors

Most adult numeracy tutors work part-time or are volunteers, and as a result may feel isolated from peers in their own or other ETB locations. Face-to-face and online networking opportunities can bring tutors together for discussion and demonstration of different teaching materials and approaches to suit various types of adult learners, and for sharing of information about how numeracy is integrated into other courses such as horticulture or hospitality. Such meetings could help establish communities of practice across the ETBs while raising the community profile of adult numeracy provision.

# The Study

## Aim of the Research:

Establish a series of online 'Numeracy-Meets' for adult numeracy practitioners. These 'Meets' will be an informal, yet structured community of practice aiming to meet the CPD needs of practitioners and provide a space for them to share best practice, resources, and personal insights into teaching adult numeracy.

## Research Questions

1. What are the professional development needs of adult numeracy practitioners in Ireland? (Phase 1)
2. How can the professional development needs of adult numeracy practitioners be addressed through the design and implementation of a series of online 'Numeracy-Meets'? (Phase 2)

# Phase 1 – Needs Analysis

- Online questionnaire examining the professional development needs of adult numeracy practitioners in Ireland.
- Instrument adapted from ‘Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 Teacher Questionnaire – Professional Development section.
- Four sections:
  - Background information
  - Attitude towards and Perception of Teaching
  - Professional Development needs
  - Attitude towards and Perception of Numeracy
- Circulated to adult numeracy educators through NALA networks on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2022 – 15 responses thus far

# Preliminary Findings

- Background information ( $n = 15$ )
  - Majority of respondents were female
  - All in 40 – 69 age range (eight due to retire in next 10-15 years)
  - Average number of years teaching numeracy was 13.5 years
- Attitude towards and Perception of Teaching
  - Respondents seemed confident in their ability to provide alternative explanations, craft questions, make their expectations about behaviour clear, and help students to think critically. Less confident in motivating disinterested students and using digital technology.
- Attitude towards and Perception of Numeracy
  - Respondents fully recognised the importance of numeracy in everyday life. For some, it was not their preference to teach numeracy, but they see it as necessary and extremely important.

# Preliminary Findings

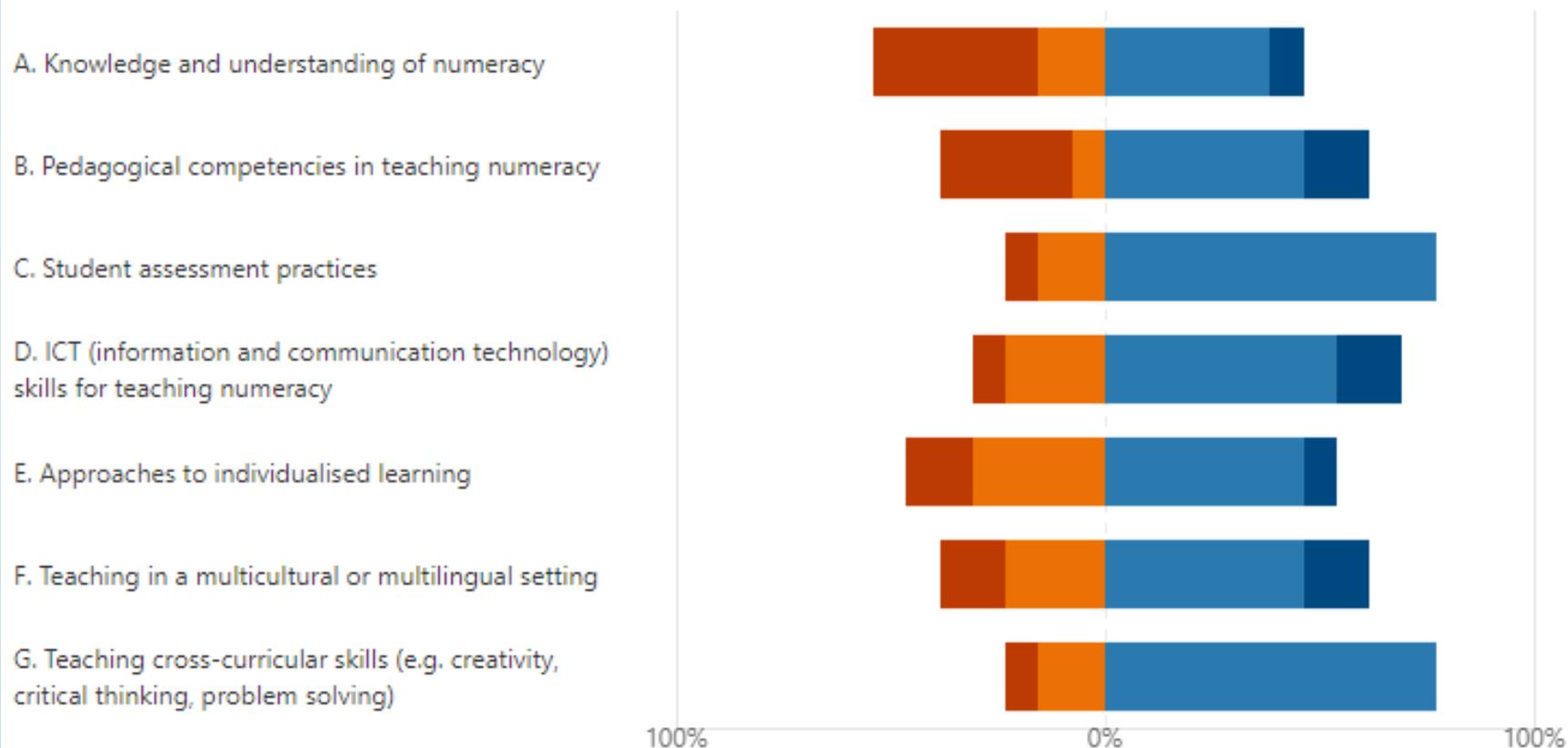
- Professional Development needs
  - Participants are engaging in CPD, although not usually in formal qualification programmes.
  - Most commonly in the form of online seminars and education conferences.
  - Practitioners felt that CPD provided them with new ideas and strategies, opportunities to engage with other educators and examples of apps they can use in the classroom.

For each of the areas listed below, please indicate the extent to which you currently need professional development.

Please mark one choice in each row.

[More Details](#)

■ No need at present   ■ Low level of need   ■ Moderate level of need   ■ High level of need

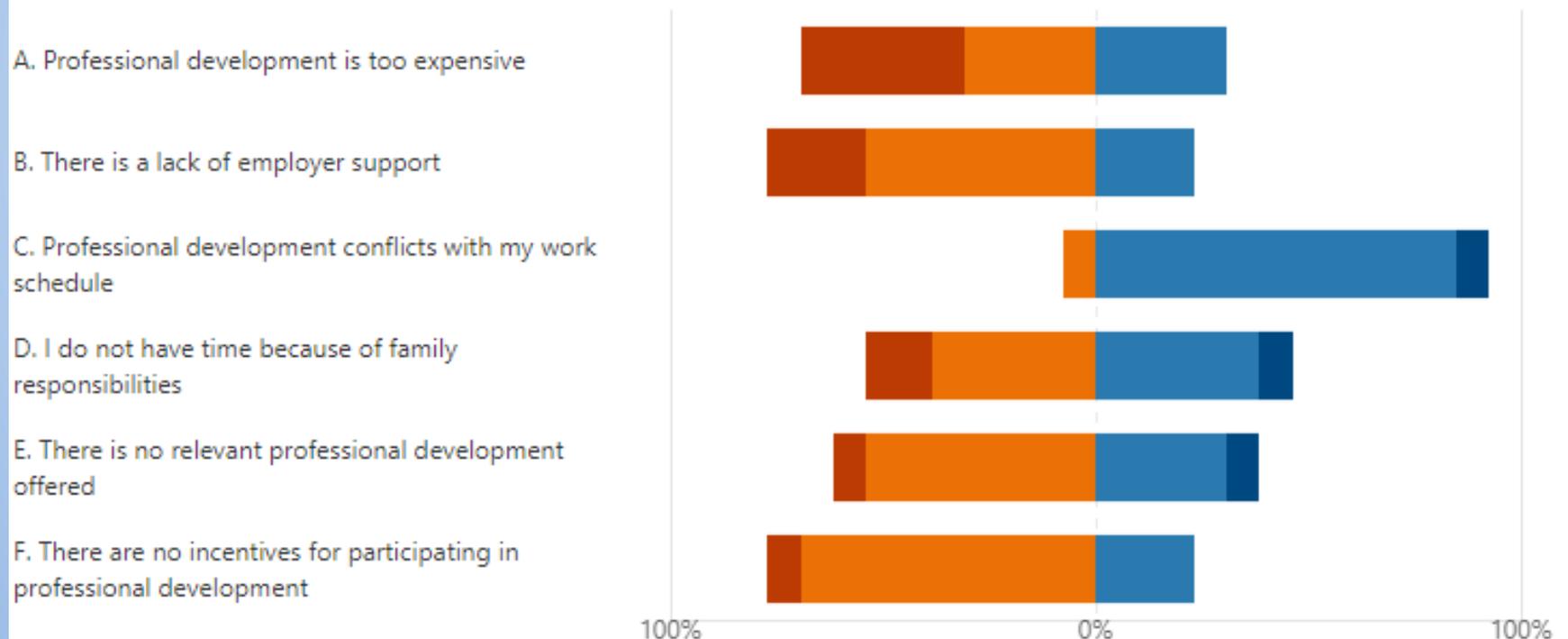


. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the following present **barriers** to your participation in professional development?

Please mark one choice in each row.

[More Details](#)

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree



# Phase 2 – The Numeracy-Meets Model

- Based on the Teach-Meet model which was developed in the Scotland in 2006 and mainly involved primary and secondary school teachers focusing on teaching strategies and classroom practices.
- According to Amond et al. (2018) a Teach-Meet is “an event held after-hours between teachers to share practice and ideas, making short presentations and hosting conversations in a convivial and playful atmosphere.”
- Bennett (2012) notes that Teach-Meets are focused on teachers sharing ideas with one another based the things that they’ve used and found effective in their teaching.

# Phase 2 – The Numeracy-Meets Model

Our Numeracy-Meets will be an organised but informal community of practice for practitioners to share pedagogy, practical innovations, and personal insights into teaching adult numeracy.

In line with Charles (2021, p.3), our Numeracy-Meet model will be developed with the following goals:

- Create a means of communication around pedagogy
- Provide a forum for sharing of expertise and insights
- Create a pool of instructional resources and strategies
- Gain input in steering instruction and assessment
- Foster teamwork and enable networking

ADULT NUMERACY PRACTITIONER  
CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

Numeracy-Meets  
Online 1 - 2 PM



Contact: [AForster@ucc.ie](mailto:AForster@ucc.ie)



16 February

Introduction to  
Numeracy



02 March

Family Numeracy



23 March

Financial Numeracy



06 April

Numeracy for Health



27 April

Numeracy in a  
Digital World



11 May

Overcoming Maths  
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The Numeracy-Meets will be evaluated using a brief online and anonymous evaluation questionnaire after each 'Meet' and an online focus group with volunteer participants at the conclusion of the series of six Numeracy-Meets.

# To Consider Going Forward....

- As recommended by Goos et al. (2021), professional development for adult numeracy practitioners needs to be widely promoted and accessible and involve practitioners in sharing their practice as well as learning new teaching approaches.
- How effective are the Numeracy-Meets in addressing the needs identified?
- How sustainable is the Numeracy-Meet model in the long term?