

**ZMATH 2015c.00034**

**Ackland, Aileen**

**More ... or less? Towards a critical pedagogy of adult numeracy.**

Adults Learn. Math. 9, No. 2, 7-21, electronic only (2014).

Summary: The development of socio-cultural understandings of mathematics combined with policy interest in adult numeracy as a result of international studies, which compare skill levels in different countries, have impacted adult education practice in recent years. In Scotland, a 'social practice approach' is espoused and adult numeracy tutors are encouraged to add more to the learning experience – more context, more activity. But is this a sufficient pedagogic response to the insights from social practices theory and a socio-cultural perspective of mathematics? This paper draws on evidence from studies of practitioners' understandings of social practices theory to argue that these responses are limited and potentially limiting of adult learners and represent a neo-deficit approach. Instead a critical pedagogy is required, which may require that the tutor bring less, not more, to the learning experience. Critical pedagogies would involve exploring with learners the powerful uses of mathematics in society. Adult numeracy learners could learn not only to understand the mathematics in use but to use mathematics for their own projects. The paper concludes with some thoughts on the kind of teacher education required to support tutors to become more critical in their pedagogy.

*Classification:* A48 C68 D28

*Keywords:* adult education; mathematical literacy; adult numeracy; social practices; critical pedagogy; sociocultural aspects; literacy and numeracy as social practices; social practices approach; learning; teaching; research; word problems; real-life mathematics; understanding; teacher education; educational policy  
<http://www.alm-online.net/images/ALM/journals/alm-ij-volume9-2-november2014.pdf>