



*Adults Learning Maths:
A Research Forum (ALM)*

ALM is an international research forum bringing together researchers and practitioners in adult mathematics/numeracy teaching and learning in order to promote the learning of mathematics by adults

AN AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

ALM Chair Diana Coben presented 'An Agenda for Adult Learning in Mathematics for the Next Millennium' at 'Mathematics for the new Millennium - What needs to be changed and why?', 9-11 October 1996, Institute of Education, University of London, UK. It incorporates soundings from ALM members and other adult mathematics educators and researchers at ALM-3 and ICME-8.

1. MORE RECOGNITION - adults should be on the agenda in all discussions of mathematics education unless there is good reason to the contrary. A voice for adult mathematics educators in policy decisions about education and training. Adult mathematics educators need to engage with the politics of education and training and develop tactics to enable them to intervene in policy decisions. We should develop our knowledge of adult education structures and funding priorities in various countries and then strategize on how to affect these structures and priorities. Poor economic performance may have a range of causes; it is not solely due to lack of education of the workforce.

2. MORE RESEARCH - vital to increase our understanding and enhance the status of adult mathematics education. Developing and using appropriate adult-focused research methods is essential to develop the field. Co-operative research, between researchers and practitioners to identify agendas and, where appropriate, to undertake research. More research is needed on all aspects of adult mathematics learning and teaching, developing new areas and building on previous work in: adult mathematics education; mathematics education of children; related disciplines: e.g. psychology, sociology, etc., and in mathematics per se.

3. MORE PROVISION OF ADULT MATHEMATICS EDUCATION taking forms appropriate to adults with different needs, interests, circumstances, work, social and domestic commitments. Including: courses of varying duration; part-time and full-time; at a distance and or face-to-face; education in the workplace and in institutions; with provision for disabilities, childcare, learners' own languages or language support; affordable courses. Adult mathematics education should be adequately funded.

4. ADULT-FOCUSED CURRICULA: these should take many forms - relating to the goals and values of the learners, take account of their experience and diverse purposes in learning mathematics, including: work-related mathematics; education for critical citizenship and social movements; providing a negotiated curriculum. Mathematics support for other subjects should start with, rather than end with the subject concerned.

5. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

6. ANDRAGOGY NOT PEDAGOGY: teaching adults is different from teaching children. How to help adults to recognise the mathematics that they can do - and build on it? Tuition should proceed at a pace which suits the learners. Adults' mathematical experience should be the focus of their mathematics education. Adult learners and adult mathematics educators should have access to and be using the new media.

7. 'ADULT-FRIENDLY' FORMS OF ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION as an option. Assessment and accreditation should be geared to adults' needs and experience. Not all adults want assessment or accreditation in mathematics, it should be an option for those who do. Where mathematics tests are used to regulate entry to work and to training for work, the mathematics in the test should be related to the mathematics required in the work concerned.

8. STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR ADULT MATHEMATICS EDUCATORS. Opportunities for adult mathematics educators and researchers to come together. The formal and informal networks that result are vitally important for staff development. Pre- and in-service training specifically for adult mathematics education is a necessity. Teaching mathematics to adults is a very hard job: e.g. teachers have to decide during their instruction how to integrate students' problems in the continuing instruction, so they must have mini-didactical approaches in mind, which they can actualise in the maths course whenever they need them.