

Embedding/Integrating Literacy, Language or Numeracy in other Subjects/Programmes

“Embedded teaching and learning combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational and other skills. The skills acquired provide learners with the confidence, competence and motivation necessary for them to succeed in qualifications, in life and at work.” (DfES/The National Research and Development

Many adults get by with their existing levels of skill and knowledge of literacy, language or numeracy and would not consider joining specific learning activities/ courses or programmes to improve them. However many of them have leisure interests they might like to develop, qualifications they wish to obtain, work practices which could be improved and aspirations which could be realised. By using their motivations and purposes for learning and development and combining them with literacy, language and/or numeracy, it is possible to increase skill, knowledge and understanding in both the subject and the necessary associated literacy, language or numeracy. This is known as embedding or integrating.

Embedding, integrating or contextualised definitions

The term **embedding** is being used a great deal. However, this concept is not new. In the past, learning such as ‘link learning’ and ‘integrated learning’ have been used. It is possible that the word ‘embedding’ suggests that the literacy, language or numeracy elements of a learning programme could be lost in the main subject.

Integrating literacy, language or numeracy, suggests making a different, whole programme, combining these elements of teaching and learning with the main subject. This approach involves at least two learning aims.

Contextualised literacy, language or numeracy is not the same as embedding or integrating. This approach is one used by good tutors: taking the interests, purposes and motivations for learning and using them as a vehicle, or context, for learning literacy, language or numeracy. This approach involves only one aim or learning goal which is literacy, language or numeracy.

Promoting integrated provision

Consideration of the target group or audience is key when considering promotion and publicity activities. The activity, course or programme with which the literacy, language or numeracy will be integrated should also be taken into account. Clear indications of the course content must be made in any information offered, without creating anxiety. The literacy, language or numeracy content should be evident but relevance to overall achievement of the host subject using such terminology as “communication”, “necessary maths” or “associated literacy and language” can be helpful.

Outreach and face-to-face pre-learning information and guidance activities have been demonstrated as effective in reaching people and supporting them into learning activities. Alerting other agencies who can sign-post people as well as working in partnerships are also tried and tested promotional activities. Any publicity material should be reviewed for clarity and language level.

Models of delivery

There are no prescribed models of delivery. However, providers have tried different approaches which are described by the following models:

a) Fully Integrated

This model appears most frequently at pre-entry level and is usually a short programme, delivered by one tutor who has host subject knowledge but is trained in literacy, language or numeracy. There is one learning aim, which may or may not be accredited, along with other individually negotiated learning outcomes in the associated literacy, language or numeracy.

b) A Sandwich Model

A 50-50 approach between the host subject and literacy, language or numeracy which can be provided as a strict division between the two areas or more flexibly from session to session. This approach is used on short and longer programmes. Some organisations use one teacher, skilled in both areas or a subject tutor who is supported by a literacy, language or numeracy specialist. Some providers use two teachers. The added value from using two staff is associated with gains in knowledge and teaching and learning styles and methods, from which learners and teachers can benefit.

c) Overlapping Model

This model emerges as applicable to both short and longer courses. Typically the two subject areas are delivered separately but very quickly overlap so that integration takes place. Staffing models vary but two areas of specialism are vital and two teachers are usually involved.

In any models of delivery these features are important:

- learners' purposes and motivations are paramount;
- programmes and organisations should develop their own approaches;
- learning outcomes should be identified in the host subject and literacy, language or numeracy;
- teaching and learning should take place in both subject areas;
- the model developed should be influenced by the host subject but both subjects can influence each other;
- two areas of teaching expertise must be included.

Planning

A whole organisational approach ensures consistency, coherence and commitment to a learning entitlement. Responsibilities start with senior management of providers. Time must be allocated to cross-departmental working, relationship-building, exchange of knowledge and ideas and links with additional learning support. All programmes, regardless of provider or sector, can be reviewed for their literacy, language or numeracy content to support the achievement of the host subject.

Assuring quality

Ways of ensuring that the quality of the learners' experiences should be addressed, as in all approaches to delivering learning. The following are some of the features which support the quality of an integrated approach. The training of staff from both literacy, language and numeracy backgrounds and those from vocational subject areas is key to supporting good quality provision. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses are being designed and delivered in many Professional Development Centres to support this.

a) Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)

Organisations choose whether one or two ILPs work best for their learners. One ILP must include aims for both areas whereas two ILPs must be closely linked. Aims can be accreditation/qualifications in both areas or in one. If one host subject aim is identified, literacy, language or numeracy outcomes should also be identified and recorded.

b) Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans

These documents should include both the host subject and the literacy, language or numeracy content which will be taught and assessed.

c) Tutorial Support

Tutorial support has been identified as making a particularly important contribution to embedded or integrated approaches. Tutorial time offers the opportunity to review learning with groups or individuals in both learning areas.

d) Materials

Teachers from both subject areas can identify the materials which will be most relevant. Using the host-subject materials increases the relevance and purpose of literacy, language or numeracy learning. Embedded materials have been developed by DfES: www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/embeddedlearning.

e) Joint Assignments or Tasks

Where possible assignments should integrate both the subject areas and formative feedback should include achievements and areas for development. Two staff can assess one assignment or task. This helps learners to see the vital links between the subject and literacy, language and numeracy.

Progression

Following an integrated learning programme, progression routes available can include:

- further embedded/integrated programmes;
- discrete literacy, language or numeracy programmes;
- vocational or personal development/ interest courses;
- voluntary or paid employment.

Challenges

- Embedding/integrating is challenging, complex and time consuming.
- A whole organisation approach is the mechanism which ensures support for staff, curriculum development and parity of opportunity for all learners.
- Literacy, language or numeracy must be taught, assessed and progress recorded. Where the host subject is closely synchronised with literacy, language or numeracy, retention and achievements are likely to improve and the purposes and benefits of integration become clearer.

- Mainstream funding has often been enhanced by other sources. Identifying resources to support team planning, team teaching and team assessment is challenging.
- Research is being conducted by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), comparing embedded and non-embedded approaches in order to address questions of effectiveness.

Where Can I Find Out More?

Raising standards: a contextual guide to support success in literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision: embedded learning. Department for Education and Skills. DfES, 2004. ISBN 1844782182

Developing embedded literacy, language and numeracy: supporting achievement. Jan Eldred. NIACE, 2005. £6.95. ISBN 1862012199

National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL. Website: www.nrdc.co.uk. Tel: 020 7612 6476

Talent (training adult literacy, ESOL and numeracy teachers) has a list of the Professional Development Centres that offer specialist training for literacy, ESOL and numeracy teachers. To search for a centre near you go to: www.talent.ac.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=787

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This is the sixty-fourth in a series of briefing sheets, which aim to provide an introduction to a variety of lifelong learning issues. Other titles in the series which may be of interest include:

- 59. The Skills for Life teaching qualifications framework
- 58. What is Dyslexia?

Requests for briefing sheets in other formats, such as large print are welcomed, we will be pleased to consider your request. Copies of this and other sheets are available from:

NIACE, 21 De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GE
Tel: 0116 204 4289, Email: information@niace.org.uk
They are also available on the website at: www.niace.org.uk/information

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training. It aims to do this for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties, or insufficient resources. Registered charity number 1002775; Company registration number 2603322.