Embedded Literacy & Numeracy: Evidence informing practice; practice informing evidence

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Embedding (the practice of combining / integrating literacy and numeracy into vocational and workplace training) improves the likelihood of retention and success when:

• vocational and literacy tutors work together
• literacy and numeracy content is deliberately connected to vocational or real life contexts
• there is a whole of organisation approach.

LLN programmes in workplaces are successful in attracting learners who would not otherwise participate in learning programmes. These learners improve their attitudes to learning, their LLN and workplace practices, and their employability skills. Programmes work best when:

• employers understand what literacy and numeracy is and are interested and supportive
• LLN skills are taught in relation to the LLN demands of the job, which are made obvious to learners.
While there is limited evidence about the connection between proficiency (increased skills) and participation, there is a strong connection between participation and changed literacy and numeracy practices that lead to increased knowledge, skills and motivation. Therefore there is a need to develop measures of practice that can be used alongside the measures of proficiency to fully ascertain the outcomes for learners.
On hours of learning needed to achieve LLN skills’ gain

• The hours of learning needed to achieve LLN skills’ gain remain contentious because of the ways in which the researchers describe gain:
  • in the USA, 100 hours of teaching is associated with “measurable gain,” described as improving a level / gaining a GED
  • studies in the UK and New Zealand found that “statistically significant” gain was made in 35-39 hours
  • short courses are appropriate for those who require a “brush-up” on skills.

Research evidence…
Research evidence…

On the need for a qualified teaching workforce

• A qualified teaching workforce is essential, and the more qualified this workforce, the greater progress made by learners. This applies for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ESOL.
There are positive signs that ICT engages learners and contributes to LLN skill gain, but more research is needed in this area.
Research evidence…

On the need for consistent policy

- Policy interventions need to be consistent over time and need guidance from the central government along with acknowledgement that educational change takes time, resource and support.
The questions…

• What are the most urgent and important questions for ELN practitioners today in your view?

• What research evidence would shed light on these questions and help practitioners to improve both their own practice and learners’ outcomes?

• How should ELN practitioners become more critically aware of existing research relevant to their work, for example, through professional development and work towards a teaching or academic qualification?

• How can practitioners influence research agendas and actively inform research relevant to their work?
An answer - a repository?

• What could this look like?

• What would be most helpful for:
  – Display?
  – Engagement?

• Would social media (Facebook, blogging) be useful to begin?