



## Embedded teaching and learning of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL

### Seven case studies of embedded provision

#### Synopsis

The purpose of this research project was to gather evidence about the characteristics of embedded literacy, language and numeracy (LLN), teaching and learning. In particular to establish what is meant by "embedded teaching and learning"; how the vocational subjects and the LLN skills relate on such programmes; how subject tutors and LLN tutors work together, or how sometimes a single teacher can handle both and what implications can be drawn for policy and practice. To study all this, it was essential to select a wide variety of embedded LLN provision to reflect the diversity of vocational courses. The case studies were selected from the following curriculum areas: construction, entry to employment (E2E) – engineering, childcare, land-based, complementary therapy, sports and nursing. The courses studied were either standard vocational programmes for young people or specially designed preparatory vocational programmes for adults.

#### Key findings

- ✘ There is no one effective way of organising embedded learning. However, the case studies suggest that directly linking LLN to a practical task and ensuring that there is an opportunity for LLN support at the time of the practical task, is particularly effective. The case studies also underline the importance of empathy and respect in the teacher/learner relationship.
- ✘ Embedding is not just about interlinking different curricula; mapping of the *Skills for Life* curricula is

only a starting point. The LLN teacher has to learn how LLN are used both for the particular job and in this type of vocational classroom taking account of both "situated" and transferable LLN skills.

- ✘ Embedded provision offers access to a new "professional" identity; learners value LLN when they can see that it is an integral part of the learning for the job that they are aspiring to.
- ✘ Vocational teachers have a natural legitimacy and represent the role to which the learner aspires; LLN teachers have less control of the curriculum and of how it is taught. Vocational and LLN teachers need to plan and work genuinely together and share responsibility for the course. Successful teacher teams are strongly motivated, have time to work and plan together and are willing to learn from each other.
- ✘ The case studies also show the importance of teachers making explicit the value of LLN in relation to learners' aspirations; demonstrating how aspects of literacy, language and numeracy form integral parts of the professional working practices of different occupations.
- ✘ Curriculum managers and course teams should be aware that:
  - embedded can be key to widening participation and raising achievement;
  - it is different from discrete additional learning support; and
  - it requires commitment of the whole course team.

## The seven case studies were:


<p><b>Modern Apprenticeship in Construction (Level 2)</b> - numeracy and literacy</p>	<p>This study addresses the question of how embedded literacy and numeracy enables learners to make progress in achieving vocational and other life goals. It seeks to understand and illuminate the complex and dynamic nature of the process of embedding through the perspectives of trainees, teachers and managers, as active participants in the process.</p>
<p><b>Entry to Employment: Engineering (Level 1)</b> - numeracy</p>	<p>This study explores some of the ways in which numeracy skills are taught, negotiated and learned in a vocational (engineering) setting as part of an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme for young men working towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in engineering at Level 1, with attendance patterns on a "roll-on, roll-off" basis.</p>
<p><b>Childcare and English for Speakers of Other Language (Entry 2/3)</b> - ESOL</p>	<p>This study describes a course in the process of change. It examines how a group of adult women ESOL learners are extending their experience of learning English whilst being simultaneously prepared for vocational study in the field of childcare. It looks particularly at the way learners are being socialised into considering themselves as potential learners on a vocational childcare course and how this provides the motivation for improving their language skills.</p>
<p><b>Complementary Therapy and First Aid – Taster Courses (Entry 2 – Level 1)</b></p>	<p>This study looks at the use of situated and transportable literacies from the participants' points of view in a community-based complementary therapy and personal care course. It focuses on two different uses of instructional texts and their situated and transportable literacy practices and includes analysis of the use of instructional texts in Indian head massage.</p>
<p><b>Horticulture (Entry 2/Level 1) – oracy, literacy and numeracy</b></p>	<p>This study explores the ways in which literacy, numeracy and oracy are embedded in a practical vocational horticulture programme at a rural land-based college. It includes an examination of the development of embedded oral communication skills as a distinctive feature of the programme and a consideration of what might count as progression for the students on the programme.</p>
<p><b>Preparatory course for supervised nursing practice: nursing and ESOL (Above Level 2 except in oracy)</b></p>	<p>This case study looks in detail at a course for overseas qualified nurses that prepares the nurses for a period of retraining and "adaptation" (or supervised practice) in hospitals or nursing homes so that they can become NHS qualified nurses. The nurses on the course already know how to be nurses but must learn to be nurses in new professional and institutional contexts.</p>
<p><b>Sport</b></p>	<p>This study looks at embedded literacy in a sports coach course for young people at Fermanagh College in Northern Ireland and highlights the need for collaboration on methodologies and course content between embedding team members.</p>

## Methodology

This research uses ethnographic case study methodology, which should not be confused with other kinds of case studies, such as those used as exemplars of good practice. Ethnographic case study methodology involves looking at one set of activities in a very detailed and concrete way so that new insights and ways of looking at the problem are revealed. The aim is to stimulate creative thinking and disturb general assumptions. Case studies also reveal the complexities of the practices observed and so help to explain why so often general maxims about what is effective do not work out in real life. Just as the microscope reveals teeming life in a speck of material, so the case study method provides a new lens for looking at one case. Each case study represents a 'telling case' (Mitchell 1984) out of which theory, concepts and hypotheses can be drawn, leading to further research.

## Contact for further information

Helen Casey  
NRDC  
Institute of Education  
20 Bedford Way  
London WC1H 0AL  
Email: h.casey@ioe.ac.uk

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