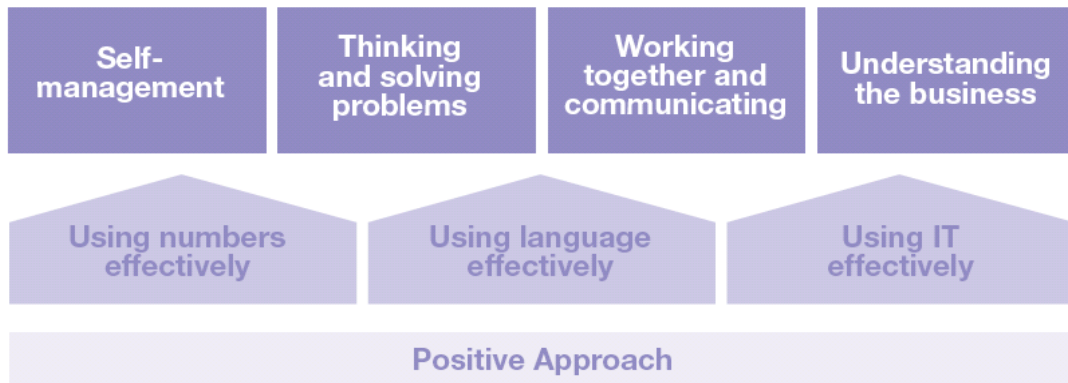


Integrating employability into literacy teaching and learning

As a teacher of literacy, you will be developing employability skills, whether or not your courses have employability in the title. You probably already teach learners to look at job adverts, fill in application forms, write CVs, and prepare for interviews. Possibly you already use role plays in which your learners practise dealing with complaints at work, or answering the phone and taking messages. All of these can be considered as employability skills, as can more general work that develops learners' literacy skills. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) defines employability skills as:

"..the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job. They are the skills that make specific knowledge and technical skills fully productive. Without employability skills, UK Plc ceases to be a global economic force and individuals don't get and progress in rewarding jobs."

Literacy, language, numeracy (LLN) and ICT skills underpin all employability skills, as is shown in the diagram below:



UKCES (2009) The Employability Challenge. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

<http://www.ukces.org.uk/upload/pdf/EmployabilityChallengeFullReport.pdf> P11

The UK Commission on Employment and Skills describes a 'Positive Approach' as "*being ready to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism and take responsibility for outcomes*" and suggests that this is the foundation upon which to build all other employability skills.

With the increasing demand for good levels of LLN skills in all types of employment, you are likely to find yourself working with literacy learners in a workplace setting, or with job-seekers in work-focused provision. In these situations you will need to work closely with the employer or training provider to identify organisational requirements and ensure that the literacy provision meets the needs of the learners and also the needs of the workplace.

International and national research has shown that employability skills matter:

“Research has found that, between the ages of 23 and 37, almost two-thirds of men and three-quarters of women with very low literacy skills had never been promoted, compared to less than one-third of men and two-fifths of women with good literacy skills. That is, men with very low literacy skills were half as likely to get promoted as men with good literacy skills” (Ananiadou et al. NRDC 2003)

Whether you are teaching in a workplace setting, with job-seekers in work focused provision, or in a general literacy class, you can support employability skills in a number of ways.

Points to consider when teaching in the workplace

- Wherever possible, liaise with the employer or training provider to find out the literacy requirements of your learners’ job roles and the tasks that they have to carry out. Even a short time spent “work shadowing” the learner will provide valuable insights into the literacy that is embedded in tasks, such as checking delivery notes, or updating and signing a care plan.
- When planning a programme, take into account the work context, the organisational conventions, for example the style and tone of a company email, and the learners’ proposed or actual job roles.
- Work closely with the employer to organise the training at times and venues which will encourage attendance and punctuality. In some cases, employers will permit a portion of the training time to come out of working hours.
- Check what resources and materials are available. Some employers will be happy to give you non-confidential paperwork, such as a new timetable or instruction leaflet.

Developing employability skills as part of literacy in any setting

- When assessing your learners, analyse the types of listening, speaking, reading and writing that are required in their potential or current job roles, match these with their current skills in these areas and identify their learning needs. Set learning objectives. Be aware of key vocabulary requirements, including jargon and slang.
- Consider how learners will demonstrate achievement of the learning objectives, through application of literacy skills in work relevant contexts, and through qualifications they are undertaking.

- Plan activities to develop the learners' listening and speaking skills in work-relevant contexts, including socialising in the workplace and giving presentations, if relevant. Use video, DVD and film clips and make the practice as realistic as possible. Record learners' performances on video or audio so that they can review their strengths and areas for development and set their learning priorities.
- Encourage learners to analyse the genres of written text that they will need to produce in the workplace, such as work experience diaries, notes and messages, written quotes and incident reports. Provide them with models, frameworks and other types of support to help them become effective writers of these text types.
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- Encourage learners to look at levels of formality in work-related tasks, for example answering the phone and taking a message, or asking for time off for a hospital appointment. Discuss possible differences in different workplaces, and with different audiences.
- Discuss barriers to getting jobs with learners who are still seeking work, and, together, consider ways of addressing the literacy aspects of these barriers.
- Integrate work placements into your literacy and work-seeking courses, and support learners in their work placements by preparing them beforehand, using reflective diaries and blogs while in work experience, and reflecting and building on the experience after work experience has ended.

Useful links

Skills for Life Core Curriculum:

Employability and Embedded Skills pages

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/sflcurriculum>

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=sfl-cc-literacy>

Guidance on 'real communication'

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=180878>

Developing awareness of register (levels of formality) in teaching speaking and listening,

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=180686>

Developing speaking and listening through role-play

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=180671>

Websites

Excellence Gateway

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=sfl-cc-skills>

Embedded learning portal

<http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/index.cfm>

Teaching and learning programme resources

http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/teachingandlearning/downloads/index_lsis.html

The Network for workplace language, literacy and numeracy

<http://www.thenetwork.co.uk/>

UK Commission for Employment and Skills

<http://www.ukces.org.uk/>

Readwriteplus: the workplace

<http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/readwriteplus/workplace>

Books and reports

Ananiadou, K. Jenkins, A. and Wolf, A. (2003) *The benefits to employers of raising workforce basic skills levels: a review of the literature*, London: NRDC. <http://www.nrdc.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=424&ArticleID=389>

Appleby, Y. and Barton, D. (2008) *Responding to learners' lives*. Leicester: NIACE in partnership with NRDC.

DeCoulon, A., Marcenaro-Gutierrez, O. and Vignoles, A., (2008) *The value of basic skills in the British labour market: Research report*. London: NRDC. http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=157#

Employability Skills Project (June 2008) *Review of evidence on best practice in teaching and assessing employability Skills*. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills. <http://www.ukces.org.uk/employability-skills-project>

Evans, K. and Waite, E. (2008) *Adult workers' engagement in formal and informal learning: Insights into Workplace Basic Skills from Four UK organisations*. <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/interplay/insights/insights.pdf>

NRDC (2007) *Learning for and in the workplace*. London: NRDC http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=95#

HM Treasury (2006) *Leitch review of skills: prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills*. Norwich: HMSO. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/leitch_review_index.htm

Roberts, C., Cooke, M. Campbell, S. and Stenhouse, J. (2009) *Frequently asked questions and quickly found answers. The great British job interview* (DVD). For availability see <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/sspp/education/dvds.html>

UKCES (2009) *The employability challenge*. London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills. <http://www.ukces.org.uk/upload/pdf/EmployabilityChallengeFullReport.pdf>