

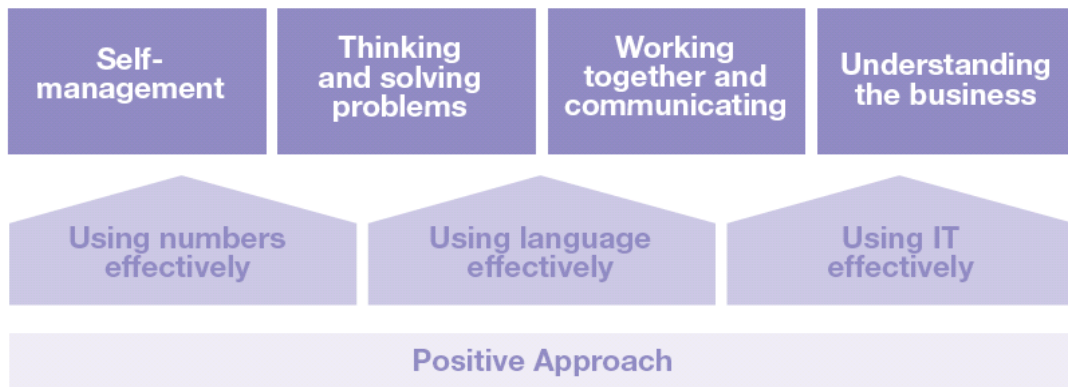
Integrating employability into numeracy teaching and learning

As a teacher of numeracy, you will be developing employability skills, whether or not your courses have employability in the title. You probably already teach problem-solving and money calculation methods which are set in work contexts, or working with time in relation to punctuality and completing time sheets, for example, which are also part of employability skills. Your learners may possibly be browsing job adverts and working out what words and phrases to do with wages and salaries actually mean in money terms. All of these can be considered as employability skills, as can more general skills such as time management or using a calculator, which contribute to work-readiness.

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', i.e. *being ready to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism and take responsibility for outcomes* as being 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 numeracy 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 job-related numeracy skills, and ensure that the numeracy provision meets the needs of the learners and also the needs of the workplace.

International and national research has shown that employability skills matter.

“Possessing and developing the skills necessary to enter employment, perform work tasks well and progress at work is critically important. It is essential for individuals if they are to improve their life chances, capabilities and livelihood.” (2007 NRDC)

When planning a programme you bring to the task your understanding of how people develop numeracy skills and knowledge as well as experience of planning, teaching and assessing ways of learning. Nevertheless the programme should always be learner led, incorporating personal goals and ensuring ownership by the learner.

Points to consider when teaching in the workplace

- In workplace learning, consider the learner’s job role and take into account the work context. Even a short time spent “work shadowing” the learner will provide valuable insights into the numeracy that is **embedded** in tasks (e.g. in noting delivery times in 24 hour format) or **explicit** (e.g. working out total amounts of money or goods).
- Work closely with the employer to organise training opportunities in a way which will encourage practical problem-solving and functionality, e.g. counting in multiples in the warehouse shop floor where that skill is needed to speed up the picking and packing process.
- Check what real resources and materials are available. For example, you could request use of the company’s non-confidential documentation (e.g. time sheet or electronic stock control system) that are directly relevant to the learners’ job roles and from which appropriate learning activities can be developed for practising underpinning numeracy skills.

Developing employability skills as part of numeracy in any setting

- Identify the specific numeracy needs of individual learners: the numeracy skills and knowledge that are directly relevant to the learners’ potential or current job roles and workplace context. Set learning objectives.
- Consider how learners will demonstrate achievement of the learning objectives, through application of numeracy skills in job roles, and through qualifications they are undertaking. Use an experiential, active learning approach through engaging learners in practical, work-relevant problem-

solving to help them to use trial and error to work out their own ways of estimation and computing. Record learner performance in a variety of ways so that they can review their strengths and areas for development and set their own learning priorities.

- Plan activities to develop the learners' numeracy skills and knowledge in work-relevant contexts. Work experience is a very good way of making learners aware of the application of numeracy in work situations, often integrated with language and literacy, e.g. reporting an accident at work which includes accurate recording of numerical information such as readings on a temperature gauge. Use on-line resources, such as stock control or customer databases, or everyday resources such as newspapers, where appropriate, to make the practice as realistic as possible. .

Useful links

Numeracy resources on other websites

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=172229>

Numeracy progression overview

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

Numeracy Core Curriculum overview

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

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>

Readwriteplus: the workplace

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

Employability Forum

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

Excellence Gateway

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/VLSP-23097>

The Network for workplace language, literacy and numeracy
<http://www.thenetwork.co.uk/>

Teaching and learning programme resources
http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/teachingandlearning/downloads/index_lsis.html

UK Commission for Employment and Skills
<http://www.ukces.org.uk/>

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

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