

Embedded teaching and learning of key competences: can we have too much of a good thing?

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Turning education and skills policy into practice

Learning from Experience (NIACE)

Model 1 – Fully Integrated: Basic skills are integrated fully into the learning, and in the activity, or subject matter, being interwoven with the subject, delivered through the whole activity and, being integral to it. Here, the person/s delivering the subject or main activity will also take on the basic skills work.

Model 2 – Sandwich Model: Here, the basic skills are delivered in a calculated and discrete part of the time allowed for the whole activity or course, but are contextualised to the main subject area. Often, the basic skills inputs are delivered by staff other than those teaching the rest of the course.

Model 3 – Overlapping Circles Model: In this model, except where it is designed to overlap, the basic skills work is neither integrated nor contextualised to the activity or subject area.

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City & Guilds *Embedding Skills for Life: A resource for embedding Skills for Life in vocational qualifications*

With **embedded learning** the learning objectives start from the vocational task. For example:

Learners may be asked to outline their local leisure facilities. In order to do this, it may be necessary to practise some skimming and scanning skills to read documents that outline leisure services. Skills for Life/ key skills development will take place but the learning objective at the start was from the leisure and tourism curriculum.

With **contextualised learning**, the learning objectives are perceived as starting from the literacy/ numeracy key skills. For example:

An ESOL tutor may decide they want to teach the past tense. In order to do this in a relevant way, they could ask learners to talk about a holiday they have had. This could not be described as an embedded leisure and tourism as it is not based on leisure and tourism learning objectives but on a language learning objective.

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'You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering...': Embedding literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) in post-16 vocational programmes – the impact on learning and achievement (NRDC)

- 1: **Non-embedded:** Learners experience their LLN development and vocational studies as entirely, or almost entirely, separate
- 2: **Partly embedded:** Learners experience their LLN development and vocational studies as integrated to some degree/only in some aspects
- 3: **Mostly embedded:** Learners mostly experience LLN development as part of their vocational studies, but some aspects of their LLN development and vocational studies remain uncoordinated
- 4: **Fully embedded or integrated:** Learners experience their LLN development as an integral part of their vocational studies

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- (iii) Recognising that generic key competences may not always be as generic as we think

Enabling the learner to deploy a given competence, or set of competences, in a range of settings

Avoiding embedding that comes too soon

[He had] offered evidence to show that those providers that offered formal teaching in numeracy and literacy at the beginning of a work-based learning programme reaped benefits in terms both of higher achievement rates and an improved capability among their learners to master the technical skills of an apprenticeship. 'Embedded' key skills were fine for learners who had something solid to build on, but inadequate for those who had only the flimsiest foundations.

Adult Learning Inspectorate's (ALI) Annual Report, 2003-04

Recognising that generic key competences may not always be as generic as we think

although these skills are thought of as 'generic' across different workplaces, from a multicultural perspective, the tools and strategies involved in using these skills may vary across languages and cultures ... a speaker who has developed generic skills in, say, 'communication' or 'teamwork' in their first language and culture may find that they cannot necessarily transfer them directly for use in Australian contexts because the conventions and expectations involved are different.

(Yates, 2005)