Apprentices’ perceptions of their supported acquisition of Literacy and Numeracy Skills

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Outline

Issues
Perspectives
Findings and recommendations
The issue of literacy and numeracy

62% were identified as having an issue in at least one area of reading, writing and numeracy (2016 data)
The issue of literacy and numeracy

> Navigate classroom expectations (Bednarz, 2014; Waterhouse, 1999)

> Literacy and numeracy skills are crucial for ‘active citizenship’ and ultimately impact self-esteem and self-efficacy (Balatti et al. 2006)

> Developing apprentice capability to adapt to a multiliteracy workplace environment (O’Neil and Gish 2001).
Issues we considered

What can we do about retention?

Are apprentices equipped to participate in an advanced economy? (Deloitte Access Economics, 2014)

What impact is compliance having?

Apprentice perspective is often-underrepresented (Angus, Golding, Foley & Lavendar, 2013)

   What do the apprentices think about this?
Context

Regional TAFE

Engineering students – 1\textsuperscript{st} 2\textsuperscript{nd} 3\textsuperscript{rd} years

3 weeks of work, 1 week training.
Issues facing apprentices

- Literacy/numeracy vs Multiliteracies
- Increased demands (industry 4.0)

Employer concerns

- What is helpful?
- What supports?

Learning

Learning strategies?

Improvements?
Setting

Trainer

Apprentice

LN Support
LN Support

1 day a week

Focusses on literacy and numeracy skills

In tandem with trainer


Question how it helps to transfer skills (O'Neil and Gish, 2001).
Inability to articulate acquisition

Jean: “I’m not sure what I do actually... you’d probably see what I do but I don’t actually know”

Ray: “It’s just how my brain works I dunno”. 
Strategies used

Most used: 95% and above:
‘looking up previous information’,
‘re-calculating equations’,
‘seeing if the answer is reasonable given the question’ and
‘leaving the question for later’.

Least used:
‘Cheating’
‘Ask the LN Support Teacher’
Navigation of coursework

Remy: “everything’s in the book so as soon as you read over it ... just keep reading over it and eventually you’ll get it anyway.”

Logan: “The only way I seem to learn is just going over and over stuff until it sinks in ... It’s just repetition really.”
Scott: “If we reduce some of the books down by, I reckon you could almost get rid of 50 percent of what we do.”

Jean: “…a lot of the questions in the assessments they’re just the other way around. … you get confused and think ‘oh that’s a different question and it can’t be the same answer’ which is not really needed.”
Disciplinary Language

Challenging / reading demands

Kurt: “Sometimes there is language there I wouldn’t understand

Jean: “...there was a lot of big words that I did not know about”

Logan: “Ah yes, ...sometimes you’ve got big words and you don’t know what it means”. 
Fixed Mindset

Ray: “Well I’m more of a mathematical type of person so I find math a little bit more easy than like literacy so...”

Scott: “I know most of my own strengths and weaknesses (VN) umm and one of my biggest weaknesses is numeracy, always has been, always will be...”
Dependence on teacher/trainer

Kurt: “...ask the teacher if he can explain it to me”

Logan: “95% of the time I go to the teacher”

Scott: “Usually it ends up with me having to talk to the teacher”

Jean: “…if it … doesn’t make sense then I usually just ask the teacher.”

Hank: “…[I] just ask the teacher more questions”.
LN Support teacher

Seen as important to people other than themselves

Bobby: “...well I don’t really know what he was there for. I thought he was like an aid for someone”

Jean: “Is that the guy that comes around?”

Scott: “disruptive”
What would help?

More interaction, more clips, different formats, listen to the talk

Logan “I understand your question but I don’t know the answer!”

Jean: “Umm usually they’re too strong headed ... umm I don’t know”

Bobby: “I’m not quite sure in all honesty”
Key Findings and recommendations

- Industry expectation vs student focus
  
  And transference

- Literacy vs multiliteracies
  
  And workbooks

- Revision to LN Support including best practice

- Learning discourse
What can be done

Consider:

> The literacy and numeracy demands of your course
> How can you move from literacy and numeracy to multiliteracies?
> The supports offered to your students—how effective are they? Will the skills be transferable?
> How do you teach learning?
Questions?

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References

Agrifood Skills Australia. (2009). From the ground up: addressing core skills in every level Agrifood qualifications. Townsend & Waterhouse, 2008


