

'Matching the Words to the Calculations - Making Sense of Functional Skills Questions and Tasks'

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

With the introduction of Functional Skills (FS), learners have to be able to demonstrate proficiency in skills including Conceptual Understanding, Procedural Fluency and Problem Solving. This project looks into the issues, barriers and constraints learners encounter when attempting mathematical word problems based around practical situations and everyday context, in order to gain a better understanding of the factors to consider when designing our Curriculum as well as when planning, resourcing and delivering our lessons.

METHODOLOGY:

Includes a combination of survey questionnaires; feedback forms; informal interviews; discussion; observation; reflective accounts and literature review.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT: This was a small-scale project. Limited to six 2013-14 FS courses. It involved Level 1 and 2 learners and LALS maths tutors delivering FS courses in the Skills for Life Curriculum area.



IMPACT:

It is expected that improvements are made on the way we teach our learners and on their learning experience with us.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ More emphasis on challenging skills sets as part of the Curriculum and FS Scheme of work.
- ✓ Bank of resources on problem solving skills.
- ✓ Training matrix and CPD opportunities.

SOME FINDINGS - TUTORS' SURVEY:

- 78% of respondents to the tutor's survey agree that with the introduction of Functional Skills, aspects of their teaching practice have changed (e.g. approach and methods, scheme of work, resources, lesson plans)
- Participants either agree or strongly agree that preparing learners for successfully achieving their Level 1 and/or 2 FS Qualification requires more time and effort than for the old National Test.
- Learner's motivation and attitude; language skills and underpinning knowledge were identified by participants as the three most important aspects when teaching Functional Skills maths.
- 56% agrees that metacognitive skills can be taught to adult learners.
- Selecting the mathematical information to use; identifying & deciding on the operations, methods and tools and using language skills to communicate numeric concepts, interim findings, solutions or explanations were identified as the most challenging skill sets to teach.



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