

Literacy, numeracy and foundation skills in VET

Vodcast Discussion Notes # ③

Background

ACER and Aspire—both not-for-profit educational companies—are collaborating on the issue of Foundation Skills, particularly language, literacy and numeracy (LLN), in VET. As part of this, we are developing and making available to our clients a series of short vodcasts that promote LLN in VET and discuss the use and role of the Foundation Skills Training Package (FSK).

This set of Discussion Notes accompanying the vodcasts is designed for RTOs to use as starting points for discussing LLN in their delivery and training in VET. We recommend you use them before staff and trainers view the vodcasts.

Discussion notes

Podcast 3: The 'N' in LLN: why it's a crucial skill

<https://aspirelr.com.au/pages/digital/vodcast-library/the-n-in-lln-why-its-a-crucial-skill>

This vodcast looks at numeracy—the 'N' in LLN. Numeracy is often the forgotten part of LLN or Foundation Skills.

Reflection questions

1. Before watching the podcast, have a small group discussion about these points:

- How important do you think numeracy and maths skills are in VET and workplaces?
- Do numeracy skills impact on your training and delivery? In what ways?
- Has this changed in the 21st century, and, if it has, why do you think this is so? Do you think workers need higher levels of numeracy and maths skills now than before?
- Do you think Australia has numeracy issues and challenges?
- Do you think your RTO addresses the 'N' in LLN well and supports learners who have numeracy needs?
- How do you do this? What are the challenges? How do you and other trainers feel about addressing numeracy?

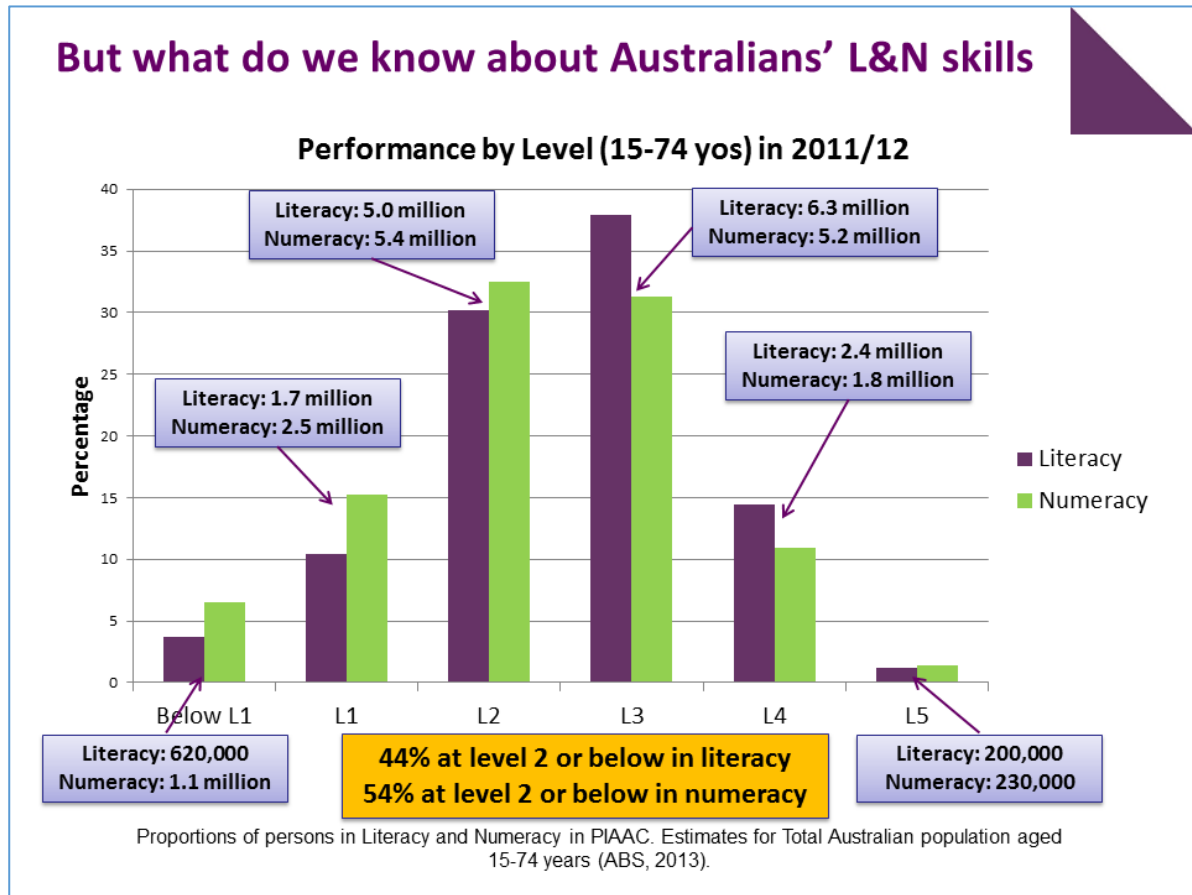


2. After watching the vodcast, reflect on the key messages and information presented, and have a small group discussion about the following:

- Now you have viewed the vodcast, has any of the information or data it presented changed your mind about how important numeracy skills are in VET and workplaces?
- In what ways and why?
- Do any specific comments or issues raised by Dave resonate with your experience?
- Do you feel there are more reasons now for improving how your RTO addresses the 'N' in LLN and supports learners who have numeracy and maths needs? How could you best do this?
- Do you now think numeracy should not be forgotten? Do you think there is evidence to support the view it is a more significant challenge for Australia than literacy, and, as such, should become a priority?
- Are there any specific comments or issues raised by the vodcast you want to discuss and reflect on, or to investigate further?

Information from the podcast

Below are copies of some of the information and statistics from the podcast.



L&N in the 21st century

New Work Smarts: Skills that matter most

Smart Learning

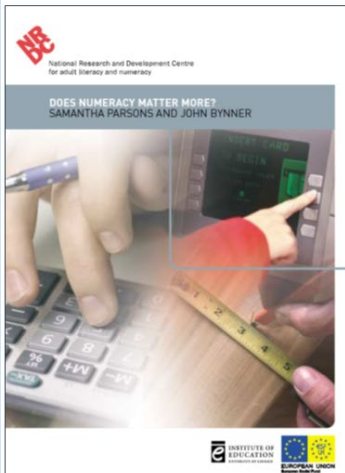
Smart Thinking

Smart Doing

- **learn** (be a lifelong learner)
- **solve problems**
- **think critically**
- **use science and mathematics skills**
- **use verbal communication and interpersonal skills**
- **have an entrepreneurial mindset**

Foundation for Young Australians,
The New Work Smarts: Thriving in the New Work Order, 2017
 Accessed from: http://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FYA_TheNewWorkSmarts_July2017.pdf

Why is numeracy crucial?



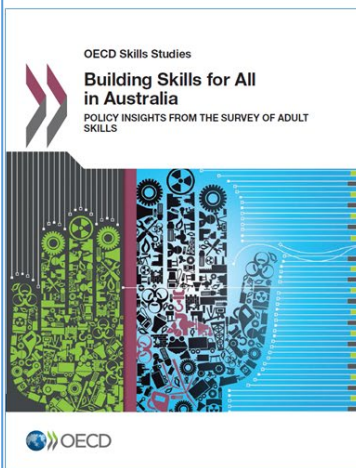
Another example:

... while the impact of low literacy and low numeracy is substantial, low numeracy has the greatest negative effect, even when it is combined with competent literacy. ... Poor numeracy skills make it difficult to function effectively in all areas of modern life, particularly for women.

(Parsons & Bynner, 2005, p. 7)

<http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/4758/1/parsons2006does.pdf>

2017 OECD Report: Building Skills for All in Australia



A closer examination of Australia's performance reveals the following:

- **Numeracy** represents a particular challenge in Australia.
- Signs of poor **numeracy** performance can be traced back to initial schooling.
- Women have weaker **numeracy** skills than men.
- There is a relatively large gap between the most proficient and least proficient adults in literacy and in numeracy.
- Many well-educated adults have low literacy and/or numeracy skills.
- Young women in Australia are much more likely to be not in employment, education or training (NEET) than young men.

<http://www.oecd.org/australia/building-skills-for-all-in-australia-9789264281110-en.htm>

Please contact ACER at cspa@acer.org if you want a PDF copy of these materials/handouts.

Further reading and references

As per the above slide, in September 2017, the OECD released a targeted country report on Australia's performance in PIAAC, *Building Skills for All in Australia: Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills*. This is available from: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/building-skills-for-all-in-australia_9789264281110-en).

Other possible relevant numeracy reports, resources and readings include the following.

Aspire Learning Resources

Aspire LR provide numerous LLN and Foundation skills resources, including a set of Foundation Skills Training Package (FSK) resources and sets of pre-employment skills materials:

<https://aspirelr.com.au/training-packages/fsk-foundation-skills-learning-resources>

<https://aspirelr.com.au/training-packages/pre-employment-skills-learning-resources>

Building Strength in Numeracy

This free online resource revises and improves on the iconic 'Strength in Numbers' and 'Breaking the Maths Barrier' teaching resources. It includes many new ideas, activities and student practice exercises, which can be used in a range of settings.

BBC Skillswise

This website offers a wide range of UK developed adult numeracy activities, games, learners' stories and much more.

NCVER Numeracy Research Reports

NCVER has conducted a range of research about numeracy in Australia and the reports are available on their website. Note: You will need to search for the titles on the NCVER Publications Website: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/find-by-subject>

Some examples include:

- *Seeking the N in LLN* by Tina Berghella & John Molenaar (2013)
- *Thinking beyond numbers: Learning numeracy for the future workplace* by Beth Marr & Jan Hagston (2007).
- *Economic returns to education and training for adults with low numeracy skills* by Lynne Gleeson (2005)
- *Learning numeracy on the job: A case study of chemical handling and spraying* by Gail FitzSimons, Susan Mlcek, Oksana Hull & Claire Wright (2005)

Three Numeracy reports

Three Numeracy reports (*Numeracy in Practice*, *Numeracy by Measure* and *Numeracy in Focus*) are all available free here: <https://oggiconsulting.com/our-work/>

Numeracy resources written by the narrator, Dave Tout

***Having fun with maths: activities and games for developing maths language and skills* (2007)**

***Car Costs: A Numeracy Workbook* (2006)**

***Numeracy: Teaching Mathematics in Context* (2017)**

Available from: [Multifangled](#), [MAV](#).