

LEVEL 6 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Module:	Cross Curricular Responsibilities: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competence		
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Assignment Title:	Looking forward: A critical analysis of literacy, numeracy and digital competence as cross-curricular responsibilities.	Word count (or equivalent):	2, 500
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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Looking forward: A critical analysis of literacy, numeracy and digital competence as cross-curricular responsibilities.

Introduction

Cross curricular learning is a current approach within Education which allows for a collaboration of “skills, knowledge and disciplines of subjects” to be merged within a concept of learning (Barnes, 2015, p. 62). This allows for ‘partnership and acknowledges the wider perspective’, recognising that learning can go ‘beyond the school gate’ (Donaldson, 2015). With a new curriculum fast approaching, emphasis is given to developing children’s skills and ‘real-life experiences’ in order to ‘succeed in a changing world’ (Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2018). The new curriculum also emphasises Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competency (DC) as ‘key responsibilities’ throughout all areas of learning and experience (AoLE’s), allowing for “creative, connected learning” to take place. These responsibilities should ‘work in collaboration’ to help children attain the ‘four main purposes’ (Donaldson, 2015). With the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) being introduced in 2016, it could be argued that educators are starting to implement other strategies and approaches in their classrooms to prepare for the arrival of the curriculum. By including all three responsibilities in a cross-curricular manner within other AoLE’s could mean “creativity and experiences are shared” (Education Wales, 2018). A cross-curricular approach with these three aspects could allow for ‘rich and memorable experiences’ to be obtained whilst making ‘connections and pathways’, giving “motivation” those pupils who may find a certain aspect such as Numeracy challenging (Dowling, 2014) (Barnes, 2015, p.62). In this assignment I intent to discuss how Literacy, Numeracy and DC play a role within the new curriculum and how these three responsibilities are expected to be taught. I also intend to discuss the benefits and limitations of teaching these responsibilities in a cross-curricular manner, drawing on personal experiences within my school-based placements, suggesting personal recommendations and furthering them to the wider curriculum.

Current education in Wales is changing with the new curriculum being brought into place by 2022. This curriculum shows a clear focus on developing ‘children’s skills to be used beyond school life and throughout adulthood’ (WAG, 2017). By developing their skills and understanding, children should be able to “adapt positively” to the world around them. The

curriculum currently based around ‘four purposes’, gives indication to a sense of ‘freedom’ regarding teaching. Teachers will be able to decide on strategies which will help ‘learners have the best outcomes’ allowing them to deliver engaging lessons, incorporating the Literacy, Numeracy Framework (LNF) and DCF throughout. Subjects will also expand into AoLE’s allowing for broader learning opportunities and richer experiences to be had. Donaldson (2015) suggests an ‘increase in the number of employers seeking wider skill abilities’ within their employees such as “critical thinking and problem solving”. This leads to a demand in education for these set of skills to be taught for future application. The curriculum shows emphasis to this and proposes them to be “embedded within the AoLE’s”.

Another aspect within the curriculum that will change is assessment. This will predominantly be the focal point which should allow learners to “understand how they are performing and what they need to do next” (WAG, 2017). In order to be “ambitious, capable learners”, children should recognise their progression steps within their own learning and should ‘adapt their understanding to further them to success’. Although many changes within the curriculum, the LNF still has a distinctive role with its importance being highlighted to be included in all areas of learning. The continuing development of technology is recognised in the upcoming curriculum with children being expected to be “confident, creative and critical users of technology” (WAG, 2018, p.2). By preparing children to be digital competent it should “help them thrive in an increasing digital world”, allowing them the opportunities to progress through the framework strands to become “enterprising, creative and critical thinkers”. Overall these change in the curriculum should lead to children obtaining the four main purposes, giving learners in Wales the platform to continue using their ‘ambitious mindset’ through to adolescence. The skills and knowledge acquired should ‘prepare children for life-experiences’, allowing them to ‘cope in a rapidly progressing world’.

Main body

It is apparent that Welsh Government have expectations to see the LNF and DCF incorporated in all areas of learning due to the beneficial skills they provide. WAG (2013, p.5) emphasise the importance in developing ‘oracy, reading and writing skills whilst amalgamating numeracy skills’ in relation to the LNF. Heifetz et al. (2009, quoted in Askew, 2016,) refers to ‘good practice’ through “finding solutions through technical problems in our current expertise”. Askew contradicts this slightly, proposing we “work to the best of our

current knowledge within current teaching”, suggesting that educators can implement numeracy skills and understanding into the learning although being blind of the future demands. Literacy and DCF are also considered important skills required to aid ‘life-long learning’. Kerry (2011) argues that ‘understanding a concept or problem, requires learners to create relationships between AoLE’s’, supporting the use of literacy skills such as ‘communication, oracy and reading’ being implemented into many areas of learning. This skill is also part of Donaldson’s 12 Pedagogical Principles, showing learners as ‘capable and resilient’ in the willingness to search for linking attributes. Combining literacy to other areas of learning, could “make learning more cohesive” so children could “gain a greater sense of understanding and purpose” (Copping, 2016, p. 15).

With Welsh Government encouraging Literacy, Numeracy and DC to have focused responsibilities within the evolving curriculum, it could be suggested as important that a student teacher recognises the benefits and limitations of these responsibilities being structured in a cross-curricular approach. Considering these factors could allow educators to identify and acknowledge the limitations, evaluate the approach, resulting in progression to help aid children’s learning further. It could be suggested when implementing any new concept, evaluating and reflecting the approach could be beneficial. Allowing the educator to ‘analyse the experience’ could make changes for future progression whilst ‘recognising the emotions that surround the experience’ (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985).

Welsh Government have clear expectations, of these three responsibilities being intertwined throughout the curriculum to help “meet the demands and expectations of life in the twenty-first century”. Allowing children to develop these ‘key skills’ could ‘enable them to secure capable positions within society’, determining which skills are required in situations to aid success (WAG, 2017, p.2). Implementing these responsibilities could however be suggested to require teachers to ‘plan in great detail to include the skills, taking focus away for the ‘knowledge learnt’ within the AoLE’. During my professional teaching experiences both in year 1 and year 2 (PTE1 & PTE2), I have personally witnessed that teachers currently include the LNF in a cross-curricular manner within learning. During my PTE2, I witnessed the children learning aspects of the skill ‘creating graphs’ and applying these skills within Science in Key Stage Two (KS2). The children were able to use the skills previously learnt to

create a graph relating to habitats of species. These skills were carefully planned into the lesson to recall on the learning. It could be argued however, that pressures to implement the LNF and DCF could result in missed opportunities of rich experiences due to the primary focus being the number of skills included rather than “developing the skills in a naturally occurring, meaningful way” (WAG, 2018, p.2).

Savage (2010) suggests teaching in this cross-curricular manner can “motivate and encourage pupils’ learning” when it is ‘relatable to experiences outside of the classroom’. On PTE2, I found that the children were motivated to learn coding when it was engaging with their interests. During my lesson, children were asked to use previous skills learnt in a coding lesson to complete levels within an online programme ‘Hour of Code’. Children were engaged and confident in the learning due to the motivational aspect of choice. Children were able to choose a theme of interest within the programme such as ‘Minecraft or coding with Anna and Elsa’. Children were able to recognise and engage with the themes due to them being relatable to their own life experiences. This in raised levels of achievement within the skill of coding and encouraged children who lack confidence within coding to participate. It could be argued however that skills should only be embedded into other AoLE’s if they are clearly understood. During PTE2, this became evident to me during a lesson with the learning objective to “use standard units to measure” (WAG, 2015, p.33) in creating potions. Children who had not previously understood the skill of ‘measuring in litres’, found the task to ‘create a potion’ measuring a variety of fluids difficult. Through reflection, I evaluated that for children to progress further and apply a skill within another area of learning, it is important that learners fully understand the concept first, therefore considering the role of the teacher knowing their learners’. I personally would use this consideration to further my own teaching experiences in future by recapping on skills I feel the learners do not fully understand.

By incorporating the three responsibilities effectively into other AoEL’s could result in children experiencing ‘rich opportunities’ and being able to ‘make their own connections in the learning’ (Donaldson, 2015) (Savage, 2010). Children could potentially develop their understanding of the skills further when using them in other contexts such as using the LNF to create a ‘Wanted poster’ about the Romans or creating a ‘movie trailer’ about ‘George’s Marvellous Medicine’ (PTE2 experience). It could be argued however that some AoEL’s

have apparent links to the LNF and DCF and others may prove difficult to link. 'Successful Futures' highlights the importance in developing the use of the Welsh language in schools and 'allowing the language to grow and flourish in its own right' (WAG, 2015, p.18). Support is given to this concept suggesting teachers are 'challenged to deliver skills of languages effectively in other areas' (Grenfell, 2002). Although the AoLE 'Languages, literacy and communications could prove links between the Welsh language and literacy, it could be argued that creating a direct link to Numeracy skills may prove difficult. I experienced this difficulty during my PTE2 placement. In planning, I had tried to effectively link numeracy skills within the Welsh language however, the children found it difficult to apply their numeracy skills to the activity due to not understanding the connection between the skills and the Welsh numbers. Through reflection and evaluation, I concluded that this task may have lost its 'identity and success' due to 'forcing the skills' into the planning. To progress professionally in the future, I would personally set myself a target to include the three responsibilities where the links are 'meaningful' and further the learning opportunities.

Teacher subject knowledge could also be considered an aspect that has its limitations. Hayes (2010) argues not all 'teachers may understand the concept' of cross-curricular teaching as the approach "does not have a single identity or definition", therefore it could be argued that some educators may shy away from the inclusion of all AoLE's and deliver lessons with cross-curricular links in favourable theme/topic areas. This could be evident in children's learning also. Allowing children to learn through this approach could convey 'preferred areas being chosen' and 'difficult areas' being disregarded. Foundation Phase (FP) lessons allow children the choice of favoured areas of learning, suggesting a possibility of 'low levels of resilience and attitudes' being built towards difficult concepts within learning Wilshaw (2013, quoted in Turner, 2013) (Hayes, 2010).

Another limitation to be considered within the Welsh Government's expectations would be assessment. Due to the three responsibilities being evident throughout all AoLE's, it could be questioned how and what assessment would take place within the learning. For children to progress, assessment should be evident to "monitor progression and to plan next steps" (WAG, 2013, p.9). It is suggested that using Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies alongside the LNF allows educators to 'analyse and evaluate the learning taking place' by

distinguishing “opportunities to make improvements to literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects” therefore using this formative assessment strategy to help children’s development. Although AfL could be used to assess LNF within the curriculum, it highlights the challenge in ‘ensuring children reach their full potential within the given skills’. I personally would target this limitation for future progress, to ensure that I as an educator consider assessing the three responsibilities using a variety of AfL strategies alongside the LNF and DCF. I would give recommendation to showing children their progression steps and discussing how they can be achieved within their learning, overall aiding “attainment, progression and planning” (WAG, 2013, p.9).

Barnes (2015) argues that ‘subject progression can be difficult when integrated together’, therefore it could be considered a limitation when many LNF and DCF skills are combined within areas of learning. It could be suggested as a recommendation that Welsh Government could consider the duration given to each AoLE and the skills built within them. Although cross-curricular lessons could be said to not follow a ‘time table’ due to the nature of the approach, the skills used throughout could be assessed monthly to show equilibrium between the three responsibilities. It could be considered that educators have ‘time constraint’ within the current curriculum and feel ‘an overwhelming amount of pressure to plan and deliver lessons that show these cross-curricular responsibilities’. During both PTE experiences, I personally found that most of my time was spent planning creative cross curricular lessons and found little time for assessment during the week. I evaluated my PTE and furthered my AfL strategies within PTE2 however, I felt I was under time constraint when wanting to give progression steps to the learners. I experienced the first hand, the amount of time that is spent planning, marking and assessing learners and other aspects, therefore consideration should be given to educators regarding what is expected of them within the school week. In recommendation to Welsh Government, I would advise extended training for all teachers in relation to the evolving curriculum. Using ‘Inset days as training for the upcoming curriculum’ and to further educate teachers who may not be familiar with cross-curricular approaches (Barnes and Shirley, 2007). This could allow for ‘purposeful days where educators can share good practice and help aid teacher’s confidence in implementing the expectations’ (Kate Herbet-Smith, 2017).

Conclusion

Looking forward to the upcoming curriculum, as a student teacher I feel I recognise the benefits and limitations to the Welsh Government expectations. I personally feel it is important to reflect and evaluate within my own teaching and consider personal targets to further my own understanding. Overall, teachers are suggested to be implementing the LNF and DCF into current teaching with aspects of cross-curricular being evident. Giving recommendation to my future PTE, I would consider implementing skills which naturally link within an area of learning to 'develop experiences furthering the potential of reinforcing the skills (Hayes, 2010). I would also give personal recommendation to consider the learners understanding when planning. Another aspect to consider is teacher subject knowledge. Careful consideration should be taken to ensure teachers are fully equipped in training and delivering these expectations. A possible recommendation to Welsh Government and Schools could suggest delivering training within Inset days and allowing educators to observe 'good practice' within other schools and local Pioneering Schools

Recommendation should also be considered when assessing the responsibilities in the areas of learning. It could be suggested that AfL does not specifically take into consideration how the learners have applied the skills and their understanding to the concept. The use of effective AfL and assessing the progress of the skills could be considered as a personal target to obtain during PTE3. I personally feel this target will add my own reflection and further my progression of the QTS Teaching Standard 'S3.2 Teaching: Monitoring and Assessment'.

A final recommendation to Welsh Government and all educators when considering 'Building block 4 of the curriculum. Sharing practice within Wales, allowing educators to observe and discuss 'good practice' within local schools and specifically 'Pioneer schools'. Sharing practice could 'further understanding and aid teacher subject knowledge for those who show uncertainty to the cross-curricular responsibilities. 'Evaluating evidence from a variety of sources within schools' could allow educators to engage in the curriculum, motivating them to further their own teaching strategies to embed the curriculum (Barnes, 2015). When considering cross-curricular responsibilities are given expectations to be shared, I personally feel the same consideration should be given to sharing and collaborating through 'good

practice'. Through all these personal and wider recommendations, I hope to further my own teaching in PTE3 and allow my own learners to gain 'rich opportunities to become capable and ambitious citizens'.

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