Flemish government

The L-coach

Integrated literacy training in vocational training

The L-coach

Report

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Preface

The subject of this report is the development of an educational concept for integrated literacy courses as part of vocational training. The study forms part of the Improve Literacy Campaign (Plan Geletterdheid Verhogen - launched in 2005) and was commissioned by the Ministry of the Flemish Community, Department of Work and Social Economy. We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone for their contribution to this project, not least the members of the steering group: Hugo Verdurmen, Lieselotte Bommerez, Heidi De Niel, Tine Vanreusel, Katty De Loof, Evelien Masschelein and Griet Smet. We also want to thank all those who worked with us on conducting the survey on this concept. Finally, we must also mention the excellent cooperation between the Leuven/Hageland Basic Education Centre (CBE) and the CTO (Centre for Language and Education) (Catholic University of Leuven).

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1. Introduction

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) shows that in Flanders low literacy is a major problem among the unemployed section of the population, more so than in neighbouring or comparable countries. 40% of job-seekers can only perform the lowest level language and arithmetic tasks, which equally applies in terms of prose, document and quantitative literacy. (Van Damme et al. 1997, p. 97) As a result, the Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Association) is asking, as a first recommendation, for priority to be given to specifically working on boosting literacy among the target group of job-seekers. (Bohnenn et al. 2004, p.46-47) The Flemish Government's operational Improve Literacy Campaign (launched in 2005) stipulates a variety of actions involving this target group in terms of screening, provision of guidance and specific pathways. The plan also devotes a section to integrated literacy pathways (p.3).

Literacy is an important key skill. More importantly than this, literacy skills form the basis or foundation for developing further skills (Padmos & Sannen, 2007, p.12-14). Skills development can, in turn, contribute to increased employability and involvement of employees or job-seekers, and therefore, to equal opportunities on the job market. Skills development also creates greater social responsibility and cohesion. (Vandenbroucke, 2009)

Job-seekers often want to increase their chances on the job market by going on a vocational training course, but if they lack adequate literacy skills, this is an obstacle preventing them from obtaining vocational qualifications. In an effort to remedy this situation, attending literacy, numeracy or ICT classes is not, however, the first solution people think of. These "traditional" classes in basic education provision are encountering problems (Ceulemans, 2003; Leyder, 2006). In addition, only 17% of unemployed people in Flanders take part in some form or other of formal learning within the adult education system (Vandamme et al. 1997, p.80). Based on this finding, the idea has evolved among many of the actors involved in this sector that there is a much greater chance of adults with poor literacy being prepared to improve their literacy skills if the activity to improve their literacy is integrated as part of vocational training[1]. In the same

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1 This assumption applies just as much to the integration of literacy in other contexts: involvement in social and cultural associations, other kinds of training courses, library initiatives, leisure activities etc.

vein, Bohnenn et al. argue in their second recommendation for a "widening of the narrow path of adult education". "Innovative initiatives in the areas of Dutch teaching as both a mother tongue and second language highlight the fact that there is a demand for dual and integrated pathways where either education and work or language teaching and vocational training are combined. There are sufficient indications that this broad approach is successful. Education and learning which are directly linked to the roles and tasks that people (want to) perform in their work and private life boost their motivation, increase the direct significance of what needs to be learnt and create situations where the acquired skills can be applied directly." (Bohnenn et al., 2004, p.47)

A cross-disciplinary approach has always been adopted to literacy in terms of research (Verhasselt, 2000; D'Hertefelt et al., 2007), policy and field work. For instance, Goffinet & Van Damme (1990, p. 171) write about the literacy work carried out in the 1980s, which was "(...) at the intersection of different institutional frameworks, including education, social welfare, community development, culture, socio-economic and employment issues etc., while other areas showed an interest in it as well, such as librarianship." The Improve Literacy Campaign also involves players from totally different sectors. It may not come then as any surprise either that different combinations are always being applied in this area, varying according to the social, economic and cultural situation at the time and in the relevant location. This is also true of the approach analysed in this study, namely, the combination of vocational training with the improvement of literacy skills.

In the first part of this reference framework, we attempt to establish an operational definition of integrated literacy pathways. This is followed by a description of the various models mentioned in the reference literature. We then propose a concept. In a later section we will present the arguments for the option chosen, and all the implications in terms of basic educational and organisational conditions will be described. The educational concept developed on the basis of these findings was presented to a group of 20 professionals involved in educational practice, policy and research. Their comments and concerns, which are summarised in a later chapter, have allowed us to adapt the original idea and further refine it. This chapter also features a list of critical factors ensuring the success of such pathways. The last chapter deals with the development of integrated lesson tasks and the sample material created as part of this project is presented.

Finally, the following terminology clarification is made, which is definitely of some importance in terms of understanding properly what follows.

1. The term "literacy" was given the following definition in operational terms in the call for projects and also includes the following elements when used in the text:
   - "knowledge and skill which are required to communicate and process information via written language
   - the skill required to handle numerical and graphical data and the skill to be able to use ICT"

2. The "teacher" represents the literacy expert, whereas, the "instructor" is intended to mean the vocational training instructor.

3. The term "integrated literacy pathways" is abbreviated as ILP.

Chapter 2

Definitions

2. Definitions

The contrasting approaches to tackling literacy of "separate versus integrated" can provide an initial definition on the way to establishing an operational definition. In the case of a separate, independent approach, learners work on their literacy within the context of general provision, which is based on a general needs analysis and has not been specifically geared towards a particular context, area or vocational training course. Sometimes literacy programmes are offered in addition to vocational training and lessons are even given at a different location. An "integrated approach", on the other hand, means that the way in which literacy is tackled forms part of vocational training. According to Verhallen[2], we can talk about an integrated pathway "if the separate language courses (…) can be taken not prior to, but alongside and therefore during vocational training, which means that their content can be integrated as part of the vocational training." In his view, an integrated pathway must "therefore be viewed as a labour market instrument. The starting point is that, at the end of the course, the participants will be able to able to find a better job and more easily than before, and that they will also be able to hold down the job better." In other words, "language development completely serves the purpose of vocational training and practising the relevant trade".

The Improve Literacy Campaign website states that: "The term 'integrated pathways' is generally used to describe learning pathways where course participants link the learning of a particular trade or participation in a specific training pathway to acquiring basic skills (language, numeracy and ICT), which are required for the particular trade or for participating in a specific course. In this case, learning is primarily geared towards (long-term) integration into the work process and/or acquiring a vocational qualification and promotion to a higher position."

The Skills for Life Strategy Unit in the former Department for Education and Skills in the UK (SfLSU, DfES) defines integrated literacy education as the type of education which "combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational

2 www.itta.uva.nl/upload_files/ Wat %20is%20een%20 GIT 1.pdf

and other skills. The skills acquired provide learners with the confidence, competence and motivation necessary for them to progress, gain qualifications and to succeed in life and at work."[3]

Integrated literacy pathways therefore have the following aspects in common:

- The end goal is not literacy itself, but in being able to participate in the labour market or enjoy greater success in life.

- A broad concept of "literacy"

- A combined approach based on the development of skills, motivation and independence

- A notion of simultaneity and strong content harmony

- Sustainability and broad adaptability of the result

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3 http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/search.cfm

Chapter 3

Provision models

3. Provision models

The provision of integrated literacy teaching can obviously take many different forms in practice. Roberts et al. (2005) take an interesting approach in an attempt to put the host of provision models available in some order. They believe that the participants' experience or perception of the way integration takes place is a crucial factor.

Non-embedded	Partially embedded	Mostly embedded	Fully embedded
The participants feel that literacy teaching is provided alongside vocational training. The lessons are not based on it and participants themselves must establish the links between the two areas.	The participants feel that the development of their literacy has a limited connection with vocational training, but only for certain aspects.	The participants mostly feel that working on literacy skills is an integral part of vocational training, but that some elements are still not completely harmonised with each other.	The participants feel that working on their literacy is organised so that it is an integral part of vocational training, even though it may involve explicitly working on literacy/ numeracy.

Every way of organising vocational and literacy training can be compared from the learners' perspective and regarded as being more or less integrated. Some examples are given below.

1. Stack model

LT >	VT

This model is based on two separate programmes, with literacy teaching (LT) preceding vocational training (VT).

2. Sandwich model

LT >	VT >	LT >

The sandwich model offers alternation between both components at specific times during the pathway. The crossover periods may

provide the instructors with the opportunity, between courses, to brief the teachers on literacy issues so that they can anticipate the expressed needs. And vice versa.

3. Alternating method

LT >
VT >

Vocational training and literacy training are provided in parallel, for example, morning and afternoon, which results in some cases in content overlap between them, but not automatically. Another variation is possible, for instance, where at the start, proportionately more time is given to one element, but towards the end this is reversed.

4. Co-team

LT ~~~~ }>
VT

In this model a teacher gets involved to provide support during technical vocational activities. This offers the continual opportunity for feedback or support in connection with the specific or traditional problems that arise while a task is being carried out. There is another possible variation in this case too: teachers are not always present the whole time. Teachers sometimes provide this support for more than one course.

5. Super teacher

LT/VT>

This form of training can only be provided if teachers are available who are well qualified in the vocational subject and have expertise in the area of developing the skills which come under the term "literacy".

These (and other) organised forms of provision vary, often based on the same parameters. These parameters include the individual learners, the location, the time available, subsidy conditions, the available capacity in terms of educational teams etc. For instance,

teachers who are fully qualified in the vocational subject and also have literacy expertise are few and far between. In this case, integrated working will require close cooperation in a small team. Each parameter can vary on a continuum from "separate" to "embedded".

	non-embedded ⟷		embedded
Group	participants receive the various elements spread across different programmes or level groups		one group
Teachers	separate teachers	consultant teachers	co-team super teacher
Instruction period	separate, stack model	sandwich, alternating pathways	a single whole
Instruction location	different locations	same building	same room
Organisational planning	separate	consultation	single organisation
Regulation and subsidies	different regulatory and subsidy frameworks	coordination at (meso-) level of 2 organisations	single regulatory and subsidy framework (macro)
Content planning and lesson preparation (objectives etc.)	separate	consultation and coordination	single programme
Lessons	separate lessons, content and teachers	teachers give the lesson together	one teacher provides the entire content

	non-embedded	←――――――→	embedded
Assessment and monitoring	separate assessment of own objectives		joint monitoring, assessment and evaluation

We can also see a line going from "generic" to "specific". This means that the literacy programmes offered are more specific, the more embedded they are. Integrated programmes are, in any case, based on an analysis of literacy needs within the scope of the training and particular profession, as well as on a comparison with the participants' skills at the start of the pathway. They are focused more on the learners and try to respond to their development level (which is sometimes inimitable), whereas provision models at the other end of the spectrum will be more strongly focused on a general curriculum that has been predetermined.

Another upshot of this is that the instruction offered will vary according to the model used. In the case of some forms of integrated pathways the teachers' involvement will be more on an *ad hoc* basis and linked to the issues which are very much relevant to those with poor literacy at that point in their development. In courses where there is no link to vocational training teachers will have to provide more input themselves, select and organise teaching material, organise things in advance, perhaps work in a more conventional manner etc.

The interaction of the parameters mentioned above is mainly determined by the actual context and the particular facilities available in the area. This always produces, therefore, specific provision models, each with pluses and minuses in different areas. Theoretically, the combinations are almost limitless, and it would not come under the remit of this study to describe and illustrate all the possible combinations. Consequently, we will provide in the following section a summary of the key findings based on recent literature and practical assessment.

Chapter 4

Findings based on literature and practical assessment

4. Findings based on literature and practical assessment

A large amount, but certainly not all the relevant literature refers to the embedding of a second language in vocational training. This may raise the question of the possibility of transferring the findings to a literacy context. In our view, it is clear that particularly where the participants' psychology (motivation, position in a group) and the acquisition of basic skills are concerned, there are however differences when dealing with a target group and approach where Dutch is the second language. Other elements or educational principles are then the same for for the literacy and vocational groups, for instance, the link between motivation, need and skill assessment, the relationship between interaction and learning performance, the same ultimate goals etc.

4.1 *Gatekeeper* or inclusive skills policy

In the stack model candidates are not allowed to join a vocational training course before they have achieved a certain general level of literacy. Literacy screening tests with this in mind are often organised during the admissions process, and in quite a number of cases, this poses an obstacle to starting a vocational training course. This process is not only demotivating for the adults concerned with poor literacy, but does not contribute either to encouraging adults to take part in training, which is a socially desirable objective. This is also a target audience which is difficult for both training providers and the Basic Education Centre to reach. (SLN, 2006) However, this entails other consequences.

If people with poor literacy are not attending vocational training courses, the vocational or literacy training programmes can be left unchanged, with each retaining their respective features. This means that vocational training instructors do not need to worry about how their method of teaching and their educational approach can promote the development of literacy. Whenever people with poor literacy are taken out of the group, there is generally no *incentive* to check where unnecessary barriers are raised and how support can be given to learners in different areas of literacy. Instructors often feel, in this situation, that they are

not qualified or consider that this does not come under their remit. Many trainers even place the responsibility on the individual for acquiring adequate fluency in the language first (Schuurmans & Steverlynck, 2008, p.89)

It is again noticeable with general courses which focus separately on literacy that it is difficult to focus specifically on the perspective of each participant and therefore make some differentiation, because the profiles of the members in a group are completely diverse.

When carrying out literacy screening, D'Hertefelt et al. (2007) noticed a strong consensus on contextualising the measurement from the perspective of the person with poor literacy. This exercise must not only provide an indication of literacy level, but also conclusions that clearly indicate the actions which will be required to raise the literacy level of the person who has been screened. Screening cannot be used on its own, but must therefore be integrated as part of an inclusive pathway for developing literacy skills. In this respect, it is important to obtain a broad initial picture of the candidates. For instance, what affinity or experience do they have with a particular profession? Do they have learning difficulties, dyslexia, dyscalculia and to what extent can these problems be remedied? How motivated are they? How do they communicate? How do they cope with written or printed documents, tables? What solution strategies do they use? When participants are being admitted to an integrated literacy pathway, the team must assess in a conversation with the candidate whether he or she has a reasonable chance of completing the vocational training successfully. It does not look very good for either participants or the organisation if they drop out of the course midway. (See Section 5.2.6)

4.2 Extensions?

If the stack model is being used and the duration of both components is added up, the period of time involved can sometimes be very long. (Roggen, 2005) This can encourage people to drop out. It is not obvious for people with poor literacy how to keep motivated faced with the prospect for the (distant) future of dealing with all kinds of concerns and difficulties every day. Roberts et al. (2005) report a significantly lower dropout rate for pathways where some form or other of integration is involved (see the graphs in Section

4.6). Furthermore, the transition from one component to the other in the training pathway is problematic for many participants and is typically one of the times when they drop out. (Stevens & Vienne, 1999; Schuurmans & Steverlynck, 2008, p. 89) In spite of the separate reference and agreement frameworks, it still does not seem obvious how to achieve a good rapport between the various offer providers in terms of admission criteria, level achieved etc. From a content perspective, it is often very difficult for participants who are less competent to see the link between both worlds or to transfer what they have learnt in one programme to using it in the vocational training course.

In the case of a non-integrated model, it is left to the individual course participant to establish these links. However, this transfer receives stronger support as integrated training actually establishes links between the components. The integration of vocational and linguistic skills is then also highlighted as an element that makes the pathway more effective. The person learns more in the same time. (Roberts, 2005; De Groof & Pype, 2007) Maton (2008b) writes about this, based on the experience with non-native speakers with poor literacy: "In practice, it seems that the acquisition of language and general skills, in isolation from a specific area of application, does not produce the desired learning outcome. Integrated pathways definitely deliver the desired learning outcome because there is a specific area of application in mind right from the start. This therefore makes them far more suitable for non-native speakers with poor literacy. Different learning contents are placed in a wider framework, with links to each other, repeated in other contexts and approached from a different perspective. This helps what has been learnt to sink in better. The content of different components will be more specific. The participants gain more of an insight into their own learning process, which boosts motivation." (p.6)

4.3 Content integration

An integrated pathway involves more than adding up the vocational objectives from vocational training and the objectives for language, numeracy and ICT. An analysis ought to be carried out of each course, looking at how literacy can feature or be used both in the vocational training course and the ultimate job. There are strong indications that the teaching of literacy skills is

effective if the looking up, reading, writing, counting, processing etc. take place as part of a task being carried out in the vocational training course. (Roberts et al., 2005) There is a direct link present between both, not so much in terms of setting targets for the training course, but rather the specific implications of these assignments for literacy. For example, a specific task may require the learner to measure, estimate or calculate something in order to be able to perform the task properly. Or else, something needs to be looked up or filled in. In this case, it will be immediately clear to the teachers or participants themselves which knowledge they are lacking when they carry out such a specific task. This means that participants will find learning to count, read, look things up, write etc. far more useful if it relates to a vocational assignment that is associated with their initial professional aspirations than if they had to perform the same processes at another time and in another class. This is naturally assuming that the teacher (if it is not the same person as the vocational training instructor) can actually be present at that time in the training environment and has the expertise to offer the necessary support as part of a "learning through doing" approach.

In addition, this approach is suitable for utilising more widely motivation, self-confidence and positive attitudes, which are just as important factors for this target group for ensuring success in the training and actually performing the job. Dierckx (2007) states on this point that "the integrated development of technical skills, basic skills and attitudes will reinforce the target group's motivation, generate the feeling of success and greatly increase the effectiveness of the training provision".

One-trick pony?

In the case of "situational learning", the fear sometimes arises that participants might get too strongly attached to one particular situation, but outside that situation they might only be able to apply a little, if anything at all of the knowledge they have learnt. Schuurmans & Steverlynck (2008) make the following comment about integrated pathways for people with Dutch as their second language: "The experiments and projects described above clearly highlight that contextualising language courses and focusing them more on the situations requiring use of the language where the participants are also actually involved provide added value for a wide range of participants. This is even a win-win situation: the participants are also going to acquire the language more quickly, in addition to the other skills. Even though we need to be careful about the conclusions we draw, language acquisition seems

to operate in a way that can be transferred to other contexts. Participants seemingly manage to successfully make the transfer." (2008, p.91)

It appears that the "learning through doing" approach can also specifically improve the transfer process, going beyond insight and reflective skills. (See Feuerstein, 1993).

4.4 Teachers and instructors

Teaching skills and good relations between instructors and teachers seem to be even more important than any model for embedding literacy. (De Groof et al., 2001; Drijkoningen, 2001; Roppe & Wijnants, 2004; Roberts et al., 2005; De Groof & Pype, 2007) They must have the same view of what their learners' ultimate objective is. The participants' aim is to obtain vocational qualifications. Many people with poor literacy are not at all motivated to work at their literacy and numeracy skills, but are interested instead in being able to practise a particular profession. Vocational training instructors often have a different perception of the learners: they have a preconception of what the participants want to achieve. Teachers of literacy do not have this natural legitimacy because their role is only indirectly linked to the learners' primary objective. Vocational training must make them realise that literacy and other skills play a key role in learning and doing the job. The literature indicates that the role of vocational training instructors is important in this. It works better if they, from their position of direct legitimacy, put the "full emphasis" on the teachers' involvement. Close cooperation and good understanding are therefore vital.

Most teachers of literacy are often working in unknown territory when involved in the various vocational training courses. There are frequent reports about their uncertainty in this area. (Roberts et al., 2005) It is no easy task developing literacy skills around the structure and progress of a specific vocational training course. The vocational training instructors may support them in getting up to speed on the more technical matters. But, conversely, it is just as important for vocational training instructors to learn to see the significance of literacy training. They can be helped in recognising the literacy requirements featuring in their assignments. They must also gradually become familiar with the literacy needs of the participants and the different levels they perform at.

For both teachers and instructors it not only about investigating the different contents, but also about learning educational approaches, especially with the "learning through doing" approach". They must adapt or create together a learning environment where the development of literacy skills goes hand in hand in a natural way with making progress in the technical skills. For example, there is the finding that the role of the teacher is considerably less effective if most of the technical instruction is delivered in the conventional style of a lecture. (Roberts et al., 2005)

There are clear indications that teams with the same objective, taking the time to plan the course and evaluate progress, using complementary skills/expertise and willing to learn from each other's specialist areas are definitely not less effective, but are, if anything, more effective than the rare (often solitary) super teachers who are both literacy experts and highly skilled in a particular trade. This implies that the further promotion of expertise and the development of teamwork must go hand in hand.

4.5 The learners

Going from not being able...

As was mentioned in the introduction, working on improving their literacy skills is often not the primary goal or concern of people with poor literacy. They can be motivated to learn a particular job, but are often not inclined to follow separate courses which work on the various aspects of literacy. In an integrated pathway, it is much less likely that the teacher, instructor or participants themselves are only going to focus on not being able to read, not being able to write, not being able to count etc. This is more the case with a generic, non-embedded course as a result of its specific structure. This does not mean that working on literacy skills must be hidden away in the vocational training course, but rather that a wider range of skills can be assessed, including all kinds of skills relating to the particular trade or other (sometimes forgotten) skills. The participants are more than just people who, for instance, on the basis of a test, cannot read, cannot write, cannot calculate percentages etc. This then allows literacy as well to be used by the participants to achieve their professional aspirations, thereby giving it positive connotations (Grief, 2009). Embedding literacy in vocational training increases the functional

content of the definition of literacy and avoids it being approached as a problem. As the participants' perception and attitude to their own ability is crucial to their effective progress (Graham and Troia, 2003), it is vitally important that using language, using the computer, reading, counting, writing, looking things up etc. are introduced by the vocational training instructor and teacher as something that is natural and essential to the relevant trade. If it is integrated as part of the training, this demonstrates its relevance to the job and training. The enjoyment of minor successes can boost the feeling of being competent, giving a greater chance of an integrated approach resulting in a more positive attitude towards figures, using the computer, reading and writing. "By not only focusing on their less developed skills (such as language and literacy), but by also working on their technical skills, social skills and work attitude this enhances the participants' self-image and self-confidence." (Maton, 2008a)

Another aspect that was observed relates to the impact of group events. "The instructor argues that there is a lot of resistance to training. People are ashamed to have to leave the class for extra lessons." (Roggen, 2005, 'metal working' info sheet) Previous negative school or learning experiences and performances relating to literacy are often to do with group pressure, stigma, social prestige and positioning among their peers. If the literacy-related activities and support are arranged in an ILP in the training environment and not in the conventional manner, but rather in groups or through independent work with individual support, participants who are afraid of coming across as poor at writing, counting and other literary skills can more often avoid this pressure.

... to building a new professional identity.

In a previous point it was also mentioned that vocational training instructors can serve as role models for participants. They wonder what it will be like, for instance, to work in a construction firm, what it will be like to work as an auxiliary in a hospital, or how you need to behave when you are a bricklayer's assistant in a construction firm. What is it that they can and cannot do or say? What is expected (and what is not)? What should they be able to do in all kinds of areas (vocational skills, reading, dealing with people, compiling reports, asking questions, looking up things, working together etc.)? The development of a new professional identity or membership of a new professional group can motivate the participants in a vocational training course. (Roberts et al., 2005; Wagner, 2009) Participants often see a reflection of this in the training and instructors. What has therefore been said and

done in this vocational training course has a quite a considerable impact on the way in which the participants' aspirations are formed. For this reason, it therefore seems important to ensure that literacy naturally goes hand in hand with the development of professional skills and is an integral, inextricable part of the training. This also gives the message that working on literacy skills does not end after school or training. Opportunities will also arise later in the workplace or in informal situations where there will be plenty of new things that have to be read, calculated, looked up, processed and/or reported. (Van Damme et al. 1997, p. 91) This kind of socialisation cannot be achieved with standalone, generic literacy courses and often offers a stark contrast as well to earlier school experiences which were not positive for many people with poor literacy. This finding therefore provides a strong argument in favour of integrating professional and literacy skills.

4.6 Economic considerations

Sometimes the cost of far-reaching integration is mentioned, as in the *co-teaching* model. A sandwich model or a model based on alternating periods (separate place and time for lessons) can also have certain effects, for instance, a lower dropout level and a higher level of literacy achieved. These effects can take place, although to a lesser extent, and only on the condition that the teacher and instructor can plan and prepare the lessons together. (Atkins et al., 2007; Grief, 2009). A sandwich model or model based on alternating periods could therefore provide an alternative because it seems to fit in the current situation, but there are some other considerations:

- If you want to achieve the same effects, additional investment is required compared with the more "separate" model. The teachers and instructors must sit down together to plan, prepare and coordinate the lessons.

- In this model the teachers and instructors must be teaching 100% of the time, whereas in the *co-teaching model* the teacher, for instance, does not always need to be present the whole time and can, in the meantime, observe, create specific material etc.

- The cost will not be higher than the cost, for example, of language coaching in the Flemish Public Employment Service

(VDAB) courses or in courses provided by external parties. (75 €/hour - Dutch in the workplace scheme (NodW), 12 €/hour - Dutch in the training environment scheme (NodO)).

- A broad initial picture of the candidates will undoubtedly highlight very individually defined profiles in terms of skills, as well as vocational and learning experience. A model which is still mainly based on individual support will be able to accommodate this better.

- Research (Grief, 2009) shows that the effects on the dropout rate and different levels of literacy performance are quite different. This can be clearly seen from the following graphs:

Learners completing vocational training

	percentage achieving
embedded	77,4
Not embedded	61,6

Learners achieving a literacyE SOL qualification

	percentage achieving
Fully embedded	92,8
Mostly embedded	91,4
Partially embedded	85,5
Non- embedded	50

Learners achieving numeracy qualifications

Category	percentage achieving
Fully embedded	93,4
Mostly embedded	90,1
Partially embedded	78,6
Non- embedded	69,6

percentage achieving

4.7 Assignment for a whole organisation

In conclusion, these findings clearly highlight that all the stakeholders in the training – instructors, training managers, admissions staff, educational staff, evaluators – must be inspired by the realisation that literacy and numeracy, language and ICT skills are essential support elements in the learning of a trade. An assignment for the whole organisation, as it were.

However, there are few organisations in the training sector in Flanders which have the commitment or the expertise in both areas – vocational training and literacy – to be able to initiate an integration process in-house. Therefore, joint responsibility must be assumed for the successful completion of the whole training course. If one or other of the embedded models is selected, there will definitely need to be a gradual move towards close cooperation between the offer providers. This requires an adequate structured dialogue and sufficient time to be provided for joint planning, developing contextualised material, monitoring and jointly assessing the participants' performances etc.

Chapter 5

An educational concept for integrated literacy pathways: L-coaching

5. An educational concept for integrated literacy pathways: L-coaching

Based on the above findings, we are proposing the following concept: L-coaching as part of vocational training. This is therefore a form of *co-teaching* where a literacy teacher comes and provides support during the training course. We will now explain what this involves.

We do not want to completely exclude the "super teacher" model, where one person is both teacher and vocational training instructor, but Grief (2009) reports a higher risk of failure compared with *co-teaching*. *Super teachers* miss out on the supportive interaction of a team. In addition, it is not easy to find this kind of teacher.

5.1 L-coaching

This support is aimed at:

(1) the general learning environment of the vocational training course

(2) the vocational training instructor

(3) the participants

5.1.1 Learning environment

Rather than focusing on the weaknesses of the participants, the L-coach works at systematically creating a powerful learning environment for the whole course. The features of a literacy-rich learning environment include:

- A great deal of provision in terms of reading, writing and arithmetic tasks outside the vocational (training) context, combined with ICT or not.

- By linking these tasks to practical instructions and assignments, they are:

  - relevant

  - realistic and achievable

  - familiar and directly practicable

  - motivating

- Extensive opportunities for interaction and cooperation

- Secure environment with an assessment of all the existing skills

- Great deal of (visual) support tailored to the current task and the individual

- Large degree of involvement by everyone

In Section 5.3 we will look in more detail at the relevance of these elements in learning processes. The pack enclosed includes examples of integrated literacy tasks (The sample material is available from the Leuven-Hageland Basic Education Centre).

5.1.2 Teachers and instructors

The features described above provide a sound foundation for the training course, capable of offering greater stimulation for the development of literacy skills. However, the L-coach can never do this alone. He or she does this in close cooperation with the vocational training instructor within a complete organisation that wants to adopt a similar approach.

Good cooperation requires them both to adopt the same perspective, i.e. that of the candidates. They must clearly demonstrate their desire to perform a particular job. Successfully completing a vocational training course and working on literacy

skills – if they are lacking – are dependent on this. The technical content specifies the structure for this because of the direct legitimacy in relation to the primary aim. The same legitimacy for the content of literacy training material is established when it is clear that literacy skills are *part of the job* and are effectively supported. This does not mean that no changes can be made to the vocational training curriculum for content reasons, but that this can happen in consultation.

Apart from setting common objectives, deciding on the composition of the groups and specifying teaching guidelines, integrating a vocational subject and literacy requires an adapted teaching methodology. This methodology should be based more on the "learning through doing" principle. Task-orientated material and literacy-rich technical assignments should be chosen or created as far as possible by mutual agreement. Each lesson is looked at in terms of literacy-related opportunities and/or problems. Not every technical assignment or instruction is appropriate for dealing with a literacy point.

In addition to these preparations and planned activities, there are also the interventions carried out in the training environment. Clear principles must be agreed on and used for this: When can the L-coach get involved? What exactly does he/she do (e.g. reformulate (written) instructions)? Whom does he/she provide assistance to? When does the vocational training instructor take over again?, etc.

L-coaches get actively involved with the technical tasks so that they can also become very familiar with the technical side of the specific training. However, they only step into the limelight if they notice learning opportunities or problems. In this situation they focus on the participants, while, in the meantime, the instructor can also learn something about the literacy requirements contained in a specific assignment and about handling literacy problems. The teacher and instructor should definitely give each other a settling-in period before finding an ideal balance. Structured dialogue and a clear definition of roles are necessary for successful cooperation.

It is clear that the investment in this kind of coordination will be proportionately huge if the integrated pathway is carried out only on a one-off basis. It goes without saying that the amount of staff time may decrease towards the end of the actual pathway and certainly if it is run on several occasions using the same team. Based on the idea of a gradual introduction, we suggest starting

immediately with several series of courses in succession, not only because of the return on the initial investment, but also because of the risk that the perception of this approach will mainly be determined by the inevitable, less successful activities which occur when the course is given for the first time, which would hamper any further fine-tuning and implementation of this model.

5.1.3 Course participants

If the teacher intervenes in the training environment, this places greater focus on the participants with poor literacy. It is about their literacy skills, the way they communicate with their environment, their struggle with written or printed technical content and their general uncertainty about this. From the participant's perspective, the support mainly involves providing targeted assistance when real literacy issues arise. The following example highlights such a situation.

Marcel is on a training placement in a restaurant. He has reading difficulties. He has learnt the different types of beers and wines off by heart. He is familiar with the soft drinks. But he finds the menus difficult. There are six starters, eight main courses and six desserts. He has numbered the courses for himself and given them a keyword, which works well. He also has to give orders to the chef himself, verbally. But Marcel is afraid that they will find out that he cannot read very well. He does not want to lose this training placement. He enjoys the contact with the customers, but they sometimes ask quite awkward questions. Last time, someone asked whether the house wine was French or Spanish. He did not know. He then showed the bottle and fortunately the man said it himself. Later on he stood looking at the label and it took him ages to work out where the country was indicated. (freely adapted from Bohnenn et al., 2004, p.25)

The support is mainly aimed at real tasks which automatically arise from what the participants must (ought) to do in practice. The L-coaches provide support to the participants when they get stuck. They provide feedback, demonstrate things, do small exercises and encourage them to think actively etc. The vocational training instructors can also support the L-coaches at this point by justifying their educational input as necessary for completing the technical assignment.

However, *ad hoc* interventions exclude planned activities involved with technical instructions and practical assignments, as well as times for explicit literacy-related learning. In this case, we are dealing with limited preparatory activities involving a technical component of the training course. Depending on the needs of the situation, these educational interventions can be tailored to individual participants or pairs, sometimes aimed at groups or carried out once for the whole group.

As the general learning context increasingly displays the features of a powerful learning environment, the support input from the L-coach may change over time or even possibly be reduced with regard to both the participants and instructor. Even though an expected cumulative effect is achieved from the mutual promotion of expertise between the teacher and instructor across different deliveries of an integrated pathway, we are not advocating, however a reduction in the support from the L-coach. It is strongly linked to other factors. In a group where everyone is making very good progress, a reduction in the level of support seems possible. Given that this is something which is not easy to predict, this also makes it difficult to organise a reduction in an L-coach's input when planning lessons.

5.2 Basic modules tailored to an ILP

The cycle for delivering a training course includes the following elements, although they do not necessarily have to be carried out in the same order. A specific step-by-step plan is described based on these modules, with the necessary hyperlinks to useful documents.

1. When making preparations, the concept of the L-coach as part of the vocational training course is examined. The opportunities available are compared against the model's critical success factors.

- **Instrument**: L-coaching concept, step-by-step: "An L-coach in vocational training"
- **Result**: an approach plan based on the model and adapted to the location chosen and context

2. Duration, intensity, timing and location. Lessons are delivered in the training environment and the teachers/instructors share the same room space with a common materials cupboard. The available resources and time are shared and confirmed as part of an agreement.

- **Instrument:** consultation, tips on joint planning and specifically working on improving cooperation
- **Result:** a detailed code of practice governing all roles, tasks and responsibilities; cooperation planning, interim evaluations, promotion of expertise and consultation schedule

3. A needs analysis must identify specific literacy requirements for the relevant vocational training course and for performing the job. A SWOT analysis is carried out on the learning environment in which the training is taking place.

- **Instrument:** The CTO's methodology for needs analysis and target setting, environment analysis based on interviews, observations and an analysis of the written and oral texts used. For example: (1) Handvatten voor taalbeleid (Guidelines on language policy) (CTO/VGC, 2001)[4]. (2) Nederlands op de Opleidingsvloer (Dutch in the training environment) (CTO[5]/VDAB[6], 2001) (3) Taalgericht naar werk (Language for work) (HvN Antwerpen/Linguapolis, 2007)[7].
Collections of other possible sources that have set out literacy requirements. For example, the "Stappen Vooruit" (Step Forward) project and "Basiscompetenties in kaart" (BIK - Record of basic skills) from the Leuven Basic

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4 http://cteno.be/downloads/publicaties/drijkoningen_2001_handvatten_taalbeleid.pdf

5 http://cteno.be/downloads/publicaties/berben_van_nuffel_2004_taalondersteuning_op_de_opleidingsvloer.pdf

6 http://vdab.be/inwerking/nt2-opleidingsvloer.shtml

7 http://www.nt2antwerpen.be/actieplannen_taalgericht_naar_werk

Education Centre set out the literacy skills that are required to be able to take a number of vocational courses and perform the relevant jobs. 'Stappen vooruit' (Step Forward) (Roggen, 2005) for the construction, sanitation, metal and electrical industries. "Basiscompetenties in kaart" (Record of basic skills) sets out the literacy skills for the following vocational training courses: builder's assistant, cooking & professional cleaning services, decorator and care home assistant (Dierckx, 2007).

- **Result:** an inventory of the key literacy sticking points; skills profile for vocational training course

4. The team sets the objectives in relation to the technical training's components.

- **Instrument:** consultation, target list for technical training, needs analysis inventory, basic education training profiles. Documents from previous modules can definitely be used at that point. The SERV vocational skills profiles[8] and the Flemish Qualifications Framework can also provide a source of inspiration. An example of a target list and possible classification is given in "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in de beroepso-pleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample material) (This sample material is available from the Leuven - Hageland Basic Education Centre).

- **Result:** integrated target list

5. Based on the list of sticking points or main problems to be expected, targeted interventions and task-orientated activities are gathered, adapted or created in order to work on the necessary literacy skills. Atkins et al. (2007) looked at how teachers handle material in ILPs. In order to meet their expectations, the best solution is to provide an online activity database or a source book for each vocational training course. This must be provided with a handy method for looking for and choosing the necessary activities. The database contains different levels of materials which can be used independently, in pairs or in groups. Examples of the type of exercises and working methods used have been developed as part of the project (see "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in de beroepsopleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample

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8   http://www.serv.be/dispatcher.aspx?page_id=20-00-00-00-003

material)) or it can be found, for instance, from sources abroad[9], but it goes without saying that developing material for a whole range of vocational training courses costs a great deal of money and requires specific expertise. Producing this material seems to be feasible only if not every initiative is developed and input from specific developers is used.

- **Instrument:** setting priorities, collecting sufficient source material (examples of material in English)[10] and any development material. An example of a possible classification system for the material is given in "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in de beroepsopleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample material) (This sample material is available from the Leuven - Hageland Basic Education Centre).
- **Result:** digital (online) material database for the relevant vocational training courses

6. Recruitment and selection (in combination with 7). Well though-out recruitment that attracts the right candidates: clearly motivated about a particular trade and less competent in terms of literacy. When the participants start the course, a short initial situation analysis is carried out and, if necessary, specific learning objectives are set for each person. The decision about whom to admit can be made in consultation, based on a broad analysis. This analysis must highlight a close link with the rest of the pathway. If the screening process is not embedded (see Section 4.1), there is always the risk of coming across as intimidating, of reinforcing only the deficiency-based approach to literacy (cut-off point between those who are able/not able) and being used as a *gatekeeper*. Some organisations often often firmly stick to entrance tests. Nevertheless, a survey on integrated pathways for non-native Dutch speakers as part of training initiatives in Brussels produced the statement that "whether an admissions bar is set or not is not a crucial factor to the model's success" (De Groof & Pype, 2007 p. 15). What goes on in the pathways seems to be of much greater significance than a selection process beforehand.

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9 http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/search.cfm

10 http://rwp.qia.oxi.net/embeddedlearning/search.cfm

- **Instrument:** a well thought-out recruitment plan; an integrated analysis instrument that can provide a broad representation of the initial situation (see last paragraph in Section 4.1). Sample observation tasks which can be carried out in the first week(s) according to this initial picture are available in the pack "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in de beroepsopleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample material) (This sample material is available from the Leuven - Hageland Basic Education Centre).
- **Result:** action plan with individual specifications and possibly a portfolio. Sample individual action plans are also available in the pack "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in de beroepsopleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample material) (This sample material is available from the Leuven - Hageland Basic Education Centre).

7. Group composition (in combination with 6). A decision ought to be made as to whether a group should consist of only people with poor literacy or not. One solution to the old dual approach to literacy is to create an environment where everyone needs to have literacy skills, even though everyone does not have the same level of skills. This can be achieved in a vocational training course where the desired trade is the same for everyone. This moves the focus away from standardising the groups according to literacy level. Even though this would help form a homogeneous group, the differences would yet again grow wider in a short time. Creating heterogeneous groups also seems a good alternative in terms of learning effect. It offers more options and variations in terms of interaction (e.g. with regard to form, structure and meaning of a text), meaning negotiation and support (Van den Branden, 1997; 2000).

- **Instrument**: results, initial picture instrument for candidates, consultation.
- **Result**: deliberately heterogeneous group(s)

8. Treating preparations from an educational perspective. The L-coaches carry out observations in the class and gather relevant written material: work rotas, written instructions, manuals etc. They assess the difficulties with these and already possibly provide support or activities. They design tasks involving looking up things, reading, writing, counting, measuring or other activities where interaction and cooperation

are required at relevant times. (Vienne, 2008). The L-coaches provide in the room plenty of writing resources (pen/paper, PC), individual notebooks/folders, possibly as part of a portfolio, a list of standard texts or templates etc.

The L-coach and vocational training instructor decide together which points in the sticking points list are the most important for the next lessons or components in the vocational training. Based on the experiences and observations in class, they consult with each other about what they are going to work on. They focus on written words. They think about using simple written language in the course and clarifying difficult texts. This means structuring the text well (title, signal words), avoiding unnecessary repetition or information, splitting a long text into chunks, providing visual support etc.

Both coaches agree on when each intervenes (see Section 5.1.2).

- **Instrument**: observation plan, material; preparation plan etc.
- **Result**: good scenario and role-playing for the lesson

9. Handling the educational aspect. The L-coach carries out a planned intervention on an *ad hoc* basis. He/she uses, for instance, an agreed pattern: going through the planning, digging out individual notebooks etc. The vocational training instructor uses good instruction language and rotates well with the L-coach. Teaching methodology and agreements: (see 5.1; 5.3)

- **Instrument**: preparation; material database; tips on clear instruction language and a secure environment [positive basic attitude; mistakes can happen, but you can learn from them; think about the feedback you are going to give (e.g. use of red ballpoint pen!); giving support by supplying templates, standard texts etc.; giving responsibility to participants; repeating written language again verbally as well; avoiding unnecessary repetitions etc.]
- **Result**: participants target the steps ahead towards the objectives

After each component, the L-coach and vocational training instructor look back with the participants at the assignments carried out and reflect on aspects relating to the planning and execution of the task. If necessary, they agree with the participants about, for instance, attitude, extra practice etc.

- **Instrument**: reflection cards (see the self-evaluation framework for this for each of the sample activities in the pack "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in beroepsopleidingen II – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training II - Sample material), additional training material, portfolio, <u>observation tool)</u>. (This sample material is available from the Leuven - Hageland Basic Education Centre).
- **Result**: participants and teachers gain a better insight into how it works in the learning process

10. Evaluation. The L-coach and the vocational training instructor regularly monitor the participants' progress and, if necessary, change a number of elements in the training. This gives the evaluation its rightful place in the educational cycle. The results may, if appropriate, be kept in a portfolio, which can raise the participant's awareness of the growth in the various skills and attitudes required. Whether a permanent evaluation, a piece of work or a one-off exam is involved, it is important to carry out an integrated measurement of the predefined functional objectives of the vocational training course. If the participants can perform a particular job-related task properly which involves literacy skills, it is perhaps not necessary to still measure these literacy skills separately with the focus on this specific element. The requirement for this is that the literacy skills are simply integrated in an appropriate manner and are well distributed throughout the training.

- **Instrument**: adapted and integrated evaluation instrument(s). An example of this is presented below in Section <u>7.2</u>.
- **Result**: a broad, valid and reliable assessment of the participant's performance in light of the training's objectives and their role in the job

Finally, it seems obvious to us to evaluate the integrated pathway again even afterwards: the process, programme, cooperation, results, results for improvements for a next time etc.

In a nutshell, the L-coaching model is positioned as follows on the continuum of parameters:

	non-embedded	←————→	embedded
Group	participants receive the various elements spread across different programmes or level groups		one group
Teachers	separate teachers	consultant teachers	co-team super teacher
Instruction period	separate, stack model	sandwich alternating pathways	a single whole
Instruction location	different locations	same building	same room
Organisational planning	separate	consultation	single organisation
Regulation and subsidies	different regulatory and subsidy frameworks	coordination at (meso-) level of 2 organisations	single regulatory and subsidy framework (macro)
Content planning and lesson preparation (objectives etc.)	separate	consultation and coordination	single programme
Lessons	separate lessons, content and teachers	teachers give the lesson together	one teacher provides the entire content
Assessment and monitoring	separate assessment of own objectives		joint monitoring, assessment and evaluation

Based on these modules, a specific step-by-step plan has been devised for establishing an ILP: "De G-coach in beroepsopleidingen" (The L-coach in vocational training courses).

5.3 Educational foundation

Learning outcome and an increase in effectiveness are used as an important argument for integrating the vocational subject and literacy. We are going to look more closely at this in this section. It is generally accepted that the learning process goes more smoothly if the following elements are present:

- Involvement

- Positive thinking

- Interaction and cooperation

- Stimulating feedback and support

- Sense of competency

- Recognition as a member of a certain group/community

- Any external incentives

- Safe environment and sense of well-being

This applies, by extension, to the learning of content and skills as part of a vocational training course and just as much to literacy skills. It primarily comes down to designing the learning environment in such a way that it accommodates these features as well as possible.

However, the participants will not necessarily learn anything just with a good learning environment. Tasks are also required to get them to learn. These tasks must provide a rich offering in terms of literacy, as well as pose a sufficient challenge to and motivate the participants. One possible way of doing this is to include contexts which are relevant to their vocational training. On the other hand, the tasks are also best if they are repeatable and adapted (Vygotski, 1962). There are no general guidelines which every team must comply with. In any case, if the material's level of difficulty is too high, this is demotivating, but setting requirements which are too low has just as negative an impact.

Tasks must therefore be chosen well according to the objective and level of the participant. In addition, they must be structured so that they encourage active learning and offer plenty of opportunities for negotiation and feedback about the design and meaning. They provide support which can be flexibly tailored to the individual according to their needs.

This support can be provided in connection with language or numeracy elements, self-management aspects in the learning, motivation, attitudes, technical content issues, cognitive skills etc.

Literacy is never handled in isolation to avoid the the risk of it only being a decoding exercise and dealing with technical aspects. The vocational training course includes numerous opportunities for creating a context-rich and stimulating learning environment. It provides the context where it is normal to have to carry out all kinds of (literacy) tasks (responsibility for own product, learner's independence in the learning process). The training situation is close to the desired target situation, which is doing the actual job. This guarantees that the participants learn exactly what is relevant and necessary. The selection of the various literacy issues which will need to be worked on is controlled by the training and seems to happen spontaneously. A great deal of material can be offered in the training environment and the participants can get some ideas in all areas about what is expected of them (feasibility). The practical benefit of what they learn can help them handle the texts which are often difficult, as well as tables, input screens or associated actions. Making the link with their professional aspirations is very clear if there is a dip in their commitment or motivation. The participants can also identify themselves with a particular professional group (membership).

In the context of a vocational training course, participants are less likely to focus on or get obsessed about their lack of literacy skills. There are plenty of other skills available which can be assessed positively (sense of competency). It is also an environment offering numerous opportunities for support: machines, tools, working documents, computers etc. L-coaches can use all of these. They also find it easy to arrange interaction involving different kinds of things which need to be learnt. They can offer group work, but just as easily switch to providing individual support or literacy training on specific points.

It is not isolated skills which are required for the "desired objective situation" - doing the job. An approach based on using as many different components as possible together – literacy, attitudes, vocational and other skills – will equip the participants better for proving they are up to the job. In this situation, as employees, they will also have to deploy all sorts of abilities to be able to perform their tasks successfully and be accepted into the professional group.

Chapter 6

Feasibility and methods

6. Feasibility and methods

We will present in this chapter a survey about the L-coach concept and compile a list of key factors for making an ILP a success. There are striking similarities with the findings described in Chapter 4. The "Integrated literacy training in vocational training" steering group will draw up, following this, report recommendations relating to different aspects of the implementation of such pathways.

6.1 Results of the survey about the ILP concept

The proposed structure for L-coaching was presented to a group of twenty people made up of stakeholders, teachers, experts and policy experts (see list in Appendix). They were asked their opinion about it via telephone using the questions below, which covered all kinds of aspects relating to organising such an ILP. A summary of the answers given is provided with each question.

1. The L-coaching model is primarily geared towards supporting the whole learning environment of the vocational training course. To what extent and under what conditions do you think it is possible to adapt the learning environment of the vocational training course so that it stimulates the development of literacy skills?

The majority of respondents on both the instructor and teacher side feel that it is possible to make adaptations to the learning environment. They give examples of this: adapting course material based on authentic material taken from practical training (reading a proper plan/following the instructions on a real bag of cement/understanding the manual for a real welding device etc.), adapting objectives to the vocational training, the layout of rooms, consultation times. However, organisers and teachers/instructors also give a number of conditions for adapting the learning environment:

- Making instructors aware of literacy. Instructors must understand or realise that adequate literacy is required to be able to complete the training successfully. A relaxed approach must be adopted to this process of awareness without the instructors asking too many questions or forcing matters

where the participants have not received the necessary content. Preliminary conversations may help provide a greater insight into literacy.

- The team must make a deliberate choice as a whole.

- Time factor: for the L-coach to become thoroughly familiarised with the technical aspects of the vocational training course, to add the necessary literacy requirements to the vocational profiles, for joint preparation, for developing teaching material, to be able to promote expertise. This will pay off in the long run if the training is organised on several occasions.

- Flexible material (it is basically impossible to predict queries and problems that crop up), taking another look at training packages in the light of stimulating literacy development.

- It is not always practical to organise a standard classroom adjacent to training premises, but sometimes it is necessary when the training environment is too noisy.

The respondents who are more involved with policy use these practical opportunities mainly to monitor the effects of this teaching model on the participants and the increase in their chances of success on a vocational training course and directly on achieving better integration into professional life.

2. In the proposed model L-coaches and vocational training instructors work closely together. Can you indicate for each of the following points which activities you think must be carried out jointly? And what conditions would be needed to make this feasible?

a. **Analysis of literacy requirements specified by the relevant vocational training course**

Everyone thinks that the instructor and L-coach must do this task together. This allows the L-coach to become familiarised with the training's literacy requirements and, conversely, it also contributes to the instructor's awareness. The L-coach can make the first move, present a method and put it in writing.

b. **Setting the training objectives**

The objectives are already set for each vocational training course. The instructor and L-coach together must incorporate

the literacy objectives. One basic education teacher states that this work can also take place at a higher level (training organisers, an institute etc.). In this case, it is recommended that the instructor and L-coach go through thoroughly the results of this work together.

c. **The initial picture of the candidates and individual learning plan**

All the respondents react positively to this idea, but warn against the use of instruments for producing an initial picture, such as a *gatekeeper.* The emphasis here again is on them doing this jointly.

d. **Selection of course participants and group composition**

Where this still happens, most respondents feel that it is best done together. In practice, however, the process of selecting course participants has been stopped and anyone can join. The instructors among the respondents indicate that the content (not only the technical content, but also the literacy objectives) must be clearly communicated to the participant. It is useful if the L-coach is more involved from the start in the participant's pathway and in order to make the pathway advisers aware of the abilities required in particular vocational profiles.

e. **Content planning of training**

All respondents agree that it is the Basic Education Centre's responsibility to complete the ILP and the technical aspect is the responsibility of the training agency. But everyone is also asking for parallel adaptation in consultation. Often approach plans are already made for organising vocational training courses. A literacy approach can also be attached to this.

f. **Preparation for every lesson**

Perhaps individual lessons can already be prepared together, but overall every respondent thinks that this is far too time-consuming. More importantly, they have regular consultations, going through the programme for the coming period and discussing each other's process.

g. **Delivering the lesson**

Generally speaking, teaching the lesson together is indicated as the ideal situation. Only one basic education teacher wanted to be able to work on literacy separately, but with integrated content (principle of the current "numeracy labs", apprenticeships). It is important for participants to be able to reflect in a calm environment, stand still during practical assignments, do exercises, learn etc. The participants occasionally need to sit down and concentrate on an exercise. If they are moving around they easily get distracted. It is not clear to the L-coach either about setting exercises in the busy environment of a workshop (noise, machines, coming and going, plenty of distractions for the participants). Some instructors do not consider having this kind of separate ILP and L-coach as contradictory. They advocate a combination of both. The L-coach helps with practical assignments where participants must work out, look up things etc. themselves. If they spend a lot of time on, for instance, on finding the meaning of "perimeter", "surface area", "spatial awareness", they can do extra exercises in the numeracy lab. It is necessary to work on literacy with the L-coach in the relevant context. This is the only way that the participants will see the benefit of it, which supports their motivation.

h. **Monitoring progress and the final assessment**

It is clear to everyone that the measurement of progress and the discussion of results are also best carried out together if an integrated model is selected. The various objectives must be evaluated the same way. Otherwise, this would be totally confusing for the participants. Although the vocational training requirements are the main priority, it cannot always be deduced from the answers whether everyone sticks as rigidly to this basic principle. In the case of a poor technical performance, the instructor or L-coach must look further into whether it is due to a particular literacy task which the participant cannot perform well.

3. In the proposed concept the activities for working on literacy mainly follow the thread of the vocational training programme. Do you think this is feasible and desirable? Do you think that adjustments need to possibly be made to the teaching guidelines, based on the level of literacy development?

The majority of respondents indicate that the teaching guidelines for the vocational training course take priority and that the literacy objectives must follow these. However, it must also be possible to make adjustments, based on the integration with literacy objectives (assuming that time has also been added to the training for this). One basic education teacher and training manager indicate that it is not only necessary to work on professional self-reliance objectives, but the minimal level of social functionality must be achieved with each participant. On the other hand, all the other teachers, instructors and policy experts emphasise the pure self-reliance aspect. If objectives aiming at achieving the minimum possible social functionality are not relevant for this or any vocational training, they do not need to be recorded.

4. What do you think are the types of vocational training courses which are most suitable for combining with literacy training?

All the respondents think that all secondary training courses with lower skills profiles and work experience projects are eligible for an ILP. This is obviously because the requested literacy skills can be differentiated for each type of training. A number of practical problems are also mentioned in relation to the short duration of the training or, for instance, the location (e.g. basket makers in a work experience project are often on the go).

5. In this model we suggest coordinating the admissions policy based on a broad analysis of each candidate's initial position. Not only is the literacy level taken into account, but also (vocational) experience and other existing skills. This means that the groups should be put together on a uniform basis according to the desired trade (possibly sector), but not according to level of literacy (language, numeracy, ICT) and/or other background factors (e.g. native/non-native speakers, schooling). Does this model offer sufficient opportunities to be able to achieve this kind of heterogeneous composition?

Many see this model as offering different kinds of opportunities for capitalising on the participants' different backgrounds. As a result, this model often includes the use of two coaches so that they can divide their attention, take a separate group, if necessary, offer additional individual support, alternate with each other etc. In any case, every respondent is aware that heterogeneity is a logical consequence of this kind of set-up and they will need to deal with it. Having a difference in level can make sense if it is controlled in the right way and not all of the participants are going to need the same level of support. A number of teachers state that this is not obvious to an L-coach (or to the instructor) because they need to

feel comfortable in many areas and be expert at using different methods. Time, a team and material need to be provided to be able to act as an L-coach. One striking fact in connection with this is that a basic education teacher and the training manager of an integrated training course actually advocate a preliminary pathway or a referral to basic education lessons if the participant does not have adequate basic skills or the level is below the minimum social self-reliance level.

6. The proposed model allows a great deal of flexibility so that educational intervention and different types of support can be applied to a heterogeneous background and the participants' educational development. There are 3 questions on this point:

a. What opportunities and difficulties do you see in the area of accountability with regard to current subsidy provision and rules? What changes would you suggest?

Although various suggestions are made concerning the financial aspect of these pathways, all the respondents agree that the government must facilitate this. For some, only as an experiment, while for others, immediately at a structural level, for instance, based on the regular basic education hours package and, therefore, not like the present situation involving 10% OLC (Open Learning Centre) or other resources. In the case of numeracy, there is possibly an opportunity in prospect through an exercise in applying greater flexibility in Education Decree XIX (from 2010). A Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) language coach also also sees Dutch-language instructors involved in the training environment as future L-coaches.

b. What must a teacher or instructor know or be able to do so that they can operate effectively in this model?

Both instructors and teachers state in each case that they are lacking the other side of the job (the technical knowledge or literacy training knowledge/skills). Both need to be integrated into the other one's area, either technical expertise or literacy methodology. They need to be prepared to do this and be able to put aside sufficient time for this (e.g. L-coaches work together two weeks in preparation). The L-coach must therefore feel comfortable in all areas: ability to cooperate well, to communicate, to define opportunities and flexibly utilise them. On the other hand, instructors must also be prepared to make possible

changes to their programme, teaching approach, use of language when giving instructions etc. L-coaching will not work if an instructor "lectures".

c. What things do L-coaches need to be able to have – apart from their expertise – to be able to do their job well: material, methodologies, step-by-step plans etc.?

All the respondents agree more or less that an ordinary basic education teacher or training instructor does not have yet, at the moment, sufficient educational skills to implement this model. Appropriate additional training and more experience are an absolute must. The L-coach and instructor need a list of all the objectives both for vocational and literacy skills. L-coaches must be able to use different working methods (coaching, individual support, group work etc.) and (audio-visual) teaching aids. There is also mention that a whole range of practical assignments is required where literacy skills are incorporated. Reflection material and a portfolio are also mentioned for this question, both for course participants and teachers' and instructors' teaching approach, as well as cooperation and the development of the project itself.

7. What kind of material does an L-coach need? What tools do you think are required for this model?

The respondents interpret this question as being linked to the previous one and added little in the way of answers. It comes down to, in a nutshell: good assignments and working methods, a set of online material (PC, website); tools for defining levels, diagnostics, learning progress and self-reflection.

8. In the proposed model the L-coach spends a great deal of time in the vocational training course. Sometimes the lesson is delivered jointly. Is a distribution of tasks feasible? How would you manage to reach a good way of alternating?

The respondents are aware that this entails potential points of conflict. Everyone is looking for a good distribution of tasks, but realises that this often depends on the personal aspects as well. Things must "click" too between the L-coach and instructor. A good distribution of tasks is absolutely essential and is very simple, at first glance: the L-coach is responsible for the literacy skills and the instructor is responsible for the technical side. But cooperation is necessary and requires a teaching process. A

teacher suggests arranging properly who intervenes where and when, for instance, whenever one (or more) of the participants are not present. If this does not really work, perhaps the L-coach needs to be changed. Other considerations mentioned include: respect for each other's jobs, neither can be dominant, giving the instructor due respect, the instructor must also have time to be able to invest in cooperation, the same workplace and rules for the L-coach as applied in vocational training.

9. In connection with evaluation, the concept provides a direct, integrated measurement of the functional objectives presented. If a participant can perform a certain technical vocational assignment properly which involves certain literacy skills, it is no longer necessary to measure the underlying literacy skills again separately. What do you think of this view?

Nearly all the respondents support this view, but various underlying conditions are mentioned, which must be met to make this approach work. For example, a good analysis must be carried out of the basic skills required to complete the vocational training course successfully. The literacy skills must also be integrated properly into the training and the evaluation assignments.

One training manager says that technical performance alone is not sufficient. In addition, the literacy requirements must be achieved as a minimum; otherwise, people have little chance of operating effectively in the workplace.

10. Have you any comments about the duration and intensity of such pathways, and possibly about the cost as well?

Most answers go along with an extension of the current pathways, but they must not be too long either. If training courses are too short, people will be sent into the labour market with too few skills. However, there is a greater risk of dropping out with long training courses. It is often difficult to keep alive the prospect of employment over a longer period. The policy experts are not alone in stating this. Trainers too state that consideration must be given to the fact that all course participants want to find work as quickly as possible. With regard to the duration and intensity, the respondents are asking for experiments and flexibility, depending on the type of training. Some people indicate that this approach is only beneficial if the L-coach is present in the training environment as much as possible.

With regard to the price, there are almost no replies. The comparison is made with the Dutch in the workplace scheme. The price of this scheme at the moment is 75€ per hour, regardless of whether a group or an individual is involved. Coaching as part of the individual vocational in-company training scheme (IBO) and language support for course participants cost 12€ per hour through the Flemish Public Employment Service.

6.2 Key success factors

1. **Cooperation** L-coaches, instructors and training managers. The team and organisations assume joint responsibility for ensuring the participants' success. A deliberate effort must be made to work at cooperation, to devise a joint approach, to consult on practical assignments and produce integrated activities, to discuss course participants, to support each other and learn from each other etc. This will then also be a process of "learning by doing".

2. **Time** for the L-coach to make observations, carry out a needs analysis, consult and plan, evaluate and become familiarised with the technical content. And for the instructor: to observe which literacy skills their assignments require.

3. Creating a **general learning environment** based on social constructivist principles adapted for people with poor literacy.

4. **Profile and expertise** of the vocational training instructor and L-coach, as well as of the training managers and the whole team. The L-coach should be someone who is interested in getting involved in technical areas which are sometimes different, who can cooperate flexibly and has a sound grounding in literacy teaching methodology. It must be someone who is very familiar with the literacy objectives and be a natural at working with different working methods and types of groups. Instructors should also want to broaden their outlook with regard to participants with poor literacy and become aware of the literacy aspects in their training. They must be able to adapt their language and instruction method to an active, supportive style. Both must be open to additional training, exchanging experiences and experimenting in order to gain relevant experience.

5. Adapted **material** which can be used directly is quick to find and easy to update because technical features can sometimes evolve quickly. The use of ICT is very important for ILP. (Atkins et al., 2007) This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

6. Look at the **regulations** which facilitate joint planning, consultation, preparation and delivery (right in the training environment), in collaboration with different partners VDAB (Flemish Public Employment Service), SLN (Local Networks Centre), BE (Basic Education centres), SYNTRA (business training) etc. Clear simple rules for flexible subsidies and reporting/accountability to government/authorities providing subsidies. (Roggen, 2005, p.7) Clear *front-end* (clear to candidate organisers) and an organised *back-office* through interdepartmental agreements (a single contact point).

7. **Attitude** of the whole training centre. An open atmosphere, consideration and strong conviction of all those involved (training managers, fellow instructors, admissions staff, teachers, management, evaluators, staff who come into contact with the course participants) can simply thrive with a clear policy from the centre.

Chapter 7

Teaching and evaluation resources for the ILP

7. Teaching and evaluation resources for the ILP

The primary aim of a vocational training course is to acquire a trade. The main purpose is to acquire technical skills. Literacy skills are sometimes, but not always offered as part of vocational training. Working on literacy skills is done best when embedded as part of the vocational training. The basic skills are then provided in clearly recognisable situations and assignments. Not only is the context technically orientated, but the whole assignment is embedded as part of the vocational training. In other words, it is an essential part of the vocational skills.

As was already mentioned in Section 5.3, the vocational training environment is not automatically a good learning environment for literacy skills. A number of vital conditions are required for this, such as sufficiently relevant written language/numeracy provision, realistic and motivating tasks, sufficient interaction, a secure environment and a large degree of involvement by the various parties. Improving the vocational training course to the extent of creating a total learning environment means that the the optimum conditions for learning have been created in the vocational training environment. Consequently, the focus should not only be on the participant's literacy skills, but the best possible language and numeracy provision must also be made by the training course.

7.1 Integrated assignments

7.1.1 Variation in teaching methods

Not all the participants within the group have the same learning needs. Some will still lack certain basic skills, while others only need to go into certain minor points in more depth. It is important that the various skills which are described in the training course's objectives feature at different times and are gone into in increasing depth. Most learners acquire new skills at different times and, in most cases, certainly not immediately. This is why the material is arranged in a cyclical manner so that different

objectives come up again at regular intervals. In order to avoid repetition with this and ensure sufficient alternation, we can play around with the format of the teaching activities.

In most cases, there is no point in going from one extreme to the other. A variation in the teaching format and methods is much better. Depending on the objective which the teachers or instructors want to achieve and the participants' objective, they opt for a particular format, ranging from lecturing and teamwork to supporting independent learning. The upshot of this is that every group of participants and every training course is different and requires an approach that suits the context. We are therefore not talking about or/or, but about and/and. The various options are complementary, each with their own advantages.

Working on literacy in the training environment clearly highlights its direct benefit, thereby boosting motivation. On the other hand, learning on a one-to-one basis or in small groups also has the advantage on some occasions of being less intimidating for weak learners. They are not confronted with their learning difficulties in front of the whole group and can work in a secure context on acquiring the basic skills. We list below some of the options available. It is important with this, whatever options are used, to continue to interact with the vocational training instructor.

1. **L-coach's direct intervention in the training environment** (individual learning) The participant is faced with a particular instruction in the training environment and must handle this request on the spot. The L-coach supports the participant, giving a direct transfer of knowledge. This can be done if the knowledge gap is not too big and it can be plugged with a quick intervention. The role of the L-coach is vital in this instance: he or she must react to questions and signals and give feedback at the right time.

2. **Individual training point in an apprentice workshop** (individual learning) Some basic skills are lacking only among some weaker participants and more time is required for them to acquire these skills. They can receive additional training on an individual basis in a language and numeracy workshop. To prevent learners dropping out, they must also still be able to rely on support during individual assignments. On the other hand, it must also be verified that the assignments in the workshop are linked to the tasks in the workplace and do not lag behind. A language and numeracy workshop is also suitable for faster learners who can use some additional practice on a small, isolated minor point. In most cases, we are dealing with exercises which can largely be carried out

independently and supplement the other forms of L-coaching and group learning. The relevant room at the workplace is preferably right next to the training environment so that it is easy to switch between them.

3. **Cooperation in heterogeneous groups in the training environment** (group work) The task is designed in such a way that the learner is motivated to interact with others in tackling the problem. This allows assumptions to be tested and a great deal of feedback is given implicitly or explicitly. The (mostly) heterogeneous composition of the team encourages interaction which is beneficial for both sides. Weak learners find the barrier of asking for an explanation less daunting, in most cases, in a smaller group. Stronger colleagues also learn because they have to produce the clearest possible explanation. Not every teaching point in group work can guarantee success. Some learners like to take the initiative and play a dominant role when carrying out a group assignment, while others adopt a waiting attitude. For this reason, tasks are structured best so that the participants need each other's input to be able to complete the task successfully.

4. **Cooperation in heterogeneous groups in a classroom context** (group work) When starting a new stage in the training course, it may be effective to incorporate a traditional teaching approach. This includes restricted preparatory activities for a technical component of the training course. It can be looked at afterwards whether certain participants require additional support on a particular component. A group activity also has a positive effect on the well-being of a team. It gives the vocational training instructor scope to deal just with administrative or other tasks. Within the same teaching activity for a heterogeneous group a differentiation can be made in the support material provided or intermediate steps. The degree of difficulty of the written linguistic assignments can vary and participants can be allocated another task within one assignment etc. In this case, the variety mainly comes from the format of the material. The classroom is preferably right next to the training environment so that it is easy to switch between them.

5. **Cooperation in a homogeneous group in a classroom context** (group work) If a certain group is struggling with the same problem, this may indicate the need for a joint teaching point. It can be reassuring for participants to examine a problem in a more traditional classroom setting and be able to work through it in a concentrated manner. It also provides the L-coach with extra time to support individual students, which means that on other

occasions again there will be more time available for providing individual support. In this case too, the L-coach cannot lose sight of the learners' key role. L-coaches must base themselves on and use the experience of participants and always make the connection with the training environment. The classroom must be right next to the training environment so that it is easy to switch between them.

7.1.2 Developing tasks

When L-coaches develop a task, they can gain inspiration from the actual assignments which the participants need to carry out on a daily basis as part of their training and/or later on in their professional life, and where literacy skills are required. This working method is less aimed at the systematic learning of basic skills in a particular order. A list is made of situations and literacy components which participants are faced with during their training (or later on in their professional life). It is up to the trainers to ensure that these literacy components feature sufficiently so that the participants need to apply their skills at different points and in different situations.

This working method involves working on functional objectives. The aim is not for participants to have mastered all the literacy skills used immediately after performing a task. The regular requirement of these literacy skills in different contexts will help participants learn to use these components, in new unknown situations as well.

While the task is being carried out individually or in a smaller group, the L-coach will quickly anticipate questions and problems and provide the participants with further help when carrying out the task.

This approach ensures that participants are not unnecessarily caught off guard by theoretical explanations and exercises on underlying elements. They receive the right information at the right time and can incorporate and try it out immediately in the task they are working on.

This implies that a task does not always end up with one correct end result and that performing the task does not automatically provide knowledge of all the elements that are used in the task. The aim is not for participants to be able to successfully complete a task on their own without any problems. On the contrary, being

faced with new elements, looking for solutions, asking the L-coach, instructor or colleagues for help, learning independently, dealing with new situations are all part and parcel of the learning process.

Completing a literacy training course successfully is dependent on a variety of factors. Integrating literacy training within vocational training is definitely an important aspect of this. It means integration on both the organisational and teaching/educational side.

On the organisational side, it is important for the vocational training instructors to be closely involved in the literacy training. On the teaching/educational front, a task-orientated approach facilitates a large degree of integration by working on literacy as part of a vocational training course.

7.1.3 Focus points for developing tasks

When devising tasks, the developer may take into account the following points:

- decide in consultation with the instructor an objective that fits in with a literacy point

- gather authentic material from the training course

- decide what the participants need to do with this material

- choose a sensible group format conducive to productive interaction

- devise a logical and motivating process for the activity

- decide on the difficulties to be expected and dwell on differen-tiation

- provide any necessary support in the material (textual, visual)

- think about what the L-coach/instructor can do during the activity to provide support

- make sure instructions are clear

- devise a step-up or possibly a preliminary activity and provide questions or items for reflection afterwards

In order not to lose sight of these things when developing tasks, it is helpful to use a template. In the sample activities in the pack "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in de beroepso- pleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample material) a set pattern is supplied. (This sample material is available from the Leuven - Hageland Basic Education Centre.) This is useful for the L-coach or instructor, but, above all, using the same pattern provides participants with a recognisable element that they can cling to during the sometimes chaotic atmosphere of a training course.

As regards the time spent on developing the teaching tasks in this kind of set-up, this project and comparable projects indicate 2.5 to 3 working days per completed task. This obviously takes into account all the preparatory, creative and editorial stages.

7.2 Sample material

A number of sample integrated literacy tasks have been developed as part of this project. This material is collated in the enclosed pack "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletterdheidstraining in beroepsopleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample material). An example is also provided of a possible method for classifying teaching resources. There are also teaching tasks available which have been specially designed for observation. A personal training plan can be produced or adapted based on the findings of such assessment tasks. Examples of these training plans are also available in "De G-coach. Geïntegreerde geletter- dheidstraining in de beroepsopleidingen – Voorbeeldmaterialen" (The L-coach. Integrated literacy training in vocational training - Sample material) (This sample material is available from the Leuven - Hageland Basic Education Centre.)

7.3 Example of an evaluation tool/monitoring system

The L-coaches and instructors could use an observation system to monitor the participants' performance, enabling them to see and discuss things for themselves. This allows them to observe the participants' skills in different areas - technical, language, numeracy, ICT etc., based on comparable points. It also allows them to record the degree of support they have provided and verify whether this support is decreasing. This then means that participants are progressing and continually improving at monitoring their own performance. How does this work in their work context? We can perhaps illustrate this using the figure below (adapted from Bultynck, 2004).
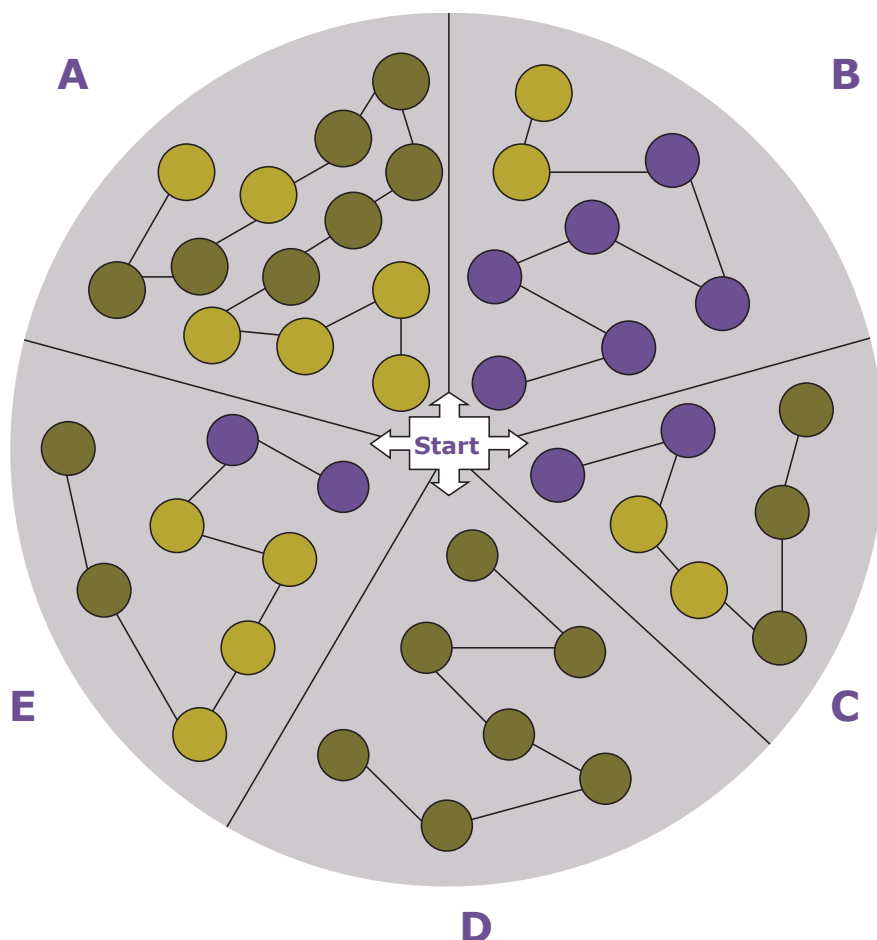
The most crucial objectives and associated teaching activities are selected in different areas (to be decided for each vocational training course): technical, numeracy, language, ICT etc. The figure shows five segments, but it will work just as well with a higher or lower number. When the activity is being carried out, the L-coach, instructor or training manager observes the participants using one observation sheet per observation point. This process could be carried out for all participants, but it will be more realistic to limit observation to "at risk" participants. The figure below shows an example of this kind of sheet (adapted from Bultynck, 2004). The observer notes at which points support was required and awards a particular rating: red – orange – green.

C4	**Observation point C4 (see also A2, B5 & E6)** *How much concrete does this floor need?*

		1. Which point?
Observation	**Phase**	The participant is looking for the area measurements of the floor on the plan and the required thickness on the architect's cost estimate summary, and indicates how many cubic metres of concrete need to be made.

	2. Was support required? If yes:
If yes: Support	What signal was used to offer individual help? / What steps did you, a fellow participant or the instructor take to offer help? Mark the level of support given: Green O little or no individual support that results in success / Orange O reasonable amount of individual support that results in success / Red O highly intensive supporting that results in O success / O failure

		1. What else did you notice about this participant today?
General		

The rating is transferred to the comparison tool making the participant's development on different points clearly visible. This display can be used along with the records as a source for:

- a discussion with the training manager, instructor or colleagues in terms of adjusting the programme or personal training plan, or of providing different support

- supporting a particular decision or assessment (for instance, a referral)

- intermediate (or final) interviews with the actual participants about their choice, progress, more practice in certain areas etc.

This kind of approach can make the evaluation process much less intimidating and actually make it a fully-fledged component of the educational cycle.

Chapter 8

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Chapter 9

Appendices

9. Appendix

List of respondents

1. An Bistmans (VOCVO)

2. Marijke Cosemans (CBE Antwerp)

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6. Eddy Elsen (Wonen en Werken)

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