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Research Projects

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Literacy and Earnings Project. <http://www.literacy.ca/research-and-resources/clln-literacy-and-earnings-project/>

Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN)'s Literacy and Earnings Project, which ran from March 2011 to September 2012, was a series of research projects exploring the links between literacy and earnings. It resulted in three published reports, described below. In collaboration with Canada's Public Policy Forum, CLLN will use these reports as a basis for a series of roundtables with policymakers and employer and labour stakeholders to further investigate the likely returns on investment in literacy and essential skills.

Keywords: Canada; Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN); Literacy and Earnings Project; Policy; Return on Investment (ROI)

Workforce Development

Supporting the provision of training for unemployed adult learners. <http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/learning-for-unemployed-adult-learners>

The UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) commissioned the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) to do research into training for unemployed adults to identify effective practice adjusted to the new approach outlined in the Government's Skills Strategy, *"Skills for Sustainable Growth"*, BIS (2010). The research ran from February 2011 to March 2012. It produced a series of ten provider case studies, and a report on common themes in the ten case studies. Another report was based on a survey of providers delivering skills instruction through the Adult Skills Budget for unemployed adults including young people aged 19 to 24, not in education, employment or training. The reports *Common themes Identified from research undertaken by NIACE on the provision of training for unemployed adults* and *A report on our survey of providers delivering skills provision through the Adult Skills Budget* are described below.

Keywords: Case studies; Labour market institutions; National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE); Training for unemployed youth; UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS); United Kingdom; Workforce development;

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Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

Canadian Data Collection for PIAAC Complete

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has announced the completion of data collection for the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) in June 2012. Data release is planned for October 2013. HRSDC is partnering with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) to produce an international report and pan-Canadian thematic reports.

Keywords: Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC); Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC); International adult literacy surveys; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

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Research Reports and Articles

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Murray, S., & Shillington, R. (2011). *From poverty to prosperity: Literacy's impact on Canada's economic success*. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network. Retrieved September 19, 2012, from <http://www.literacy.ca/research-and-resources/clln-literacy-and-earnings-project/from-poverty-to-prosperity/>

This report was produced for the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN). The study was intended to develop an argument that a large investment in adult literacy could significantly reduce poverty and economic inequality in Canada and boost overall economic growth. The report synthesizes recent research on the relationship between literacy and poverty showing that adults with literacy skill levels below Level 3 (as measured by the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey) have lower labour force participation and employment rates as well as lower wage rates. The authors estimate the economic benefits of upgrading all those in Level 1 and Level 2 to Level 3 using a technique called propensity score matching. They claim that recent research suggests it would cost \$18 billion to eliminate occupational literacy skills shortages in Canada, and that this investment would likely generate \$100 billion in additional earnings.

Keywords: Canada; Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN); DataAngel Policy Research Incorporated; International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS); International literacy surveys; Poverty; Return on Investment (ROI); Workplace literacy and essential skills (WLES)

Murray, S., & Shillington, R. (2012). *Investing in Upskilling: Gains for Individuals, Employers and Government*. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network. *In focus: benefit receipt payments*. Retrieved September 19, 2012, from

<http://www.literacy.ca/content/uploads/2012/09/Investing+Upskilling+full+report.pdf>

This report draws on data from the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Life skills Survey (IALSS) and from five years (2005-2009) of the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID). It attempts to estimate the likely return on investment (ROI) of a significant financial commitment to adult literacy on the part of government. The report estimates the “one-time” cost of raising all adults to prose literacy level 3 at \$29 billion, although the authors note that they did not include costs such as the cost of training instructors, developing and administering a system of instructor certification, curriculum development or the improvement of support systems. The report estimates benefits of \$86.8 billion, of which \$3.1 billion includes savings in income support programs. It estimates increased earnings of \$83.7 billion a year.

Keywords: Canada; Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN); International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS); International literacy surveys; Poverty; Return on Investment (ROI); Workplace literacy and essential skills (WLES)

The Centre for Literacy. (2012). *Learning and Earnings: Linking literacy and poverty using IALS data on earnings*. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network. Retrieved September 19, 2012, from

<http://www.literacy.ca/content/uploads/2012/09/learning-and-earning-literature-review.pdf>

This literature review produced for CLLN explores the relationship between literacy and poverty using mainly data from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) series of international literacy assessments. The literature surveyed finds a strong link between literacy skills as assessed by IALS and earnings, but also acknowledges the influence of other factors that contribute to earnings. Also, not all groups benefit from literacy proficiency to the same extent: for instance, the difference in earnings between men and women is much larger than can be explained by different skill levels. While it is important to improve literacy skills, research suggests that non-cognitive (social) skills may be just as important. Changes in labour market institutions could improve equity in earnings outcomes.

Keywords: Canada; Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN); The Centre for Literacy; International literacy surveys; Labour market institutions; Poverty; Workplace literacy and essential skills (WLES)

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Workforce Development

NIACE. (2012). *Common themes Identified from research undertaken by NIACE on the provision of training for unemployed adults*. Retrieved September 10, 2012, from <http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/training-for-unemployed-adult-learners/Common-themes-identified-from-research-undertaken-by-NIACE-on-the-provision-of-training-for-unemployed-adults.pdf>

In February-March 2011 the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) researched the provision of training for unemployed adults at eight further education colleges and two independent training providers. NIACE found that this training provision had changed in the previous two years, driven by participation in the Six Months Offer, a government program for job seekers unemployed for six months or more. Six Months Offer requires that providers offer short, focused courses tailored to local labour market needs and responsive to the job seeker's circumstances, collaborating with JobCentre Plus (JCP), the UK government's service to help job seekers find work.

Among the researchers' findings: Providers developed strong relationships with JCP, meeting regularly with them and keeping front-line JCP staff informed and finding other ways to collaborate. All of the providers responded rapidly to employers' requests to tailor training to meet their particular needs. They found ways to make their course delivery flexible to accommodate workers' schedules. Other themes in the report include progression to further learning after the initial training period, learner engagement and support, and the future plans of providers.

Keywords: Labour market institutions; National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE); Partnerships; Six Months Offer; UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS); Training for Unemployed; United Kingdom; Workforce development

NIACE. (2012). *A report on our survey of providers delivering skills provision through the Adult Skills Budget for unemployed adults including young people aged 19 to 24, not in education, employment or training (NEET)*. Retrieved September 10, 2012, from <http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/projects/training-for-unemployed-adult-learners/BIS-Skills-Provision-Survey-Report.pdf>

This report outlines the findings from a NIACE survey done on behalf of the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The survey examined the challenges for providers in providing skills training for unemployed adults aged 19 and over, funded through the Adults Skills Budget starting in August 2011. Providers were expected to develop provision based on local labour market demand and consultation with local stakeholders that would also be flexible enough to meet the needs of the individual job seeker. Seventy-six providers responded to the survey. The largest group was further education colleges. Respondents found most aspects of the program challenging, particularly engaging employers, working with JobCentre Plus, and supporting learners with health and financial difficulties and those exhibiting challenging behavior.

Keywords: Adult Skills Budget; Funding; Labour market institutions; National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE); Partnerships; Policy; UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS); Training for Unemployed; United Kingdom; Workforce; Young adults

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Accountability

NIACE. (2012). *Local accountability for adult learning and skills: a community perspective*. Retrieved September 10, 2012, from

http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/l/o/localaccountability_web.pdf

The current UK policy for reforming learning and skills emphasizes local accountability. This report from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Local Government Association looks at accountability for adult learning and skills in the local authority of Kirkees in West Yorkshire, England. The report presents case studies of neighbourhood organizations, voluntary and community groups who work in partnership with the Kirkees Council. The researchers asked how the local council develops local accountability and practice. The report notes that various community structures play a role. The Kirkees Adult Learning Partnership strategic group is crucial in coordinating local provision and building local capacity, strengthening organizations' ability to measure their impact and improve their services through workshops and other professional development. The Local Authority Adult Learning team helps providers reach and engage new learners from disadvantaged priority groups while the Learning Provider Group provides a forum for tutors to share with and learn from each other. Organizations reported that grants from the local authority, while small, allow them to do things they could not otherwise do.

Keywords: Accountability; Adult education; Case studies; Community; Local Government Association; National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE); Partnerships; Policy; United Kingdom

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Adult Education

OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing. Retrieved September 26, 2012, from http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG%202012_English_100912.pdf

OECD's annual review of education systems around the world reports on a range of comparable national education indicators. Looking at "How many adults participate in education and learning?" (Indicator c6), we find that 40% of adults in OECD countries participate in formal and informal education in a given year. However, this number varies from more than 60% in New Zealand and Sweden to less than 15% in Greece and Hungary. Those participating tend to be younger (50% of those aged 25-34) and with more education (65% of younger persons with a tertiary education). The number for Canada is not provided. Participation in non-formal education is slightly higher in Canada than the OECD average. There is no OECD-wide information on direct spending on adult education. However, the report does calculate the "opportunity cost", or the value of working hours devoted to non-formal workplace education. Measured this way, the report states that in the majority of OECD countries employers invest more in employees with a higher level of education. Canada and Denmark are the only OECD countries where the reverse is true.

Keywords: EU Adult Education Survey (AES); Non-formal education; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); Participation in adult education; Workplace education

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Ageing

Jenkins, Andrew, Ackerman, Rodie, Frumkin, Lara, Salter, Emma, Vorhaus, John. (2011). *Literacy, Numeracy and Disadvantage among Older Adults in England*. National Research and Development Centre (NRDC).

http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=187

Extending working lives is currently a major preoccupation of policy makers. However, the role of low skills in reducing employability among older adults and the extent to which those with poor levels of literacy and numeracy are disadvantaged remains unclear. This report draws on a literature review and quantitative analysis of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), which started in 2002. The literature review revealed a lack of survey evidence on the literacy and numeracy proficiency of people aged over 65, very little information on changes in basic skills levels as people get older, no research on the relationship between skills levels and labour outcomes in later life, and little evidence on effective practice for teaching literacy and numeracy to older adults. The analysis of ELSA showed no evidence that literacy and numeracy levels were associated with whether or not older adults stayed in the workforce, or whether they worked full-time or part-time. Lower numeracy was associated with lower pay and longer periods of time spent out of work, while low literacy and numeracy was associated with poorer health outcomes and lower subjective levels of well-being. The authors recommend further research into the areas identified as gaps in the literature review.

Keywords: Adult literacy; English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA); Literature reviews; National Research and Development Centre (NRDC); Numeracy; United Kingdom

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Family Literacy

Robinson, Petra A. (2012). "Literacy Engagement and Parental Development through Even Start Family Literacy Participation" *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education* 1.1 (2012): 20-32.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program (ESFLP) is an American publicly-funded family literacy program. This paper reports on a study conducted in an Even Start program in South Central Texas, which examined how parental participation in Even Start programs influences parents' reading behaviours, other literacy practices, and parenting practices. Previous research on the impacts of Even Start programs had focused on the effects on participating children. This research was qualitative, consisting of interviews with eight Hispanic mothers originally from Mexico, and two teachers. Analysis of the interviews found that the parents were participating in the program to improve their English and help their children; that it had improved their relationships with their children and that the Parent and Child Together (PACT) time, where parents and children engage in literacy practices together, was their favourite part of the program. The parents reported that they engaged more in literacy practices and developed their critical thinking skills through participation.

Keywords: English as an Additional Language (EAL); Even Start; Family Literacy; Immigrants; Parenting; Policy; Qualitative research; Texas; United States

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Keywords

Accountability	Adult Skills Budget
Adult education	Canada
Adult literacy	Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN)
Case studies	Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC)
Community	English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	EU Adult Education Survey (AES)
Family Literacy	Even Start
Funding	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)
Immigrants	International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)
International adult literacy surveys	Literacy and Earnings Project
Labour market institutions	Local Government Association
Literature reviews	National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE)
Non-formal education	National Research and Development Centre (NRDC)
Numeracy	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
Parenting	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)
Participation in adult education	Six Months Offer
Partnerships	Texas
Policy	UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
Poverty	United Kingdom
Qualitative research	United States
Return on Investment (ROI)	Workforce development
Training for Unemployed	Young adults
Training for unemployed youth	
Unemployed	
Workforce development	
Workplace education	
Workplace literacy and essential skills (WLES)	

Name Keywords
