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Current Research

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Building Employer Commitment to Workplace Literacy Programs - Australian Industry Group (AIG)

<http://www.aigroup.com.au/portal/site/aig/education/buildingemployer/>

The February 2012 scan included a summary of the final report of the Australian Industry Group (AIG)'s Workforce Literacy Project, which recommended incorporating Return on Investment (ROI) indicators into workplace language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) training. AIG is now engaged in a research project to investigate Return on Investment (ROI) outcomes for employers who invest in Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) programs in the workplace. The researchers developed an ROI instrument from July through October 2012 and will assess it through selected Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) projects in consultation with participating employers from November 2012 to November 2013. They will also use the [Australian Core Skills Framework](#) (ACSF) as a benchmark of outcomes for program participants.

Following up on another recommendation from the National Workforce Literacy Project Final Report, the project will also include the development of an employers' guide to the Core Skills Framework. A draft was to be completed by the end of 2012 and consultation to occur throughout 2013. Evaluation and reporting of the project with a particular focus on ROI measures will take place from November 2013 to July 2014.

Keywords: Australia; Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF); Australian Industry Group (AIG); Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN); Return on Investment (ROI); Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

International Assessments

Longitudinal and International Study of Adults (LISA)

<http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5144&lang=en&db=imdb&adm=8&dis=2>

This longitudinal survey aims to find out what skills are required for successful participation in today's society and economy, how Canadians are using information and technology in their work and daily lives, what the long term benefits of a post-secondary education are, how moving in and out of work affects people's standard of living and the services they use when they lose their jobs. The sample for the survey, which was carried out in 2011, consists of two independently drawn samples of 15,000 dwellings each from ten Canadian provinces. One of the samples was a sub-sample of dwellings from the International Study of Adults (ISA), which is the Canadian component of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Results from the survey are to be released in the fall of 2012.

Keywords: Canada; International Study of Adults (ISA); Longitudinal and International Study of Adults (LISA); Longitudinal surveys; Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC); Statistics Canada

Curriculum

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) Review – AlphaPlus
<http://alphaplus.ca/en/oalcf/oalcf-online-feedback.html>

With funding from the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MCTU), AlphaPlus has engaged Cathexis Consulting to develop a framework for reviewing the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). The goal is to see how the OALCF's three core documents are being used and whether the OALCF tools are helping learners achieve their learning and basic skills (LBS) goals. Providers were asked to participate in a 15-minute, online survey conducted between December 13, 2012, and January 18, 2013 to share how they use the documents and how their use affects learner outcomes. The respondents were also invited to suggest improvements to the documents. Nearly 250 Anglophones and 30 Francophones participated in the survey. The project will be completed in March 2013 and results will be disseminated shortly thereafter pending approval by MCTU.

Keywords: AlphaPlus; Cathexis Consulting; Online surveys; Curriculum; Ontario; Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF); Policy

Reports, Articles and Books

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Black, S. & Yasukawa, K. (2011). *Beyond deficit approaches to teaching and learning*. Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association
<http://avetra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/62.00.pdf>

In Australia, current models of support for literacy and numeracy in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses mainly use a “deficit approach”: identifying literacy and numeracy “deficits” in workers and then trying to overcome them. The researchers looked for alternative approaches by doing an environmental scan of known Australian literacy and numeracy (L&N) providers, conducting semi-structured interviews and undertaking case studies in three states. This report focuses mainly on the results of the interviews. Of 53 people interviewed, 28 were L&N teachers, 11 were vocational teachers, and 14 were VET managers with responsibilities for L&N support programs. The researchers find the “deficit model” is prevalent but look at the Western Australian Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills (CAVSS) team teaching model as one example where integrated L&N moves beyond a deficit approach. It does this by viewing L&N support as an “ordinary part of the VET training”, “something that every student is engaged in as a matter of course”, and by ensuring that L&N practices “relate primarily to the vocational learning”. The authors did identify some other examples of alternative approaches in their research and planned to document one as a case study in a future paper.

Keywords: Australia; Case studies; Deficit model; Embedding; Instruction; Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN); Learning Literacy and Essential Skills (LES); Vocational Education

Workforce Development

Moore, Chris. (2012). Bridging the Employment Gap in Bendigo. *Fine Print* 35, no. 3: pp.14-17.

This Australian research report was produced by Learn Local practitioners as part of the “Responding to CALD learners: cultural diversity in action” project conducted by Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) and Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFE). The report looks at the obstacles facing an immigrant community in Bendigo, Victoria in Australia from their perspectives as well as those of actual and potential employers. The Karen are an ethnic group from Burma. The researchers realized that they would need to adapt their training program to include not only employability skills but also cultural issues and attitudes. This realization resulted in the formation of the Bendigo Employment Working Group which allows the researchers to consult with employers in developing the training.

Keywords: Australia; Culture; Employability; Immigrants

Tal, Benjamin. (2012). The Haves and Have Nots of Canada's Labour Market. *In Focus*, December 3, 2012. CIBC. http://research.cibcwm.com/economic_public/download/if_2012-1203.pdf

This analysis of Canadian job market data published by CIBC suggests a growing “skills mismatch”, which is to say that while there are growing labour shortages in some occupations, there is growing unemployment in others. The author recognizes that simply asking business leaders whether they are having trouble finding skilled applicants is “hardly satisfying” unless there is evidence that employers are being forced to raise wages or increase on-the-job training. He has identified 25 occupations that account for 21% of total employment in Canada where the average unemployment rate is 1% and wages are rising at an average annual rate of 3.9%, which is more than double the overall rate. He states that recent government plans to admit immigrants with targeted skills and to increase focus on apprenticeship will not have large enough effects to make a significant dent. The researchers also identified 20 occupations that show signs of labour surplus, including high unemployment rates and no wage growth. They warn that because of this mismatch, long-term unemployment will likely increase in coming years, particularly among those aged 45 and older, and that retraining will be necessary.

Keywords: Canada; Immigration policy; Labour market outcomes; Skills mismatch

Social Innovation and Finance

Ministry of Justice (United Kingdom). (2011). *Lessons learned from the planning and early implementation of the Social Impact Bond (SIB) at HMP Peterborough* <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/research-and-analysis/moj-research/social-impact-bond-hmp-peterborough.pdf>

This report is the result of an evaluation conducted by RAND Europe of the first Social Impact Bond (SIB) launched at a prison in Peterborough, England, in September 2010. The evaluation sought to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the SIB model, the extent to which stakeholders felt the SIB led to greater innovation or efficiency, the costs and benefits of the SIB and lessons learned in terms of creating viable future payments-by-results models in offender management. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 people involved in developing and implementing the project, from stakeholder organizations such as the Ministry of Justice, Social Finance, Peterborough prison and funding agencies such as the Big Lottery Fund and the St. Giles Trust. The report does not include the perspective of service users. The interviewees reported that: the development of a robust outcome measure commanding the confidence of all stakeholders was complex and time-consuming, as were the contractual negotiations. The investors were concerned about tax rules and lack of clarity on trustees' duty to maximize financial returns. They also note issues with the attribution of improved outcomes in cases where multiple interventions may have had an impact. It is also unclear how much transfer of risk from the government to private investors actually occurred. The report suggests that making standard contract terms and definitions for SIB's could facilitate the drafting of future contracts and recommends that governments consider tax incentives for investors.

Keywords: Pilot programs; Policy; Social Impact Bonds (SIB's); Social Innovation and Finance; United Kingdom

Literacy and Essential Skills (LES)

Harwood, Chris. (2012). *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field*. Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN).

<http://www.literacy.ca/content/uploads/2012/12/State-of-the-Field-2012.pdf>

This report is an environmental scan providing an overview of Literacy and Essential Skills in Canada from the perspective of the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN) and “its national network partners, the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions.” Consultations with experts in the field included speaking with all the provincial and territorial executive directors and their staff, staff in a major union and staff at an apprenticeship forum. These consultations took place by phone and emails. The researcher also looked at research reports and resources available online, and included summaries of provincial and territorial policies and strategies submitted by the provincial and territorial coalitions. The report notes the impact of the International Adult Literacy Survey and its successors, and anticipates results of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey. The report argues for the importance of Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) for health, poverty, people with disabilities, and new Canadians. It also cites many reports that claim low LES levels among Canadians are a roadblock to improving productivity and economic growth, and that a major investment in improving LES would result in large gains for the Canadian economy and large savings on social expenditure for governments. Most of the research cited, although not exclusively, is from the past five years.

Keywords: Canada; Environmental scans; International literacy surveys; Literacy and Essential Skills (LES)

Aboriginal Peoples

Friesen, J., & Krauth, B. (2012). *Key Policy Issues in Aboriginal Education: An Evidence-Based Approach*. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC).

http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/295/Key-Policy-Issues-in-Aboriginal-Education_EN.pdf

This Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) report focuses on the issue of how better data and evidence could facilitate policymakers' efforts to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in provincial and territorial elementary and secondary schools. The researchers conducted a series of interviews with informants in national and regional Aboriginal organizations as well as ministries and departments of education. The report assesses existing data and evidence, identifies data gaps, and makes recommendations on how jurisdictions could address these data gaps. These recommendations include: building evaluation into the design of new programs and policies, providing access to administrative records to researchers in a timely, affordable fashion, and sharing knowledge of programs, policies and communities with researchers. Specific recommendations for CMEC include: making efforts to coordinate pan-

Canadian procedures and standards for administrative and assessment data, and sounding out CMEC members and national aboriginal organizations about their interest in addressing the evidence gaps identified in the report.

Keywords: Aboriginal peoples; Canada; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC); Research

Financial Literacy

Robson, Jennifer (2012). *The Case for Financial Literacy: Assessing the effects of financial literacy interventions for low income and vulnerable groups in Canada*. Retrieved January 21, 2013, from http://www.nald.ca/library/research/ccfl/case_for_financial_literacy/case_for_financial_literacy.pdf

This report was commissioned by the Canadian Centre for Financial Literacy (CCFL), a division of Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI). The researchers investigated the effects of financial literacy interventions on vulnerable groups by reviewing published and grey literature, analyzing the 2009 Canadian Financial Capability Survey and poverty trends in Canada, and conducting semi-structured interviews with Canadian and American informants from the private, public, community, and research sectors. The researchers conclude that while financial literacy is not a panacea, there is some evidence of positive impacts of interventions on vulnerable populations. However, further research is required to improve the nature and extent of these impacts.

Keywords: Canada; Canadian Centre for Financial Literacy (CCFL); Financial literacy; Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI)

LES Research

Hargreaves, Jo. (2012). *Assessing the impact of research: a case study of the LSAY Research Innovation and Expansion Fund*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). Retrieved November 5, 2012, from <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2513.html>.

Increasingly, funded research programs are being required to demonstrate their relevance to public policy and to practitioners. This is a study of the outcomes of research and activities funded under the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) Research Innovation and Expansion Fund. The researchers asked whether the purpose of the fund (“to start a ripple effect in the use of the LSAY data”) was met, and what other impacts the research had. They used the framework NCVER developed for measuring research impact in terms of contributions to knowledge on the subject, building capacity for further research, informing policy and practice and impacts on outcomes in the field, which is [described in a 2009 NCVER report](#). They found that the purpose was met, and “the research undertaken had strong resonances in the media as well as proving useful to government officials and practitioners working in the area of youth transitions.”

Keywords: Australia; Longitudinal surveys; National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER); Outcomes of research; Youth

Policy

Canadian Union of Public Employees. (2012). *Putting Literacy on the Public Agenda: A Briefing Package for CUPE Activists*.

http://cupe.ca/updir/Putting_Literacy_on_the_Public_Agenda_2012-2.pdf

Until now CUPE's advocacy efforts regarding literacy and essential skills have focused on the federal government. Recent changes in federal policy mean that provincial and territorial governments now have funds to support literacy and essential skills activities in the workplace. This report is intended to support CUPE members who advocate for funding for workplace programs by providing contact information of those responsible for policy and programs at the provincial level as well as information on current policies and funding arrangements, and specific information on [Labour Market Development Agreements](#) (LMDA's) and [Labour Market Agreements](#) (LMA's).

Keywords: Canada; Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE); Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA's); Labour Market Agreements (LMA's); Policy; Provinces; Territories; Unions; Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Professionalization and Professional Development

Independent Review of Professionalism in Further Education. (2012). *Professionalism in Further Education: Interim report of the independent review panel*. Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning United Kingdom. Available at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32351/12-670-professionalism-in-further-education-interim.pdf

Independent Review of Professionalism in Further Education. (2012). *Professionalism in Further Education: Final report of the independent review panel*. Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, United Kingdom. Available at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/p/12-1198-professionalism-in-further-education-final>

In the previous decade the British government established a regulatory framework of national occupational standards for teaching staff in a bid to professionalize the further education sector. However, studies of the implementation suggested that the framework failed to achieve consistency in professional development in the sector and the government sought a change of course which would eliminate certain state agencies and roll back central controls and regulation. The panel, headed by educationalist Lord Lingfield, in the interim report offered recommendations on how to "remove regulations" and "review teacher qualifications". The final report includes an update on progress in implementing these recommendations as well as

attempts “to define how professionalism, in the absence of registration, might be characterized and supported in the context of further education.” The report supports [the government’s proposal of a Further Education \(FE\) Guild](#) which would be led by the employers of lecturers while also involving lecturers through their representative organizations and would replace the current coercive coordination of professional training and development. It also proposes that a covenant be negotiated between employer and employee groups in the sector setting out their respective obligations and duties in relation to fostering professionalism and professional development.

Keywords: Adult education; Further education; Professionalization; Professional Development; United Kingdom

Perry, KH, Hart, SJ. (2012). “I’m Just Kind of Winging It”: Preparing and Supporting Educators of Adult Refugee Learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. Volume 56, Issue 2, pages 110–122, October 2012.

This article is part of a quantitative case study on education for adult refugees in a midsize Southeastern U.S. city. The analysis focused on the preparation and professional development needs of ten adult educators. The ten tutors and instructors completed an open-ended questionnaire; of the ten, seven went on to participate in semi-structured interviews and three allowed observations of their classrooms. Analysis involved open coding, theme generation, data matrices, and participant checking. Findings indicated that participants had some preparation but felt unprepared and needed teaching tools and techniques as well as mentoring. The authors recommend increased investment in ongoing, targeted professional development, providing greater opportunities for apprenticeships and mentoring and supporting educators’ efforts at self-education by developing resources such as libraries and online collections of professional resources.

Keywords: Case studies; English as an Additional Language (EAL); Professional Development; Quantitative research; Refugees; United States

Program Evaluation

Frontier College. (2012). *The Impact of Frontier College Programs: A Two-Year National Research Study* http://www.frontiercollege.ca/english/learn/newfrontiers/december2012/research_highlights_en.pdf

Frontier College conducted a two-year national research study from 2010 to 2012 that involved 1229 participants including learners, parents, school personnel and tutors. The research, which mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, aimed to find out how participation in Frontier College programs impacts learners’ capacity to learn and achieve goals, what the unique strengths of these programs are, how they can be improved, and what additional resources staff members and tutors require to improve outcomes. Researchers used focus groups, workshop evaluations, learner interviews, online surveys, learner tracking forms and report card data as well as initial and final reading assessments conducted with 116 students over a 6-month period. Through the assessments, the researchers found that “57% of students improved their

reading level, and 12% moved from below grade level on the initial assessment to at or above grade level on the final assessment.” The most significant change in learners was increased confidence resulting in less anxiety, greater willingness to take risks and strive to achieve goals and the ability to better express themselves and access opportunities for employment or volunteer positions.

The link here is not to the full report but to a summary. The full report is an internal document and not available online.

Keywords: Canada; Confidence; Frontier College; Program outcomes; Surveys

Ofsted. (2012). *The Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector for Education, Children’s Services and Skills: Learning and Skills: 2011-12*

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120350

Osted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills) is mandated by the British Parliament to inspect educational institutions and provide reports on the state of the field annually. The 2011-2012 report was the result of 320 inspections of learning and skills centres. Concerns are raised about the quality of provision, which is “not improving”: weak accountability, leadership and governance are identified as “common failings in poor provision” and only 56% of providers were judged “good or outstanding” for teaching and learning. They find that teacher training was often inadequate and was improving more slowly in the Further Education sector than in other sectors of the education system. Governance was a major reason identified for colleges’ failure to improve provision. Those institutions that did improve had implemented strong systems of internal accountability.

Keywords: Accountability; Apprenticeships; Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Osted); Policy; Professionalization; Program evaluation; United Kingdom; Youth

Southwood, Sue, Dixon, Linda & Ruck, Tat. (2012). *Developing Functional Skills: Learning from the adult pilots*. National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE).

<http://shop.niace.org.uk/developing-functional-skills.html>

The UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills commissioned NIACE to gather feedback and case studies from organizations and institutions involved in Functional Skills pilots for adults. The report introduces functional skills standards and outlines what distinguishes them from Skills for Life standards. Teaching functional skills is not merely a matter of teaching discrete skills but rather an ensemble from which one can choose and apply the right skill for a given real-life situation. Challenges faced by the pilot sites included finding a suitable assessment tool for initial, diagnostic and summative assessments. Recommendations for successfully teaching functional skills based on the pilots include: embedding functional skills into existing curricula as much as possible.

Keywords: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; Embedding; Functional skills; National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE); Policy; Skills for Life; United Kingdom

Keywords

Aboriginal peoples
Accountability
Adolescents
Adult education
Apprenticeships
Case studies
Confidence
Critical literacy
Culture
Curriculum
Deficit model
Embedding
Employability
English as an Additional Language (EAL)
Financial literacy
Functional skills
Further education
Immigrants
Instruction
Labour market outcomes
Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN)
Learning
Literacy and Numeracy Programs
Longitudinal surveys
National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE)
Online surveys
Outcomes of research
Pilot programs
Policy
Professionalization
Professional development
Program evaluation
Program outcomes
Provinces
Quantitative research

Refugees
Return on Investment (ROI)
Secondary education
Skills mismatch
Social Impact Bonds (SIB's)
Social innovation and finance
Surveys
Territories
Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)
Unions
Vocational Education
Youth

Name Keywords

AlphaPlus
Australia
Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)
Australian Industry Group (AIG)
Canada
Canadian Centre for Financial Literacy (CCFL)
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
Cathexis Consulting
Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Frontier College
International Study of Adults (ISA)
National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA's)
Labour Market Agreements (LMA's)
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
Ontario
Longitudinal and International Study of Adults (LISA)

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework
(OALCF)

Programme for the International Assessment of
Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

Social and Enterprise Development innovations
(SEDI)

Skills for Life

Statistics Canada

United Kingdom

United States