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Reports and Articles

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

ABC Life Literacy Canada. (2012). Essential Skills Training: The Foundation of Workplace Health and Safety

http://abclifeliteracy.ca/Essential_Skills_The_Foundation_of_Workplace_Health_Safety

In our [March scan](#) we reported on a two-year (2010-2012) project of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME). Essential Skills through Safety and Health (ESSH) had the mandate to embed essential skills into Occupational Health and Safety training (OHS) for workers who do not have English or French as their first language, or who have difficulties with reading and writing in English or French. The project developed a curriculum, *Learning a Culture of Safety*, as a 10-week program of one hour per week, with two workers from each of the 35 companies who agreed to pilot the project. ABC Life Literacy Canada presents case studies of two companies that participated, Westland Plastics of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Par-Pak Ltd. of Brampton, Ontario, through text and videos. On both sites, the ESSH program focused on three of the nine essential skills: oral skills, working with others, and document use. Training materials were based on actual workplace examples, and workers were able to provide input on the curriculum through web conferences. The videos focus mainly on employer perceptions of the importance of this training to reduce inefficiency, improve safety and retain staff. However, reported outcomes in the text and videos focus on employee perceptions: the feeling that the program had enabled them to learn about the organization's safety culture and to play a more confident role in strengthening that culture.

Keywords: Canada, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME), Case studies, Essential Skills through Safety and Health (ESSH), Manitoba, Occupational Health and Safety training (OHS), Ontario, Workplace Literacy, Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

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Athanasou, James A. (2012). Adult language, literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in the workplace. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 52 (1), 174-181.

This paper looks at how workers in eight major occupational categories performed across the four skill areas of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. Overall, the percentages of employed Australians scoring below Level Three (hence, considered to have less than “minimal competence”) ranged from around 39% for prose and document literacy to 64% for problem-solving. Two occupational groups (machinery operators/drivers, and labourers), were identified as having the greatest need for skills upgrades. Most managers and professionals were in Level Three in all four areas, but machinery operators/drivers and labourers were mostly in Level Two for prose and document literacy and numeracy, and Level One in problem-solving. There was much overlap in all skill areas between occupations. There were also labourers who scored higher than many managers and professionals.

Keywords: Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS), Australia, International literacy surveys, Occupational comparisons, Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Miner, Rick. (2012). *Jobs of the future: Options and opportunities*. Retrieved July 4, 2012, from http://abclifeliteracy.ca/files/Jobs_of_the_Future_Final.pdf

This report is an update on Dr. Miner’s 2010 report, *People without Jobs, Jobs without People*. Drawing on labour market and demographic data, the report notes that, with the ageing of the baby-boomer generation, labour force participation rates are expected to decline, which is likely to slow economic growth and result in labour shortages, particularly in occupations requiring post-secondary education credentials. The report estimates that by 2031 77% of the workforce will require a post-secondary education or training. A failure to ensure that workers have that training would result in a combination of labour shortages and high unemployment. While immigration could help to increase the size of the skilled workforce, Canada would need to target immigrants whose credentials and work experience are easily accepted and whose language skills are strong. The report calls for a greater recognition of the importance of higher education, and calls on Canadian industry to engage in more workplace training.

Keywords: Canada, Labour market and skills, Post-secondary education, Workforce education, Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

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Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2012) *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies*. Retrieved July 4, 2012, from http://skills.oecd.org/documents/Skills_strategy_final_PDF.pdf

This document focuses on skills as a means of achieving desired economic and social outcomes. It presents the OECD Skills Strategy, making policy recommendations for governments on how best to develop and employ people's skills. Among the recommendations are: gather information about evolving demand for skills and use it to guide skills development; work with employers, unions and other partners to develop hands-on workplace training; implement financial incentives for individuals and employers to invest in post-compulsory education; ensure that educational and training systems have the information and flexibility they need to adapt to local contexts as well as changes in demand for skills over time; facilitate collaboration among education bodies, employers and economic-development officials; and encourage the pooling of resources and partnership arrangements among small and medium enterprises (SME's). Case studies of promising policies are presented. The report does not confine itself to OECD member states.

Keywords: International education, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), Policy, OECD Skills Strategy, Workforce education, Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Social Innovation & Social Finance

Bureau of European Policy Advisers. (2011). *Empowering people, driving change: Social innovation in the European Union*. Retrieved July 4, 2012, from http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/pdf/publications_pdf/social_innovation.pdf

This report looks at the need for social innovation as a response to growing social problems and limited budgetary resources. Social innovation is defined here as "new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations." The report notes the obstacles to developing and mainstreaming social innovations, including risk-averse organizational cultures and finance systems that are not well designed to support social innovation. It recommends a "European Social Innovation" Initiative that would involve 40 measures for improving governance, funding, implementation and research related to social innovation.

Keywords: Bureau of European Policy Advisers, European Commission, European Union, Funding, Social Innovation

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Health Literacy

Black, Stephen. (2012). Diabetes literacy: health and adult practitioners in partnership. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 52 (1), 90-111.

This paper describes a series of “diabetes literacy” programs that were jointly delivered by nutritionists from a public health service and adult literacy teachers from a technical and further instruction institute in local community sites. The project involved piloting six programs of two hours a week over seven weeks on the risks and prevention of Type 2 diabetes. The programs targeted culturally and linguistically diverse communities. They represented an “integrated” concept of literacy in that they were not designed to improve literacy skills, but literacy was used to enhance understanding of health concepts. The paper focuses mainly on the partnership between health and adult education professionals. The role of the adult literacy educator was to help learners overcome English language literacy barriers to learning, while the health professionals provided the diabetes knowledge. Such collaboration is rare in Australia, but there is a growing recognition of the need for cross-sectoral partnerships in both the health and adult literacy sectors. The researcher engaged in action-research with the nutritionists and teachers: this consisted in joint planning between the health professionals and teachers before the sessions and reflections with the researcher after the sessions. The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with participants at the end of each program, and a telephone evaluation of participants’ views conducted a month later. He found that the partners sometimes had difficulty understanding what their respective roles should be, but overall working relationships were good. The collaborative pedagogy had a strong focus on empowerment and on improving social capital outcomes and was situated (embedded) in the everyday lives of participants.

Keywords: Action research, Australia, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, Cross-sectoral partnerships, Diabetes literacy, Health literacy, Embedding, Pedagogy, Social capital outcomes

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Keywords

Action research
Case studies
Cross-sectoral partnerships
Diabetes literacy
Embedding
Funding
Health literacy
International education
International literacy surveys
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Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN)
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Occupational Health and Safety training (OHS)
Ontario
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Policy
Post-secondary education
Social capital outcomes
Social Innovation
Workforce education
Workplace Literacy and Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Name keywords

Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS)
Australia
Australian Journal of Adult Learning
Canada
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME)
Essential Skills through Safety and Health (ESSH)
Bureau of European Policy Advisers
European Commission
European Union
Manitoba
OECD Skills Strategy
Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)