



# UPSKILLING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME



## IN-HOUSE LITERACY, LANGUAGE AND NUMERACY (LLN) INITIATIVES IN NEW ZEALAND WORKPLACES

Summary Report to the Department of Labour



## **Acknowledgement**

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## ACRONYMS

ALL	Adult Literacy and Lifeskills survey
DoL	Department of Labour
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ELNP	Embedded Literacy and Numeracy Projects
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
FLP	Foundation Learning Pool
HR	Human Resources
H&S	Health and Safety
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
IH/EF	In-house, employer funded
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IT	Information technology
ITF	Industry Training Federation
ITO	Industry Training Organization
LLN	Literacy, language and numeracy
NCALE	National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education
NZCTU	New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
NZITO	New Zealand Industry Training Organisation
PTE	Private Training Establishment
RFT	Request for tender
SMEs	Small and medium sized enterprises
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TES	Tertiary Education Strategy
WLF	Workplace Literacy Fund

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This summary report is based on a more extensive research report written by Dr Catherine Kell (with Kim Hastwell and Shona Guy) in 2008 and 2009. It draws on that work and also includes a reanalysis of the survey data. The research was undertaken for the Department of Labour to investigate the level of literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) in employer funded in-house training in workplaces in New Zealand. The aim of the research was to investigate the character of this training and consider reasons why the companies involved had not applied for government funding, predominantly through the Workplace Literacy Fund (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009b) and Embedded Literacy and Numeracy Projects funding, available to Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009a).

Over recent years, a wide range of research into adult literacy, language and numeracy has been drawn on in order to formulate national policy in these areas. The research has provided information about the levels of New Zealanders' literacy skills and employers' perspectives on the types of problems encountered in workplaces as a result of low LLN skills. These resources include Benseman (2003), Gray (2006), Green, Huntington & Summers (2008), Maori Adult Literacy Reference Group (2001), Nielson, Culligan, Waston, Comrie, Sligo & Franklin (2006), Satherley, Lawes & Sok (2008) and Schick (2005). In addition, much information is available through reports and case studies on initiatives which are government funded, for example, projects drawing on the Workplace Literacy Fund (WLF) or the Embedded Literacy and Numeracy Projects (ELNPs) (Gray & Sutton, 2007; Industry Training Federation, 2009; Workbase, 2002a; Workbase, 2002b). However, there is little information currently available on enterprise funded in-house training with regard to literacy, language and numeracy skills. Schick's large and informative study of employers in New Zealand (2005) focused on employer attitudes towards investing in LLN, but did not distinguish between LLN initiatives that were employer funded and those which were government funded nor did it explore the extent and nature of the initiatives that are being undertaken. This project therefore aimed to gain insight into what was happening 'under the radar' (that is, in non government funded programmes), for those seen as having low levels of LLN.

### **1.1 Design of study**

The research project was comprised of the following components:

- A literature review. This was conducted as a systematic review, but because of the paucity of material on in-house, enterprise funded (IH/EF) LLN initiatives, it also included material on aspects of workplace learning in general as well as background theoretical perspectives on literacy, language and numeracy. The review included theoretical articles, literature reviews and empirical studies.
- Interviews with key informants (n=20). These were divided into five groups. The first was a business related group (n=5) from Business New Zealand, the Industry Training Federation and the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand.

The second group (n=5) were involved with LLN and were working for the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the Department of Labour (DoL). The third group (n=5) consisted of informants from private training establishments (PTEs). The next group (n=5) was drawn from industry training organisations (ITOs) and one interview was conducted with a staff member in the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU).

- Two small surveys. One survey (Survey One, n=13) was designed to elicit the extent and nature of employer funded LLN training. The other survey (Survey Two, n= 22) gathered data on the experiences of companies that do not offer LLN training. The aim was to ascertain information about LLN difficulties in these workplaces and the types of training they offered.
  
- Case studies of three companies (interviews and site visits) that were not receiving government funding for LLN initiatives. More case studies were planned however it proved difficult to gain access and the consent of companies for case study research. The three cases were in the manufacturing, construction and retail sectors:
  1. In the construction industry case study the company had 650 employees spread across 60 business units all over the country. Interviews were conducted with the learning and development officer and the health and safety officer, while additional information was provided by the training manager.
  2. In the manufacturing industry study, the company was a well established family business employing around 250 people. Seventy percent of its products were exported. A day was spent on site interviewing the training manager and being shown around the site.
  3. In the retail sector, the owner/operator of a supermarket in Auckland was interviewed and the site was visited, in which around 100 people were employed.

The research has yielded largely qualitative data, with a small amount of quantitative data from the two surveys.



## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of useful theoretical frameworks were provided by the literature review. Each was developed in research projects which involved literature reviews and empirical studies, in some cases over multiple sites and many years.

Townsend and Waterhouse's (2008) study in Australia outlines a shift from the provision of training for LLN, towards conceptualising the relationship between 'provision' and 'development'. The authors question what they called the 'systemic metaphors of foundation, provision and delivery' and believe that these are unable to account for the complex roles that LLN plays in workplaces. They advocate a role for 'development' alongside 'provision'. While 'provision' involves stand alone education and training opportunities aimed at individuals, 'development' involves workplace learning that is fostered within the organisation as a whole. The concept of 'deployment' may be helpfully added to this, in order to capture the range of tasks and processes that LLN is embedded in, in the workplace.

A dual track approach to workplace learning is argued for by Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird & Unwin (2006). They stress that learning can be most successful when workplace practices *and* the learning needs of the individual worker are jointly considered. They suggest that most workplace learning takes place informally during participation in everyday work, so measures which enhance the quality of the work environment are important in the learning process.

Linked with this idea is Fuller and Unwin's (2003) concept of expansive versus restrictive approaches to workforce development, which argues that organisations differ in the way they create and manage their working contexts as learning environments. In a restrictive approach there is a lack of opportunities for off the job learning, and any training that is provided is aimed at immediate job related needs. With expansive approaches, employees are provided with a diversity of opportunities for learning which include both on the job and off the job learning.

Wolf and Evans' (2008) study argues that support for workplace LLN should encourage and complement enterprises' own initiatives, and that programmes which are initiated by and located within workplaces are the ones that survive. These findings build on aspects of Dawes' (2003) study which found that the following three factors were strong indicators of successful workplace training:

- Having in place an organisational culture which supports learning
- Mechanisms to link training to the major features of a business strategy
- Mechanisms to link training to workplace change.

Evans et al. (2006, p.7) identify a three point typology of workplace learning:

- Learning through work: In this case learning opportunities are accessed as part of the employment relationship through entitlements, workplace custom, collective bargaining or legislation. This type of learning may or may not be relevant to the current job and may be related to broader development and employability.

- Learning for work: This involves job related training for employer need in the context of the organisation.
- Learning at/in work: This involves a diversity of forms which may be formally or informally structured, and are related to the extent to which the organisation of production affords opportunities for learning.

Whether learning occurs in the workplace or outside, important questions are raised around the contextualisation of LLN and the importance of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Workplace learning can also be considered in terms of:

- Formal learning: This refers to learning that takes place through a structured programme of instruction generally recognised by the attainment of formal nationally and internationally recognised qualifications;
- Non-formal learning: This refers to learning in structured programmes of instruction for developing skills and knowledge required by workplaces, communities and individuals. These do not lead to nationally or internationally accredited formal qualifications;
- Informal learning: This refers to learning that results from daily work related, community or family activities.

It may be more productive to view these forms of learning as stages in a continuum rather than as distinct categories. There is a growing awareness of the importance of informal learning, which can involve self-directed learning, incidental learning and tacit learning. Distinctions between types of learning are further refined in the idea of 'learning conscious learning' and 'task conscious learning' (Rogers, 2003). The former is future orientated, occurs in guided episodes and is structured in order that learning can be made more conscious. The latter, 'task conscious learning', involves '... heightened consciousness of the task at hand' (Rogers, 2003, p.24).

Newton, Miller, & Braddell's study (2006) adds information technology (IT) to the LLN acronym, stressing that work is increasingly mediated through information and communication technologies (ICTs). This UK study is based on the premise that release from work can be problematic and that organisations might participate in LLN training more readily if release was not required. The research therefore explored possible ways that LLN IT development could enhance on the job learning.

These studies are discussed in further detail in the full report, and are set against changing perspectives on literacy. They highlight the importance of literacy as a situated social practice and the growing importance of multimodal forms of communication.

## **3.0 FINDINGS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section presents a short summary of the findings from the key informant interviews, case studies and a complete analysis of the survey data.

### **3.2 Key informant interviews**

The key informant interviews provided information about what kinds of employer funded in-house initiatives were occurring, and secondly offered wide ranging comment on current approaches, including the potential and possible pitfalls of developing in-house LLN initiatives. Each group of informants held differing perspectives on in-house, employer funded (IH/EF) LLN.

- The business related group had a clear picture of the importance of in-house LLN and how it needed to be seen as an important strategic pillar in the wider landscape of training, business strategy, and the New Zealand economy and society. They saw the advantages of in-house LLN, and the need for models for promoting it, even as they acknowledged that probably very little is being done in-house.
- Government officials discussed the challenges involved in in-house LLN and the need to reach those at the lowest Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) survey levels. Those from the TEC and DoL expressed some unease about the pressures involved in the next phase of LLN work as expressed in the Skills Strategy (Department of Labour, 2008). They were concerned about rapid expansion in the field, the shift to a focus on quantity of provision, and felt anxious about maintaining quality.<sup>1</sup>
- The third group of key informants from ITOs had some experience with working with companies around the Embedded Literacy and Numeracy Projects (ELNPs), and some had worked in PTEs previously. They saw their LLN work as sensitive, mediating between government policy and the needs and desires of companies. The group voiced independent and varied views of developments in LLN and the place of IH/EF LLN. In many cases they had had experience of working with companies in an attempt to draw them into the ELNPs and could make valuable and informed comment on non-participating companies' responses as well as on companies' responses to government initiatives in general.
- A further group of interviewees from private training providers were highly experienced in working with programmes which were state funded, while their specific involvement and experience with workplace projects varied. Most worked through the WLF, the Foundation Learning Pool (FLP) and the ELNPs, while some had experience in the Upskilling Project and Modern Apprenticeships.

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of Budget 2009 the increases projected in actions three and four of the Skills Strategy no longer apply.

- Finally, the one trade union interviewee stated that he had not had substantial experience in working with LLN, but presented a wide understanding of key issues, from the perspective of the employees. The organisation was on the point of appointing a number of new staff members to work specifically on LLN issues.

### **3.3 Case study findings**

The case studies provided insights into several types of employer funded LLN initiatives, and reasons for undertaking them in-house.

In the construction company, LLN initiatives were adopted on a whole of organisation basis and were seen to have '*turned the company around like the Titanic*'. LLN involvement directed a focus towards issues of communication for the entire company. All three individuals interviewed spoke in favour of the whole of organisation approach as enabling them to avoid isolating individuals and to address LLN issues amongst staff at all levels. The 'L word' (i.e. literacy) was not used and there was a strong feeling that it stigmatised employees and was counterproductive. The company therefore did not offer LLN programmes as such but was undertaking a major initiative to rewrite all training materials and standard operating procedures to make them relevant, readable and responsive to the company context. All employees (including many who were studying for certificates) could do assessments related to the LLN levels of the training they needed to do, and be referred or self refer for someone to one help with a trainer. A number of trainers were being supported to get through the National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education (NCALE) and especially to do Unit Standard 21204 (Develop adult learners' literacy and numeracy skills within a training or education programme). LLN was therefore clearly linked into the company's business strategy and 'philosophy', as it was called.

The manufacturing company had undertaken a government funded LLN programme through a PTE and had later employed the PTE's LLN trainer on a full time basis. This trainer had continued with the programme in-house and funded by the company. The company believed it could obtain better value for money and more contextualised learning this way. The government funded programme did not continue as TEC said it did not meet with the WLF criteria. In the trainer's words it was no longer considered to be '*pure literacy*'. The trainer had moved into a wider HR manager role and in line with the company's approach to total performance management was implementing what was called a '*tsunami*' in terms of restructuring, involving the development of clear career paths at all levels with training closely integrated into these pathways. These were constructed for employees as opportunities to be strived for. In this process, younger employees were being targeted for development, and these individuals did not have LLN problems. The trainer was keen to apply for funding through a PTE and offer further government funded LLN programmes in the future. This was despite his negative experiences of working with the WLF and his strong view that providing LLN in-house was preferable to contracting out to a PTE.

The retail case study provided a window into a different approach, in a company that employed 100 people with twenty seven nationalities. Training efforts were seriously hampered by the lack of a training room and employees sometimes used the owner/operator office and computer to develop computer skills. There was building work

in progress and a training room was planned. There was no HR person or trainer in the company and the owner/operator played these roles himself although he was currently sponsoring an employee though a university degree in HR and hoped that she would eventually take on HR work. At one stage, he had hired a local literacy teacher to run some LLN sessions with staff members but had felt that it was not productive as there were problems with finding good times for classes, space, as well as the sense that the teacher could not get close enough to the LLN needs on the shop floor. Staff in this workplace attend a number of programmes, including many community based English as a second language (ESL) and LLN classes, some in work time, some outside of it. These were either free, or paid for by the employee and the employer helped them if staff were having difficulties. The employer had sponsored a number of his employees to attend costly Dale Carnegie courses and has found these highly productive for staff members, many of whom he felt had had a '*complete turnaround*' as a result of attending them. The employer saw these as preferable to the training that was offered by the parent company. He took a rather informal 'whole organisation' approach, explaining with numerous examples how he took care to buddy new staff members and set up peer support and coaching. He also got them involved in job rotation, and tried to promote an organisational culture that allowed for experimentation and a positive view of mistakes made on the job. An online module for learning ESL had been trialled by his employees and he was very positive about the experience.

### **3.4 Survey findings**

#### **3.4.1 Survey respondent selection and response**

Two surveys were designed for the study. The first (Survey One) aimed to gather information about the character and extent of employer funded LLN initiatives. The second (Survey Two) was designed to ascertain experiences of training and LLN needs for companies that did not provide LLN training.

In order to identify the two different cohorts, one hundred companies were contacted by phone and asked whether they provided LLN training for their staff. The group was purposively selected to give as broad a representation of New Zealand companies as possible in terms of industry sector, location (North Island/South Island, main urban centre/provincial centre/rural) and size of company. Further selection was based on gaps in the geographical distribution, with an effort being made to have smaller centres represented. Where a company had branches throughout New Zealand, a branch would be chosen, though often staff there would refer the request back to the main office (in Auckland) as training was centrally organised

Of the 100 companies, 32 said that they did provide LLN training for their staff, but 14 of these were accessing government funding, so were not eligible for this study. The other 18 companies were sent Survey One and 13 completed surveys were returned. Of the 68 companies who said they did not provide LLN training, 56 expressed willingness to complete Survey Two and twenty two completed surveys were returned. Table 1 gives a breakdown of companies contacted by sector, the industry as a percentage of New Zealand enterprises and company responses to Survey One and Survey Two.

	<b>Companies contacted</b>	<b>Industry as % of NZ enterprises<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Companies responding to Survey One</b>	<b>Companies responding to Survey Two</b>
<b>Industry sector</b>				
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	8	4.1		3
Mining	2	0.1		
Manufacturing	36	7.1	4	6
Electricity, gas and water	2	0.1	2	
Construction	18	12.2		1
Wholesale	2	5.5		2
Retail	6	11.4	1	2
Accommodation, cafes, restaurants	4	3.6		1
Transport and storage	5	3.6	2	
Communication services	1	1.1		1
Finance and insurance		3.8		
Property and business services		33.2		
Government administration and defence	4	0.1	1	1
Education		2.1		
Health and community services	6	4.4	2	1
Cultural and recreational services	4	3.6		1
Other	2	4.1	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>

Table 1: Industry sector of all companies contacted and of companies who responded to the two surveys

(Note 1: There is a small discrepancy between the way the researchers categorized the companies and the way the companies define themselves. Note 2: Three industry sectors were not included in the cohort (finance and insurance, property and business services, and education) as it was considered that they would be unlikely to have significant numbers of employees needing LLN.)

Companies were surveyed across a wide range of industries and there were responses from most industry sectors (see Table 1), though the response rate was particularly low for the mining and construction industries. There is some correlation between the distribution by industry of those contacted and the industries as a percentage of New Zealand enterprises once allowance is made for the exclusions of finance and insurance, property, business services and education. The distribution by industry also correlates to some extent with the results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) survey (Education Counts, 2006), which showed that literacy and numeracy levels were lowest among the elementary (cleaners and labourers) and machine (plant and machine operators and assemblers) occupations. The occupation with the next lowest levels of literacy and numeracy, service and sales, was also the largest group of those with low skills. Nineteen of the companies contacted could be included in this broad category.

Companies were contacted from throughout New Zealand (see Table 2). The bias toward Auckland was because some companies who were contacted outside Auckland referred

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<sup>2</sup> Enterprise and employment size groups 1997 to 2003 (Statistics New Zealand, 2008)

the enquiry back to their head office and because Auckland has a significant proportion of the large companies who may be expected to have LLN needs. It also has a higher proportion of people for whom English is not their first language. Although companies from throughout New Zealand were approached, the small number of respondents means that some areas are not represented in the data.

Location	Companies contacted	Companies responding to Survey One	Companies responding to Survey Two
Northland	9		4
Auckland	36	9	9
Waikato	4		2
Bay of Plenty	6	1	3
Gisborne/ Hawkes Bay	5		1
Taranaki/ Wanganui/ Manawatu	7		1
Wellington/ Wairarapa	6	1	
Nelson/ Marlborough	5		
Canterbury/ West Coast	12	1	
Otago/ Southland	6	1	2

Table 2: Location of all companies contacted and of companies who responded to the two surveys

Although the size range of companies contacted was distributed, none of the respondents to Survey One had fewer than 50 employees and 12 of the 13 companies employed more than 100 staff (see Figure 1). A relatively high proportion of contacted companies had more than 100 employees as it was reasoned that they would be in a better position to provide LLN training and this would increase our sample size for Survey One. The size distribution of companies who did not provide LLN and responded to Survey Two was similar to that of all companies contacted, with almost half the companies being small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Although the cohort size was small, the results could indicate that it is larger companies that can or are willing to provide LLN.

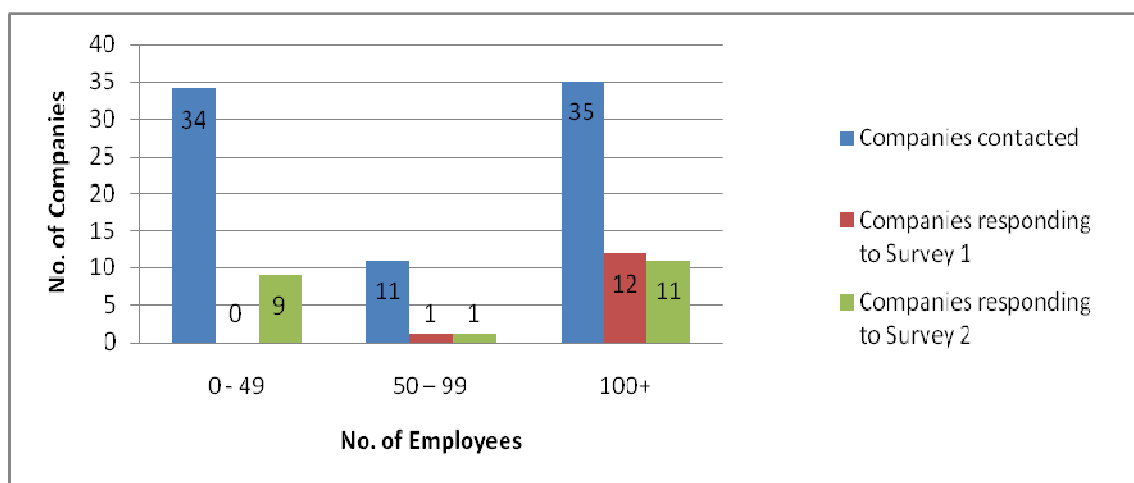


Figure 1: Size of all companies contacted and responded to the two surveys (Note: There was no data on size of company for twenty of the companies contacted. One company in Survey Two did not give the company size.)

### **3.4.2 Companies that are providing and funding LLN (Survey One)**

Although the companies contacted cover a wide range of industries, respondents who provide employer funded LLN represent a more restricted group (see Table 1). Those in the manufacturing industry category were either large, heavy industry companies or were food manufacturers. Other companies who responded included a supermarket, a waste disposal company, a road construction company, a freight company, a security company, a government department and two health providers.

Nine of the 13 respondents to Survey One (see Table 2) were based in Auckland, and there was one each from Bay of Plenty, Wellington/Wairarapa, Canterbury/West Coast and Otago/Southland. As noted above, the disproportionate bias towards Auckland is partly explained by the fact that three branch companies outside of Auckland who provided LLN referred the survey back to their head office in Auckland, where the responsibility for training was located. Nine of the 13 companies were located in a city of over 100,000. Here again the influence of Auckland head office responses biases the data. One company was in a small city (20,000 – 100,000) and three were in smaller centres (3,000 – 20,000).

Although, as Figure 2 shows, the sizes of companies contacted was distributed through the range, 12 of the 13 companies who responded and provided LLN had 100 employees or more, and the other had between 50 and 99 employees. None of the respondents in our sample of those providing LLN training can therefore be classified as SMEs.

Most of the employees in these companies were full time (eight of the 12 respondents reported at least 85% of staff were full time). Exceptions were one manufacturing industry (72% full time), a transport and storage industry (71% full time), a health services provider (20% full time) and a retail company (65% full time). Fifty-five percent of employees in the health services provider were part time. Percentages in contract and casual employment were low except in one transport company where 22% of the staff were on contract. Only one of the 13 companies had a trade union learning representative.

The survey asked for an estimate of the percentage of employees who did not have English as a first language. Five of the 13 enterprises who provided LLN training reported that 30% or more of their employees had English as an additional language (EAL). Four of them put the percentage at 10 – 19% and four at 0 – 9% (see Figure 2). It seems surprising that eight of the 13 respondents put the percentage at less than 20% given the predominance of Auckland region companies (nine out of 13) and the types of industry which included manufacturing, retail, transport and health services, industries which could be expected to have a high proportion of EAL employees. Results for Survey Two were more in line with expectations and this suggests that Survey One results reflected the small size of the cohort.



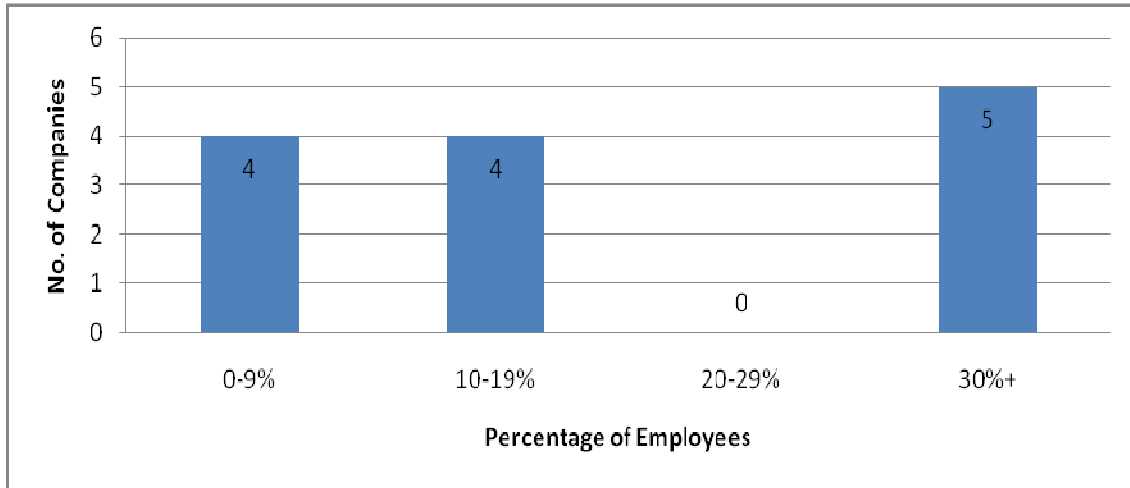


Figure 2: Percentage of employees who did not have English as their first language (n=13)

### 3.4.3 Productivity

Eleven of the 13 companies who funded LLN training had included skills development and training in their business plans or mission statements. Four of these 11 included literacy and numeracy in this skills development statement. Three companies included English language development in their statements.

Eight of the 13 companies indicated that they had undertaken major investment in new plant or technology in the past two years. Six of these noted that the range of tasks performed by supervisors, team leaders and general staff had changed as a result. Two comments on this question were: 'All gear now run by computers etc. Trending toward less manual work!' and 'Our technology is always developing – and manufacturing is, of course, using more computers'.

When asked whether they viewed LLN as important in relation to the seven drivers of productivity identified by the Department of Labour (2007) the answers were as follows:

Driver of productivity	Important	Neutral	Not important
Building management and leadership capability	12	1	0
Creating productive workplace cultures	10	3	0
Encouraging innovation and the use of technology	13	0	0
Investing in people and skills	13	0	0
Organising work	12	1	0
Networking and collaborating	10	2	1
Measuring what matters	10	3	0

Table 3: Importance of LLN in relation to productivity drivers

Evidently, most employers felt LLN was important for each of the categories, particularly regarding innovation and technology, skills, management and leadership and organising work.

### 3.4.4 Problems with English language, literacy and numeracy

Three companies who funded LLN training considered that more than 30% of their staff had problems with English language. There was a greater range of responses for problems with literacy and numeracy (see Figure 3). However, even among these companies who considered it worthwhile to fund LLN training, seven of the 13 companies considered that less than 10% of staff had a problem with language, literacy or numeracy. It would appear that in most cases the need for LLN was considered to be low and LLN training was being provided for the low proportion of staff who needed it. This result would seem to be at variance with the ALL survey findings (Education Counts, 2006) which indicate that 73% of machine category employees were reported as having low numeracy skills (Levels 1 or 2) and 69% of all employees had low document literacy skills. Among manufacturing sector respondents to Survey One, three said 0 - 9% of their employees had problems with literacy or numeracy and one said 10 - 19% had problems. This would suggest that although employees in this sector often have low levels of literacy and numeracy, employers consider the levels are adequate for the work requirements.

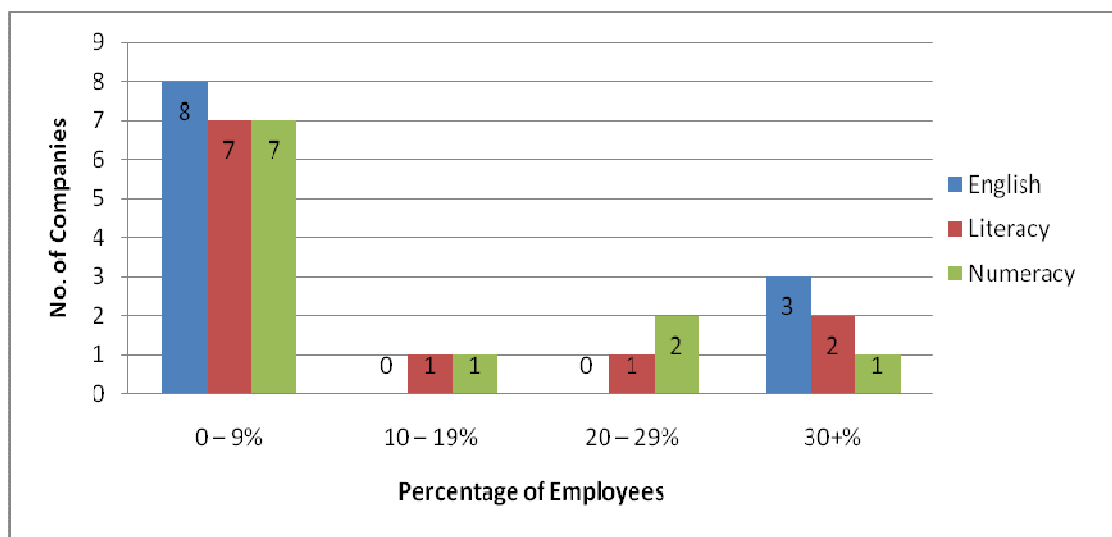


Figure 3: Survey One respondents' estimates of percentages of employees with LLN problems

### 3.4.5 The character of employer funded LLN training

Two of the 13 respondents did not answer most of this section. Six of the 13 companies reported having more than 20 of their employees in LLN training during 2008. Another four companies had 15 to 19 employees in training. One company had six to nine employees in training (see Figure 4). These results indicate that a number of the companies provided help for relatively small numbers of employees. This result correlates with data on employer estimates of the relatively low percentage of employees with LLN problems (Figure 3).

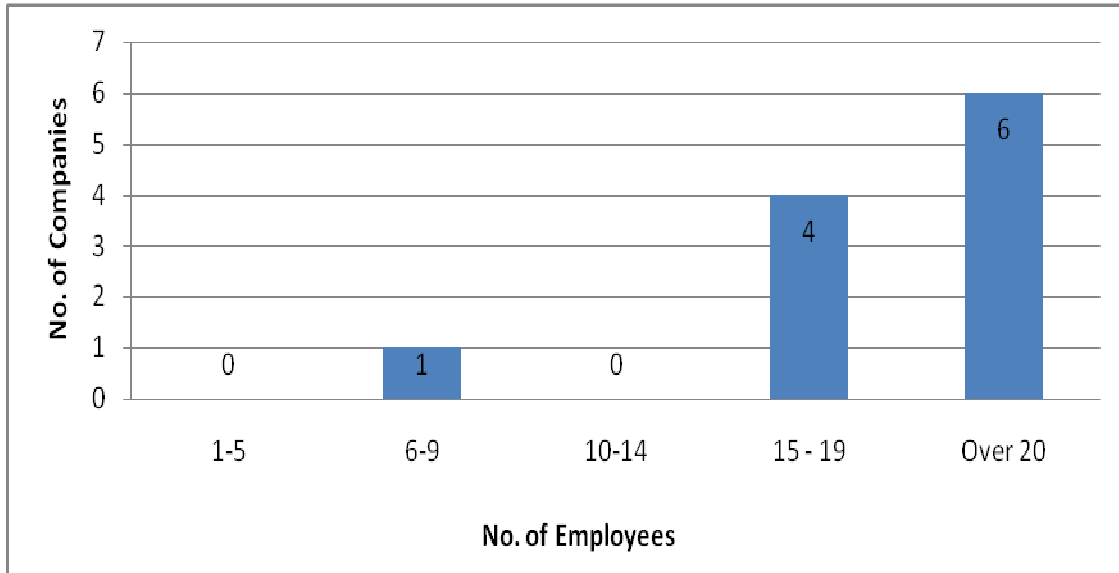


Figure 4: Number of employees receiving training (n=11)

Eight of the companies provided fewer than 20 hours of training during 2008. One company provided 20 to 39 hours and two companies provided over 60 hours (see Figure 5). These results indicate that the amount of training funded by companies generally is low. Twenty hours would equate to one short course and eight of the 11 respondents provided less than this. This amount of input is unlikely to make a significant difference to the LLN skills of employees and may be of limited value unless it is very specifically directed at particular problems. Eight companies provided this training fully in company time, and three provided it partly in company time. None of the companies required that all of the training be done outside of work time.

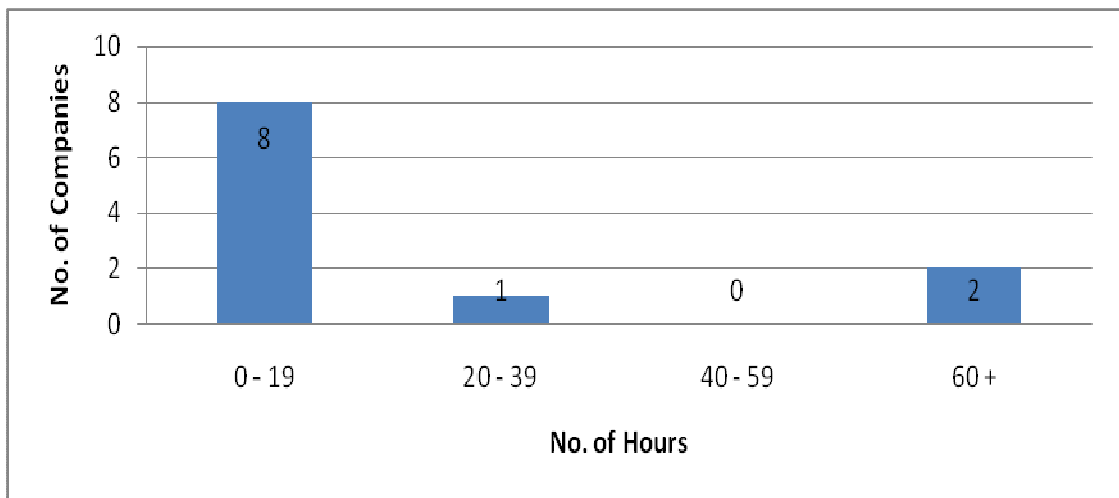


Figure 5: Number of hours of training provided for employees (n=11)

Among the Survey One cohort there was a relatively high reliance on external providers of LLN training (eight of the 14 trainers, see Table 4) and only two companies had a designated company literacy trainer. Four respondents reported that the training was linked to NZQA unit standards or another form of certification. Eight companies had not linked the training to any form of certification.

Type of LLN trainer (more than one answer ticked)	Number of companies
External provider (PTE or individual)	8
Company literacy trainer	2
Vocational tutor who includes LLN	2
HR person	2

Table 4: Types of trainers used in LLN initiatives

Although a range of reasons was given for providing training (see Figure 6), one key theme was that help was provided when a need was identified, rather than on a regular or planned basis. Possible needs mentioned were changes in technology, or an employee lacking the skills needed to complete their induction or to do their job. English language issues were mentioned in only three instances.

<i>Because of the course material and the need to bridge the gap between existing knowledge and necessary knowledge.</i>
<i>We offer this when the need has been brought to our attention. We do induction courses which every new team member must attend. If a person is struggling with any aspect of the course we will buddy them up with another team member.</i>
<i>We are presently training 2 staff and have been over the last 2 years. We identified problems they were having with doing their job effectively, so that started the project and it has carried on from there.</i>
<i>We didn't. We provide staff with financial assistance if they wish to undergo any further training on a needs basis.</i>
<i>Job specific training to meet safety requirements.</i>
<i>Because although our lines staff are able and qualified, there was a problem gaining registration due to English language.</i>
<i>To increase staff knowledge.</i>
<i>To help employees in their private lives and to assist with their ability to communicate with our customers.</i>
<i>We are only offering 2 courses for non-native English speakers for the 08/09 financial years. The workshops are 2 days each – 3 times per year and delivered by University of Auckland Centre for Continuing Education. It is not funded by TEC.</i>
<i>We commenced programs to lift the skills in these areas when technology started to appear and employees' roles changed from manual operators to operators using technology as part of their normal work cycle.</i>
<i>Obvious need coupled with my personal passion and beliefs.</i>
<i>To ensure employees understand instructions clearly, to ensure employees are accurate in the counting of product.</i>

Figure 6: Reasons why respondents provided LLN training

Employers were asked whether they were satisfied with the LLN training taking place. Eleven of the 13 respondents were satisfied in terms of its benefits for the company, and one was not satisfied. Ten were satisfied with the training in terms of benefits for

individuals while two were not satisfied. Respondent comments (see Figure 8) indicated that although most of these companies were satisfied with the provision of training that had been taking place, a number of them could see room for improvement. Four of the eight respondents commented that they would have liked more input from government.

*Needs to be done more systematically and earlier.*

*We are bearing the cost of this training entirely ourselves at present, around \$5000 per annum. It would be nice to get some help in this area and we could maybe help other staff.*

*Legislation for work standard language, literacy, numeracy.*

*We need to know what is available out there so we are able to get staff some extra training.*

*Access to Government funding.*

*Too early to tell.*

*Always aiming higher.*

Figure 7: Respondents’ views on what would make LLN training more effective

### **3.4.6 LLN and other workplace training (Survey One)**

All 13 companies provided training in addition to LLN training. As Table 5 indicates, these companies were aware of employee needs and were seeking to address them in many and varied ways. Two of the companies reported that they offered a very wide range of courses and one commented that they included employees’ families in their training. Eleven respondents indicated that they saw these other forms of training as helping with employees’ English language skills. Nine felt that these helped employees with literacy skills and eight with numeracy skills. One response to the question of whether other forms of training helped with LLN was, *‘To some degree yes as the training is in English and is generally discussion based’*.

<b>Form of training other than LLN (more than one answer ticked)</b>	<b>Number of companies</b>
Induction	13
In-house staff development	12
On the job training	12
Team meetings	11
Computer skills	10
Buddying	9
Unit standards	9
Communication skills	9

Table 5: Forms of training other than LLN

It would appear that these employers understood that different types of training complement each other, and were willing to provide training focused on LLN when needed. This attitude was further borne out by their responses to the question of what they would do if they found an employee had problems with LLN. As Figure 8 shows, most of these employers were not likely to modify the requirements of the job or take an

employee off the job if they were not coping with LLN. They were more likely to provide training to equip the person for the job. The 'most likely' courses of action were to encourage supervisors or co-workers to help the employee, to provide training using a specialised LLN tutor, and to provide a mentor. All but one of the employers would be 'likely' to choose one of these options and for six of them one of these would be a 'most likely' option. Another 'likely' course of action was to look at funding training from within the company, using a specialised literacy tutor, training a vocational tutor or offering less formal tuition (all respondents were 'likely' to choose one of these options). Eight of the respondents were 'not likely' to apply for state funding for external LLN provision, while five considered this was 'likely'. Slightly less than half of the respondents would consider using a vocational tutor to address LLN needs, or offer less formal ad hoc tuition.

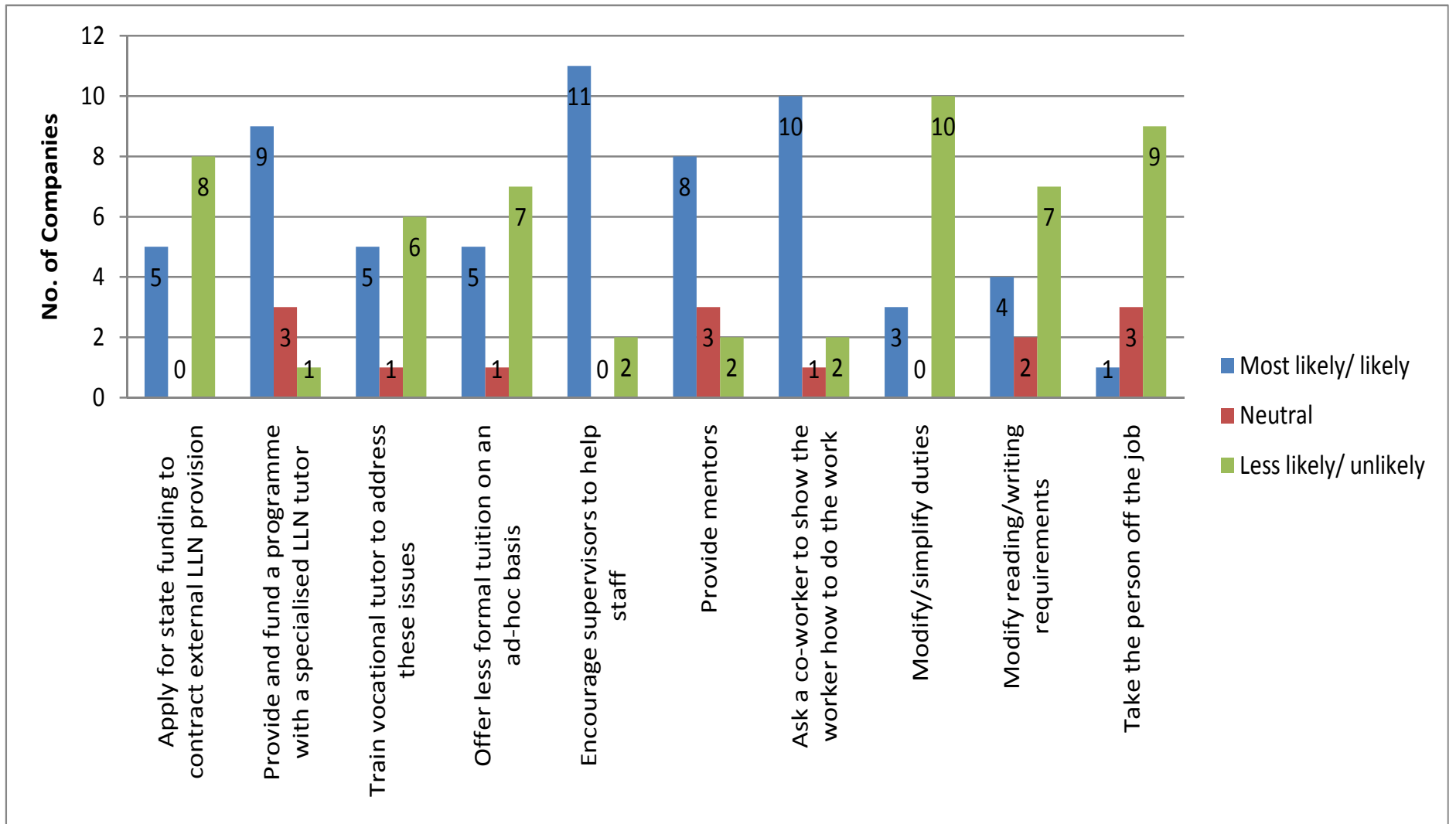


Figure 8: Response of companies (Survey One) when they find a worker has a problem with LLN (more than one answer ticked)

Six respondents considered that LLN training was the employer's responsibility, while seven did not. Seven respondents indicated that they were aware that the government offered funding to help, while six were unaware. Those respondents who were aware of government assistance indicated that they found out about this through the following sources:

How did you find out that the govt offers funding for LLN? (more than one answer ticked)	Number of companies
ITO/ITF	5
Other company	5
Government department	3
EMA/Business Assoc/Chamber of Commerce	0

Table 6: Sources of information concerning government funding

ITOs and the ITF are obviously valuable in disseminating information as are networks between companies. Only three companies learnt about funding possibilities through government departments. In a follow-up question, respondents were asked whether they had considered applying for government funding to contract an external provider to run a programme. Eight of the 13 respondents responded affirmatively to this, a result that is inconsistent with the fact that six of the 13 said they were unaware that the government offered funding. Comments were as follows:

*Are currently looking at this.*

*We tried with a local organisation but it didn't work out.*

*I would definitely try something as it's so good for staff's self esteem.*

*Looking into it at present for a foundation literacy programme in conjunction with MIT.*

*Ha! If only they would respond to queries!!!!*

Figure 9: Comments regarding consideration of applying for state funding to provide LLN

In response to the question whether they felt the government should do more to assist companies with language, literacy and numeracy issues, 10 of the 13 respondents felt that there was more the government should do. Their suggestions as to what the government could do were as follows:

*Raise awareness.*

*Information sharing.*

*Help ensure that students leave school with tools they need to get a job. There are too many still leaving schools with very poor literacy skills now!!*

*Fund the companies to provide so they meet LLN and company specifics in a cost effective way.*

*Inform us simply what's available.*

*Actively support it through an agency.*

*Perhaps make the services available more widely known, programme design support.*

*Communicate clearly what the criteria are to get funding.*

Figure 10: What the government could do to assist with LLN



These suggestions raised a variety of issues. However, five of the eight comments were clearly in the area of information dissemination.

### 3.4.7 Companies that are not providing and funding LLN (Survey Two)

Of the 22 companies which responded to Survey Two, nine were based in the Auckland region. This is in part because more Auckland companies were contacted. Many of the larger industries are based in Auckland and it has a higher migrant population where people might be expected to have LLN difficulties in English. It also appears, however, that response rates were higher for the northern half of the North Island than for the remainder of New Zealand where responses to the survey by companies contacted was disappointingly low. Figure 11 indicates the size of the population centre responding companies were located in. Cities of 20,000 – 100,000 seem to be under represented.

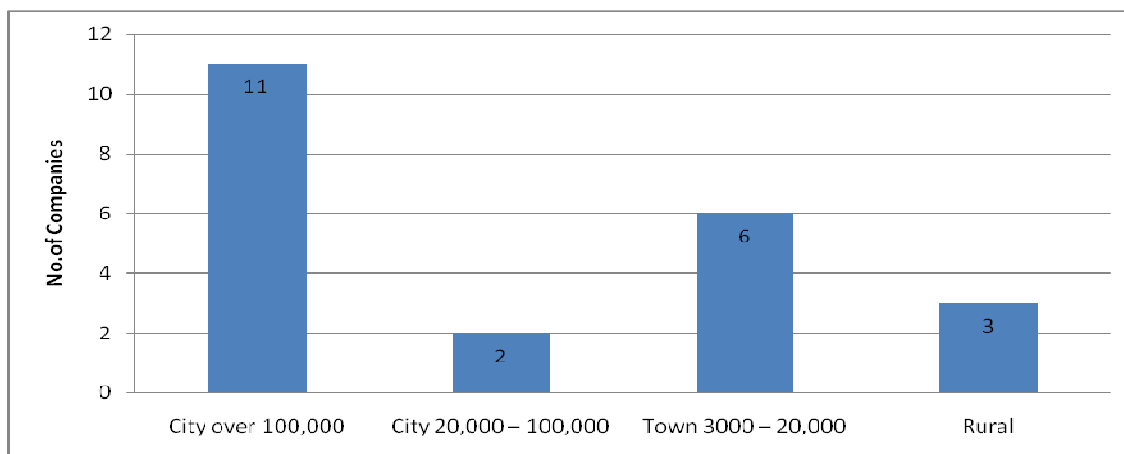


Figure 11: Rural / urban spread of respondents to Survey Two

A smaller proportion of staff was full time in the Survey Two companies (those who did not provide LLN training) than in the Survey One companies. Nine of the 20 responding companies said over 85% of their staff were full time, compared with eight of the 12 companies in Survey One. Survey Two companies with low proportions of full time workers were:

- a wholesale company with 80% of its staff part time
- a health and community services provider with 65% of its staff part time
- a cultural and recreational services company with 95% of its staff on contract or casual employment.

Half of the responding companies estimated that more than 30% of their employees did not have English as their first language. This proportion was higher than the responses in Survey One (five out of 13), a surprising result because it was the Survey One companies who were providing LLN training. This higher proportion for Survey Two would be more in line with expected results given the Auckland region location of nine of the companies and the types of companies involved, particularly the manufacturing and service industries.

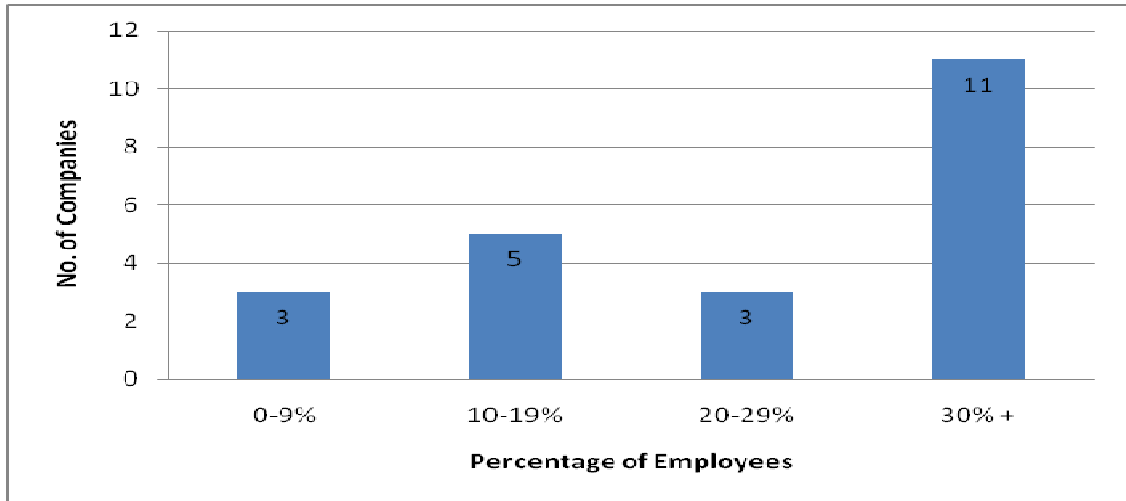


Figure 12: Percentage of employees (Survey Two) who did not have English as their first language (n=22)

Sixteen companies had included skills development and training in their business plans/strategies or mission statements, while six did not. No Survey Two respondents had mentioned English language development, literacy or numeracy in their company documents, compared with Survey One where four of the 13 companies who provided LLN training had mentioned LLN.

Twelve companies indicated that they had undertaken major investment in new plant or technology in the past two years, while 10 had not. Unlike Survey One, only three of those that had invested indicated that the range of tasks undertaken by all staff had changed as a result of this investment. Comments on this included the following:

*New computer systems, new point of sale computers, new winter machinery.*

*New CAD computer cutting machines, requiring upskilling and training of factory staff.*

*Changes in some areas with new technology.*

Figure 13: Reasons for change in the range of tasks performed by supervisors and general staff

Most of the employers in Survey Two (see Figure 14) did not see LLN as a key issue for many of their employees, with 17 or 18 of the 22 respondents estimating that less than 10% of their employees had problems. For each category of LLN, two of the 22 employers could be considered to face a significant LLN problem (20% or more of staff with problems). By contrast three of 11 respondents in Survey One considered over 20% of their staff had a problem with at least one category of LLN. Although numbers were small, it could be considered that this higher proportion correlated with the fact that Survey One companies were those who were acting on this need.

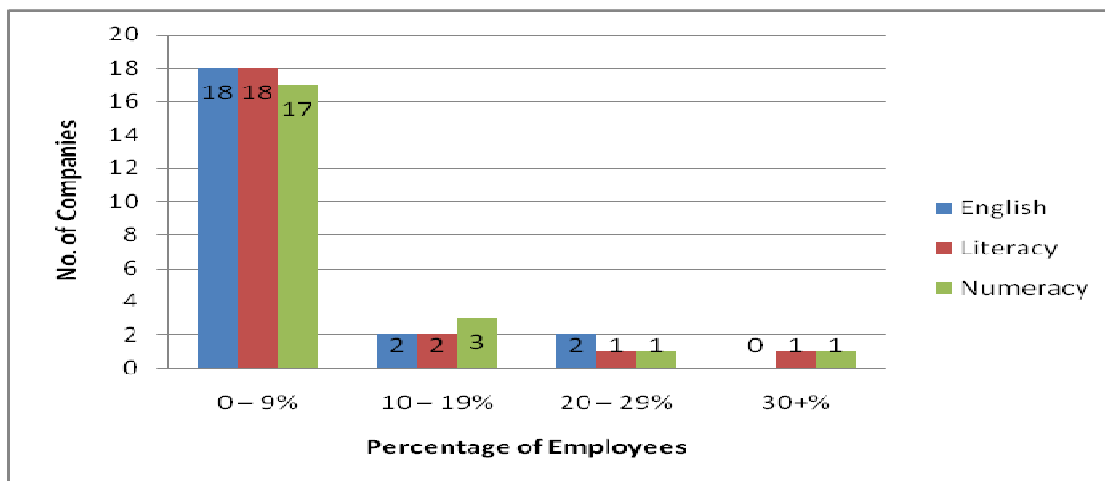


Figure 14: Estimated percentages of employees (Survey Two) with LLN problems

(Note: Respondents could tick more than one answer)

### 3.4.8 Description of training in companies that did not provide LLN

Interestingly, five Survey Two companies had offered LLN training in the past. Seventeen had not. Two said they had made use of an in-house company trainer and four said they had used an external provider (they were able to choose more than one option for this question). None of them had accessed state funding.

Eighteen companies provided forms of training other than LLN, while four provided none. Forms of training which were not specific to LLN but which were offered by these companies were as follows:

Forms of training other than LLN (ticked more than one answer )	Number of companies
Communication skills	19
Induction	16
On the job training	16
In-house staff development	15
Team meetings	14
Buddying	13
Computer skills	11
Unit standards	10

Table 7: Forms of training offered other than LLN (Survey Two)

(Note: Respondents could tick more than one answer)

Ten of the 18 respondents who provided other forms of training indicated that they saw the training as helping with employees' English language skills, while eight felt that it did not. Nine felt that it helped with literacy skills and eight felt that it helped with numeracy skills. One respondent commented that, '*Communication with key staff requires that the person be understood. Logbook and other quality record keeping completion help develop written and numeracy skills*'.

In terms of the LLN learning that took place in these companies where formal LLN training was not provided, 17 respondents said they were satisfied with the LLN learning that currently took place, while five said they were not. A lower proportion of respondents, 14 out of the 22, were satisfied with the LLN learning in terms of benefits to the individual. Of the four respondents who did not provide any training opportunities for their staff, all were satisfied with the LLN learning taking place in terms of benefits to the company, and only one of the four was not satisfied with it in terms of benefits to the

individual. There is clearly some awareness of the need to help employees with LLN. In terms of what respondents felt could improve any LLN training, comments were as follows:

*As we have no programme, putting one in place.*

*We employ English speaking Pacific Islanders, Indians, etc. in factory, welding, and general engineering.*

*Communications skills necessary but literacy not essential.*

*Communication skills are always something to be working on.*

*Young ones at school seem to be taught to rely on electronic machines to give them answers instead of thinking for themselves e.g. counting change back at supermarket checkout. Also short cutting English language e.g. texting seems to be the norm.*

*Targeted training for those who have been identified as being in need.*

*Integrate into workplace skills training. Build on entry language/numeracy assessment and incorporate numeracy/literacy objectives in individual training plan.*

Figure 15: How the LLN learning that is taking place could be more effective (Survey Two)

Companies were asked what they would do if they found workers had LLN problems. The responses in Figure 16 indicate that, as for the respondents in Survey One, the 'most likely' action taken would be to provide help from a supervisor, co-worker or mentor. All respondents said they would be 'likely' to follow one of these options and for 15 respondents it was a 'very likely' course of action. Twelve of the 22 respondents in Survey Two were 'likely' or 'most likely' to fund a programme with a specialised tutor, train a vocational tutor to address the issues or offer less formal tuition. Twelve of the 22 Survey Two respondents would be 'likely' to modify the duties to help solve the problem. Twelve of the respondents thought they were 'not likely' to run a formal training programme (using state funding, using a specialised tutor or using a vocational tutor).

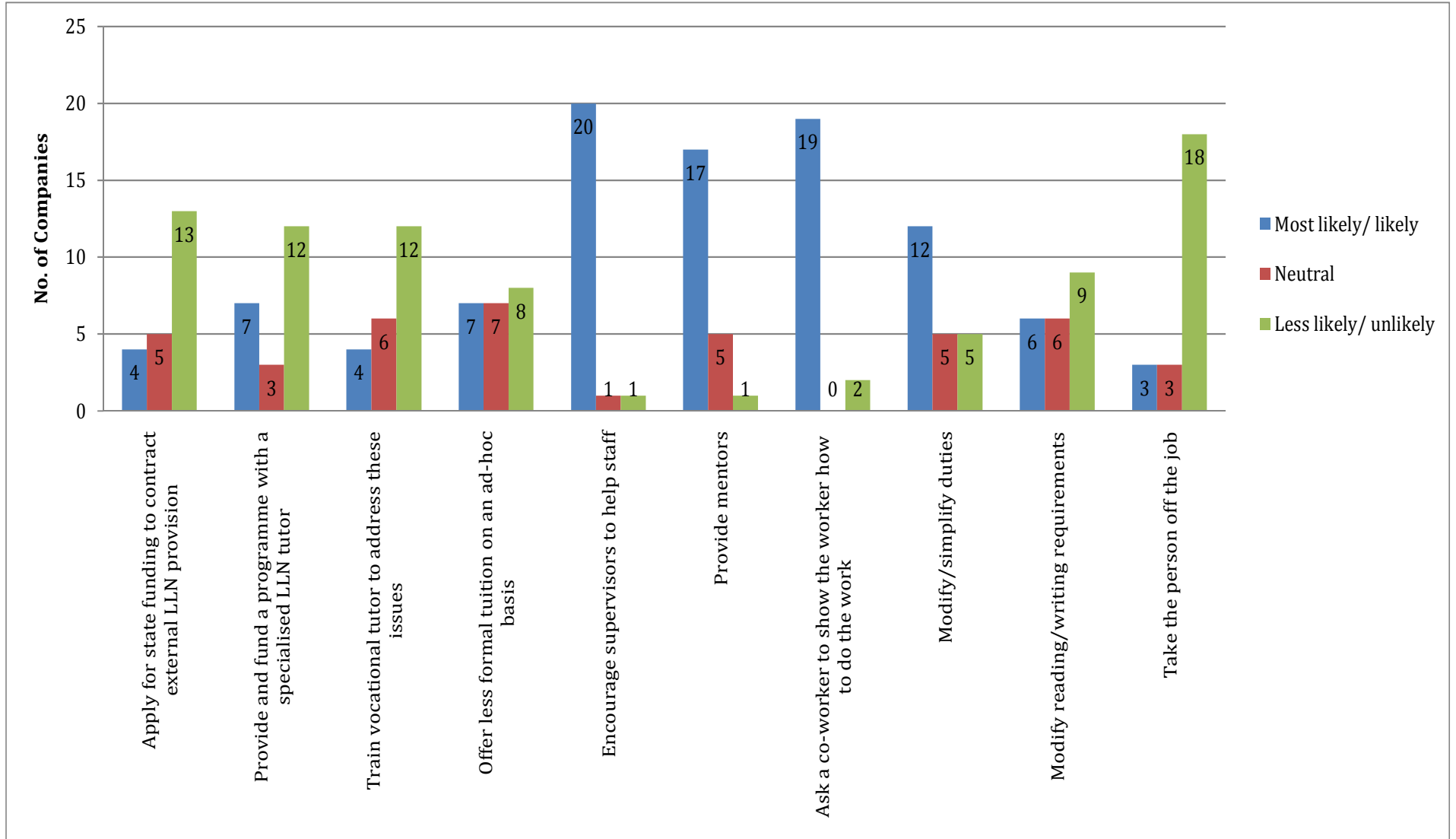


Figure 16: What companies would do if they found a worker had a problem with LLN (Survey Two)

Only three respondents saw LLN as the employer’s responsibility, while 19 did not. This was in contrast to respondents in Survey One, where nearly half of the respondents considered this was the employer’s responsibility (six out of 13 respondents). Survey Two respondents made comments as follows:

*In the event where we take on Mandarin speakers for communication with our factories we do have an obligation to help them with English.*

*Staff generally employed for their skills in management roles and factory workers are shown job.*

*We expect prospective employees to have an appropriate skill level.*

*Depends on recruitment. If you hire a person knowing what their deficits are then you have a responsibility to deal with those deficits through training to those deficits.*

*It’s a national issue.*

*It should be up to the individual to make the effort to improve their literacy and employability.*

*As quality record keeping is required, the employer needs to be satisfied that staff are aware of and are capable of completing all aspects of their jobs which includes written work and proof reading labels.*

*Helping staff to better themselves is a big thing but this seems like not a business issue.*

Figure 17: Comments on whether LLN training is the employer’s responsibility

Seven respondents were aware that the government offers funding to help with LLN training, while 16 were unaware. These seven indicated that they found out about this through the sources shown in Table 8. As in Survey One, government departments were not a significant source of information.

<b>How did you find out that the govt offers funding for LLN? (could choose more than one answer)</b>	<b>Number of companies</b>
ITO/ITF	2
EMA/Business Assoc/Chamber of Commerce	2
Govt dept	0
Other company	3

Table 8: Sources of information about government funding

Companies were asked if they would consider establishing a formal literacy training programme if they saw a significant need. Seven of the 18 employers who responded to this question said they would not consider this. It is significant that four of these seven respondents did not consider that this could be a need in their area and another employer would not hire people who could have these needs. Eight employers replied positively but qualified their answers:

*Would require external assistance.*

*Unsure employees would be interested.*

*Yes, if it was needed.*

*Yes if needed for particular part of a job.*

*We are mainly a seasonal company, with a large turnover of employees annually.*

*Would depend on the cost/benefit/time requirements.*

*Yes, but downsizing.*

*It would depend on budget etc.*

Figure 18: Considerations of establishing a formal literacy programme

Three of the 18 respondents gave an unqualified positive response to this question, adding the following comments:

*We would ensure that there is a stable platform on which to build our programmes as there needs to be confidence from the workforce that this a real initiative and that people won't be left with uncompleted training.*

*We would have a lot of support from our head office in bringing this in.*

*Ensure it is well integrated with workplace learning programmes.*

Figure 19: Positive responses to establishing a formal literacy training programme

By their comments these three employers give the impression that they had thought about the implication of running such a programme. None of them considered that this provision was the responsibility of the employer. Two of these employers indicated that they knew about state funding through their ITO/ITF. Another two felt there should be more access to information about funding. One company had considered applying for funding and it was the only one out of the 22 respondents who said that they had considered applying for government funding to contract an external provider to run a programme. They had looked to a private training provider for a literacy initiative and to the New Zealand Industry Training Organisation (NZITO) for industry based training. Of those who had not considered applying for funding one commented, '*Did not know this was available – it is not promoted in any way in our industry or our area*'.

Nine respondents felt that there was something more the government could do to assist companies with LLN issues. Seven of those who answered in the affirmative made comments as follows:

*Publish available programmes.*

*Get kids up to speed at school, work to change work ethic/attitude in young people.*

*Improve the profile of the literacy and numeracy programmes so that more people know that courses and funding are available.*

*Ensure that school leavers/immigrants have adequate skills in these areas, in order to meet common requirements.*

*Ensure that people who are struggling at school are identified and brought into programmes where deficiencies can be addressed. Not everyone is academically gifted. Streaming needs to be seen and used as a genuine way of helping people to achieve the levels of literacy they need to succeed. Maths and literacy need to be seen as relevant to people's lives and what they do. Trying to understand formulae is a lot harder as a cerebral exercise than using them to get the answer to a problem which then means you can make something, for example, build a tank with a conical roof which is to contain a specified volume.*

*Make people more aware that the funding is there.*

*More access to information about funding/resources.*

Figure 20: Ideas for government assistance to companies with LLN issues?

Four of these seven comments relate to better publicity around the programmes that are available, while the other three relate to issues of education and preparing people for work.

### **3.4.9 Issues arising from Survey One and Survey Two**

Two clear issues worthy of particular note arose from the surveys. The first was the matter of dissemination of information about LLN. Five out of eight comments from Survey One and four out of seven comments in Survey Two indicated that greater dissemination of information by government around LLN initiatives would be beneficial. Interestingly, six out of 13 of the companies who provided LLN training said they did not know the government provided funding.

The other salient issue, related to that of accessing government funding, was around what companies would do if they realised a worker had LLN difficulties. Only five out of 13 companies in Survey One would be 'likely'/'most likely' to apply for government funding and this dropped to four out of 22 in Survey Two. This is a low proportion of employers who would consider applying for funding. Going to the original tabulation, the most commonly chosen options for employees discovered to have LLN difficulties were to encourage supervisors, provide mentors and ask a co-worker to help. All but one company in Survey One and all companies in Survey Two responded positively to at least one of these options and for six in Survey One and 15 in Survey Two it was a 'most likely' choice. Thirteen out of 13 in Survey One were 'likely' or 'most likely' to provide and fund a programme with a specialised tutor, train a vocational tutor or offer less formal tuition. Twelve out of 22 two companies in Survey Two chose at least one of these options.

A further important observation is that of the companies surveyed, only large companies provided and funded LLN (twelve were over 100, one was 50 - 99).



## 4.0 THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF IH/EF LLN

The research revealed that a number of different types of employer funded initiatives were being carried out in companies around LLN, and these can be classified into six types. Only the first two of these are commonly characterised as LLN training, the others involve employees in informal or indirect forms of LLN learning. The six types of initiatives are as follows:

**Type 1: Formal and non-formal employer funded LLN programmes.** The extent of these was very limited with, at the most, seven companies undertaking such programmes. We have defined these as follows: they involve a structured and sequenced programme of LLN instruction and they include 10 learners or more in any year who spend more than 20 hours in the programme. These are seen as having an orientation towards further education and training, and are likely to involve placement testing, and formative and summative assessments. The programmes may or may not involve recognition of the learning in the form of unit standards or certificates. Programmes are delivered by tutors specially trained in literacy, numeracy and/or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Some programmes specifically address ESL problems and are designed for 'foreign' workers who are not on residency permits and therefore not eligible for government funding.

The most inspiring and unusual local example of Type 1 programmes is the suite of delivery from Te Whare Ako (The House of Learning) which ran at Norske Skog from 1994 to 2006 (Workbase, 2002a).

**Type 2: Small scale, non-formal employer funded LLN programmes.** The research revealed up to 19 companies taking such initiatives. These tended to be of the 'fix it' type, with many being ESOL related. We have defined these as structured programmes of instruction in LLN skills and knowledge seen as necessary for work. They involve fewer than 10 learners in fewer than 20 hours of instruction per year. These do not lead to recognition in the form of unit standards or certificates, and are not orientated towards further education. Employers do not necessarily require reporting on these. They are delivered by tutors specially trained in literacy, numeracy or ESOL, many of whom are based in a PTE, and they can take place on or off site. These could also involve low key partnerships with places like the Citizen's Advice Bureau, local marae and wānanga, and possibly Rotary. In one case, a local community trust had funded a programme.

**Type 3: Small scale, informal initiatives involving employer funded LLN.** Survey data indicated strongly that companies' first approach to dealing with LLN issues would be to get a supervisor, co-worker or mentor to help out. These initiatives are defined not as programmes but as learning events (which could be sequenced) and offered in relation to a specific need or activity in the workplace. These tended to be provided one on one on site, and could also be offered by vocational tutors, Human Resource officers (HR) and Health & Safety (H&S) staff. They could also involve coaching or mentoring by team leaders or in-house trainers. Sometimes they were linked with LLN needs which have to be addressed if vocational qualifications are to be attained. In these cases the LLN was not formally recognised through unit standards or certificates.

**Type 4: Embedded LLN initiatives.** These were defined as taking a 'whole of organisation' approach to communications, and addressing the usability of texts like standard operating procedures, training materials, signage and general communications. These were not aimed at individual employee learners and were oriented to work processes and the work environment. Such initiatives appear to have been prompted and supported indirectly through the work of the ELNPs which seem to be having significant effects beyond the immediate companies involved.

**Type 5: Embedding LLN in vocational qualifications for trainers.** The construction industry case study provided an example of this and others were mentioned by key informants. This is an indirect form of employer funded LLN, in that it involves companies sponsoring their trainers to further their own education, and to specifically rewrite training materials for vocational qualifications. In the IH/EF LLN context, these initiatives were aimed at improving tutors' abilities to deal with LLN issues in relation to their vocational training through, for example, encouraging them to achieve the Unit Standard 21204 or the full NCALE.

**Type 6: Initiatives that are indirectly LLN related.** These involved communications, leadership and/or team building types of courses that addressed the ways in which workplace organization was mediated through written and spoken language. Interestingly, LLN providing companies took the view that these programmes did help employees with LLN issues, while non-providing companies tended not to take that view.

Inserting these classifications of LLN training onto the continuum in the literature review provides the following diagram. This develops a picture of how LLN training is impacted by the tertiary education environment and government funding.

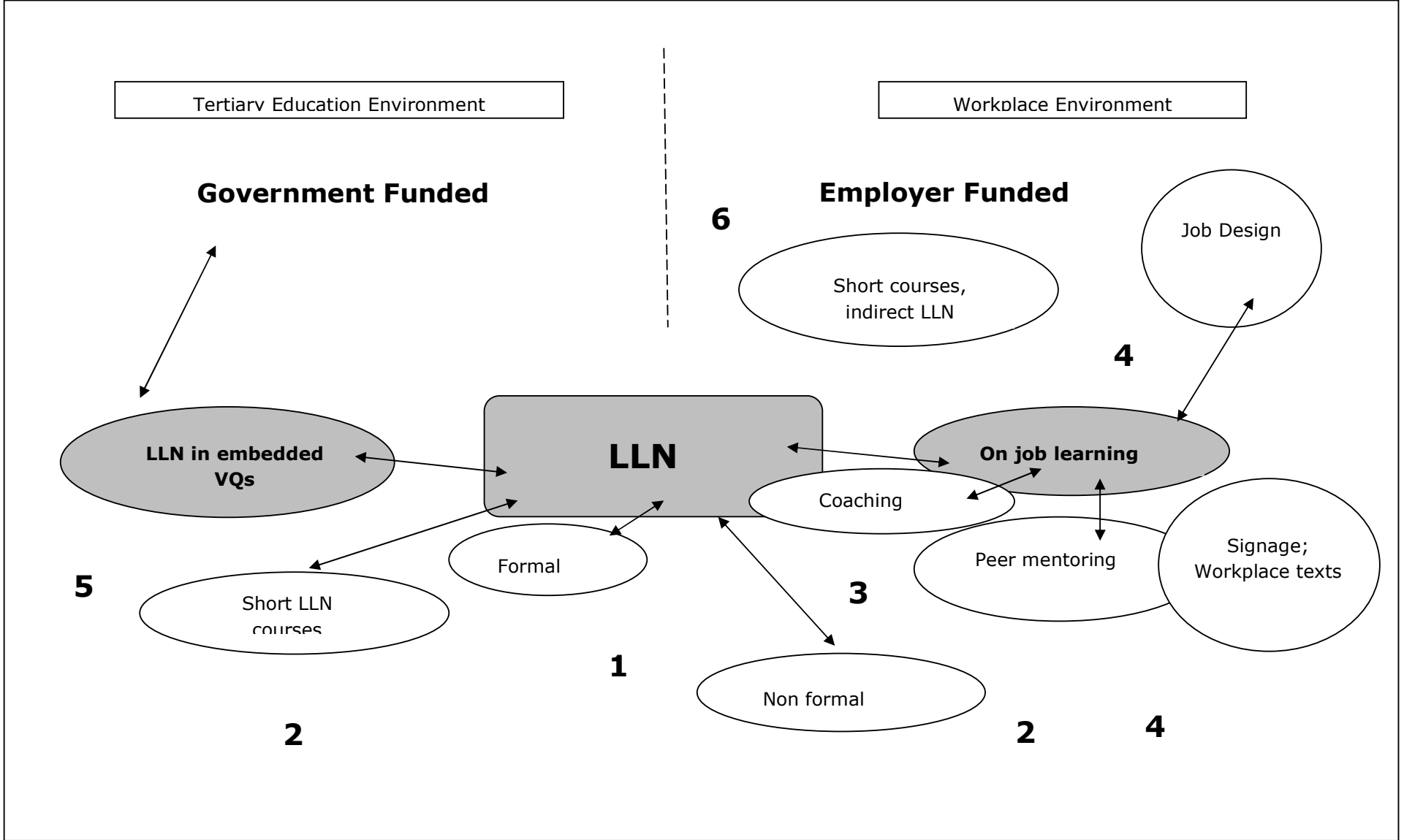


Figure 21: A continuum of LLN initiatives

## **4.1 Internal (within company) issues regarding IH/EF LLN**

The classification of different types of LLN delivery raises important considerations for an IH/EF approach to LLN particularly in relation to staffing. Significantly, each of the six types of initiatives has different staffing requirements. The NCALE and associated Unit Standard 21204 already go some way towards raising the standard of LLN tutoring amongst trainers who do not see themselves as specialist LLN tutors. There are further considerations:

- a. Given the range of LLN initiatives employed in companies, staff with a wide range of roles may need to have their skills raised in relation to LLN tutoring and mentoring. These could include HR staff, managers, supervisors as well as trainers in PTEs that are not directly dealing with LLN. Such a comprehensive shift to LLN training competencies will require creative approaches. The development of e-learning resources could also play an important role here.
- b. There were divided opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of specialist LLN tutors working in in-house initiatives and whether they should be based in companies or in PTEs. Many argued strongly that it was better for the tutor to be based in-house as they could engage in team teaching, address literacy issues in the company in a 'whole of organisation' approach, and provide highly contextualised LLN learning opportunities. Others argued that it was critical that LLN tutors continue to be based in PTEs, having a base that was independent of the company that included access to opportunities for professional development in LLN. They argued further that it was important that LLN tutors did not lose touch with the community of practice made up of literacy practitioners, that they had access to high quality resources and that they were involved in debates about LLN teaching. One of the strengths of the Te Whare Ako project was that tutors there were directly linked to Workbase and the materials and staff development opportunities that that organisational structure afforded (Workbase, 2002a). If staffing and resources are based entirely in-house it is easy for LLN staff members to get diverted into HR and other types of training, thus weakening the LLN focus.
- c. The provision of appropriate spaces and times for learning, and the creation of teaching resources for the range of LLN initiatives are also important issues.
  - One key consideration is whether it is the employees' right to have release time for learning or not. LLN trainers tended to be strongly of the view that release time is an employee right. Management indicated that they would like to give release time but could not always do that. In addition, supervisors often carried the burden of the organisational problems associated with release time as production schedules were not routinely changed to take LLN learning into account. These situations could lead to bad feelings on all sides and to a reduction in the appeal of LLN initiatives.
  - In a number of companies there was great pressure for space for LLN learning and support, and this had seriously hampered initiatives. In addition,

computers for learning and practising tasks were not readily available. Ideas like a 'learning bus' (a mobile learning environment), the use of learning bays, access to onsite libraries or training centres and ready access to computers were raised as possible solutions in the literature and by key informants.

- Access to materials and to printing and publishing facilities for teaching materials was limited, and often existing materials were seen to be of very poor quality. There is space for a wide range of initiatives here.
- d. Another problem is the general lack of digestible information for companies internally and externally, about LLN initiatives. One possibility for internal communication is the provision of an information bank with exemplars and narratives about current LLN initiatives which would be available for company staff at all levels. There were mixed responses about external information for companies. Interestingly, some informants noted that companies felt they were being '*spammed*' and the range of government programmes was too complex and unwieldy for them to relate to without help.

Issues around pedagogy, assessment, monitoring and evaluation were also raised.

## **4.2 Perceptions of IH/EF LLN in the wider context**

The following themes emerged from the wider research and are more comprehensively discussed in the full report.

- IH/EF LLN in relation to wider business strategy

The business focussed participants had a clear picture of the need to relate LLN to wider business strategies, as well as the constraints involved in doing this. One participant stressed the importance of '*moving away from industry training and towards workplace performance*'. Companies that were undertaking LLN initiatives demonstrated an understanding of the need to address LLN in a 'whole of organisation' approach and were taking steps to do implement this.

- Government LLN policy and funding

Companies tended to be confused about what assistance was available for supporting LLN and about how criteria were developed and applied (for example, problems with double dipping for funding). There was also some antipathy expressed towards TEC processes amongst those that had had experience of applying.

There were four reasons for not applying for government funding:

1. Companies did not know that there was government funding for LLN.
2. Companies were aware of government funding but they had a strong rationale for why they did not want to take that route.
3. Companies had had negative experiences with applying for and utilising government funding.

4. Companies knew about funding and would be interested in applying but were not following it up for a variety of reasons.

There was overall agreement that it is very difficult for companies to apply for government funding without help in navigating the process. There were examples of companies that had '*given up*' and one that claimed to be '*just walking away from the institutional sector*'.

A number of key informants had insight into the need for linking up initiatives but experienced difficulties in managing this within current systems. They saw a need to link government funded projects with employer funded in-house initiatives and also stressed the importance of linking off site/off job with on site/on job learning. Because of a lack of organisational coherence for LLN sometimes different funding streams were not targeting employees with the right levels of programmes.

Most responses indicated that what really counted was workplace performance rather than the achievement of standards and qualifications for their own sake. There were numerous comments noting that completion of certificates does not necessarily translate into workplace performance. In addition, it was suggested that the achievement of standards or qualifications was often compliance based, and while some informants welcomed that and saw it as a driver for training, others felt that training to achieve compliance did not necessarily promote motivation, participation or creativity in the workplace. There were many examples of training for certificates that was poor in quality and unlikely to connect with shop floor issues. Insisting on such training as a basis for funding seemed more related to ease of reporting than to '*the alignment between learning and what's needed in the workplace*'.

- Perceptions around the role of LLN providers in IH/EF LLN

With regard to IH/EF LLN, providers are in a difficult position. At the moment, there is little financial support for in-house LLN, other than what companies can sponsor themselves. As already noted above, there are few of Type 1 and 2 initiatives happening in these contexts. Types 3, 4 and 5 as in-house initiatives cannot offer major contracts for LLN providers, while Type 6 initiatives can, but are mostly taken up by providers that do not specialise in LLN at this stage.

The interviews with providers however, indicated that their involvement with in-house LLN could take a range of forms:

1. Direct delivery of employer funded in-house LLN (Types 1 and 2).
2. Direct delivery of in-house LLN, sponsored or supported by local/national charity (Type 2).
3. Inclusion of workers on paid time off from work in community based classes (Type 2).
4. Involvement with in-house LLN needs analysis but not delivery of training (contribute to Types 1 and 2, as well as to Types 3, 4, 5 and 6).
5. Involvement through advising enterprises (all Types).

6. Indirect involvement through tutor training and professional development (all Types).

However, as one informant pointed out, it is cheaper for companies to employ an in-house LLN tutor than to take on a provider who needs to ensure appropriate overheads (and possibly profit) are built into the budget. Providers therefore do not see that they particularly stand to gain from promoting IH/EF LLN. It is possible that PTEs are not committed to building longer term strategies but are responding to short term needs in order to be able to compete, obtain funding and therefore increase profits. A number of informants expressed anxiety that the number of providers in the field is growing quickly and this may make it difficult to maintain quality because of the lengths and cost cutting measures providers will go to, to compete for contracts.

It should be noted also that LLN providers stand to gain from initiatives that are based on the identification of individual employees as having LLN needs, as programmes to address these needs are easier to plan and implement. Working in-house in relation to assisting with informal and incidental forms of learning, as well as embedded approaches is time consuming and difficult, and unlikely to lend itself to profitable initiatives, unless creative ways are found to engage LLN providers taking this approach in co-ordinated learning systems across companies and regions.

- A gap between education and business perceptions around LLN

Across all the research participants there was a considerable difference of opinion between those who worked closely with businesses and those who worked closely with the government and PTEs. Companies and those associated with companies prioritised what they saw as 'business outcomes', while those associated with the government and many of the PTEs tended to prioritise individual skills levels or 'education system outcomes'. Importantly, it appeared that those who spoke about 'business outcomes' were also aware of wider social outcomes and took them into account. These people saw education system outcomes as important also, in the sense that licences, compliance requirements, H&S issues and so on required LLN skills before people were able to undertake further education and training that would lead to certification and qualifications. The respondents from the ITOs were able to present both perspectives. One informant explained clearly that improving LLN was '*good for the country*', while understanding also, the needs and frustrations of companies. Many business informants indicated that there was a communication problem between the two sides of the LLN equation, in that people in the education sector did not know how to speak to businesses. Four respondents used the term 'language' with reference to the idea that '*we do not speak the same language*'. A further quote:

*I think the two communities [business and education] speak different languages and part of it is just getting them closer together, just sort of understanding each other better (Key informant interview – Business related organisation).*

Inserting a visual representation of this gap into the diagrams of the six types of provision in relation to the continuum identified is helpful. Those with the education orientated LLN focus look towards individual learning opportunities in the tertiary sector. Those with the business orientated LLN focus tend to look towards the workplace environment and business outcomes. Both are valuable and should not be considered in

isolation from each other. It is critical that these perspectives are situated in relation to the continua of sites and types of learning discussed in the literature review, as well as to remember the emphasis, in the key studies consulted, on the dual track approach, in an expansive rather than restricted view of workforce development.

Two different key informants captured this preference for an expansive view very well:

*I think we're too blunt with what we do, I think we need to have several nets that we can throw over and - catch a different ... each time. To get beyond the tip of the iceberg, we have to grapple with informal learning or on the job learning... This would be another of those nets... (Key informant interview – Business related organisation)*

*... you want them to think about the entire firm and their business goals and so on....the throw away sound bite we use is 'you want to go from industry training to workplace performance' which is more than just individual skill packets, but I think the government understands that – I'm still not quite sure how they get there, because that requires a different set of measures, funding systems and rather more flexibility and a lot more complexity... If you think about workplaces as learning organisations, focusing on the individual probably isn't the most sustainable intervention because you have to have an organisation that values it and part of that is changing workplace cultures, managers, so that it gets into HR and it gets into business practice. (Key informant interview – Business related organisation)*



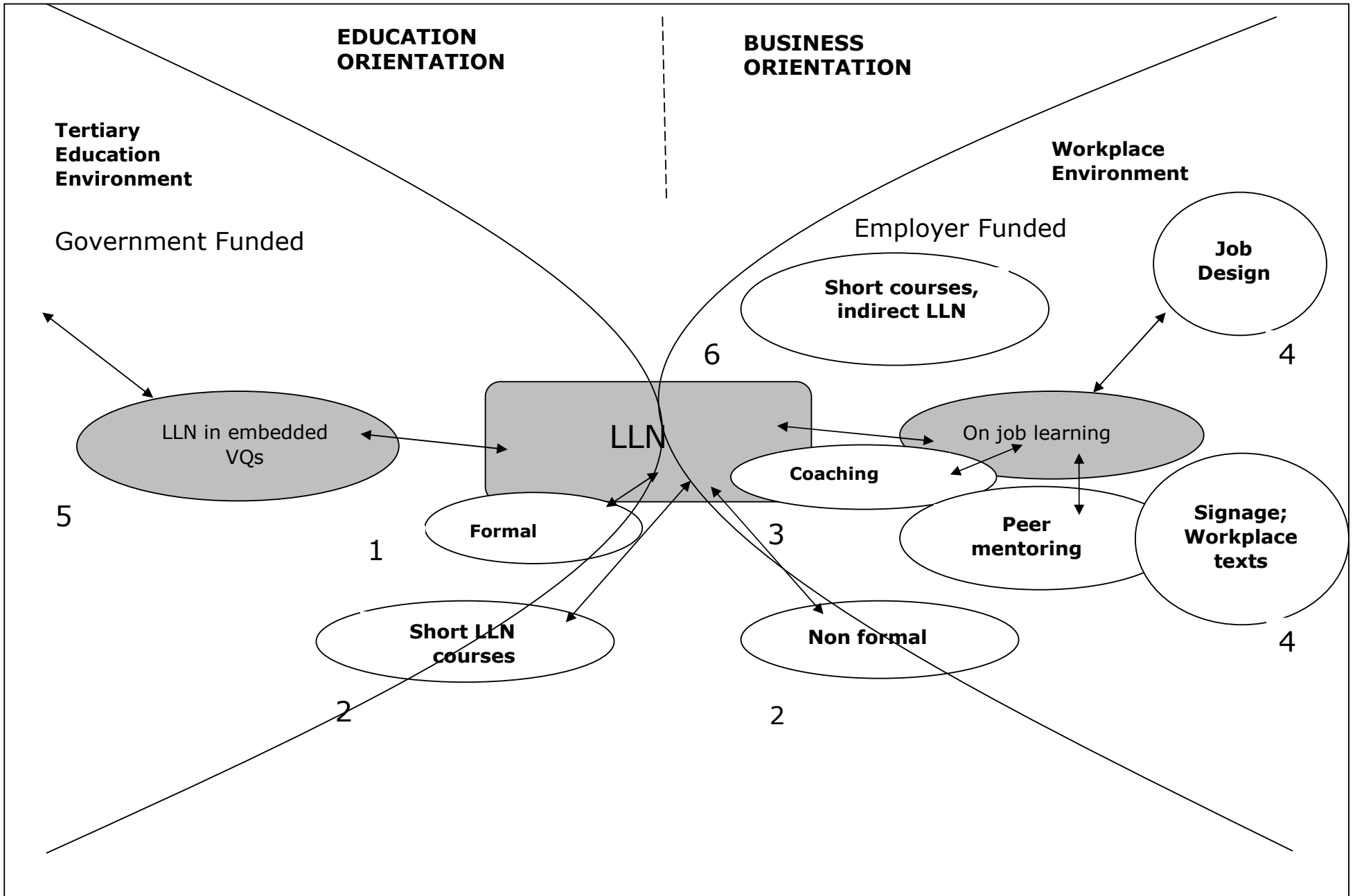


Figure 22: The education – business gap

To aim for an expansive approach, workplace learning needs to be conceptualised as learning through, in and for the workplace. If this is done, training and perhaps mentoring can address learners' needs for portable skills and possibly qualifications that will give them security and mobility. At the same time training should address their needs as employees and their employer's needs for them to be able to engage successfully in workplace tasks and demands. To achieve this, it is important that workplace LLN learning draws on formal, non-formal, informal and incidental forms of learning. Importantly, these forms of learning need to be viewed as connected and not isolated from one another. Pursuant to this, government sponsored policies and plans for LLN need to listen to, draw on and build on all possible opportunities for learning that are currently provided in workplaces, even where these might be, at present, underdeveloped or not made explicit.

The identification of the different types of IH/EF LLN as outlined above provide insight into a possible continuum of initiatives around LLN which companies are currently engaged with. Together, these offer forms of workplace learning for expansive approaches to workforce development, rather than restrictive ones.

However, the situation has developed where many of the companies and many of the informants we spoke to regarded only Types 1 and 2 as LLN. This suggested that the idea of LLN has become associated with training, and viewed as an intervention which is formally structured into a programme and involves the transfer of a prespecified body of knowledge. This leads to the situation where many companies do not consider offering LLN training, and by the same token, do not see themselves as needing it.

The ELNPs are clearly changing this way of thinking, but these ideas have not yet necessarily filtered through to the broader business community. Some of the survey data and the case studies nevertheless revealed nuanced understandings of LLN learning and ways of providing it. If these can be taken into account and a continuum of learning opportunities provided, it is possible that more companies will take up LLN as an integral factor in workplace learning.

An enabling framework is therefore needed that will provide opportunities and support for all of the types of LLN provision identified above. Current funding formula which are based on numbers of individuals and the achievement of qualifications cannot take into account embedded learning and 'just in time learning'. New forms of financial support might need to be developed to address these or existing funding could be used in more flexible and innovative ways. Funding could take the form of training subsidies for time release, performance incentives for peers who act as mentors or tax credits aimed at the company as a whole.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Widening perspectives on LLN**

It is important to see LLN as inextricably part of the complex, tool mediated, multi modal and interpersonal activities that make up work processes, not as something separable from them. This may also involve thinking about a range of literacies in addition to workplace literacies (for example, in relation to the family or social interaction) as well as about the connections between written language and other modes of communication like spoken language and the visual and gestural. Importantly, issues of workplace development (of the worker and the company) and deployment (of the trainer/mentor and learner) also need to be taken into account.

### **5.2 Taking a business outcomes oriented strategic approach**

A perspective of LLN as simply foundation skills which can only be addressed through structured programmes can contribute towards a double bind for employers who might feel that they cannot afford to implement such programmes (for a range of logistical and other reasons). In trying to address LLN difficulties some employers move to the 'fix it' approach, but feel that this is not really adequate either (because they do not address broader LLN issues in the workplace). If employers cannot access LLN programmes that integrate with their business goals and organisational constraints, workplace LLN may come to be seen as too difficult to address at all. However, with a widened perspective on LLN, there will be recognition that improved work performance, better work relations and higher productivity result from LLN taught in context and not in isolation from work processes and cultures. Ideally, LLN needs to be conceptualised in relation to a 'whole of organisation' approach to learning and change which concomitantly addresses positive business outcomes.

### **5.3 Starting off where companies are at**

The starting point for a strategic approach to needs-based training should not be a funding application. Rather it will be the slow work of identifying LLN needs, how these relate to 'whole of organisation' needs and training options. In doing this it will be necessary to connect formal and informal ways of learning using a range of types (as identified on pages 33-34). The current ITO mode of assessment for applications to the ELNPs may be one that could be applied to in-house needs analyses. The importance of listening to employers, of speaking to them in a language which they are familiar with, with a wide range of options in mind needs to be emphasised.

### **5.4 Diversifying strategies**

Diversifying strategies involves designing practical options in line with a widened view of LLN. This could involve a multi pronged or suite of options (see above for possible types of provision) some of which may need to operate simultaneously. In order for several options to be operating at the same time, current tensions around double dipping in government funding would need to be addressed under clarified and perhaps revamped funding strategies. It may be that some

companies will always prefer to fund and deliver their own LLN initiatives. For others more autonomy to pursue diverse strategies or combinations of them that meet specific needs may be required. Funding for the training of educators is critical for all approaches.

Partnerships could play an important role in supporting diverse LLN strategies. Examples of working in partnership with the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Rotary and local community trusts were cited by respondents. These should be explored and shared. There are possibilities for promoting e-learning and other forms of 'just in time' learning in relation to the Digital Learning Strategy. Some respondents in this research also stressed the importance of drawing on Māori pedagogies and traditions to involve workers appropriately. Diversified strategies and different funding arrangements could allow for the involvement of community and family members in learning.

## **5.5 Strengthening support**

Diversifying strategies as outlined above requires strengthening support. Support is conceptualised as access to advice, to advisors and to training for LLN specialists. There are six areas of support required:

- Training for LLN specialists and generalists

The range of initiatives outlined earlier require skilled and well educated tutors, advisors and brokers. This implies the need to upskill vocational tutors and staff in PTEs that offer workplace courses. LLN is a highly complex and contested field, and has suffered for years from a lack of qualified staff. There is no substitute for well trained people in this field and quality outcomes which are both business and education orientated cannot be achieved without them.

- Development of resources

There is a clear need for further development of learning materials and resources both for teaching and for targeted information. E-learning materials can play an important role in addressing provision for different types of initiatives, particularly of the 'just in time' type (those needed at short notice without much time for planning).

- A one stop information shop

It may be useful for an independent one stop information shop to be established. This could advise companies on the diverse strategies for addressing LLN and the ways in which the government can support these. It could collect and disseminate experiences of IH/EF LLN.

- Development of LLN advisors/brokers

As part of the Department of Labour's evaluation of the Upskilling Partnership Project the role of brokers is being researched so any recommendations here would be subject to the results of that research. It is, however, possible that

advisors could be attached to this independent unit, so that they operate freely of the funding allocation processes and reporting mechanisms. They could also operate within clusters and/or across geographical locations or industrial sectors.

- Linking ESL and LLN

It is crucial that initiatives and training in the language area and the literacy area are brought closer where appropriate (not all literacy learners and EAL learners). ESL training needs to take account of literacy and literacy training needs to take much closer account of language issues. ESL provides a very valuable entry point to in-house training that does not carry the stigma of the 'L word'.

## **5.6 Strengthening access to facilities**

Facilities that have been mentioned by respondents and in the literature include the important role played by learning centres in workplace learning, for example, Te Whare Ako (Workbase, 2002a). These enable more informal drop in arrangements for one to one and small group tutoring. They may include computers, thus attracting employees at all levels of proficiency in LLN. It is important that creative strategies are developed for providing and supporting such facilities in partnerships across organisations. An alternative to a learning centre is a mobile learning centre that visits particular locations where there are concentrations of workers. This could be a Learning Bus containing computers. Another alternative and one very close to the factory floor is the idea of a learning bay, an alcove which contains one or two computers, table and chairs. This would facilitate on the job learning.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The recommendations made above are not incompatible with many of the actions laid out in the LLN Action Plan (2008 – 2012) (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008). They do, however, provide a reframing of some aspects through a widening of perspectives on LLN beyond those of foundation skills. The intention would be to stress LLN not as something acquired only by individuals prior to, or separate from work but as *literacies* that are themselves work. These literacies should be seen as being integral to a wider business strategy, and ideas about expansive rather than restrictive forms of workforce development are important here. This view would consider the needs and gains of individuals at the same time as it would address workplace learning from a whole of organisation perspective. Work would be seen as a textually mediated social practices and the workplace as a learning environment.

Conceptualising the role of LLN within all of the drivers of productivity (rather than just 'investing in people and skills') could provide a helpful basis for this approach and link in with a focus on business strategy. In this view, LLN needs to be seen as developing in formal, explicit ways (learning conscious learning), but also in the informal learning that is essential to work processes (task conscious learning). Also other modes of communication could receive explicit attention (like the visual).

It is clear that innovative ways need to be found to bring the range of opportunities outlined above to SMEs and small groups of employees scattered across sites of employment and workstations. These could involve the subsidisation of travelling or mobile advisors and tutors, as well as facilities like the 'learning bus' and mobile libraries and computers.

This research into IH/EF LLN comes at a time when there are contradictory forces at play. The LLN field in New Zealand is in a very dynamic period and the potential for centering and seeding LLN into workplaces is high. At the same time there is no doubt that companies will be cutting back and investment in training will inevitably suffer. These contradictory forces mean that different ways of thinking about LLN are required. The findings of many of the studies consulted tell us that enterprises are more willing to undertake firm specific training than general training. The view that LLN is foundational and therefore, general, may have unintentionally increased the perception that LLN is not the responsibility of firms. On the other hand, it is possible that growing understandings about LLN as closely linked with business outcomes could contribute to the perception that LLN has value as company specific training and is therefore connected with the learning that is necessary for production and innovation to take place.

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