



UPSKILLING
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME



INTERNATIONAL
WORKFORCE
LITERACY REVIEW

› CANADA

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1. Reviewer Introduction

Sue Folinsbee has been intimately involved in workforce and workplace literacy since the mid 1980s. She has taken on a variety of roles during this time, both in terms of organisational leadership and consulting work. She spent many years working at the front end, to plan and set up workplace literacy programs in a variety of workplaces across Canada. She works with a variety of partners including unions, employers, all levels of government, and literacy organisations.

In the late 1980s and 1990s she developed and offered some of the first practitioner training institutes for workplace literacy in Ontario, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories.

One of her most enlightening and interesting experiences is as an ethnographer. She spent six months on the factory floor of a textile factory examining and making sense of the literacy practices that workers and managers used. As a result of that work, she is one of five co-authors of the book *Reading Work: Literacies in the New Workplace*.

She is currently involved in a variety of projects that focus on workforce and workplace literacy and other areas of literacy and adult learning.

2. Background information on the context for workforce literacy

2.1 Introduction

Canada is a federation with 10 provinces and three territories. The population of Canada is around 33 million. It is one of the most diverse countries in the world. It is projected that by 2017 about one in five Canadians will be an immigrant and also racially visible.¹ More than 70% of newcomers choose to settle in the urban centres of Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver, with the largest percentage settling in Toronto.² Also significant is that the Aboriginal population will increase at twice the rate of the overall population.³

Overall, Canada is dealing with an ageing population, with a declining fertility rate and a rising life expectancy. In 2006, the Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce released its report: *The demographic time bomb: Mitigating the effects of demographic change in Canada*.⁴ This report indicated that 'the number of people aged 65 and older is expected to increase from 3.9 million in 2000 to approximately 7.8 million in 2026, reaching almost 9.4 million by 2051'. It also projected that by 2031, 25% of Canadians will be 65 years or older, up from the current 13%. The Standing Senate Committee reported that although immigration has accounted for more than 60% of the population growth since 2000, it will become more difficult to attract immigrants for two major reasons. The first is that Canada will be competing with other

¹ See CPRN's *Policy brief: Diversity: Canada's Strength* at http://www.cprn.org/documents/47478_en.pdf

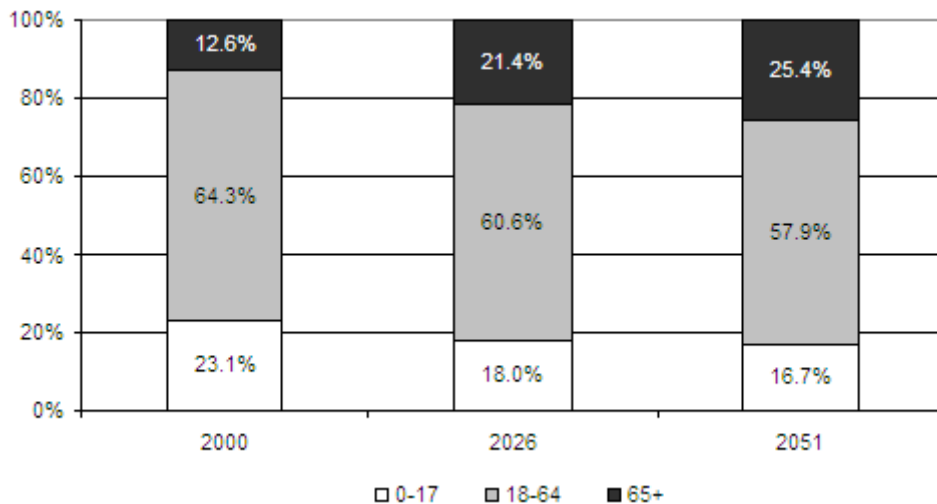
² See Canadian Labour and Business Centre. (2004). *Handbook of Immigration and Skills Shortages*, p6. at http://www.clbc.ca/files/Reports/Immigration_Handbook.pdf

³ See Statistics Canada (2005, June 28). *The Daily: Canada's Aboriginal Population 2017* at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050628/d050628d.htm>

⁴ See Senate Canada (2006). *The Demographic Time Bomb: Mitigating the Effects of Demographic Change in Canada. Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce* at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/39/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-e/bank-e/rep-e/rep03jun06-e.pdf>

countries for immigrants. The second is that historical sources of immigration are also dealing with ageing populations and declining birth rates.⁵ See Figure 1 below for Statistics Canada’s 2001 projections of the percentage change in the age of the Canadian population.

Figure 1: Projected Change in Canadian Demographics, 2026 and 2051⁶



2.2 Workforce demographics and projections

The general Canadian population projections about an ageing population set the stage for workforce demographic projections. Current articles and reports on workforce demographics and projections stress government and business concerns about the aging workforce and declining numbers of skilled workers. There is hope that immigration will solve the problem—but many experts say it will not. Nonetheless, because Canada is approaching a ‘seller’s market’ in terms of the labour force, there is renewed interest in older workers’ rights to remain employed, human rights and language training for immigrants, and the urgent necessity to train all workers. Increased literacy rates are becoming viewed as necessary.

The Canadian Policy and Research Network’s (CPRN) study, *21st century job quality: Achieving What Canadians Want*, released in September 2007, stresses that older workers are the talent pool that employers will have to draw from. The report states that employers, government, and pension-plan administrators favour keeping older workers in the work force. However, the report also emphasises the need for non-financial incentives to keep these workers in the work force.⁷

A recent study by Statistics Canada on labour force projections indicated that in four different projection scenarios used, the overall participation rate in the labour force would decline due to the ageing population, low fertility rates, and higher life expectancy rates. However, in three of the scenarios the labour force should continue to grow until 2031. The study found that in all the scenarios, the number of workers for every retired person aged 65 or older would be reduced by half between 2005 and 2031, falling from about four

⁵ as cited in Senate Canada (2006). Original source from Statistics Canada, *Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2000-2026*, March 2001, Table 18, p. 68.

⁷ See CPRN report http://www.cprn.com/documents/48485_EN.pdf

today to slightly more than two in 2031. In 1981, this ratio was more than five workers per inactive senior.⁸

These findings also suggest that neither a rise in fertility, nor increased immigration, nor even the continued rise in participation rates could reverse the downward trend. The study concludes that the expected slowdown in labour force growth could have various repercussions for the Canadian economically and socially.⁹

2.3 Immigration patterns and volumes

Canada, along with Australia, is different from most other Western countries in that immigrants comprise a much larger share of its population. In 2001, 18% of Canada's population was foreign-born, a far higher proportion than in the United States and most European countries. 10

Canada's immigration policy has three broad objectives:

- to reunite families
- to accept refugees on compassionate and humanitarian grounds
- to foster a strong and viable economy in all regions of Canada.¹¹

In a study of 28 OCED countries, Canada ranked fifth in the percentage of its population that was made up of immigrants. In Canada today, immigrants account for an increasing percentage of the labour force. One out of every five employed workers is an immigrant. Over the past decade, immigrants have accounted for 70% of Canada's net labour-force growth. Between 1991 and 2000, Canada accepted 2.2 million immigrants, increasing the working-age population by more than 1.1 million. This was almost twice as many immigrants as were admitted in the previous three decades. Although immigrants tend to work in all industry sectors in Canada, more are employed in the manufacturing sector than any other. However, in terms of overall labour-market growth from 1991 to 2001, immigrants have contributed the most growth in the retail sector (303%), followed by manufacturing (166 %) and then the hospitality industry (65 %).¹²

Those immigrants coming to Canada in recent years are more educated than immigrants who came in the past. More than half, or 61%, came as part of the economic class of immigrants which includes skilled workers. They are also twice as likely to have a university education compared to the Canadian-born population, but their earnings are usually a great deal less than those born in Canada.¹³

Recent immigrants tend to come from countries where English and French are not the main languages. As a result, they do not have English or French as their mother tongue.

⁸ See The Daily for June 7, 2007 <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/070615/d070615b.htm>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Bélanger, A. & Caron Malefant, É. (2005). *Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada: Prospects for 2017*. at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-008-XIE/2005003/articles/8968.pdf>

¹¹ See Statistics Canada (2007). *Overview of Canada's Immigration Policy*. at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-624-XIE/2007000/technote2.htm>

¹² See Statistics Canada (2006). *Literacy Skills among Canada's Immigrant Population* at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/81-004-XIE/2005005/impop.htm> and Canadian Labour and Business Centre (2004), *Handbook of Immigration and Skills Shortage* at http://www.clbc.ca/files/Reports/Immigration_Handbook.pdf

¹³ Ibid.

They also tend to be members of racialized communities and practice diverse religions. Since 1990, the most common country of birth for newcomers to Canada is the People's Republic of China, followed by India and the Philippines. Ten countries account for about one-half of Canada's recent immigrant population. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of recent immigrants are members of a visible minority.¹⁴

Immigrants coming to Canada face significant barriers. Seventy percent of newcomers identify barriers in finding employment. These barriers include lack of Canadian experience, foreign credentials not being recognized, and language barriers.¹⁵ A recent study by Sarah Wayland indicated that Canada welcomes immigrants with one hand and creates barriers for them with the other. The report asserts that these systemic barriers, including labour market obstacles, need to be addressed through changes to policy and law and the collaboration of all relevant stakeholders.¹⁶

In 2005 a presentation by the Institute for Public Policy Research asserted that the economic situation for immigrants, particularly members of racialized communities, has worsened. It further stated that underutilization of immigrants' skills costs Canada two billion dollars a year. The Institute called for a number of solutions including skill training bridging programs, subsidized internships and mentoring programs, more effective assessment services for international credentials, and more awareness-raising with Canadians about the barriers immigrants face and the consequences for Canada.¹⁷

2.4 Employment rates and patterns

The 2005 Statistics Canada publication *The Canadian Labour Market at a Glance* indicated that in 2005 the increase in employment, combined with a decline in labour force participation caused the unemployment rate to fall to a low of 6.4% at the end of the year and that 62.7% of the working-age population held jobs.¹⁸ This was the highest annual employment rate on record. Current statistics show that as of August 2007, the unemployment rate remains at a 33-year low of 6%.¹⁹

According to Statistics Canada's 2005 report on the labour market, employment has grown much more rapidly among women than among men during the past three decades. In 2005, almost half of all workers were women (46.8%), compared with just over a third (37.1%) in 1976. In August 2007, almost all of the employment growth for adult men and particularly women came from those aged 55 and over. Since the beginning of 2007, employment among the 55+ has increased by 4.6%.²⁰

In its 2005 *Handbook on Immigration and Skills Shortages*, the former Canadian Labour and Business Centre reported that recent immigrants (in Canada for 10 years or less) represented 6.1% of the employed population. The Centre reported a gap between the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ as cited in Dunphy, B. (2006). *Newcomers Held Back: Canada's Laws, Policies, Pressing Issue: Report*. See http://www.hamiltonspectator.com/Spec_pdfs/Newcomers_Dumphy.pdf

¹⁷ See Bouchard, G. (n. d.). *The Canadian Immigration System: An Overview*. at http://www.irpp.org/miscpubs/archive/bouchard_immig.pdf

¹⁸ See Statistics Canada (2005). *The Canadian Labour Market at a Glance*. at <http://dsp-pwd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/71-222-X/71-222-XIE2006001.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See Statistics Canada. (2007, 7 Sept.). *Labour Force Survey*. at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/070907/d070907a.htm>

percentages of those born in Canada who are employed and recent immigrants who are employed. Furthermore, newcomers who had been in Canada up to 5 years still had a higher unemployment rate than that of the Canadian-born population (12.7% compared with 7.4%). The CLBC also reported that it now takes more than 10 years in Canada before the observed unemployment rate of immigrants falls to the level found among those born in Canada.²¹

The employment rate gap between recent immigrants and Canadian-born adults aged 25 to 54 has changed considerably over the years. In 1981, new immigrants were more likely to be employed (74.2%, compared with 73.1% for those born in Canada). By 1986, the situation was reversed with the gap continuing to widen.²²

2.5 Growth industries and industries in decline

There have been significant transformations in Canada's industrial structure. The shift has been from primary industries and manufacturing jobs to service jobs. Technological change has played a part in both this shift and in the need for more highly skilled workers.²³

The current picture in Canada shows that the gas and oil industry is booming in western Canada, with the province of Alberta having a nearly a full employment rate. Construction is another high-growth sector, while manufacturing jobs are being lost.²⁴ In total, 291,500 manufacturing jobs have disappeared since November 2002.²⁵

One of three Canadians works in the service sector. This sector includes a wide range of jobs such as delivery services, storage services, truck drivers, rail carriers, and bicycle couriers. It also includes entertainment, retail, financial, legal, and all government activities where citizens are offered services.²⁶

New jobs in Canada are mainly in low-paying sectors such as personal services, repair and maintenance, retailing, and textiles. Jobs in high-paying sectors such as paper and printing manufacturing, mineral manufacturing, and public administration have been lost since the early 1990s.²⁷

The majority of the new jobs were also in self-employment and in temporary jobs, as opposed to permanent payroll jobs. According to Andrew Jackson (2006):

Large pockets of under-employment in low-paid and precarious jobs still exist among youth (for whom the unemployment rate is still 11.5%), workers of colour and recent

²¹ See Canadian Labour and Business Centre. (2004). *Handbook of Immigration and Skills Shortages*. at http://www.clbc.ca/files/Reports/Immigration_Handbook.pdf

²² See Statistics Canada (2005). *The Canadian Labour Market at a Glance*.

²³ See Saunders, R., & Maxwell, J. (2003). *Changing Labour Markets: Key Challenges Facing Canada*. at http://www.cprn.org/documents/20430_en.pdf

²⁴ See Statistics Canada. (2007, 7 Sept.). *Labour Force Survey*.

²⁵ See Weir, E. (2007). *The manufacturing crisis*. at <http://canadianlabour.ca/updir/03-27-07ManufacturingCrisisNote.pdf>

²⁶ See Government of Canada (2007). *Canadian Economy Online: Economy overview*. at <http://www.canadianeconomy.gc.ca/english/economy/overview.html>

²⁷ Tal, B. (2007). *Booming Job Market and Disappointing Economy: Explaining the Disconnect*. Toronto, ON: CIBC World Markets.

*immigrants, and among a significant minority of adult men and women who lack skills demanded by employers. (p2).*²⁸

In their 2003 study *Knowledge Workers in Canada's Workforce*, Statistics Canada stated that there has been continuous growth in occupations considered high knowledge (professional, management and technical occupations). In 1971, 14% of the workforce was in high-knowledge occupations, in contrast to 25% in 2001. Furthermore, this growth has occurred in most industries, not just high-tech sectors. This growth was also consistent across Canada. The study results suggest the need for increasing skills and knowledge of the work force.²⁹

2.6 International Adult Literacy and Life Skills results

In 2005, the results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) study were released in Canada. The ALL, a large-scale, comparative study, profiled the skills of six member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) in the first round, and provided national snapshots. Participating countries were Bermuda, Canada, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and United States. The ALL followed up on the International Adult Literacy Survey conducted in 1994. In the international ranking of the six participating countries, Canada appears in the middle. It ranks better than Italy and the United States, but is behind Norway, Switzerland, and Bermuda. In Canada, 20,000 respondents aged 16-65 representing 21,360,683 adults participated³⁰ (See Figure 2 below).

The ALL survey showed that there was very little change in literacy scores from the IALS survey that was conducted 10 years ago. Overall, 9 million Canadians—4 in 10 Canadians—do not have the literacy skills to meet the demands of everyday life. Immigrants aged 16 to 65 tended to score lower on all aspects of the ALL than the Canadian-born. For example, 60% of recent and established immigrants were at levels 1 and 2 for prose literacy, compared to 37% of the Canadian-born. Contrary to what one might expect, the duration of residence in Canada did not have a significant impact on the average performance of immigrants. This might be explained by the fact that, because recent immigrants tend to be better educated than established ones, they may have higher literacy skills.³¹

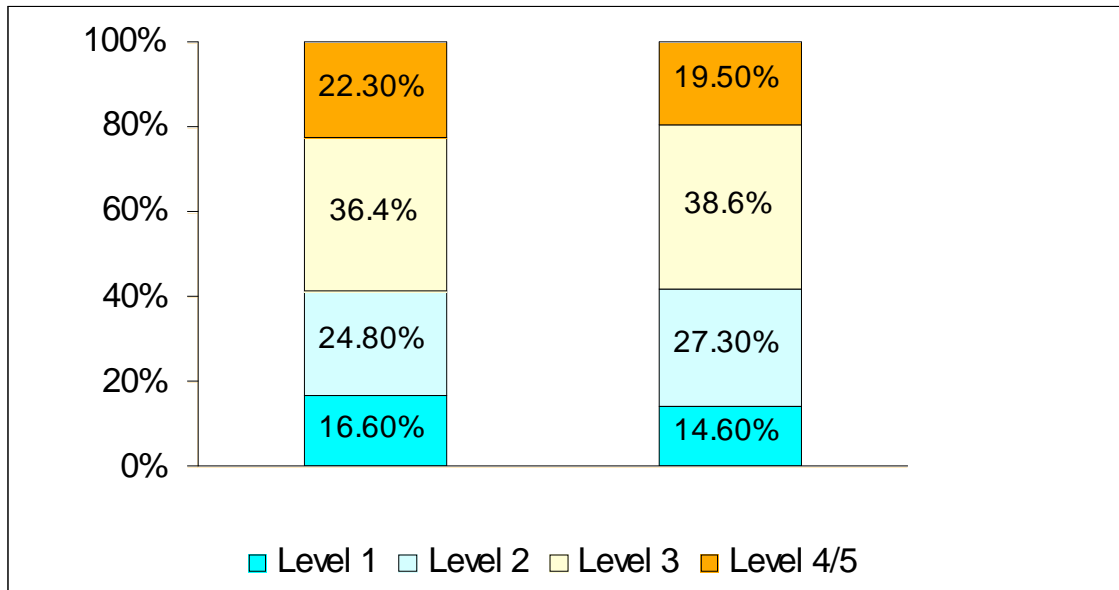
²⁸ See Jackson, A. (2006). *A Tale of Two Economies* at http://canadianlabour.ca/updir/A_Tale_of_Two_Economies_-_AJ.pdf

²⁹ See Statistics Canada. (2003, October 23). *Study: Knowledge Workers in Canada's Workforce* at <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/031030/d031030a.htm>

³⁰ See S. Brink (2005). *ALL 2003 Key Research Findings and HRSD Implications* at <http://library.nald.ca/research/browse/author?name=Satya+Brink%2C+Ph.D> and Movement for Canadian Literacy (2005) *Millions struggle with literacy* at <http://www.literacy.ca/all/backgrd/1.htm>

³¹ Ibid.

Figure 2: Percentage of Canadian population (16 to 65 years) at each prose literacy level, in IALS and ALL*



* Differences at each level between IALS and ALL are not statistically significant
 Source: ALL, 2003; IALS, 1994-1998³²

The ALL survey also shows that Canadians with literacy barriers tend to have low paid, low skill jobs. Those with higher average skills earn more. Those who are unemployed with the most serious literacy barriers had only a 50% chance of finding a job even after 52 weeks of unemployment. In Canada, 57% of those working age adults who scored at level 1 tend to be employed as opposed to 80% of adults at levels 4/5.³³

In addition, adults with the lowest skill level are the least likely to receive training. Participation rates among those with level 1 proficiency in prose literacy is 20.8% compared to about 70% among those at level 4/5.³⁴

2.7 Definitions of workplace and workforce literacy

In this review, literacy refers to reading, writing, numeracy, computer literacy and oral communication. Workplace literacy pertains to those workers already employed. Workforce literacy refers mostly to unemployed workers. Other terms that are used instead of literacy in the Canadian workplace context include basic skills, foundation skills, and essential skills.

2.8 Drivers for workforce literacy

Federal government drivers

A 2003 Parliamentary Standing Committee studying the problem of low literacy identified several overall drivers for literacy. Drivers include the fact that over 70% of new jobs will include post-secondary education, rising skill requirements in the labour market, skill underutilization, and the fact that over 40% of Canadians need more literacy and basic skills to participate in a changing labour market. The parliamentary committee also

³² as cited in S. Brink (2005). Original source from Statistics Canada, ALL, 2003 and IALS, 1994-1998.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

identified the importance of improving literacy skills to strengthen not only labour market outcomes but families, health, democracy, and communities.³⁵

In the most recent Request for Funding Proposal (RFP) for literacy funding released by the Government of Canada in September 2007, economic prosperity and workforce development is a key priority. The RFP document stresses that 'Canada's economy and social structure in being transformed by globalization, an ageing population, declining labour force growth, the expansion of the knowledge-based economy and other factors, each of which has an impact on the skills that Canadians require at home, at work and in their community.' The government plans include a focus on creating the most flexible, well-educated workforce in the world in order to improve Canada's economic prosperity and establish a global competitive advantage.³⁶

Employer drivers

Employer drivers in the private sector focus on company competitive edge, global competitiveness, technological change, low literacy statistics, and health and safety standards.³⁷

In the municipal sector, drivers include restructuring, amalgamation, new technology, requirement of a high school diploma, health and safety, and efficiency as well as the ability to attract and retain skilled workers.³⁸

Union drivers

Union drivers focus on providing opportunities for all workers to achieve their individual and collective potential as literate, informed, and active citizens and unions members. For unions, literacy is an opportunity to reach out to 'inactive' members who want to improve their skills, who had to leave school early, or who had a bad experience in school. It is about addressing inequality—racism and barriers to participation. The focus is on democracy and removing barriers.³⁹

2.9 Adult learning and training in Canada

According to the Canadian Council on Learning's (CCL) 2007 report on adult and workplace learning, only about one third of Canadian adults participated in some form of learning or training. The report emphasizes that even though Canadian employers are looking for workers with greater skills and adaptability, only one quarter of the Canadian workforce benefits from employer-sponsored training.⁴⁰

The findings in the CCL's report show that the workplace is where the most adult learning and training occurs. However, barriers such as lack of resources from employers, labour, and government, as well as individual barriers, prevent worker participation in training.

³⁵ See J. Longfield (2003). *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response* at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/raisinge/raisinge.pdf>

³⁶ See Office of Literacy and Essential Skills at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml

³⁷ See Conference Board of Canada. (2005). *Profiting from Literacy: Creating a Sustainable Workplace Literacy Program* <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/documents.asp?next=1499>

³⁸ See Patricia Nutter's "Literate Cities Project: Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators," p. 12-15 at <http://www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/wrkplace/cover.htm>

³⁹ See Tamara Levine's 'Learning in solidarity: A union approach to worker-centred literacy,' p. 8-11 <http://www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/wrkplace/cover.htm> Barb Byers' "Preface," p. 3-4 at http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/79E6A7FD-1F44-46E8-ABE8-1D469090EA64/0/report_LECCSEW_EN.pdf

⁴⁰ See Canadian Council on Learning (2007). *Unlocking Canada's Potential: The State of Workplace and Adult Learning in Canada*, at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/StateofLearning/UnlockingCanadasPotential.htm>

The report indicated that one-third of Canadians cannot get the job-related learning they want because of barriers such as lack of time and money, and family responsibilities. Lack of employer interest, low literacy, and lack of recognition of prior learning were also presented as significant factors. Findings also show that Canada's older workers (45-plus years) are adversely affected. Over half of older workers with high-school education or less report having no opportunities in the past, and no plans to participate in formal training in the future. Canada significantly falls behind countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom when it comes to employer-sponsored training.⁴¹

Similarly, in a 2006 report written for the Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)⁴², the authors report a dismal situation around learning and Canada's working adults, despite the social and economic imperative. The CPRN research, like the CCL report, notes that the participation rate in adult learning by the least educated is low compared to other countries.⁴³

The reports' findings show that in addition to low literacy statistics indicated by the 2005 ALL survey, 5.8 million Canadians 25 years and older do not have a high school diploma⁴⁴. The findings indicate that less-educated individuals are likely to experience lower wages, more unemployment, and lower status. Significantly, the report indicates that there is a cumulative effect on workers with the least education as they fall further and further behind their more educated colleagues during the course of their working lives.⁴⁵

The CPRN report states those Canadians with a university degree are five times more likely than someone with high school or less to participate in adult learning. The authors also cite evidence that shows this situation must change. These studies show that extending learning opportunities to workers with the least education would benefit the whole nation. These benefits include positive labour market outcomes for learners, an increased standard of living for the whole country and increased productivity. The CPRN report stresses on page vi:

Recent research has shown that increasing the skills of the least educated is an important route to increased productivity. For this reason, skills development of the least educated should be as much on the economic agenda as it is on the social agenda.

Similarly, the CCL report indicates that the present approach to adult learning is limiting in terms of capitalizing on the potential of the labour market, particularly employed workers and that life-long learning is necessary for both the productivity and prosperity of Canada, and a vibrant democracy.⁴⁶

Both these reports recommend the development of a pan-Canadian adult training and education vision and policy framework. The CPRN report includes recommendations that focus on:

- employer incentives to support training for less-skilled workers
- more government investment for basic skills training

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² CPRN, a non-profit, charitable think tank based in Ottawa was founded in 1994. It provides high-quality research of interest to decision makers and policy makers. It is independent, evidenced-based rather than ideological and has a diverse funding base to retain its independence.

⁴³ See Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker's "Too many left behind: Canada's adult education and training system" at http://www.cprn.org/documents/43977_en.pdf

⁴⁴ The CPRN reports cites this information from the 2000 Census.

⁴⁵ "Too many left behind: Canada's adult education and training system" and *Unlocking Canada's Potential: The State of Workplace and Adult Learning in Canada*

⁴⁶ Ibid.

- the development of a coordinated approach.

The CCL report calls for:

- more cooperation and investment among significant partners
- additional research on the barriers to adult learning
- a focus on developing a learning culture with Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs)
- more focus on motivating and targeting those workers with the least skills.

It is not clear what the impact of these reports is, as it is too early to tell.

3. Overview of key policies related to workforce literacy

3.1. Introduction

Canada does not have a national adult education or literacy strategy. Its adult learning policy environment is complex, with diverse provincial and territorial policies and provisions across the country. In addition, the federal government has a long-standing involvement in various aspects of adult education, including literacy. In practice, adult education is supported by both provincial and federal funds.⁴⁷

Literacy and English-language instruction are quite separate policy jurisdictions. Adult literacy is an educational issue and constitutionally falls under the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial governments. On the other hand, language training is federally controlled and falls under the authority of the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). At the same time, provinces may fund language instruction through institutions such as school boards with funding from the federal government.

Canada's adult learning system has been described as piecemeal, without connectedness and without financial support.⁴⁸ Several reports have come out in support of federal leadership and a national system for adult learning. These reports include the 2001 *Briefing Paper: Literacy and the Canadian Workforce*, and the 2007 *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System*.

In their report *Pan-Canadian Strategy on Literacy and Essential skills: Recommendations for the Federal Government*,⁴⁹ released in 2002, Canada's six national literacy organizations called for national leadership in literacy. This report recommended that the federal government should take the lead in developing a pan-Canadian literacy in partnership with provincial, and territorial governments, literacy organizations, and other community stakeholders. In 2003, a Parliamentary Standing Committee report *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*⁵⁰ recommended federal leadership in developing a pan-Canadian literacy accord. In 2005, under the former Liberal government, the Minister of State commissioned a ministerial advisory committee on literacy and essential skills. In its 2005 report *Towards a Fully Literate Canada*:

⁴⁷ See Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker's *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System* at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/leftbhnd/leftbhnd.pdf>

⁴⁸ See Sue Folinsbee's (2001) *Briefing paper: Literacy and the Canadian Workforce* at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/mcl/brief/brief.PDF>

⁴⁹ See the full document at <http://www.literacy.ca/govrel/building/cover.htm>

⁵⁰ See <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/raisinge/raisinge.pdf>

Achieving National Goals Through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy,⁵¹ the committee recommended and detailed a 10-year plan for Canada with stable funding. The committee also recommended that workplace literacy be expanded.

However, these recommendations developed under the former Liberal government have not been taken up. In fact, on September 25, 2006, the federal Conservative⁵² government announced a \$17.7 million cut (over two years) to the Adult Learning and Literacy Skills Program.

These cuts were part of \$1 billion cost-saving approach implemented by the new Conservative government. The federal government had several categories for these cuts, including 'value for money', which is where the literacy cuts fell. This category referred to 'funding for third parties to further their interests or programs that are not effective, do not achieve results or are being refocused or targeted for improvement.' The federal government indicated that it would focus on national priorities (as opposed to cost-shared partnerships with the provinces). In addition, the Minister whose department was responsible for the cuts said that the emphasis must be on children and that literacy for adults was 'repair work after the fact.'⁵³

The literacy field developed a coordinated approach in response to the cuts. The Movement for Canadian Literacy emphasized that the cuts would decimate much of the literacy infrastructure built over the last ten years. It would also affect outreach to learners, professional development for educators, curriculum development, research, and partnership development and coordination.⁵⁴

Also in response to the cuts, Barb Byers, Executive Vice President for the Canadian Labour Congress, stressed the need for a national adult learning system that was well-coordinated and funded. She emphasized that the results of the recent International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey show a clear need for such an approach.⁵⁵

3.2 Federal policies

Literacy

The National Literacy Secretariat (1988–2006)

Overview

In 1986, the federal government under the Progressive Conservatives announced that it would set up a national literacy initiative. The initiative was to 'work with the provinces, the private sector, and voluntary organizations to develop resources to ensure that Canadians

⁵¹ See The Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills' report at <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/towards/> cover.htm

⁵² In 2003 the former Progressive Conservatives and Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance amalgamated to form the new Conservative Party.

⁵³ See *Faces of the cuts: The Impact of Federal Program Cuts on Communities in Toronto* p. 4 at <http://www.socialplanningtoronto.org/CSPC-T%20Reports/Faces%20of%20the%20Cuts.pdf>

⁵⁴ See press release: *Spending cuts undermine Canada's adult literacy system and the Canadian economy* put out by the Movement for Canadian Literacy and ABC CANADA, at <http://www.literacy.ca/lac/crisis/pressrelease.pdf>

⁵⁵ Canadian Labour Congress (2007). *Learning Together: Solidarity at Work. Vol. 7, number 14, Spring 2007.* p.1.

have access to the literacy skills that are the pre-requisite for participation in an advanced economy' (p22).⁵⁶

The National Literacy Secretariat was created in 1988. Its mandate was to 'facilitate the involvement of all sectors of society in creating a more literate Canada.' It began to receive \$21 million a year. Under Liberal governments, increases were made to this funding in 2003 and in 2005. From 1988 to 2006 the NLS was the primary federal government program addressing workplace literacy.⁵⁷

The NLS did not provide direct program funding. There were five areas in which the NLS provided funding:

- developing learning materials
- improving coordination and information sharing
- improving access to literacy programs and outreach
- increasing public awareness
- research.

The NLS had two streams of funding. The national stream provided project funding to national non-government and literacy organizations, provincial and territorial coalitions, and labour organizations. Projects had to be national in scope. The second stream was the Federal/Provincial/Territorial funding. The NLS worked with the provinces and territories to fund and support regional and local needs.

The design of the NLS reflected the idea that literacy, although a provincial responsibility, needed federal support to address the complexity of the issue. This accounts for the partnership approach rather than an approach involving the funding of direct delivery.

The NLS was looking for short-term outcomes such as enhanced strategic partnerships, development of innovation and best practices, improved coordination, skilled practitioners, and more research. Medium-term outcomes resulting from the short-term outcomes included stronger networks, increased capacity, more literacy resources, and more knowledge around best practices. In the long term, the approach of the NLS was intended to contribute to broad goals such as a more inclusive society, more opportunities to improve literacy skills, and full participation of Canadian citizens in society.⁵⁸

The NLS was evaluated twice, first in 1995 and then in 2004. Both evaluations were positive. In the first, the evaluators concluded that the NLS was working in areas that the provinces were not. Furthermore, the NLS was encouraging sectors to get involved in literacy that otherwise might not have, and breaking down barriers to literacy programming somewhat.

⁵⁶ See Partnerships in Learning's *A Historical Look at the National Literacy Secretariat Business and Labour Partnership Program* at http://www.partnershipsinlearning.ca/doc/03FPD_Chronology.pdf

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2004). *Summative Evaluation of the National Literacy Secretariat: Final report*. Retrieved August 2007 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/hrsd/evaluation/reports/sp-ah-672-09-04/page00.shtml>

The second evaluation results were also positive and mentioned results in the areas of partnership development, awareness, and improved literacy opportunities. There was particular mention of important results in the area of workplace literacy.⁵⁹

Business Labour Partnership Program (1988-2006)

This program of the NLS was intended to build partnerships among employers, labour, education, and government to support work-related literacy. The 2007 document, *An Overview of the National Literacy Secretariat Business and Labour Partnerships: Policy Digest*, documented the work and results of the program. The report states that the following areas were developed a result of the program:

- assessment and evaluation tools
- innovative models for delivery
- training, consultations, policy conversations
- documentation of best practices.

The report divides the work of the program into three phases. In the early years of the first phase of the NLS (1988–1995), the program focused on training workplace practitioners, building champions (employers, unions and government), building partnerships with provinces and territories, and encouraging innovation. This period was described as one of experimentation and risk taking. New business and labour partnerships were struck, partnerships with the provinces and territories were built, and new connections among partners were made.⁶⁰

In the second phase (1996–2000) there were opportunities for stakeholders to meet and share their thinking and their work. New workplace structures and partnerships were also developed. Stakeholders had the opportunity to participate in national forums funded by the NLS. The knowledge base about workplace literacy was shared and increased. However, the report states that at the end of this period 'literacy began to be subverted and replaced by an Essential Skills⁶¹ agenda'.⁶²

The labour movement has indicated concern about the government's Essential Skills Framework. It sees the Framework as a narrowing of the concept and broad vision it has developed.⁶³

In the third phase, the effects of the previous work were being felt across the country. There were more indications of best practice, and more development of strategies for workplace literacy in provinces where it had not been greatly developed. There was an increase in workplace literacy projects with more resources being leveraged in some provinces. There was also more research. However, it was also a time of 'top-down accountability'.⁶⁴ This provided challenges for business and labour organizations in terms

⁵⁹ Plett, L. (2007). *Literacy Programs in the Workplace: How to increase employer support. Final report*. Toronto ON: Canadian Council on Social Development.

⁶⁰ See Fostering Partnership Development's *An Overview of the National Literacy Secretariat Business and Labour Partnerships: Policy Digest* at <http://www.partnershipslearning.ca/doc/PolicyDigest.pdf>

⁶¹ The federal government has validated nine Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Continuous Learning, Thinking Skills, and Computer Use. Levels of complexity from one to five are used to measure the difficulty of these skills in different occupations. See

http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Understanding_ES_e.shtml

⁶² Fostering Partnerships Development (n. d.), *An overview*, p. 9

⁶³ Canadian Labour Congress (2005). *Essential Skills and the Labour Movement: A research report*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

⁶⁴ Fostering Partnerships Development (n. d.), *An overview.*, p. 10

of complex reporting requirements. The process of application and communication became 'more bureaucratic and less responsive to the project goals'.⁶⁵ The program's definition of partnership became narrower. Many smaller organizations that had received funding in the past did not have the capacity to cope with the new requirements.

New Directions

In 2006, under the recently elected Conservative government, the National Literacy Secretariat was amalgamated with two other programs—the Office of Learning Technology and the Learning Initiatives Program. The new amalgamated program was called Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program and was administered by the National Office of Literacy and Learning. In 2006, the federal government announced cuts of \$17.7 million, directly affecting the federal-provincial-territorial funding stream and community-based literacy. The government announced that the money would be used for projects of national interest.⁶⁶

In 2007, the name changed again to the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES). The government Web site responsible for the new program states that:

*To support efforts to build Canada's Knowledge Advantage, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) created the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES). OLES brings together the Essential Skills Initiative (ESI) and the National Office of Literacy and Learning.*⁶⁷

In the OLES' new RFP process issued in August 2007, it is clear that priorities have changed. There is more emphasis on literacy in the workplace than family and community literacy. The cuts still hold but the policy has changed. There is no longer money for federal/provincial cost-shared projects as there had been previous to the cuts.

There are two streams of funding as follows:

- **Stream 1—Literacy and Essential Skills for Work:** Proposals will be considered for projects that contribute in a significant way to building the knowledge base, support mechanisms and outreach activities that are needed to embed literacy and essential skills into work-related learning contexts.
- **Stream 2—Family and Community Literacy:** The focus for this year's Call for Proposals is on projects that contribute in a broad sense to building the health and vitality of families and communities by ensuring that Canadians develop the literacy skills that they need for all aspects of daily and community life.⁶⁸

Although Stream 1 focuses on some of the same activities as the Business and Labour Partnership Program, there are clear differences. Projects have to be national in scope and there is much more of a focus on results. The target groups of Aboriginal Canadians, immigrants, and low-skilled workers are clearly in line with government priorities identified in the 2006 Speech of the Throne. The application process is much more rigorous than in the past. It requires more supporting research and more detailed plans on areas like evaluation, dissemination of project results, and sustainability plans once the project is complete.⁶⁹

Language instruction

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 11

⁶⁶ Fostering Partnerships Development (n. d.), *Section Three*

⁶⁷ See Human Resources and Social Development Canada's (2007) Web site at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/workplaceskills/oles/olesgeninfo_en.shtml

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

There are two federal programs of interest, Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) and Enhanced Language Training (ELT).

Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC)

The LINC program was established in 1992. LINC is a federal learning program of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) that is free to participants. It is a key element of the federal immigrant integration strategy. The purpose of the program is to facilitate the social, cultural, and economic integration of immigrants and refugees into Canada. The components of the program are language assessment and language instruction. Assessments are done according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks⁷⁰ (for English only) through designated assessment centres.

To be eligible for LINC, participants must be landed immigrants, Convention Refugees, or have received initial approval in their application to become a Permanent Resident. Canadian citizens and refugee claimants are not eligible for LINC. Québec is responsible for its own language training programs for newcomers to Canada.

Participants can attend LINC for three years from the time they start. LINC is delivered through funding arrangements with school boards, community colleges, universities, and community organizations. Participants attend full-time. In addition to LINC, provinces may also fund their own second language programs which may also be open to Canadian citizens and refugee claimants.⁷¹

Enhanced Language Training (ELT)

Citizenship and Immigration Canada started the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) Initiative in 2004 as part of a larger strategy to attract highly skilled immigrants and facilitate their successful integration into the workplace and community. The program is part of its Immigrant and Settlement Assistance Program (ISAP). ELT is for professionals and trades people settling in Canada, with the exception of Québec. The goal of ELT is to help newcomers who already have basic or intermediate language skills work in their trade or occupation. ELT's components include labour-market and occupation-specific language training, along with mandatory employability components such as internships, work placements, and mentoring arrangements.

The program has been allotted \$20 million a year. Funding is on a project basis through an RFP process. Funding is provided through contribution agreements where partners must contribute at least half the costs through funds and in-kind contributions such as services, tools, or facilities. Partners include provinces and territories, non-governmental organizations, employers, educational institutions, and community agencies.⁷²

⁷⁰ The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) are the national standard used in Canada for describing, measuring, and recognizing the second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada. The CLB provide a descriptive scale of communicative proficiency in English as a Second Language, expressed as benchmarks or reference points. They cover four skill areas—reading, writing, speaking and listening—and use real-life language tasks to measure language skills. See http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=206

⁷¹ MPM/Flaman Management Partners Ltd. (2007). *Second Language Services and Programs in Canada*. Retrieved August 2007 from <http://www.cpsc-ccsp.ca/PDFS/Final%20Report.pdf>

⁷² See Human Resources and Social Development Canada's (2005) Web site on *Enhanced Language Training* at <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/hrsd/news/2005/050425ba.shtml>

3.4 Provincial and territorial policies

In its 2004 report *Government Initiatives Promoting Best Practices*, the Council of Federation indicates that most provinces and territories have literacy strategies or plans.⁷³ However, workplace literacy or literacy for employment is only mentioned in slightly over half of the provincial and territorial plans. Most of the literacy strategies and plans have been developed in the last 6 or 7 years.

Four provinces have specific policies that affect workplace literacy: Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Québec. Ontario has recently launched an initiative called Employment Ontario—Ontario's Employment and Training Network. Literacy and basic skills fall under this new initiative.

The following section will profile what is happening in Manitoba, Ontario, and Québec. These three provinces represent a range of work going on in Canada with an emphasis on both workforce and workplace literacy.

Manitoba

The Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC) started in 1991 to address a critical need for workplace literacy in Manitoba.⁷⁴ To this day, WEMSC has two business representatives, two labour representatives and one government staff coordinator. When WEMSC was first set up, the Manitoba provincial literacy office funded the provincial coordinator's position. Now the position is funded through Industry Training Partnerships. The NLS supported the work of WEMSC through its leadership and project funding.

In its first decade, WEMSC developed a number of sectoral projects. It used these projects to develop and articulate its joint process and principles. At the same time it was developing these projects, it began to build practitioner capacity to improve delivery. WEMSC was successful in engaging and building awareness with the business and labour communities in Manitoba because of the strength of its members. Promotion of its work was a strong point. As a result of its success, WEMSC was able to leverage money from other government ministries, some of it for direct delivery. Presumably they were able to leverage this funding because they had an infrastructure in place and were successful. With time, WEMSC's work spread from larger companies and urban centres to rural areas.

New directions happened in 2001 with a number of factors at play. First, workforce literacy or a focus on those entering the workforce, became a priority for both Manitoba and the federal government. Second, a new coordinator was hired and new committee members came on board. The coordinator took on new responsibilities in addition to workplace literacy which included Prior Learning, Assessment and Recognition, and integrating Essential Skills across the provincial government. This integration work includes a focus on partnerships to address the issues and needs of both employed and unemployed workers. Funding has increased 10 times from when WEMSC first began. This expanded work has been possible because of the earlier success and reputation of WEMSC's work.⁷⁵

The impacts of WEMSC's work from its inception to 2006 were documented in the following six areas:

⁷³ See http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/pdfs/cof_practices_e.pdf

⁷⁴ Folinsbee, S. (2006). A case study on the Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC) and its work: 1991-2006. Summary report. Winnipeg, MB: WEMSC.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

- outcomes for program participants
- the development of a culture of literacy and essential skills using joint (labour management) principles
- practitioner capacity
- ability to leverage additional dollars and contributions
- the influence of the WEMSC model (other provinces used it to develop their models)
- integration of the WEMSC model across the provincial government.⁷⁶

The contribution of both levels of government, along with the individuals involved in key positions, were key success factors.⁷⁷

Ontario

Since the 1970s and up until 1996, Ontario was a thriving centre for many diverse programs that focused on literacy and language in the workplace. One such program was the Multicultural Workplace Program (MWP) that was inspired by the work of the National Centre for Industrial Language Training in Great Britain. MWP started in 1985 and included literacy and language training, intercultural communication, and employment equity. Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, its goal was to improve communication in multicultural workplaces.

Other significant programs at the time were two funding streams for workplace literacy that business and labour organizations could access. One stream was employer-oriented and the other stream was for labour. One notable program that was in hundreds of workplaces throughout the province was the Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) developed by the Ontario Federation of Labour. In 1995, the MWP and the employer-based funding stream were amalgamated with several other programs.

Thousands of workers attended workplace literacy and language programs through these funding streams until 1998 when funding was withdrawn by the provincial government. The government decided not to adopt a policy of public funding for employed workers, saying that it represented a subsidy to employers. Almost 10 years later, there is very little activity or employer initiative in workplace literacy, with no government support for delivery.⁷⁸

In 1999, the government introduced Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS), an amalgamation of many previous programs. As part of the Ontario government's program reform, LBS cultivated closer links between literacy and employment especially for adults on social assistance. Employed workers are eligible to attend programs outside the workplace on their own time. LBS delivery agencies include school boards, community colleges, and community organizations.⁷⁹

Agencies must report information to the government on learner goals, the level of literacy at entrance and exit, and the number of learners going on to further education and training.⁸⁰ No funding has been provided for workplace literacy infrastructure or workplace literacy program delivery since 1998.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ The author is managing workplace literacy forums across Ontario. There have been few employers doing workplace literacy to ask to be on panel presentations.

⁷⁹ Folinsbee, S. (2005). *The Ontario Literacy Coalition's Workforce/Workplace Literacy Reflections Paper*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Literacy Coalition.

⁸⁰ Council of the Federation. (2004)

⁸¹ Folinsbee, S. (2005)

Through the Ontario government's 2000 Workplace Literacy Strategy, among several objectives, it hoped to build the capacity of the LBS field to respond to workplace needs. A pilot project was funded by the NLS and the provincial government to develop a delivery and coordination model for fee-for-service workplace literacy programs. The five literacy networks involved in the project concluded that it was necessary to build capacity for literacy for employment before considering workplace literacy.⁸²

A consultation done by the Ontario Literacy Coalition in 2003 with the LBS field confirmed these conclusions. The consultation results showed that LBS agencies were only somewhat prepared to deliver literacy for employment and not interested in delivering workplace literacy. They said they needed clarity on the Ministry of Training, College, and Universities (MTCU) goals and definitions. They indicated that more funding was needed to manage their many priorities, to be able to participate in professional development, and deliver workforce literacy. For the few who were interested in workplace literacy, the top priorities were:

- funding for professional development
- mentoring opportunities
- funding for employers for program delivery
- a referral line.⁸³

New Directions

In November 2005, the provincial and federal governments signed a Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). This entailed the transfer in January 2007 of federal government funds and resources for employment supports and benefits to MTCU's new Labour Market and Development Branch.

In January 2007, MTCU launched Employment Ontario—Ontario's Employment and Training Network—to brand the new approach. The purpose of Employment Ontario is to make 17 programs and services more accessible to clients (employers and individuals) through a one-stop system for a million clients in the province. Service providers include community-based organizations, colleges, school boards, union training centres, and private trainers. Employment Ontario includes all the programs under the Labour Market and Training Division of MTCU. LBS programs are also part of Employment Ontario and also fall under the Labour Market and Training Division. However, they still follow the same policy guidelines they did before these changes.⁸⁴

Québec

Quebec's policy on adult and continuing education was established in 2002. Its development was the result of collaboration between two ministries—Education and Employment and Employment.

The policy focus is on four main areas for action:

- to provide basic education for adults
- to maintain and continually upgrade adults' competencies
- to acknowledge prior learning and competencies through official recognition

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ontario Literacy Coalition. (2003). *Taking the Temperature: A Consultation on Workforce and Workplace Literacy with the LBS Field. Summary report.* Retrieved August 2007 from <http://www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/taketemp/taketemp.pdf>

⁸⁴ See Community Literacy Ontario web site at <http://www.nald.ca/clo/employont.htm>

- to remove obstacles to access and retention⁸⁵

The Québec policy emphasizes that not only is basic education for social and economic reasons, it is a collective responsibility not just an individual one.

The policy emphasizes training and education related to employment as a place for life long learning. It stresses the need to remove inequalities to opportunity for this learning not only for adult education, in general, but for employer and labour as well.⁸⁶

It describes the *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training* (Bill 90) as a cornerstone in advancing a life long learning culture in Québec. Passed in 1995, the Act 'is intended to improve the qualifications, skills and performance of workers through continuing education. Employers whose total payroll is \$1.000.000 or more must invest at least 1% of the total payroll in employee training.' This is a very creative strategy that was developed by the government in consultation with its labour market partners. It applies to 85% of workers in Quebec. The Act benefits both individual workers and employers.⁸⁷

In a presentation to the Canadian Labour Congress Literacy Working Group, Louise Miller of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (Québec Federation of Labour) outlined some of the history and experience with Bill 90. Under Bill 90 corporations that have not used all their 1% of payroll for training must contribute the balance of funds to be used by labour force partners. All kinds of training are covered, including literacy. Bill 90 allows for training programs negotiated with the union. A selection committee of employers and unions selects the training to be funded. Miller noted that 50% of funding went to basic skills programs. She also noted that improvements are needed, such as equity measures.⁸⁸

There was provision for Bill 90 to evaluate its impact in 10 years from its inception. The evaluation was completed in 2006. As a result of the evaluation, there will be changes made so that the law better meets the needs of all labour market partners in terms of equity.⁸⁹

Lynette Plett noted in her case study on Québec that both formal job-related training and employer-supported training increased substantially from 1997 to 2002. Suggestions are that this increase is linked to Bill 90.⁹⁰

4. Current workforce literacy provision

4.1 Introduction

In her introduction to *Reading Work: Literacies in The New Workplace*, Nancy Jackson reminds us that that the workplace is contested terrain. She argues that literacy is more than reading and writing and more than functional skills. She uses the metaphor of the tapestry to show literacy as a social practice:

We see the workplace as a tapestry and literacy as multiple threads woven into the whole. The threads are many and densely interwoven to make a whole cloth. Without

⁸⁵ Government of Quebec. (2002), p. 6

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See Emploi Québec at <http://emploi-quebec.net/anglais/enterprises/loinformation/index.htm>

⁸⁸ Presentation to the CLC Literacy Working Group by Louise Miller, FTQ in 1999.

⁸⁹ Labour Education Centre, (2007), p. 19. See http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/79E6A7FD-1F44-46E8-ABE8-1D469090EA64/0/report_LECCSEW_EN.pdf

⁹⁰ Plett, L. (2007).

*the threads there is no cloth, no pattern, no tapestry. And conversely when we take a thread out to examine it, it becomes 'just' a thread.*⁹¹

This contested terrain plays out in the Canadian workplace literacy context in different approaches to workplace literacy. For example, the list of organizations that use the government's Essential Skills Initiative focusing on nine Essential Skills with five complexity levels is growing, as is the development of spin-offs from the Essential Skills framework. Also growing is the prominent focus on Essential Skills in the federal government's recent RFP and name change.⁹²

However, other approaches are evident. Unions in Canada have taken a leadership role in innovation in literacy and adult education.⁹³ For unions, literacy is about focusing on the whole person with a broad democratic vision of literacy. Tamara Levine gives an example of what literacy could mean as an exercise of critical reflections and action. One of the night cleaners in a literacy class had cut his hand on a rusty garbage can. It was an ongoing problem known by the others in the class but nothing had been done about it. The teacher, a co-worker and peer used the situation for learning. The class talked about what they could do about the situation. They read clauses in their collective agreement and wrote a letter to the health and safety committee. The literacy development came out of real experiences or social context and group action.⁹⁴

4.2 Main stakeholders

The main stakeholders in workplace literacy in Canada are included below:

Government

Government involvement in workplace literacy operates at two main levels.

- federal government through the [Office of Literacy and Essential Skills](#)
- provincial government through a variety of ministries depending on the province or territory.

Since 1988, the role of the federal government has been to support workplace literacy through project funding through national projects and federal/provincial cost-shared projects. However, for many years, partners have called for a Pan-Canadian literacy strategy which would provide national leadership, goals, principles and resources towards the design and implementation of a comprehensive adult learning system that respects other jurisdictions. To date, this has not happened.

Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for the direct delivery of literacy and ABE, including workforce and workplace literacy. Provinces have various levels of commitment to workforce and workplace literacy.

Unions

Union involvement in workplace literacy takes place in several ways:

- through national bodies like the [Canadian Labour Congress](#)
- through national unions
- through provincial and territorial federations of labour

⁹¹ Belfiore et al. (2004), p. 2

⁹² See Essential Skills http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Tools_Apps_e.shtml and http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/workplaceskills/oles/olesfaq_en.shtml

⁹³ See *Integrating equity, Addressing Barriers: Innovative practices by union* by the Labour Education Centre.

⁹⁴ Levine, T. (2003)

- through union locals.

Unions have played a leadership role in Canada in developing worker-centred literacy through awareness building, research, learning tools and the development of programs and clear language strategies at national, provincial and territorial and local levels.

Employers

Employers involved in workplace literacy include:

- individual private and public sector employers
- employer organizations such as the [Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters \(CME\)](#), [Conference Board of Canada](#)⁹⁵ or [Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators \(CAMA\)](#)

While organizations like the CME, Conference Board of Canada and CAMA have played a leadership role in workplace literacy through NLS project funding, overall commitment of employers to training and education and workplace literacy is low. Research indicates that investment of government financial resources, support and employer incentives are key to their involvement and commitment.

National Adult Literacy Data Base (NALD)

NALD is an award-winning service that provides a number of services including complete, full-text documents and books, as well as a resource catalogue for literacy and literacy-related topics including workforce and workplace literacy.

Recently NALD received three-year funding from the federal government to develop a sister website to NALD—NALD@Work. The new site will focus on workplace literacy and essential skills.

Workplace literacy providers

Workplace educators and providers include:

- public (school boards, colleges)
- non-profit organizations
- private consultants.

Workplace literacy providers have developed practitioner training, principles, process, resources and tools for workforce and workplace literacy. They have developed, facilitated and evaluated programs and other initiatives around clear language and integrating literacy.

Other organizations

Sector councils⁹⁶

Sector councils have sponsored specific projects and initiatives in their sector.

⁹⁵ The Conference Board of Canada is a non-profit organization that works with the private and public sectors in Canada. It specializes in economic trends, organizational performance and public policy issues.

⁹⁶ 'Sector councils are permanent organizations that bring together representatives with different perspectives from key stakeholder groups in an industrial sector. Sector councils deal with human resources issues and share a commitment to identify and act on the skills needs that are most important to a given sector ...' See http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/hrp/corporate/init_sector.shtml

Provincial literacy coalitions and national literacy organizations

Literacy organizations have promoted awareness, conducted research, developed tools, offered training and brought partners together. Their involvement in workforce and workplace literacy varies across the country from very little to high involvement.

Training, employment and education organizations

Training and education organizations have sponsored specific projects of interest to their members or clients.

Academics and researchers⁹⁷

There are few academics and researchers in Canada who focus on workplace literacy. Those who do conduct and promote research and other products representing a variety of key areas and perspectives.

4.3 Models of delivery

Good practice principles

In 2002, Mary Ellen Belfiore analyzed principles of good practice statements in workplace education in Canada, United States, Britain, and Australia. She notes that these principles give direction to all the work that happens in planning and carrying out workplace literacy programs. She found that these principles were fairly consistent after two decades of work. The principles were:

- voluntary participation in programs
- confidentiality in all needs assessments both individual and organizational and evaluations
- the need to conduct an organizational needs assessment⁹⁸
- customization of learning materials and curriculum
- the need to link learning to other training and education
- the importance of evaluations and goals set by all partners
- the workplace educator as a partner.

Other principles identified in the majority of statements were:

- the need for a project team or joint committee to guide the planning process
- equity in the partnerships.⁹⁹

Similarly, The Conference Board of Canada also identifies key success factors. These factors include:

- creating a learning environment with support starting at the top

⁹⁷ These stakeholders listed are based on the author's experience working across Canada over the last 20 years.

⁹⁸ "The Organizational Needs Assessment (ONA) is a collective assessment that provides information on what programs should be offered and how they can be offered in accessible ways. It is a systematic way of getting a 'big picture' understanding of the educational needs in the workplace especially with respect to foundational skills. It takes place before any programs are offered. The ONA process involves consulting with people across your workplace through interviews, meetings or surveys to see what should be offered. Your committee can use the ONA as a planning tool to document the overall needs and goals of both management and workers, and make recommendations on the basis of the findings.' (p9). See CAMA's (2001) *A Guide for planning and conducting an organizational needs assessment for municipal workplace literacy programs* by Sue Folinsbee at <http://www.camacam.ca/downloads/en/ONAguide.pdf>

⁹⁹ See Belfiore's (2002) *Good Practice in Use: Guidelines for Good Practice in Workplace Education* at <http://www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/goodprac/cover.htm>

- planning first
- inclusive decision-making
- realistic evaluation
- the best instructor, delivery and curriculum mix.¹⁰⁰

Partnership model of excellence

The Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) [Literate Cities project](#) is a national project which began in the early 1990s. CAMA works with municipal stakeholder committees that are setting up workplace literacy programs. Partners on workplace committees are union and management representatives as well as educational providers, and sometimes program participants and government representatives.

CAMA's current literacy project's objectives are to:

- raise awareness of municipal workplace literacy
- build commitment to municipal workplace learning
- establish links and partnerships.¹⁰¹

To fulfil this objective, the project helps with the development of new workplace literacy programs, offers workshops, forums and other events, develops tools, and does research.

The partnership model that the CAMA Literacy Project uses can be defined as one that involves municipal managers, union representatives, and community representatives nationally, provincially, and locally in all of its work. CAMA promotes this partnership approach in all of its products, events, and projects. There are 14 committees that oversee CAMA's work. Committees generally have representation from municipal management, CUPE, and community partners.

Municipal managers, CUPE representatives, and community partners identified common impacts of this model in CAMA's 2006 evaluation. These impacts were focused on broader opportunities for workplace-learning programs, for raising the profile of municipal workplace learning, and promotion because of the joint labour management partnership. Another impact is knowing what will work or not in a community because of the input of community partners. Partners said that this model means more awareness of municipal learning, more workplace literacy programs, and easier partnership development, and more sharing of resources.

The impact of the CAMA partnership is that it is a powerful example of how to establish, build, and strengthen partnerships as well as how to build new partnerships. Through strong partnerships there is increased awareness of different viewpoints around municipal workplace learning and increased commitment to workplace learning. All partners—management, labour and the community—benefit from these partnerships. It is clear that the CAMA partnership model strengthens the work of the organizations of those already in the partnership. At the same time, there is a ripple effect, with the current members of the partnership facilitating the growth of new partners and new workplace learning initiatives.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Conference Board of Canada (2005)

¹⁰¹ from unpublished final report for 2006: *Municipal Leadership: Investing in Literacy and Learning for the Workplace and Community Project Final Evaluation Report Canada Association of Municipal Administrators, Workplace Literacy: National and International Perspectives on Research and Practice.* p12

¹⁰² Unpublished evaluation, 2006

Delivery models

Programs may be offered jointly by management and unions, by the employer alone, or by the union alone. An examination of case studies and write-ups of workplace literacy programs shows that the most common model is that of the small group with an instructor or teacher. Sometimes an instructor works with peer trainers or the peer trainers (co-workers) are the facilitators. Other models use the learning centre approach. In this case, employees can get help on a drop-in basis with an instructor available some of the time. In other cases, literacy and basic skills may be integrated into a content- or trades-training program or even an organization. Clear language writing for employers and unions is also part of the workplace literacy picture.

Programs tend to be cost-shared with all partners contributing. For example, many programs are offered on a 50/50 time split. Employers may contribute workers' time, planning time, and space as well as dollars for an instructor. Unions may make in-kind contributions. Classes may be offered once or twice a week, or in a workshop style. In provinces that have a workplace literacy policy, government may contribute to the cost of an organizational needs assessment and some delivery. Policies will vary. There has been no documentation or indication of one model being better than another. There is evidence of principles of good practice to be followed for best results, regardless of which model is used such as joint development of a program, conducting an organizational needs assessment, voluntary participation and confidentiality of individual assessments and evaluations. Generally, workplace literacy programs have been voluntary and open to those workers who wish to take them. Most individual assessments have been confidential and instructor based.¹⁰³

One assessment that has been developed is the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES). The TOWES is described on its web site as 'an effective assessment that uses authentic workplace documents to accurately measure three essential skills that are needed for safe and productive employment: Reading Text, Document Use, and Numeracy'.¹⁰⁴

According to the TOWES Web site:

*Test takers must assume the role of a worker and use information imbedded in authentic documents to solve real problems. Some of the documents used include, catalogues, order forms, labels, and schematics. TOWES also has tests that represent a full range of essential skill levels needed in the Canadian workplace.*¹⁰⁵

However, labour has expressed concerns about TOWES. In the Canadian Labour Congress report on essential skills, it is reported:

*Although a few people said they favour TOWES, most of those interviewed based on their experience and knowledge have serious concerns about the test ... They see the test as detrimental to workers. The issues raised include the fact that employers get the scores, TOWES does not measure what people know, and there is no diagnostic.*¹⁰⁶

The mini cases that follow will provide some examples of the kinds of workplace literacy programs offered in Canada.

¹⁰³ Author experience across Canada.

¹⁰⁴ See TOWES (2007), at <http://www.towes.com/whatistowes.aspx>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Canadian Labour Congress (2005), p. 46

Case 1: Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 5050 in partnership with the Cape Breton Regional School Board

Location: Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

Description of organization:

1400 CUPE members work at 65 sites across Cape Breton in a variety of jobs.

Model of Delivery:

Courses on Saturday mornings to accommodate different work sites and shifts.

The union formed a partnership with the employer.¹⁰⁷ The initiative is guided by a workplace education committee with five CUPE members, the board's director of human resources, and a field development coordinator from the Nova Scotia's Department of Education. In 2003, the committee surveyed union members and found that people wanted to get a high school diploma and learn computers. The committee offered basic computer and a twenty-week Essential Skills Course to start. Two more computer courses were offered. More courses are planned.

Two CUPE members have taken a training program to be peer-learning guides. Peer learning guides work with the instructor and program participants.

Impacts include:

- greater self-confidence
- participants are passing courses (high school equivalency)
- increased opportunities to move into different jobs
- participants can use their computers
- participants can help their children with their homework
- participants are more open to union involvement.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Denise Lewis is Local 5050's education chair and a cleaner with the school board. She was instrumental in getting the program going. She has won two awards for her work—the 2004 Alex MacDonald Ambassador Award and the first CUPE Nova Scotia Literacy award in 2005.

¹⁰⁸ See Literacy Program, CUPE Education, Canadian Union of Public Employees at http://www.cupe.ca/updir/it%27s_our_right.pdf

Case 2: Cavendish Farms

Location: Summerside, Prince Edward Island

2005 Conference Board Award of Excellence Winner

Description of company:

Cavendish Farms is the fourth largest producer of frozen potatoes products for a global market.

Number of employees:

850

Model of Delivery:

Learning Centre started in 2002

The Learning Centre offers a range of courses including literacy, numeracy, communication, computers, and a focus on trades. It is designed to meet individual learning needs. An instructor works with each employee to develop an individualized learning plan based on the learner's goals. The Centre is also open to employee's family members as well. The Centre was developed based on a needs assessment with employees. The development of skills benefits both workers and the employer. A certified instructor teaches general and job-specific courses. The Centre is perceived as safe and confidential. Employees can learn at their own pace.

Funding:

The company pays for staffing, classroom resources and day-to-day operational expenses. Employees learn on their own time and get reimbursed for 50% of their learning time. The program is free to employees and their family members. Other organizations like Workplace Education P.E.I. contributed the overall organizational needs assessment.

Impacts include:

- greater employee confidence and mutual respect
- increased opportunities for employees to advance
- increased completion of high school equivalencies and trades certification
- greater employee retention
- greater employee satisfaction and morale
- greater productivity
- better worker-management relations¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ From Conference Board of Canada http://sso.conferenceboard.ca/e-Library/temp/BoardWise2FJAKCGNBHDPKNDHEGFHDHIPG2007921144352/131-06_CS_Cavendish.pdf

Case 3: SkillPlan

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia

Description of organization:

SkillPlan is a joint-labour management organization of the British Columbia Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council.

Issue:

Workers who have a lot of experience in a trade, but have been reluctant to write a trades qualification exam. They are not use to taking standardized tests.

Model of Delivery:

Study Skills component in construction trades training

The study skills component focuses on dealing with pressure, managing time, reading complex material, and taking notes. There was a fixed time for study skills within carpenter trades qualification course. A basic skills instructor works with the group three times a week during the course.

Impacts include:

- greater success on the trade qualification exam
- workers learn study skills
- trades trainers see how to incorporate basic skills strategies into the trades course¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ From *Understanding Curriculum Development in the Workplace*
<http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/abc/undcur/cover.htm>

Case 4: CUPE 500 and the City of Winnipeg

Location: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators' Award of Excellence winner several times

Description of organization:

Local 500 represents about 5000 fulltime, part-time, and seasonal inside and outside workers with the City of Winnipeg.

Model of Delivery: Essential Skills Program since 2000

"The program uses a broad definition of literacy to guide the program. Literacy is defined as "the ability to understand and employ printed information in our daily lives." The definition allows the program to meet the spectrum of needs ranging from basic skills to supporting advanced skills. The Essential Skills program has learners with limited formal education to those with University degrees. It proves that 'literacy issues' can exist in all segments of a workforce."¹¹¹

The Essential Skills Program offers a variety of courses throughout the calendar year. The courses focus on areas such as reading, writing, math, computers, and interview skills. The course offerings change each year to address the need of employees. The courses are instructor lead but trained peer trainers who are CUPE members also assist the instructors.

The program is coordinated by a working committee of City employees who are members of CUPE Local 500. The working committee is a sub-committee of the Joint Union/Management Committee on Education, Training, and Staff Development. The Joint Committee administers a \$3 million education and training fund negotiated by the union with the employer.

Employees attend the program because they want to get their high school education, help their children, and get certification and new skills to apply for promotions. Employees take the courses on their own time. Careful planning is essential. Evaluations are used to determine the next year's courses.

Funding:

The Essential Skills Program started with a budget of \$150,000 for the first three years.

Impacts include:

- greater employee confidence
- increased opportunities for employees to advance
- increased completion of high school equivalencies and mandatory certification
- a culture of continuous learning — people moving on to other education
- more comfortable in approaching the union
- ability to help children and grandchildren

¹¹¹ See CAMA web site [http://www.camacam.ca/programs award 2003.asp](http://www.camacam.ca/programs_award_2003.asp)

4.5 Employer perspectives

Lynette Plett documented employer perspectives on their experiences of workplace literacy in three provinces. This section highlights what she found out in each province.

Nova Scotia

Seven companies interviewed have offered literacy and basic skills programs. The companies hired outside instructors and all training was held on site. The majority pay employees for 50 % of their time. The Nova Scotia Department of Education, Workplace Education Initiative, has provided funding to all seven companies generally for initial needs assessment as well as all or part of the instructor's salary. Companies are expected to pay a greater share of the instructor costs after initial programming. Companies contributions generally included employees' time for the needs assessment, their wages, materials, part of the instructor salary and celebration costs. Unions contributed financial or in-kind costs. All the employers emphasized the importance of not only government funding but the expertise of the Department in helping them set up the program. The conditions for offering these programs included senior management support, valuing learning, and resources.

Québec

Eleven employers were interviewed in Québec who offered a range of programs including reading, writing and math, specialized certification, and French as a Second Language. Most were held at the workplace with the others off-site. Six companies held training after work hours but reimbursed employees' wages 100% through government funding. The companies indicated that government funding was key. Top conditions for offering programs included management support, government funds, and benefits to the company.

Ontario

Three of seven employer representatives had offered workplace formal literacy programs. None had received government funding but three had worked with regional literacy networks funded by the government. Conditions for offering workplace literacy training were: commitment from senior management, resources, community partnerships, and support from employees. The interviews indicated that employers are less likely to offer workplace literacy training without government funding and support. Employers wish to see a funding program for workplace literacy.¹¹²

Plett's report makes recommendations to increase employer support for workplace literacy training. These recommendations focus on the need for the federal government to develop an action plan for workplace literacy training with appropriate partners. The action plan should include:

- financial incentives for employers (such as wage subsidies, tax credits, payroll levy, funding for some delivery costs)
- services to support employers (such as referrals—providers and resources and the program planning process)
- promotion of workplace literacy to employers
- funding non-profit organizations and other partners to provide support to employers

¹¹² Plett, L. (2007). *Literacy Programs in the Workplace: How to Increase Employer Support. Final report.* Toronto ON: Canadian Council on Social Development.

4.6 Practitioner capacity-building

In the 1990s there were a lot of professional development opportunities available across Canada for workplace educators. Many of these professional development opportunities tended to be institutes and programs that were offered on a one-time or on an as-needed basis. They tended to be a week or two weeks long. Margerit Roger found that there were two groups involved in wanting professional development—those wanting to move into workplace literacy and those who had been in the work for some time. Two labour-based programs for peer trainers were offered on an ongoing basis. Roger found that programs were offered at an introductory level and focused on general awareness and skills development in marketing, needs assessment, and teaching. There were few advanced programs and many had no built-in sustainability. Many of the professional development opportunities documented by Roger no longer exist.¹¹³

The report from a workplace practitioner's forum in 1999 concluded that there was no one way to offer professional development because of the diversity of models in practice across the country. Professional development also needs to respond to different level of experience and be both formal and informal. Next, participants recognized that the diversity of the field—while serving as a strength.

Participants felt that because of these differences there should not be an attempt to have national competencies and package the work of a practitioner into nice, neat competencies. They wondered who would set and monitor such a strategy. They thought that formal recognition could be given to training initiatives rather than national performance measures. However, they were interested in general best practices. 'Networking, mentoring and information sharing were seen as vital elements of professional development.'¹¹⁴

In her conversation with seasoned and experienced workplace educators, Folinsbee found that the role of practitioner was a multi-faceted one and certainly more than an instructor. People in the conversation stressed both their life experience, transferable skills, and academic training as important in preparing them to do the work. They emphasized that there is no one course to prepare for it. They also underlined the complexity of serving the needs of all partners—learners, workers, managers, and others. These workplace educators said they continue their professional development through experience.

Collectively, they indicated that practitioners need the following knowledge, skills and abilities:

- **knowledge:** principles of adult education, for teaching reading and writing, and business and labour trends
- **abilities:** respect for people and their work, intercultural abilities, flexibility and creativity
- **skills:** instructional skills for workplace literacy, planning and analysis skills, advocacy¹¹⁵

Geraci, in her review of workplace educator professional development, reports that the role of a workplace educator is complex with many components and that professional

¹¹³ See Margerit Roger's (1999) *Maturing of a Profession: An Overview of Workplace Education Practitioner Development Opportunities* at

<http://www.nald.ca/library/research/nls/inpub/mature/mature.PDF>

¹¹⁴ See *Workplace Education Practitioners' Forum: Summary Report*, p4 at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/nls/inpub/forum/forumE.pdf>

¹¹⁵ See Sue Folinsbee's (2000). *Looking Back, Looking Forward* at <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/lookback/looking.pdf>

development can mean the difference between success and failure. She reports that a DACUM¹¹⁶ process for the role of workplace educator was conducted in 2001. The DACUM captures skills and abilities beyond introductory training and could be used to design more advanced training. Overall, content of practitioner training tends to include adult education principles, understanding the workplace, and planning and implementing a workplace literacy initiative. While many professional development programs give certificates, a certification process was rare. Nova Scotia was the only province found with a formal certification process. Instructors in Nova Scotia wanted credentials and to see workplace literacy education as a recognized profession. In terms of accreditation, the University of Winnipeg offered a half credit at two summer institutes on practitioner development.¹¹⁷

Geraci concluded that sustainability was an issue in workplace educator professional development and that there was no professional development path except in Nova Scotia. She concluded from the review of literature that a path would be desirable.

Interestingly, one of the challenges of the Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC) was that it was extremely difficult to maintain a bank of practitioners and consultants. One reason is that not everyone is suited for this work and another is that the work tends to be contract and part time. In addition, some people are only comfortable with parts of the workplace education process. WEMSC found that practitioners would develop their expertise and then get full-time jobs in other organizations.¹¹⁸

There is nothing in the literature about future planned development for practitioner development for workplace literacy. This is not an area identified in the current federal government funding RFP.¹¹⁹

5. Outcomes of workforce literacy provision

Qualitative research on the benefits of workforce literacy provision in Canada has been conducted by interviewing employers as to what the benefits are and analyzing their responses.

The Conference Board of Canada documented the benefits of workplace literacy programs for both employers and employees in 26 exemplary programs. The top benefits for employers were:

- employees' increased success in technical and other kinds of job-related training
- greater productivity
- greater adaptability
- increased decision-making and better morale
- increased health and safety.

Employee benefits included:

- improved literacy skills
- greater self-confidence
- greater employability and ability to take these skills to families and communities.

¹¹⁶ DACUM is a job analysis tool that means Designing A Curriculum

¹¹⁷ See Karen Geraci's (2002) *Workplace Educator Professional Development: Literature review and field interview report* at <http://www.on.literacy.ca/pubs/workeduc/workeduc.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Folinsbee, S. (2006). p. 50

¹¹⁹ See Human Resources & Social Development Canada. (2007). *II: Stream One: Literacy and Essential Skills for Work* at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/workplaceskills/oles/olesstreamone_en.shtml

ABC CANADA in its report *The Impact of Basic Skills on Canadian Workplaces* found similar benefits as did Lynette Plett.¹²⁰

Plett also found that the benefits the employers she talked to reflected the benefits indicated in the literature. She notes that the responses from employers are qualitative responses and only a few employers use quantitative measures, such as tracking those who went on to further education and training or to earn industry licences. One employer noted that when participants can work with their kids or they feel good about themselves, this cannot be measured by a Return on Investment (ROI).

Unions identify the impact and benefits of members who participate in workplace literacy training. These benefits include more union participation and commitment, more opportunities for promotion, greater community involvement, and better ability to help kids. One comment indicates that the benefits and impacts are anecdotal.¹²¹

Maurice Taylor examined the transfer of learning from workplace literacy programs to the workplace setting after the training. He notes that the research on this topic indicates there are problems with this transfer in that only a small proportion of workplace training transfers back at work. He used a model called the *Role of Time Model of Learning Transfer* to examine how learning transfers or not in 11 workplace literacy programs in different sectors across Canada. The model looks at the roles of instructor, trainee and supervisor before, after, and during the training to find out who and what time periods support this transfer. Instructors reported that both an individual needs assessment to find out what participants need to learn, and contextualized learning were key to a transfer of learning. Taylor found that barriers such as organizational climate, including poor communication, poor employee morale, lack of a learning culture or lack of encouragement, negatively affected transfer of learning. Other barriers to transfer of learning identified were large class size, not enough time to practice and programs offered off-site. He concluded that it is the work environment where there is the most opportunity for stakeholder support in transfer of learning.¹²²

Taylor is presently working on a 2-year research project (2006-2008) to determine how transfer of learning occurs among employees in different models of workplace literacy programs in Canada and the United Kingdom.¹²³

¹²⁰ See Lynette Plett's (2007) *Literacy programs in the workplace: How to increase employer support. Final report*. Toronto ON: Canadian Council on Social Development.

¹²¹ Labour Education Centre (2007)

¹²² See M. Taylor's 2000 *Partners in the transfer of learning: A qualitative study of workplace literacy programs*. Retrieved September 2007 from <http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2000/taylorm1-final.PDF>

¹²³ See project description at http://www.education.uottawa.ca/ideg/projects_taylor.html

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