

# **Perspectives of Wanganui and District Employers and Providers of Adult Literacy Services 2005-2006**

**A report from the Adult Literacy and Employment  
Programme**

Deborah Neilson

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**Massey University**

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM

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This report is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr Su Olsson (1942–2005), friend, colleague, and objective leader in the Literacy and Employment Programme.



## **Executive summary**

The first half of this report covers the findings of an e-survey of 56 local Wanganui employers. This e-survey sought to solidify earlier indicative findings from employer interviews and focus groups around employer perceptions of literacy and employment. The survey found that employers show a preference for personal qualities, foundation skills, and communication skills when going through recruitment processes, while functional literacy skills and qualifications were seen as less important overall. The finding within the focus groups and interviews that employers do not feel that literacy training sits within their realm of responsibility was strengthened by the e-survey findings, with many employers stating that they would not hire someone who did not have 'basic' literacy. A general lack of awareness of adult literacy provision agencies in the Wanganui community was also evidenced through the survey.

The second half of this report outlines the findings from the second phase of an Adult Literacy Training Provider Survey. This survey follows on from an initial survey of Wanganui adult literacy providers in 2005 which sought to describe the adult literacy services in the Wanganui Community. This second survey followed a qualitative interview style where key issues and challenges for providers were discussed in more depth. The issues surrounding adult literacy provision are outlined in this report, with suggestions for potential solutions and/or ways forward.





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# Wanganui and Districts Employer E-Survey

## Introduction

The employer e-survey findings described here represent one aspect of a larger Literacy and Employment Research Programme currently being undertaken in the Wanganui and Districts Region. This larger research programme seeks to investigate the perspectives of stakeholders on literacy and employment issues, to explore the impacts (if any) of literacy on employment, and to explore what is needed to assist those with low literacy levels to enhance their abilities and attain quality employment.

The perspectives of stakeholders that have been collected to date include adult literacy providers, participants in adult literacy training programmes, non-participants (those who have never taken part in an adult literacy training programme), community stakeholders (local community agencies with an interest in literacy and employment issues), general community members, and interested employers. This latter group was sourced from an emailed invitation to all employers on the Wanganui Chamber of Commerce email mailing list, later followed by a telephone invitation. These invitations invited employers to join members of the Literacy and Employment team in either focus groups or one-to-one interviews to discuss literacy issues in the population and potential employees, from their perspective as employers. These invitations were taken up by sixteen employers, and focus groups and interviews were held. The key findings from these focus groups and interviews are outlined in the report 'Wanganui and Districts Employers' Perspectives on Literacy and Employment' which is available on the project website <http://literacy.massey.ac.nz>.

The Literacy and Employment Team was aware that the perspectives that were explored through the focus groups and one-to-one interviews could be open to the criticism that they came from employers that have a specific interest in literacy issues, due to their willingness to take an hour of their time out from their work to share their views with the team and others.

Thus, it was felt that a wider sampling of Wanganui and District employers was needed, not only to gain a wider idea of issues from those who may not usually work with or face literacy issues, but also to compare findings against the results gained from the focus groups and interviews to determine if perspectives were similar or different. (Differences of experience with literacy issues is even discussed within the focus groups themselves regarding the perceived difference in impact of low literacy levels on small businesses as opposed to large businesses (Franklin, Olsson, Comrie, Sligo, Culligan, Tilley, & Vaccarino, 2005).



## **Method**

### ***Format***

An employer e-survey was proposed as this format would allow employers to answer the survey at a time and place convenient for them. It also allowed less time commitment as the survey took five to ten minutes to complete, as opposed to the hour time commitment needed for the interview or focus group.

The e-survey questions were developed from the employer focus group and interview questions and the general community survey questions. The open-ended questions from the focus groups and interviews were re-designed to minimise the amount of typing required to answer, for example, the question 'What are the skills that you look for (generally) when employing' was redesigned to allow for a closed question, where a list of potential responses (taken from our experience of the employer interviews and focus groups and general community responses) was generated and presented in a Likert Scale format. The order of the items on this generated list was randomly allocated via a random numbers table (University of Minnesota, n.d.). To allow for responses that were not included in the generated list, an 'Other: Please Specify' option was included. The Likert Scale response to the questions allowed respondents to choose from the following answers (1 = Unimportant, 2 = Of Little Importance, 3 = Moderately Important, 4 = Important, and 5 = Very Important). There were also several open-ended questions that allowed for a free-response format following this (see Appendix A for a copy of the e-survey questions). Employers were also asked if the Literacy and Employment Project Team at Massey could contact them about any of the issues they may have mentioned in their responses, and if they would like to be entered into a draw for a dinner for two to the value of \$80 upon completion of the survey. Employers were able to miss questions that they did not wish to answer.

Ethical approval for the employer e-survey was obtained through a full application to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

### ***Procedure***

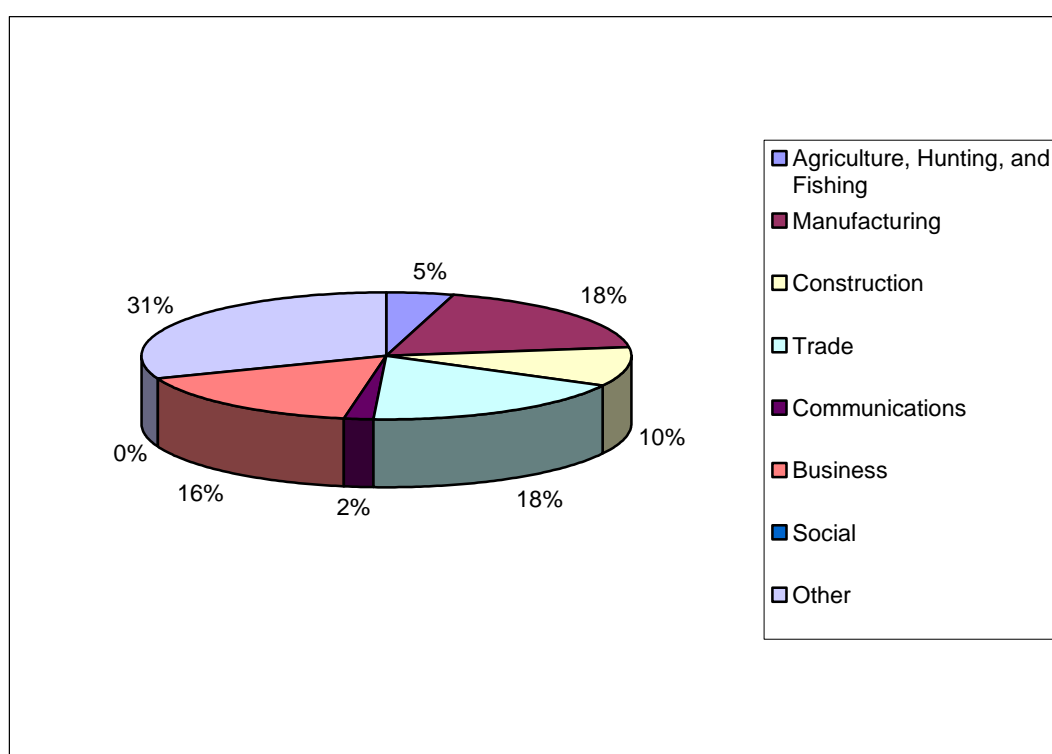
The e-survey itself was presented on the survey software website Zoomerang ([www.zoomerang.com](http://www.zoomerang.com)). Employers were invited to take part in the study through an invitation and Information Sheet sent via email to the Wanganui Chamber of Commerce email mailing list which provided access to 256 potential respondents. This invitation was sent on behalf of the Literacy and Employment Team by Enterprise Wanganui (now a part of Wanganui Inc). Upon reading the Information, if the employer chose to take part, they clicked on a hyperlink which would then take them to the internet hosted survey. Employers could not go back to change answers once they had been submitted, and an employer could not use the link more than once to access the survey.

The e-survey invitation was sent to all 256 potential employer respondents. Over a period of three months, 4 reminders were sent out to those employers who had not yet responded to the survey.

Thirty nine emails on the mailing list returned to the server as they did not exist. One employer made contact to state that they did not employ anyone else, so effectively could not comment on the skills they looked for in employees, thus ruling themselves out. In total, the valid number of potential responding cases was 216. Fifty-six employers answered the e-survey, therefore, the response rate for this e-survey was 26%. Of these 56 respondents, 50 fully completed and six partially completed the survey.

### **Sample descriptors**

The respondents indicated the industry they were involved with. The definition of 'industry' relied on participants' own perceptions of the industry they fell within. Figure 1 outlines the respondents by reported industry.



**Figure 1. Respondents by reported industry type (N=61)<sup>1</sup>**

The respondents also indicated the number of staff that they each employed. This is represented in Figure 2 below.

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<sup>1</sup> All respondents answered this question, with four respondents picking two or more industries to describe their workplace.

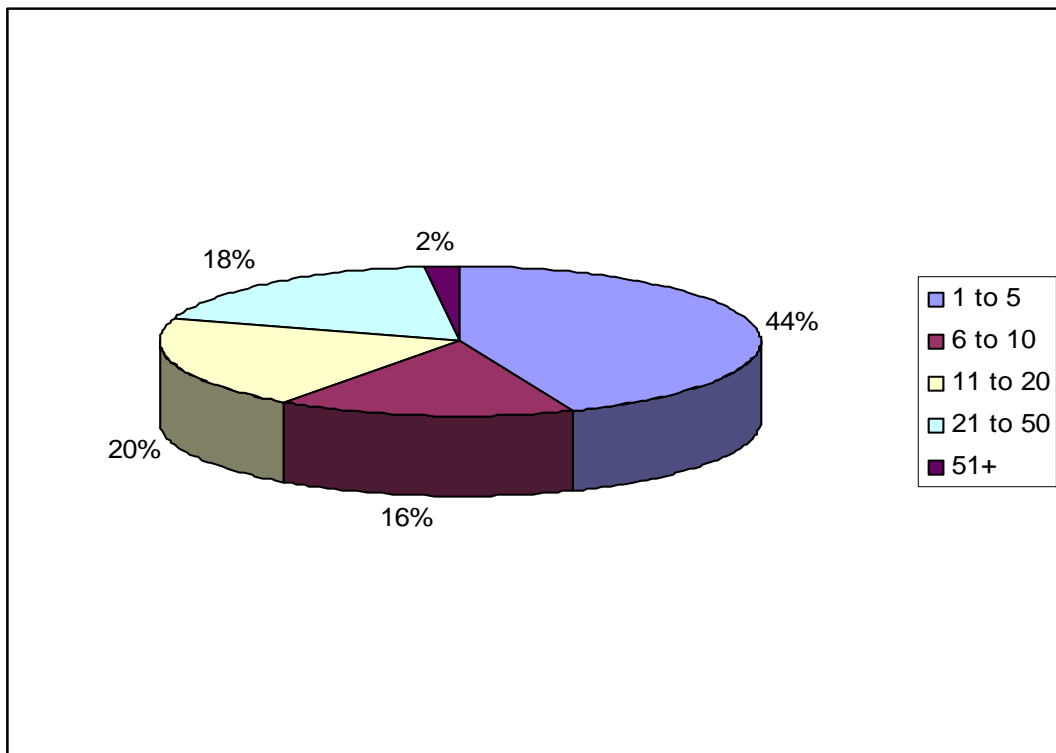


Figure 2. Number of staff employed by the respondents (N=55)<sup>2</sup>

## Findings

### ***Skills or qualities of importance to employers***

The skills defined by more than 80% of employers in the e-survey as important for employment included a variety of 'soft' skills. Table 1 ranks the skills or qualities that employers perceived as important by categories. These categories are based on the category groupings outlined in a previously run community survey which asked the question 'What do you consider to be the most important skills for people currently looking for jobs?' Interestingly, the 'hard' skills of reading, writing, numeracy, computer skills, and qualifications (including NZQA unit standards or non-NZQA qualifications) were not as highly ranked as the 'soft' skills or personal qualities of the potential employee e.g. reliability, honesty, and commonsense. These findings equate with the findings from the employer interviews and focus groups run previously where personal qualities and foundation skills such as confidence were viewed as more important overall by employers than qualifications (Franklin et.al., 2005).

<sup>2</sup> One respondent did not answer this question.

**Table 1. Employers' perceived necessary skills or qualities**

Skill or quality	Percentage of respondents that stated this skill or quality was important or very important
<b>Personal qualities</b>	
Being Healthy	100
Honesty	100
Commonsense	98
Initiative	88
Confidence	80
Presentation/Presenting yourself well	80
No criminal record	74
Work experience in the field	43
<b>Foundation skills</b>	
Work ethic	100
Reliability	98
Willingness to learn	97
Willing to work hard	97
Motivation	92
Loyalty to employer	92
Attitude/Manners/Being polite	91
Flexibility	79
Life skills	64
<b>Communication skills</b>	
Ability to follow instructions/To do as told	98
Gets on with others	91
Ability to speak or communicate clearly	82
<b>Functional literacy skills</b>	
Using numbers/calculating	77
Ability to read differing forms of communications e.g. regulations, memos, emails, contracts	70
Ability to write differing forms of communications e.g. emails, letters, reports, invoices	68
<b>Technological skills</b>	
Computer skills	55
Other technological skills (excluding computers specifically)	55
<b>Education/training</b>	
NZQA accredited trade qualifications	39

NZQA accredited qualifications (excluding trade qualifications)	23
Qualifications not accredited by NZQA (e.g. certificates or diplomas that are not part of the NZQA system)	21

### *Personal qualities, foundation skills, and communication skills*

All of the qualities and skills considered important or very important by 80% or more the employers in the e-survey fell within the categories of personal qualities, foundation skills, and communication skills. The three most important qualities and skills were 'being healthy', 'honesty', and 'work ethic', all endorsed as important by 100% of the employers. It is interesting that the employers rated 'being healthy' as highly important, given that the adult literacy participants note 'health issues' as one of the biggest barriers that they find to gaining employment. Further, the foundation skill of 'work ethic' is often lamented by employers the research team has spoken to as lacking in particularly young employees. One comment made by an employers representative claimed that the "overwhelming comment from employers is that they can't find people with a work ethic". He went on to say that

Kids coming through that [door need to] understand that they need to get up in the morning, they need to be at work on time, they need to be there for 10 hours or 12 hours, and they are not going to run the place in the first year.

Other personal qualities and foundation skills endorsed as important by more than 90% of employers were reliability, a willingness to learn, commonsense, a willingness to work hard, motivation, and a loyalty to the employer. These qualities and skills were also mentioned in the employer interviews and focus groups, with employers stating how hard it was to find employees with a willingness to work hard and a motivation to learn on the job. Particularly amongst the younger generation of employees, employers mentioned the difficulties associated with trying to work with someone who believed that they 'knew it all' and believed that they should be 'running the place' within the first year. Also, loyalty to an employer was considered an advantage with several employers in the e-survey noting that they would train new members of staff only to have these staff members move on to work for other employers.

Showing initiative, having a polite attitude or showing manners, personal presentation, and confidence were also viewed as important by employers but were not as highly ranked as the previous qualities and skills. It is interesting to note that in the interviews with adult literacy participants, confidence was often mentioned as a benefit of the adult literacy training programme undertaken. This confidence was not only in terms of personal lives with some noticing improvements in their interpersonal relationships, but also in terms of employment. Participants stated that improved confidence from taking part in the course had in some instances led to increased confidence that they could obtain a job, or the actual obtaining of a job that increased their confidence further.

Following on from these important qualities, 'flexibility' was the second to last most endorsed foundation skill. Interestingly, the lowest ranked personal quality (but still higher ranked than many 'hard' skills) was the requirement for 'no criminal record'.

Communication skills were seen by the adult literacy participants to be one of the top two learning needs they had within their courses. As most of these participants were undertaking the courses to obtain employment, it could be hypothesised that the participants believed they needed these skills for employment. Further, in a community survey undertaken of 400 residents of the Wanganui Community, communication skills were the third most mentioned skill that residents believed were required in order to obtain employment in the Wanganui Community. In the community survey, communication skills followed computer skills and general training/education in importance for gaining employment in Wanganui. This finding is interesting considering computer skills and training/education (in the form of attainment of qualifications) are ranked quite low in importance by employers in comparison to the general community view.

Employers who responded to the e-survey stated that the communication skill of the 'ability to follow instructions/to do as told' was the most important, followed by the ability to 'get on with others' and thirdly, the ability to 'speak and communicate clearly'.

### *Literacy and technological skills*

55% of employers in the survey noted that computer skills and other technological skills (excluding computer skills) were important for gaining employment. Interestingly, 31% of the sample claimed that computer skills were not important for gaining employment.

With regard to functional literacy skills, 77% of the sample endorsed the skill of 'using numbers or calculating' as important or very important, while 70% and 68% endorsed as important the ability to read and ability to write differing forms of communication respectively. Eleven percent of employers stated that it was either unimportant or of little importance to be able to read differing forms of communication. Also 13% of employers stated that it was either unimportant or of little importance for their employees to be able to write differing forms of communication.

### *Education/training*

Only 23% of the employers in the e-survey stated that NZQA qualifications (excluding trade qualifications) were very important or important as skills they looked for in potential employees. Of the employers of this view, two were in education, two in business, two in agriculture, two in manufacturing, and one in trade. The remaining four businesses categorised themselves under 'other' with a mix of business and retail industry.

NZQA trade qualifications were viewed as important by only 39% of the sample. Trade industries make up only 18% of the sample as a whole, however, only 12.5% of these trade industries endorsed NZQA trade qualifications as important for gaining employment. Subsets of the education, retail, business, construction, agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing industries endorsed the importance of NZQA trade qualifications.

Non-NZQA accredited qualifications were considered important by only 21% of the sample. This finding is very similar to the importance rating given to NZQA qualifications (excluding trade), suggesting a general lack of importance attributed to qualifications overall by employers in the Wanganui region.

These findings reflect again the primary focus of employers on finding employees with personal qualities, foundation skills, and/or communication skills which specific on-the-job training can be built upon. While employers expect potential employees to have 'basic' 'hard' skills such as functional literacy, the general picture from the interviews, focus groups, and e-survey to date are that if the foundation abilities mentioned above are present, the employer is prepared to train the employee for their specific position. The willingness to train those who are already at certain levels of competence has been adopted by some employers who claim the tight labour market means that people will never come to a job fully trained anyway (see below for discussion of skills shortages). However, employers in general do not see their role as that of a training agency for those lacking these fundamental building blocks.

The lack of importance attributed to NZQA qualifications could also stem from the general lack of understanding that employers seem to have around the NZQA framework. This lack of understanding was evidenced in an interview with an employer's representative who outlined how his business was currently setting up training programmes around NZQA to meet the need for employers to understand the system better. Further, in the employer focus groups run previously through this research programme, questions around the NZQA framework and its relevance to the workplace were met with laughter from employers, who claimed to have little understanding and faith in the NZQA system. As one employer in the e-survey noted "they [potential employees] can also present trade qualifications [to show their skills], but this doesn't always guarantee skills".

### ***Screening processes for potential employees***

Thirty six employers stated that they had some form of a screening process to determine the skills and abilities of potential employees in a hiring process. This is compared with 13 employers who stated they had no such process, and 7 who did not answer this question.

Most employers who used screening processes used particular tests such as keyboard tests, data inputting assessments, or practical work tests that were particularly relevant to the job in question. Some employers made use of references, advocate ratings of skill levels, and trial periods to check a potential employee's suitability for the job. Others bring the applicant into the workplace to work alongside current staff, or have the applicant meet and talk with current staff to assess how well they will fit in the workplace environment. Several employers mentioned specific testing of writing skills with one employer asking applicants for a handwritten application so it could be checked for spelling and neatness, while another outlined that during the interview the applicant is asked to write a written statement of a task they would do in the workplace, before actually carrying out that task.

### ***What is 'literacy'?***

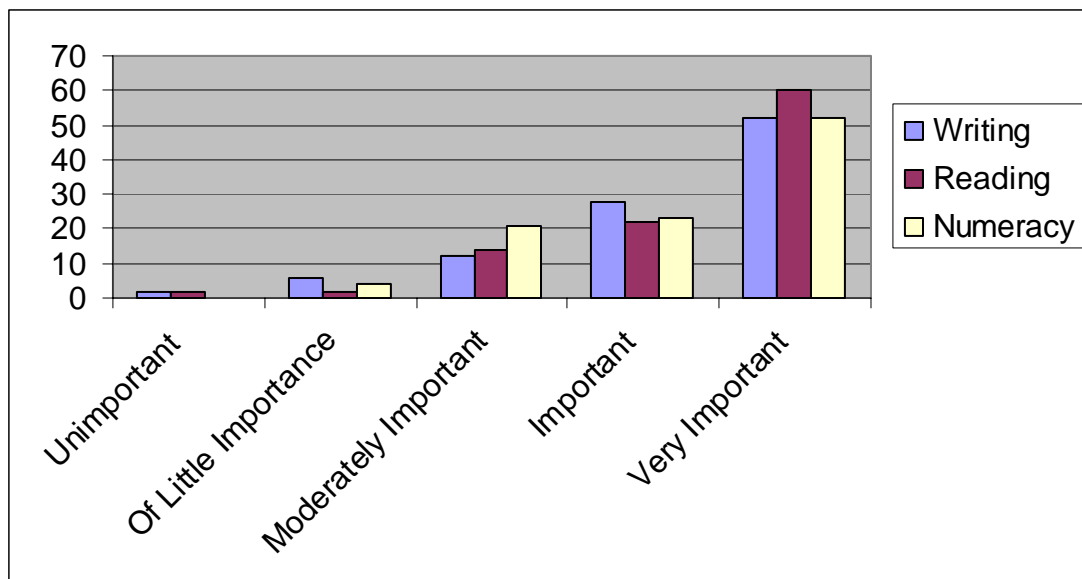
Many of the employers outlined functional definitions of literacy when defining literacy in terms of their organisation. Some examples included: "being able to read communications of many types"; and, "being able to read and write, to what level a certain age person should". Functional skills of reading and writing were often intertwined in definitions with understanding and wider communication skills, for example: "total understanding of the English language, ability to read documents, ability to spell"; "the ability to read, understand, and follow written instructions"; "ability to communicate in written English"; and, "ability to read, write, and communicate at a high level of English". Communication skills in terms of com-

prehending and communicating what was in a document to others were also mentioned specifically by one employer who said “we have a lot of communications going between departments, so our staff need to be able to understand these and clearly explain themselves so others understand”. Computer skills were also mentioned in definitions, as were numeracy skills, however, these skills were usually couched in terms of specific workplace needs such as keeping accurate timesheets, ordering, and comprehending invoices.

### ***Importance of Functional Literacy Skills***

Within the general community members survey, functional literacy skills (of reading, writing, and numeracy) were barely mentioned as important skill needs for employment (Comrie, Olsson, Sligo, Culligan, Tilley, Vaccarino, & Franklin, 2005). While employers were more likely to endorse these skills (in their functional context of comprehension) as important (perhaps mainly due to being asked directly to rank their importance), they still did not rank them as highly as the personal qualities, foundation skills, and communication skills.

When specifically prompted to rank the importance of only the basic skills themselves, rather than the use of the skills in terms of a functional outcome, there were only a small percentage of employers who saw reading, writing, or numeracy as unimportant or of little importance (4%, 8%, and 4% respectively). The respective rankings given by employers of these three skills are outlined below in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. The importance of writing, reading, and numeracy skills as perceived by Wanganui employers.**

In comparison with the rankings of functional literacy skills, the stand-alone skills of reading, writing, and numeracy would appear to be of more importance to employers, than the functional literacy skills of ‘ability to read differing forms of communication’, ‘ability to write differing forms of communication’, ‘using numbers/calculating’. One interpretation of this could be that employers are again ensuring that potential employees have the ‘basics’ or ‘building blocks’ in their recruiting processes, whereas literacy skills that involve comprehending an



array of differing communication formats may be something that can be enhanced with on-the-job training. Another interpretation could be that within some workplaces or specific positions, the ability to read or write an array of differing communications is not necessary and/or competency in one specific area is all that is required.

### ***Impact of literacy issues on recruitment and current employment***

Of the 45 employers who responded to the question “If you have an ‘applicant’ without literacy and numeracy skills, what do you do?” an overwhelming majority (30 or 75%) stated that they would not employ the person at all. One employer said that while they would not throw their application away straight away, if a screening process that tested spelling ability returned with bad spelling it would be a mark against the potential employee. Four of the employers stated they would trial the applicant’s abilities before making a decision, three stated they would make a judgment based on the ‘attitude; of the applicant, and a further three stated they would look for employment positions in areas of the business which did not require literacy skills. Two employers had not encountered this problem, while one stated that low literacy skills were unimportant for their hiring process. Finally, one employer outlined that they may be willing to work with the applicant if they were prepared to learn these skills (it was not stated whether these skills could be learned within the workplace or at an adult literacy provider agency).

Of the 43 employers who responded to the question ‘if you have an ‘employee’ without literacy and numeracy skills, what do you do?’ 21 stated that this would not be an issue for them as they would not have employed the person to begin with. A further six said that it had not been an issue for them at all to date. Four would delegate the employee other work that did not require these skills, while eight stated that they would work with the employee to train them up (three gave specific pathways as examples: through the employer’s own adult literacy programme; through an outside agency’s adult literacy programme; or, through the employer working one-to-one with the employee). Two employers stated they would ‘cope’ or work around the employee, while one said that this issue was not of any importance to their organisation. A final employer stated that they would like to be able to fire the employee but claimed that this would be difficult if not impossible claiming that the organisation could be sued for wrongful dismissal for such an action.

### ***Awareness of adult literacy provision***

Employers in the e-survey were asked ‘Where or to whom would you send someone who required literacy assistance?’ Responses to this question were varied, with several employers giving a range of answers to this question. Of the 47 responses given, 10 or 21% could name a specific adult literacy provider in the Wanganui region. While seven of the employers stated that they would send someone to a polytechnic, it was unknown whether this was because they were aware of the literacy and learning support centre that functions there, or because it is a well-known place of adult education in Wanganui. Eight of the employers or 17% did not have any idea where they would send someone who presented with literacy difficulties, and a further 17% were not specific in their choice of learning centre stating that they would send people to an ‘adult learning centre’, ‘local tutors’, ‘back to school’ or to a ‘community college’. Other responses to this question included sending the employee/applicant to their parents or the job centre that recommended them, to their choice of educational assistance, or in three cases, to the employer themselves. Seven of the employers noted that this question was not

relevant to them (perhaps because they do not hire or do not currently have on their staff anyone with literacy issues), and two employers noted that if they came across someone who was in need of literacy assistance, they would not send them on to anywhere.

These findings suggest that the employers surveyed here are mostly unaware of the adult literacy provision on offer in the Wanganui community. This lack of awareness could also be linked to the finding that employers generally do not view low literacy skills as within their realm of responsibility.

### ***Barriers faced by employers in gaining new employees***

#### ***Limited choice***

Employers in the e-survey mentioned that the current high employment status of the Wanganui District, and indeed the country, limited their choices due to a limited labour pool. Because of the high employment rate, application numbers for jobs are limited. One employer stated that Wanganui could not compete with bigger centres for the pool of potential employees, as Wanganui employers could usually only offer lower salaries, and within a provincial town there were fewer opportunities. This employer claimed this meant the most promising employees or applicants were more likely to leave Wanganui in search of differing opportunities and more pay.

#### ***Training barriers***

Six employers specifically mentioned difficulties with finding employees with appropriate work experience, while four employers discussed a general lack of skills as forming a barrier to gaining new employees. One employer outlined how his organisation was hiring from overseas because of a lack of skills in the Wanganui labour market.

Because of the limited labour pool that Wanganui employers work with, one employer stated that employers have come to accept that applicants will not be fully trained for the position when they begin. This employer screens applicants for the “right attitude” and trains them in the skills needed for the position within the organisation itself. However, the need to upskill or train staff for a particular position was also discussed by some employers as risky, as staff would be trained at the employers expense and then would move on to other jobs.

#### ***Personal/Attitudinal barriers***

A major barrier to employers finding employees was deemed to be the personal and/or attitudinal qualities of the prospective employee. The majority of the employers noted that they came across barriers such as ‘no work ethics’, ‘personal presentation issues’, ‘a lack of life skills’, ‘issues with compliance’, ‘lack of a willingness to learn’, and ‘general attitudinal barriers’ in their hiring processes. One employer discussed how they intentionally targeted older employees in recruitment procedures as this group generally had the attitude and education that the employer was looking for. Attitude to learning was further discussed by one employer who stated “An attitude to learning is most important. If the attitude is right then skills and knowledge will be acquired”.

Specific mention was made by the employers of the personal/attitudinal barriers they faced with young employees. Comments included:

Young people are hard to bring into the workforce because their life skills are not satisfactory. [There are] issues such as feeding themselves, knowing what a days work entails, communication, and cleanliness.

Many younger people have not had enough boundaries, often at home, and in the school environment. This filters through to the workplace. They don't understand the concept of hard work, punctuality, good manners etc.

### *Educational barriers*

As was found with the Literacy and Employment Programme's employer interviews and focus groups, some employers in the e-survey stated they found NZQA and NCEA requirements confusing within the hiring process. One stated that within this system, "You have no idea of a person's weaknesses because they are not reported". Another noted:

I think the system as it stands where everyone is a winner and there are no failures is wrong. There will always be winners and losers, it is just about bringing the best in people to the fore and working with them in those areas.

While some of the employers in this e-survey were of the opinion that literacy and numeracy skills were not necessary for some work: "Many positions in workplaces do not really require a lot of reading ability. If employers take a creative approach to informing and reporting they can often avoid difficulties"; others took a different view: "The importance of literacy and numeracy is greatly under estimated"; "In most jobs I would say being able to read and write is the most vital skill needed". Therefore, while most employers would actively exclude an applicant without sufficient literacy skills for that workplace, some employers would work with an employee already within the organisation to upskill them in this area if found to be necessary. However, generally employers (across the employer interviews, focus groups, and e-survey) did not feel that training in literacy skills was an area that they should be spending their funds and time working within. The responsibility for this training was largely seen to rest with schools:

I'm constantly surprised at the lack of basic writing skills shown by applicants. It's like the system has failed them completely.

Kids leaving school with no numeracy skills i.e. can't add two two-digit numbers together, or whose writing is simply shocking. Something is very, very wrong!

Schools no longer teach work ethic, personal goals, or respect for adults and employers. The work place is the real world where people have to WORK for their rewards. Too many school leavers think they deserve a well-paying job.

### *Societal and policy barriers*

One employer mentioned a barrier of working through recruitment processes with people that don't want to work but are being forced to apply for a job by Work and Income. A second employer was concerned that the trades industry was being "dumbed down" by society: "Trades can't attract people with brains. For the last 10-15 years the whole industry has been dumbed down. Yet the educational potential for advancement is huge". Finally, a third em-

ployer mentioned the impact of Government directives on taking on apprentices within his industry stating that these directives were “making it hard or expensive”.

## **Discussion of Findings and Future Research**

The employer e-survey was undertaken to add to the indicative body of knowledge gained from speaking with an employer’s representative, small business employers, medium-sized business employers, and large business employers in a series of interviews and focus groups. The findings from this e-survey have solidified the indicative summary of perspectives gained from employers in these initial interviews and focus groups.

Personal qualities, communication skills, and foundation skills (or ‘soft’ skills) appear to be of more importance to employers in their search for employees than do ‘hard’ skills, such as reading, writing, or numeracy. Within the e-survey, 80% or more employers endorsed 16 ‘soft’ skills as important to their employing processes, compared with 0 ‘hard’ skills. This result was supported by the interview and focus group findings which found that ‘work ethic’ and ‘foundation skills’ in the form of attitude, reliability, integrity, willingness to learn etc, were Wanganui employers’ primary requirements in their employees.

While the functional literacy skills of reading, writing, and numeracy were endorsed as important by a substantial percentage of the e-survey sample (70%, 68%, and 77% respectively), it was interesting to note that over 10% of employers in this sample thought that reading and/or writing skills were of little importance within their organisation. However, when asked to rank the importance of reading, writing, and numeracy as stand-alone skills (as opposed to a functional skill), over 90% of the employers stated these three skills were either moderately important, important, or very important. This discrepancy may have been due to the employer perception of the survey question asked with the examples given of the functional task being at a higher level than what would be required of some employees within the actual organisation.

Communication skills, while viewed as highly important to employers, were seen by general community members as less important for obtaining a job than computer skills and general training and education. These latter two categories were relatively unimportant to employers in comparison to the importance attributed to communication skills. Adult literacy participants also tended to emphasise the importance of computer skills over communication skills when thinking about the skills needed for a job. As pointed out in Comrie et. al. (2005), the importance attributed to computer skills by the general community and adult literacy participants could be explained by the rhetoric that today’s world is a technological one where you must need to be computer literate to survive in any job. However, the responses of the employers would suggest that computer skills are not of such value that job hiring decisions will be made largely upon competency in this area. The overall findings from the employers suggest that the ‘soft’ skills of communication, life skills, and willingness to learn, to name a few, are most important to employers as they allow an employer a basis from which skills appropriate for the position and organisation can be built.

While employers (at least within Wanganui) are essentially looking for the 'whole picture', for example, the majority of them would like a range of personal qualities and foundation skills, plus the 'hard' skills of literacy, numeracy, computer skills and general education, there is some suggestion that they look first for an attitude or willingness to learn, so that they can work with and train the person from there. However, on the other hand, the 'hard' skills of literacy and numeracy do play an important initial role in hiring decisions with the vast majority of employers screening out those with literacy difficulties from the application process. Hence, while some employers believe there are jobs that do not require literacy skills, they do not wish to deal with literacy issues if they can be avoided. One employer's reason for this focused around legalities surrounding employment. He stated that when a person is found incapable of doing the job assigned, stringent processes must be followed with written and verbal information before the company can move on and hire someone else to fill the position. This can be of great cost and consequent loss of productivity to the employer.

It is interesting to compare the perceptions of the general community on the skills needed for employment in Wanganui with what Wanganui employers are stating they are looking for. The Wanganui community residents who responded to the question 'What skills do you think are most important for gaining a job in Wanganui?' claimed that foundation skills were most important, followed by education and training, and communication skills. Lastly, personal qualities were endorsed as important. Of interest is the finding that 'being healthy' was viewed as one of the least important skills needed for employment with the wider community, and yet was endorsed by 100% of the employers as important. However, differences in responses may have been due to differences of question delivery, with employers asked to rank pre-determined categories, and community members asked to list skills they thought important for employment in an open-ended question format.

The need for a better understanding of the NZQA and NCEA system by employers was mentioned in the e-survey, employer interviews, and employer focus groups. Twenty-one percent endorsed non-NZQA qualifications as very important or important to their hiring processes, while 23% endorsed non-trade NZQA qualifications and 39% endorsed trade NZQA qualifications respectively. Approximately 50% of all the employers found non-NZQA, NZQA (trade), and NZQA (excluding trade) qualifications as unimportant or of little importance to the hiring of a potential employee. This could reflect the increased importance of personal qualities and foundation skills (of which training can be added) to employers in a limited labour market. Alternatively, it could reflect a lack of understanding of the NZQA system in the employment environment.

Employers (across the e-survey, interviews, and focus groups) did not view training people in 'basic' literacy skills as their responsibility. As mentioned previously, applicants who could not read, write, or perform simple calculations were mostly turned down for positions. Many employers claimed that they did not have employees in need of literacy skills, but if they did most would either train them or move them into work that did not require these skills. It was interesting to note that the majority of the employers could not name an adult literacy training provider in Wanganui, a finding that is also seen in the general community resident survey.

The major barrier employers faced when recruiting was finding employees with the 'right' attitude. This included having work ethic, good personal presentation, life skills, and a will-

ingness to learn. Specific comments around the lack of these foundation skills and personal qualities in young applicants was made. Other barriers included the lack of 'hard' skills such as literacy, and the low level of training that applicants for a position generally had. This may have been why the foundation skills and personal qualities were so important to employers, as when dealing with a limited labour pool from which to choose, those with the more employable attitudes i.e. a willingness to learn, could be taught on-the-job.

As mentioned in the 'Wanganui and Districts Employers' Perspectives on Literacy and Employment' report (Franklin et. al., 2005), more research is needed to investigate how to better publicise providers' programmes and to strengthen employers' sense of the alignment between providers and workplace needs. Employers who do come across employees requiring literacy assistance are often unaware of where to turn for training assistance, and as in one case outlined here, can feel isolated in their plight. Gaining understanding of the current NZQA system would also increase a sense of alignment between employers and providers given that providers work within this system also. Currently research is being undertaken within the Literacy and Employment Programme into workplace literacy development.

Further research is also continuing within the programme into the employment outcomes of a tracked cohort of adult literacy participants who began literacy training in 2005. A third survey of providers is also planned for early 2007 which will explore ways in which linkages can be strengthened between adult literacy providers and local Wanganui secondary schools. All of these findings could provide ways in which literacy provision could be improved upon, with the proposed outcome of increasing literacy levels to increase options within the labour market for employers, as well as the personal life choices of adult literacy participants.

# **Provider Survey Phase Two: Adult Literacy Provision in Wanganui**

## **A report overview**

### ***Literacy service provision in Wanganui***

#### ***Provider descriptions***

A brief description is given of the twelve providers who participated in the phase two interviews. Descriptions include services provided, programmes offered, contact details, how the providers are governed, and their goals and values.

#### ***Staff roles, training, and peer support***

Literacy practitioners often perform a variety of roles within their organisations, and may take on several roles at once. Examples are given of tasks carried out by management, literacy supervisors, and tutoring staff. Many respondents described the importance of addressing personal and social problems of participants while providing literacy assistance. However, there was some variability in the roles taken by staff with regard to addressing the personal issues of learners across organizations. A range of comments emerged about the types of staff training and peer support currently available to tutors. Examples of each are given.

#### ***Definitions of literacy***

Many respondents understood literacy to be reading and writing, but as also including vocational literacy, computer, technical, and academic skills while meeting the personal and social needs of learners. Other points of interest related to cultural considerations; the place of 'texting' in literacy; and the elements of literacy are considered to be more important than others.

#### ***Assessment***

Providers use a range of assessment processes to understand and measure initial needs and learner progress. These include using one or a combination of: standardised psychometric testing by qualified assessors; exploring family connections and whakapapa; provider-developed information-gathering tools; and critical reflection by the learners themselves.

The quality assurance measures described include both internally and externally-driven assessments of staff and provider performance.

#### ***Teaching methods***

Literacy teaching tends to be delivered either within a small group or in a 1:1 tutoring situation. Individual assistance may be provided *within* the small group environment, rather than in a situation physically removed from it. Advantages and disadvantages of both types of teaching are discussed.

### ***Identifying learners' social needs***

The major personal and social needs of learners are summarised as identified by the providers interviewed. Learners are divided into sub-groups: youth, adult Māori, learners from other cultures including those with English as a second language, and prisoners. Examples are included of how their needs are currently being addressed within the context of literacy service provision in Wanganui.

### ***Funding and resourcing***

Some providers receive funding from more than one source. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) is the most common funder. Some providers delivering programmes for targeted populations are funded for specific purposes. The Ministry of Education (MoE) funds one large provider. Three providers also use fundraising or philanthropic means (such as community organisations and grants) for extra funds. Two providers obtain some funding through tuition fees. Putting funders' literacy requirements into practice is described in relation to TEC, the Department of Corrections, and MoE.

Determining the time required per client was a key funding issue. Providers reported using flexibility and a range of methods based on the needs of individual students or groups. For some, this was regardless of whether their funding covered all of the time required to meet those needs. Not all providers work on a 'time per individual' basis as much of their literacy assistance is delivered within small groups. Three providers offer individual tutoring services to clients.

### ***Literacy and employment issues***

The three key issues raised were meeting pre-employment literacy needs; meeting learning needs of those in the work force; and meeting the learning needs of non-English speakers trying to obtain employment in New Zealand.

Literacy providers in Wanganui assist students in their preparation for employment by delivering courses in pre-employment skills and offering assistance in addressing personal issues that may be preventing a student from obtaining work. Those already in employment also request assistance for upskilling in areas such as Internet research and other computer-based skills. Specialist providers deliver training within the workplace on negotiation with employers. However, some employees are hesitant to make their needs known to employers, fearing job loss or embarrassment.

### ***Working with other providers and organisations***

Several providers reported good working relationships with other local providers, attending their workshops and sharing resources. Attendance at professional association meetings was widely seen as valuable. Providers also described positive interaction with and assistance received from over fifty other organisations from the health, justice, legal, education, disability, Māori, financial, employment, counselling, and family service sectors.

### ***Effective service provision: challenges and suggested solutions***

#### ***Wide variety of needs***



Fourteen of the twenty interviewees indicated that a challenge to their work comes from a wide variety of learner needs in age, literacy levels, cultural background, and disabilities such as learning, psychiatric, and physical.

### *Assessment*

Almost half of the respondents felt that assessing learners in some way presented a challenge to effective service provision. Concerns are listed in the main report.

### *Interaction among literacy providers*

Working with other literacy providers was seen as challenging in relation to competition for funding. Some providers felt that competition can be a significant problem, while others saw it as having a minimal impact. Difficulties included a lack of stair-casing between courses, use of differing processes among providers, privacy issues for learners, and transfer of knowledge. However, diversity across providers was largely seen as beneficial for providers, clients, and the community in a number of ways.

### *Addressing personal and social issues*

Some interviewees saw the need to address learners' social issues as a significant challenge to their work, while others described it as an integral part of their work.

### *Gaps in literacy service provision*

The most frequently mentioned gap was for youth who have left school due to bullying, boredom, or behavioural concerns. Gaps were also identified for learners with intellectual disability or mental health difficulties, workers requiring up-skilling, and women doing unpaid work in the home and wishing to extend their opportunities.

### *Funding and resourcing*

A number of interviewees commented on the impact of the shift to provision of integrated literacy that came with changes to funding practices 4-5 years ago. This was seen to have presented a number of challenges, including reporting requirements and insufficient funding to meet objectives and expectations.

The reporting requirements of funding bodies were seen as a key issue in various ways. These included: the amount of time required to complete reports; difficulties in understanding the reporting task; the demands of having multiple agencies to report to; and subsequent impacts upon relationships between provider management and tutoring staff.

### *Learners' perspectives*

Elements of learners' perspectives and attitudes seen as a challenge to service provision included: lack of confidence and self-esteem; impatience; lack of motivation to work; and avoidance of teaching environments.

### *Lack of career structure for literacy practitioners*

Concerns were raised in two cases about the limited professional qualifications and recognition available for literacy practitioners.

### *Low literacy levels*

Some providers reported it was a challenge to meet the needs of students with very low basic literacy skills.

### *School issues*

Several providers expressed frustration about the significant impact on adult learners of not having completed adequate schooling or of not having their needs addressed while at school. Many students who have left school prior to the age of fifteen have major learning needs as adults. It was noted that, while schools identify literacy issues, they do not appear to be addressing them adequately. Other concerns noted were in meeting the needs of alternative education students who have left mainstream schooling.

### ***Implications for policy development/directions for change***

Implications are presented in the following areas: funding for integrated and specialist literacy and for alternative education students; reporting requirements of funders; working arrangements between providers and between providers and schools; and interpreting and translating services for students with English as a second language.

## **Background**

### ***The Literacy and Employment project***

Researchers at the Department of Communication and Journalism, Massey University, in partnership with the Wanganui District Library, are undertaking a major longitudinal research project funded by the Foundation for Research, Science, and Technology (FRST). The focus of this project is on adult literacy and employment in Wanganui and Districts (<http://literacy.massey.ac.nz>). Through a series of interlinked research projects, it is expected that the following four objectives will be achieved:

1. To establish the literacy needs of both employed and unemployed adults in the Wanganui and Districts region
2. To identify the social, attitudinal, and economic barriers to adult literacy learning of both employed and unemployed in Wanganui and Districts
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of adult literacy programmes in promoting and securing employment outcomes
4. To examine adult literacy learning processes and their relationship to employment.

The Wanganui project group has added four further objectives, specific to gaining tangible benefits for Wanganui. These are:

1. To achieve positive, tangible, and practical outcomes for the Wanganui community, with a well-researched plan of action for the medium-long term (2005-2015) to address identified issues relating to literacy

2. To establish a database of meaningful, relevant information relating to the links between literacy and employment in Wanganui and identify links to other social issues such as crime, health, and housing, and to provide benchmarks to measure future progress
3. To develop collaboration between agencies within the Wanganui region; to strengthen the community and social infrastructure for future work and projects
4. To build the research capacity within Wanganui.

### ***Provider survey - phase two***

Following a series of meetings in early 2004 with groups in Wanganui, the need for a more thorough understanding of providers of adult literacy courses was identified. Discussion clearly indicated that the community could use information about providers, the services offered, and the challenges they faced, with immediate benefit for both providers and clients of literacy services (Caseley, 2004).

The Wanganui District Library (WDL) and the Department of Communication and Journalism, Massey University (MU), worked together to create a two-stage survey. The first phase would provide more understanding of adult literacy services available in Wanganui and Districts via a survey. It was envisaged that the second phase would allow for further in-depth interviews with providers, discussing aspects of the services they offer (Caseley, 2004). It was expected that phase two would build on the phase one research and place results in the context of the overall research project.

Phase one analysis was completed in March 2005. The data gathered included information about literacy programmes currently available in Wanganui, the numbers of clients, funding channels available, staffing issues, and identified a number of challenges faced by providers and practitioners in their work (Neilson & Culligan, 2005). Phase one feedback was given to providers on March 31, 2005 at an open presentation. The report is available on the Literacy and Employment website at <http://literacy.massey.ac.nz/Publications.publications.0.html>.

The objectives of phase two of the adult literacy provider survey begun in June 2005 were:

- To explore in more depth the challenges and barriers experienced by providers in their work. These included the social and personal problems of learners, gaps in services, and other perceived barriers to effective service provision
- To provide a description of other features that impact on the effectiveness of current provision of services for adult literacy in Wanganui
- To determine providers' perspectives on the impact of funding and resourcing policies
- To share ideas and strategies for increasing collaboration and sharing of resources among providers
- To assist providers by drawing information together and presenting a summary of relevant perspectives and issues for their consideration
- To determine how the views of providers in these areas fit with results of other parts of the Literacy and Employment project.

## ***Contribution to larger project***

Findings from the phase two interviews will contribute to the full Literacy and Employment project by adding to the previously obtained information about challenges and barriers to service provision. Providers' perspectives will be included for comparison with the perceptions of other stakeholders in the field. The aim is to identify individual variability and common challenges among adult literacy providers that may be addressed within policy.

## **Methodology**

### ***Overview***

During phase two, information was gathered from providers through open, unstructured interviews, rather than the structured interview method used in phase one. Open interviews avoid specific, structured questions, using instead an interview guide and open-ended prompts. They do not claim to obtain data that can be generalized to a whole population, but are effective in gathering a range of answers to 'why' questions rather than factual or numerical answers (List, 2002). This method was chosen for phase two to obtain rich, detailed clarification of issues, with as many relevant, local examples from providers as possible. Interview data was analysed using qualitative analysis, chosen to more fully realize the potential information contained in the interview responses.

### ***Sample***

The area covered by the Literacy and Employment project is the Wanganui and Districts area as defined by the Council (see Figure 4 below).

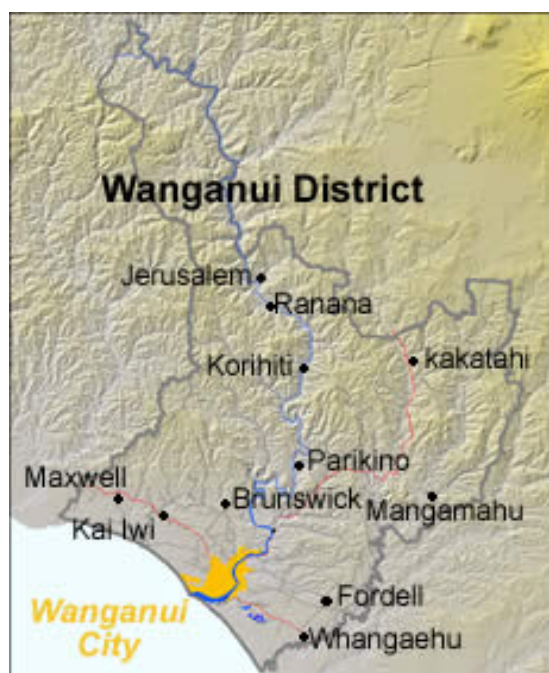


Figure 4. Wanganui and Districts boundaries (Wanganui District Council, n.d.).

The providers approached included those who identify as specialists in literacy service provision as well as those known to include literacy within their programmes relating to other subject areas. Bob Dempsey from WDL initially approached providers by phone to establish their interest in participation. Those wishing to participate were posted information letters with forms requesting numerical data about ethnicity of students, as well as access consents to be signed on behalf of the organisation.

For phase two, staff members from twelve providers were interviewed, ten of whom had participated in phase one. Two providers who had participated in phase one were unavailable this time, while two providers were included who had not been available during phase one. For nine of the twelve providers, representatives from management and literacy practitioners were interviewed separately. The aim was to maximize the amount of information gained, and to gather independent responses from staff with different functions within the organisation. These could later be compared if required.

### ***Development of interview questions***

When the phase one survey results were discussed at the meeting with Wanganui providers in March 2005, valuable ideas were obtained about areas to research in phase two. Many of these ideas were incorporated into the phase two interview questions.

Deborah Neilson of the Wanganui District Library (WDL) and Niki Culligan of Massey University (MU) formulated initial lists of potential question areas. To refine and formulate appropriate wording of the questions, a series of meetings and email consultations was held between March and May 2005, and included participation from project partners Literacy Aotearoa (Wanganui) and Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui. An interested stakeholder, John Velvin, a representative from TEC, was also consulted. Some future interview participants were involved in question development, and this community participation is seen as a strength of the research.

### ***Piloting the questions***

To test the effectiveness of the questions and open interview process, both WDL interviewers carried out a pilot session with the provider who had assisted with this process in phase one. Following the pilot study, no changes needed to be made to the format of the interview guide (see Appendix B).

### ***Data Collection***

Interviewers for phase two were Wanganui District Library librarian/researchers, Deborah Neilson and Denise Tinnion. Both were involved with the phase one provider survey. Twenty interviews were completed in twenty-two sessions (two interviews required return visits to complete the questions or clarify answers given in the first session). These interviews occurred between June 9 and August 31, 2005 at either the Wanganui District Library or the offices of the providers. Individual consent forms were signed at the time of the interviews. Interviewing, recording, transcription, and feedback processes were conducted according to Massey University Human Ethics Committee protocols. All interviews were tape-recorded, except one where written notes were taken.

### ***Qualitative analysis methods used in current study***

Qualitative analysis is a method which can result in insights not available through other methods of research (List, 2002). It is important to note that qualitative analysis is subjective and relies on human judgement. The analysis presented here is based on the current sample only, and cannot necessarily be generalized New Zealand wide. The following steps were taken in the analysis:

1. Following transcription and proofreading, transcripts were imported into a qualitative data analysis software package, HyperResearch. Each transcript was coded into key topics and subtopics, using 100 codes which emerged during analysis of the interviews. The codes were not pre-determined prior to coding, although many related to the broad question headings in the interview guide.
2. A topic outline was then developed, encompassing ten key themes arising from the interviews, with other codes assigned as subtopics under these themes.
3. Summary reports were generated on major topic groupings so that information relevant to each theme could be grouped together for review and summary.
4. Each of these major topics was then manually summarised by the writer according to the range of information given and by highlighting the most frequently occurring comments. When identified, points for future consideration were also drawn from the data.

## **Interview findings and discussion**

### **Literacy service provision in Wanganui**

#### ***Descriptions of individual providers<sup>3</sup>***

##### *Ag Challenge*

Contact: Peter Macdonald  
248 St Hill Street, Wanganui

Ag Challenge Training Centre is one of Wanganui's longest serving Tertiary Institutes. The goal of Ag Challenge is to give students the skills to gain employment as well an introduction to the industry of their chosen career.

Ag Challenge Limited has specialist trainers in Automotive, Agriculture and Carpentry National Certificate programmes. Students are able to start the 44-week programmes at any time. Most training is hands on and students are able to experience the automotive, carpentry and agricultural industries as practical experience. Theory training is undertaken at the Ag Challenge Campus. Individual literacy and numeracy assistance is also available.

A fee paying Veterinary Nursing programme is offered in conjunction with Wanganui Veterinary Services where students are able to train in a working veterinary practice. Student loans and allowances are available. Part-time safety programmes (HSNO and agrichemicals) are also offered.

##### *ESOL Home Tutors (Wanganui) Inc. (English for Speakers of Other Languages)*

Contact: Jane Blinkhorne  
Phone: 345 1778

This service is part of the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes. ESOL Home Tutors (Wanganui) Inc. is overseen by the national association, although individual schemes are run differently according to the needs of learners in that area. The Wanganui scheme is governed by a local committee, which includes a co-coordinator, secretary, chairperson, and treasurer. The goals of the scheme are to provide English language and social support to migrants and refugees. Differences between people are valued.

Services are provided to speakers of other languages in Wanganui through both group classes and one to one home tutoring. The groups take place at the provider premises as well as in the community. They include a multicultural women's group, beginners and intermediate English language groups, 'New Zealand English' classes, and social events. The content taught is related to migrants' needs, such as dealing with banking, health, or immigration issues. Vol-

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<sup>3</sup> Interview data is supplemented by information from provider Internet websites.

unteer tutors trained in the Certificate in ESOL Home Tutoring provide one to one tuition within learners' homes, directed at their individual requirements.

### *Land-Based Training*

Contact: Rob Gollan

Phone: 349 0077

Land-Based Training specialises in training for those who wish to work on the land. It is a private business with two owners, one of whom is the manager. Management determines the strategic directions and objectives of the business and meets regularly with staff. It operates from a number of sites across the North Island. The goals of Land-Based Training are to provide a pathway to knowledge and self-awareness leading to better employment; and to provide opportunities through work-based training. It also has a focus on building closer relationships and promoting successful career options within the agricultural and civil construction industries. Retail, hospitality, administration, and many other areas are covered.

Land-Based Training delivers a range of educational programmes, including the National Certificate in Agriculture Level 2, Introduction to the National Certificate in Employment Skills, National Certificate in Civil Construction Works, and Introduction to Horticulture. It also provides training in mixed employment skills, health and safety, marae trades, and vehicle licensing and endorsements. Teaching methods include classroom based work and workplace training.

Numeracy and literacy training is integrated into the courses, with one tutor providing much of the support. This includes 1:1 assistance and referral to a specialist Wanganui literacy provider.

### *Literacy Aotearoa*

Contact: Gail Harrison

Phone: 348 4950

One of 54 independently incorporated members of Literacy Aotearoa Inc., the local branch works closely with the head office in Auckland. Literacy Aotearoa Whanganui is a community organisation and a foundation skills training provider with New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) accreditation, and specialises in delivering services that meet the needs of the local community. As a member of Literacy Aotearoa, the local branch works in accordance with the national mission statement and definition.

A local governing committee is responsible for establishing policy, strategic direction, being gatekeepers of the organisations' kaupapa, good employment practices, and monitoring the effectiveness of the organisation. Management is charged with implementing agency plans within a quality management framework.

Literacy programmes are designed to meet the assessed literacy needs of each learner and tuition is provided to achieve negotiated learning goals. Learning is contextualised, provided in-house and within the community, and scopes the local business community, government departments, community organisations, Private Training Organisations, and community groups.



Literacy Aotearoa (Whanganui) provides a holistic learning service with the services of a Clinical Social Worker available to all learners. Core literacy services are provided at no direct cost to the learners and are delivered in ways that value the culture, gender, and age of the learner. Workplace literacy programmes are supported by way of the Tertiary Education Strategy.

Services include: literacy needs assessment/screening; workplace literacy needs assessment; pre-employment skills; computer skills; National Certificate in Employment Skills; workplace literacy programmes; literacy programmes – 1:1 and group; road safety programmes – learners and restricted licences; return to work support and mentoring; learner support for local private training organisations; clinical social worker support services; family/whanau literacy programmes; professional development support for local literacy tutors; Adult Literacy Research and Development Services.

### *Literacy Training Limited*

Contact: Linda Clareburt  
Phone: 06 354 7714

Literacy Training Limited is a privately owned, specialist literacy provider based in Palmerston North but working throughout New Zealand. It is overseen by a Managing Director, with most of the day-to-day operations being dealt with by a Contracts Manager. Project leaders and tutoring staff work on individual contracts held with Government Departments or private businesses. The main goals of Literacy Training Limited are to: 1) Provide the opportunities for individuals to function within the community and their workplaces with the literacy and numeracy skills they require (through their contracts with government departments and business); 2) Give people a foundation for making real choices about their lives. They value strength and confidence within individuals and work to promote these.

Literacy Training Limited provides national and regionally based services in three areas: Work and Income clients, Prison-based services and Workplace Training. The prison-based services incorporate a variety of programmes for prisoners based around literacy and numeracy and employment skills. These are delivered through a variety of courses which have literacy training integrated within them. The Workplace Training service is negotiated individually with each employer. The Work and Income contract allows the individuals to develop their literacy, language, and numeracy skills in a self-directed or work-linked capacity.

### *SPELD NZ (the Specific Learning Disabilities Federation)*

Contact: Esther Williams  
Phone: 347 6957

SPELD New Zealand is a not-for-profit organisation, which provides services to people of all ages with specific learning difficulties such as problems with spelling, reading, maths, handwriting, spatial skills, as well as attention deficits and various degrees of autism. Its overall objectives are to provide advocacy, assessment and tutoring, and family support to those dealing with these difficulties. It has 29 member associations nation-wide, of which SPELD Wanganui is one. SPELD Wanganui is overseen by the National Association, but is governed at a local level by a committee comprising the president, secretary, treasurer, teacher, and parent

representatives. The local committee makes operating decisions for the Wanganui Association and holds an open Annual General Meeting.

SPELD tutors aim to provide students with a feeling of self-worth, working from areas of strength to weakness, helping students to survive in a classroom, tertiary institution, and workplace. Registered educational testers first identify the students' areas of strength and weakness, and then plan remedial programmes based on these detailed assessments. SPELD provide tutoring on an individual basis. Progress is assessed at regular intervals. SPELD Wanganui provides two NZQA approved courses for parents, teachers, teacher aides, and those interested in specific learning disabilities.

### *Sport and Recreation Wanganui*

Contact: Penina Kenworthy

Phone: 348 1440

Sport and Recreation Wanganui (SRW) is one of 17 Regional Sports Trusts throughout New Zealand and is active in the Wanganui, Rangitikei, Central, and Ruapehu Regions. SRW is managed by a locally appointed Board of Trustees. Management staff includes the CEO, an Operations Manager, and a Finance and Administration manager. All staff have input into developing the strategic direction for the trust. The purpose of this organisation is "to support and develop sport and physical activities through others to ensure the people of the Wanganui region sustain a healthy and active lifestyle".

From the late 1990's until 2006, SRW operated a number of training courses as a Private Training Establishment. The provision of these courses reduced significantly over time with only one course, Mountain Sport and Recreation in Taumarunui, being offered between 2004 and 2006. The reduction in training courses was due to the changing nature of SRW's focus and the final Mountain Sport and Recreation Course was completed in June 2006.

The training courses provided aimed to prepare students for the workforce by providing foundation skills for employment or further learning. Training was provided within the sport fitness and physical recreation environment. Students were encouraged to work on their own physical fitness and received certificates in lifeguarding, customer service, sport fitness, and recreation. Courses were open to people of all ages and education levels. Those requiring additional assistance with literacy were referred to a local specialist literacy provider.

### *Training For You Limited*

Contact: Denise Scott-Lister

Phone: 345 1638

Training For You Limited is a Tertiary Education Organisation that aims to provide innovative programmes and inspire learning. Two Owner-Directors, one of whom is the managing director, govern Training For You. A programme supervisor who is a member of the management team leads each educational programme. This team reports directly to the manager. Training For You values the individuality of all students, understands that each student is different and specialises in individual learning styles. Training For You staff believe that education is the

key to empowerment, enabling students to create an optimistic future for themselves and their families.

Training For You delivers Training Opportunities (TOPS), STAR, Gateway, Youth, and Correspondence Programmes. Fulltime programmes include integrated literacy delivered by the course tutors supported by a dedicated literacy facilitator. Programmes include: National Certificates in Early Childhood Education and Care; Employment Skills; Horse Skills; and a Certificate in Teacher Aiding. Training For You has a well-resourced Student Learning Centre staffed by three specialist literacy tutors providing 1:1 assistance to all students and the delivery of 13 credits from NCEA level 2 English. Students with high literacy needs are able to access additional assistance above the standard provision of 1:1. Training For You has training sites in Wanganui, New Plymouth, and Palmerston North. All programmes have practical components, allowing students to link theory taught in the classroom environment to real life work situations.

### *Tupoho Whanau Trust*

Contact: George Marshall

Phone: 348 0395

Tupoho Whanau Trust is an iwi-based organisation, focussing on the needs of local Māori. Tupoho has three bases across the region. The Wanganui branch covers the bottom part of the region. It is governed by a Board of Trustees and is part of the WHAMPTE network. The vision of Tupoho Whanau Trust is to “build a vibrant, robust and prosperous iwi, culturally, socially and economically.” Its kaupapa is “To protect, nurture and educate all learners who attend Tupoho Whanau Trust Education and Training Establishment” (quotes derived from programme pamphlets of the Tupoho Whanau Trust).

Tupoho delivers literacy services to learners in conjunction with its other programmes, if required. The programmes are:

- Fishing (a set programme of 30 hours a week)
- Individual Pathways (up to 15 students at a time, for 44 teaching weeks) focusing on whatever is required by the student, with literacy integrated if required
- Active Employment Assistance (WINZ funded), which assists with whatever is required for the person to obtain a job such as obtaining subsidies, training in a specific skill.
- A new programme began in July with the focus of foundation learning. The aim is to improve literacy, numeracy, and communication skills. The programme is flexible enabling tutoring to be done in both group and/or one-to-one situations.

### *UCOL (The Universal College of Learning)*

Contact: Chrissie Zurcher

Phone: 9653800 Ext. 60798

UCOL is a government-funded Institute of Technology with 4 campuses in the North Island. It is governed by the UCOL Council who are responsible for preparing the charter and profile that ensures UCOL is managed according to these, and for appointing a chief executive. Wan-

ganui management staff includes a campus principal who has overall responsibility for the learning centre, and programme leaders in different faculties.

UCOL has an open access policy for students over school leaving age. It aims to provide a tertiary education to all students that will enable them to find employment. Courses are offered in the areas of fashion, computer graphics, fine arts, creative industries, business, nursing, hospitality, catering, tourism, hairdressing, construction, and welding.

UCOL provides a range of student support services including academic counselling and learning support. Personal Education Plans are provided to support and guide students when choosing careers and educational options. The Learning Support Service employs a literacy tutor to see those with difficulties either in small groups or 1:1. The assistance provided here can include: time management, memory retention, computer skills, assignment writing skills, grammar and English as a second language, and extra tuition in subjects such as maths. Students can also access the accessibility coordinator, counsellors, a nurse, and doctor at the Health Centre. At Whanganui UCOL, the Learning Support Staff work in A10, opposite the Information and Enrolment Centre on the Main Campus in Campbell Street.

### *Waiora Christian Community Trust*

Contact: Eugene Katene  
Phone: 3435015

Waiora Christian Community Trust is a Christian organisation governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board develops the strategic planning and vision for the organisation, while operational decisions are made by the management team, which includes the CEO, Education Manager, and administrator. Waiora aims to provide the information required by students to move forward in life and fulfil their goals.

Waiora delivers services within a strong Christian focus. These include Youth Programmes, a retail TOPS Programme, Alternative Education Programmes, and a Literacy Programme, which covers 4 stages up to NCES level. Waiora has made use of self-directed learning materials in the past. Literacy assistance is integrated within programmes and a part-time literacy tutor is employed to help students with very low literacy levels.

### *YMCA Wanganui*

Contact: Barbara Candish  
Phone: 348 9255

YMCA Wanganui is an autonomous non-profit organisation whose goals are to support families and youth, to make training opportunities accessible to all, and to fill gaps in the community. YMCA Wanganui is part of a national body, but is governed at a local level by a voluntary board. Management staff includes the executive director and three managers. YMCA promotes a set of values, which are integrated into each programme, and all participants are expected to abide by these. These are: caring, respect, honesty, bi-culturalism, responsibility, and enjoyment of life.

The training courses provided by YMCA Wanganui are: National Certificates in Furniture Making, Employment Skills, Meat Processing, Business Administration and Computing, and Workplace Learning. The YMCA also offers 'Y's Learning' (including life skills, communication, and literacy skills), a Certificate in Supported Employment, and the conservation Corps. Alternative education programmes are delivered for young people alienated from mainstream schooling, as well as a Young Parents' Programme. Numeracy and literacy assistance is integrated throughout programmes and 'roving' literacy tutors provide additional assistance within classes. Teaching takes place in a variety of locations, for example in classrooms on provider premises, during camps, or at a separate house (programme for young parents).

### ***Staff roles***

Literacy practitioners may be working in management and/or tutoring roles. Each may take on a variety of tasks, possibly performing several roles at once. Management tasks include: funding applications; acting as a specialist literacy resource person; selecting NZQA units to teach; interviewing prospective students; employing staff; enabling links between course supervisors, staff, and students; and visiting and observing the teaching premises.

Tutoring staff tasks are organized differently in each organisation. Some providers have subject-specific tutors plus a literacy specialist or 'roving tutors' to assist with literacy and numeracy. One provider separates the roles between tutors (who supply the teaching) and field officers (who provide social assistance, job seeking, and mentoring in the field). Some tutors who are also skilled in social work act as literacy supervisors/facilitators, training education managers, or leaders of student learning services. They support course tutors and assist them with professional development, ensuring their access to appropriate teaching tools. They also support colleagues in other organisations with professional development, implement performance indicators, innovations, and professional practice groups, observe practice, and provide feedback.

Providers varied in the roles taken by staff in addressing learners' personal issues. Many respondents described how providing literacy assistance is intertwined with addressing students' personal and social problems. These providers play a significant role by being available to listen, and linking students to appropriate social and health services. A few providers noted that they are unable to take on this role, for example, within the prison environment or workplace learning.

Tutors emphasised the need to establish rapport with their students, keep them motivated, obtain their trust, communicate respect for them, and engage them with subjects of interest. As many learners arrive with low self-esteem and a history of lack of success, it was considered vital for the tutor to demonstrate a belief in them.

Comments from two respondents demonstrated the range of provider involvement:

We had a student who started work experience for the first time and he bumped into one of our staff in town and said, "Last year I thought getting stoned was such a good high, but now I'm on an even better high - on life", and to me that's part of the whole being of literacy. I couldn't have got him to where he is today if I had just looked at

the reading and writing. He would have turned off, he wouldn't have got counselling, he wouldn't have gained clear drug tests.

There's a danger of burnout of a literacy tutor being involved at that level. There's more damage being done in terms of the potential literacy tutor and student relationship if you enter a field where you're not necessarily fully equipped to be able to provide that support ... In the past where learners have been suicidal ... and the tutors have tried to engage and support the person, ... it always goes wrong, ... and the tutor ends up on the edge, ... sometimes being manipulated by the learner. They become co-dependent on that tutor to fix all their problems.

Many providers make use of referral to outside agencies. Several use staff other than literacy tutors within their organisation to assist with personal and social needs, for example, clinical social workers, whanau support workers, and field officers.

### ***Staff training and peer support***

The staff training and peer support currently available to tutoring staff varies among providers. Volunteer tutors for one provider undertake an in-house training course, complete a record of learning with a learner for 12 weeks, and are then awarded a tutoring certificate. Tutors at other providers are trained to be aware of literacy issues. However, one expressed concern that training for literacy tutors depends on support provided by the governance of the organisation. Until recently there has been no qualification that tutors could easily work towards.

Tutor professional development following initial training appears to vary, depending on the provider. Some providers offer frequent professional development for tutors. TEC provides some literacy and numeracy training for tutors. Membership of professional associations such as the Adult Literacy Practitioners' Association (ALPA) and the Tertiary Literacy Cluster (TLC) is also available. Experienced practitioners provide professional development support to staff within their own and other organisations. This support includes peer reviewing, professional observation and assistance, and weekly meetings with course tutors.

Course tutors require a range of skills, including the teaching of literacy and numeracy, knowing how to teach adults appropriately, and some counselling/social work skills. Some providers noted that it can be a challenge to keep up with professional development needs.

### **Definitions of literacy**

It became clear from the interviews that there are multiple, changing, definitions of literacy. As one provider stated, defining literacy "depends on the time, culture, country, and context. Our definitions of what is a literacy need must be continually evolving." The current debate over cell-phone texting is one illustration; some tutors do not accept text language in written work, while others accept it as a part of today's communication and literacy.

Respondents suggested that literacy is reading and writing, but also includes vocational literacy, computer, technical, and academic skills. Literacy was seen as a form of communication involving understanding and interpreting language in many forms, verbal and written. A Māori provider, for example, defined literacy as, “communication in all its forms... We communicate physically through body language... Literacy is in stories, carvings, tukutuku panels on the walls, and whakapapa (genealogy).”

There was a widespread belief among the research participants that literacy training needs to be holistic, encompassing the whole being of a person, addressing cultural, social, and personal needs, and job skills, including literacies in languages and cultures other than English. Above all, literacy was deemed necessary for survival in society.

### ***The most important elements of literacy***

Research participants were asked to rate the most important elements of literacy (see Appendix C). Twelve of the twenty interviewees responded.

**Table 2. Importance rating of literacy elements by providers<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Element of literacy</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
Reading	12		
Writing	12		
Numeracy	12		
Communication	12		
Spelling	6	2	3
Computer skills	6	5	1
Problem-solving	8	4	
Ability to use information	10	2	

Table 2 shows consensus that reading, writing, numeracy, and communication are important elements of literacy. However, there were mixed opinions about the elements of spelling, computer skills, problem-solving, and the ability to use information. It was suggested that ‘ability to decode and understand the visual world around us’ could be an important element of literacy. It was also noted that ‘communication’ could include body language and cross-cultural communication.

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<sup>4</sup> No provider choose ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ for any of the elements rated in importance.

## **Assessment**

Two providers believed that testing was inappropriate, due to the nature of service delivery. However, the following comment summed up the importance of assessment to most providers:

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning practice. Formative, diagnostic, and summative assessments are utilized. These assessments are utilized in a cyclic process and inform practice. Our aim is to assist learners to identify where/what their learning needs are, and to measure the success of their learning and goals. Assessment must be purposeful, respectful, adult-centred, and meaningful.

### ***Initial assessment of learners' needs***

Providers use a range of assessment processes, often in combination. Among these are standardised, psychometric testing to assess skills such as decoding, comprehension, visual and auditory discrimination – e.g. the Burt Reading Test and the Woodcock-Johnson Assessment Battery. Some providers prefer to initially use observation and interview assessment to gather information about learners' personal, social, and learning needs. Exploring whakapapa and making family connections were described as effective ways of building rapport with all students.

Several providers have developed their own assessment tools including: basic addition; the content of unit standards; and vocation-specific assessments. Benefits of providers developing their own tools are: assessing only what is necessary; providing a simple-to-use tool; and obtaining information pertinent to the provider. Because development of assessments by staff can be time-intensive, some providers obtain assistance from other organisations to develop assessments. Others refer learners to providers who specialise in particular assessments.

Several providers commented on the importance of considering learning styles during assessment. A standardised tool assessing visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinaesthetic learning styles may be used to cater for differing learning styles. Self-assessment, although not always accurate, is used as it allows comparison with actual results and may assist learners' understanding of their difficulties. Gathering learners' histories occurs through such avenues as discussion with parents. Reviewing school records also takes place. Further, some tutors also complete a needs analysis with individual students.

### ***Assessment of learners' progress***

Assessment tools for monitoring learners' progress range from standardised, diagnostic techniques to self-evaluation. Standardised assessment gives a quantitative measure of progress, and motivates students who enjoy seeing increases in their scores. For one provider, re-testing after 30–40 tutorials determines need for further tuition. Another provider uses self-evaluation, with tutors encouraging learners to reflect on their progress and its impact on themselves, their family, and how they operate in the community.

Completion of unit standards is the most important measure of progress for some providers. One provider assesses students for competency in the literacy skills required to pass specific



unit standards. Integral to assessment is keeping a record of learning. Several providers described elements of 'planned review', e.g. reviewing students' workbooks; quarterly unit results reviews; individual follow-up for workplace trainees; and weekly meetings with the literacy tutor to check each student's progress.

Another assessment tool uses indicators of 'success' to determine progress. It was noted that success can be measured in addition to literacy gains. For example, successfully completing a drug programme is major progress for a group where drug use has impeded learning. Similarly useful is checking for new achievements, either through reaching a concrete goal, (e.g. a learner driver's licence), or by checking against a career plan developed at the start of their course. Challenges in assessment are discussed later in this report.

### ***Quality assurance***

Staff performance reviews were the most frequently mentioned method of assessing staff performance. These occur through observation of tutor practice, self-evaluation, and peer assessment. Regular assessment moderation monitors marking standards. Position/job guidelines standardise management and committee members' tasks. TEC assess staff performance during site visits by asking students about their courses and staff assistance received.

Provider performance assessment is divided into *internal* and *external* measures. The two most common *internal* methods are student feedback, (evaluation forms or interactive feedback with a group of students), and staff evaluation of the organisation (questionnaires). Providers' national offices or local branches conduct internal audits. Boards of Trustees also audit reports and observe provider premises. A database may be used to log student statistics, and non-academic success is evaluated by such means as monitoring student numbers in a work place-ment after course completion.

TEC and NZQA requirements direct most *external* assessment. The Adult Literacy Quality Mark derives from TEC/ACE quality standards. TEC conduct external audits through advisors making site visits. They require an average of 20 credits per year per student and check that target numbers are met, students attend, and credits are achieved. Providers register with NZQA who moderate the results of each field delivered. Checks are kept that industry unit standards follow required templates and formats.

## **Teaching methods**

Literacy teaching tends to be delivered within a small group or in a 1:1 tutoring situation. Some providers give individual assistance within the group environment, rather than apart from it. Advantages and disadvantages of both methods emerged during interviews.

### ***Individual tutoring***

Individual tutoring can enable the use of both Te Reo Māori and English. It enables programmes to be designed based on individual strengths, goals, and starting points. Individual tutoring fosters the tutor-learner relationship, assisting case management. Students who re-

quest individual tutoring at foundation skills level may later move into small groups when their confidence has increased.

Disadvantages of individual tutoring are that students are exposed to only one person's perspective and they may not develop skills required for group participation. Negative school experiences may cause learners to refuse 1:1 assistance due to fear of embarrassment.

### ***Small group work***

Small group work occurs in programmes such as independent living skills, budgeting skills, and preparing for employment. Using 'fun' methods to prevent boredom, information is presented on blackboards, whiteboards, or through audio-visual materials. Tutors also use ice-breakers, brainteasers, coloured pen activities, Scrabble and Monopoly games, or guest speakers with specialist knowledge about health, financial, and social services.

To teach problem solving, a group may be presented with a scenario, asked to brainstorm solutions, and vote on the best solution. Students can be given practical tasks like furnishing a flat for a specified amount of money using newspaper and department store advertisements. Peer tutoring uses students with better literacy skills to help others. Voluntary questionnaires completed at the start of class ask learners to commit to the class and ground rules. These function as tutor-student agreements.

Small group work allows students to develop confidence and oral communication skills, drawing on the experience and knowledge of 10-12 participants. Small groups, rather than large, allow the tutor flexibility to cater for low literacy levels. A disadvantage of group work is that some students lack the confidence to participate, even in a small group. The challenges of teaching to a wide range of abilities within a class are discussed later in this report.

## **Identifying learners' social needs**

Seen to be an important part of the definition of literacy, the major personal and social needs of several groups of learners are discussed in this section.

### ***Needs of youth***

The phase one survey revealed that "a high proportion of participants in Wanganui and Districts adult literacy programmes were in the age group 16-19 (accounting for approximately 38% of clients)" (Neilson & Culligan, 2005, p. 3). The social and personal needs of youth were seen to arise from four key areas: negative school experiences; family problems; drug and alcohol use; and other health concerns. Further factors were lack of things to do and low socio-economic status.

Many young people attending training programmes report negative school experiences. One claimed to have "only survived by getting stoned at lunch". Low literacy and numeracy arises with youth 'slipping through the net', after not attending school for long periods, or frequent school changes. Others, whose behavioural problems may have been exacerbated by low literacy and low self-esteem, have been alienated from school through suspension or expulsion.

As well as 15–17 year olds, providers also discussed 13–15 year old youth accessing alternative education services. It was felt that their needs have not been well addressed. Students moving from school to adult learner programmes may be challenged by teaching styles that expect more interaction and participation. Providers do not have resources to deal with this groups' learning needs and behaviour may worsen. As schools no longer acknowledge responsibility for them, this group can miss extra-curricular activities such as sport, or services such as immunisation. It is difficult to reintegrate them into mainstream schooling, and they tend to fail again due to expectation differences.

Families with social problems were perceived to have increased. Some parents have no family support with child rearing, and parental drug abuse has a major impact on youth. Providers reported teaching youth who were fearful of their parents, or had nowhere to live. One provider regularly prepares and eats food with students as an opportunity to discuss problems. Where possible, tutors work with families, encouraging them to consult support agencies. They make referrals to Child, Youth, and Family Services if needed. One provider has a whanau support worker to visit students at home.

Several respondents expressed frustration that police, schools, courts, and other authorities have been able to do little to address increased drug and alcohol use among Wanganui youth. The use of drugs and alcohol was seen to have a major impact on learning, as shown by the following comment:

We have students who get keyed up on Thursdays because they know tomorrow is Friday and come Friday night they'll be out drinking, getting drunk, and getting stoned. Come Monday they're in our classes with such a severe hangover they fall asleep.

To attempt to address this, providers reported setting individual goals for each student, bringing in speakers to present information about the impact of drug and alcohol use, and making referrals to alcohol and drug services.

The health of young people seen by providers is considered to be poor. Problems include poor hearing and vision, sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy, and wearing inappropriate clothing in cold weather.

### ***Needs of adult Māori learners***

Several providers do not currently make specific changes to their programme delivery to cater for the needs of Māori learners.<sup>5</sup> The reasons given were: they value all students individually, including their culture; or that specific changes were not required as most students attending a particular course were Māori. Two providers indicated Māori learners would benefit from further development of course delivery, including involving a kaumatua. The project team recognizes that 'kaumatua within Māori communities are ever-decreasing, and just appointing a kaumatua does not necessarily raise the capability of the individual or the organisation to achieve its goals of improving Māori literacy.'

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<sup>5</sup> It is acknowledged that a number of respondents were working from a non-Māori perspective.

Other providers in Wanganui meet the needs of Māori learners in various ways.<sup>6</sup> It was noted that Māori prefer face-to-face interaction and, when learning numeracy or budgeting skills, students appreciate examples that relate to their own circumstances. Another means of meeting Māori learners' needs is for tutors to leave the campus to teach in a home-like environment where whanau are welcome to visit, food is shared, and a family atmosphere encouraged.

Several providers discussed the value of students completing units on whakapapa and discovery of their heritage to help understand themselves and others. One provider used a literacy programme designed for Māori (Greenlight). Demonstrating cultural awareness throughout all course delivery was seen to be important by several providers. Efforts are made to include examples and names that represent a range of cultures in the learning material presented. Two providers noted that total immersion graduates highly skilled in Te Reo may require assistance to develop English literacy.

Several challenges to meeting the needs of Māori were also raised. Programmes delivered by a Māori provider and a local tertiary institution were not seen as effectively stair-casing into each other. The Māori provider reported reduced numbers of Māori students in a polytechnic course due to low literacy levels, lack of cultural safety and comfort, and because Māori value different ways of learning than currently offered. The provider has been contracted to assist with these concerns. A proposed reciprocal agreement between the two providers suggests the tertiary provider uses the Māori trust's marae and classrooms, while the trust provides services such as staff training in Te Reo and arranging powhiri for the tertiary institution. However, these arrangements were not yet seen as operating effectively.

### ***Needs of non-English speakers and learners from other cultures***

Recent non-English speaking arrivals in New Zealand often suffer from the emotional impact of leaving family, fear, and mistrust due to experiences in war-torn countries, and isolation due to an inability to communicate. Some find that their expectations of the new country have not been met: the weather is colder, or the people not as friendly as expected. Resulting problems of depression and grief can be difficult for the appropriate services to pick up and address. The range of abilities in literacy and English varies widely across a group of ESOL learners, many do not have cars, and work demands limit the time they are able to attend classes. To meet these needs, providers offer a range of topics, attempt to fit classes around working hours, and in some cases, interpreters may attend classes.

A number of providers noted that they have not had to make specific changes to their programmes to address the needs of learners from other cultures, although most noted that being aware of and valuing differences between people was of high importance. Those who have addressed the needs of specific cultures within their programme delivery suggested: employing tutoring staff from diverse cultures; considering students' cultural needs during teaching and assessment; all students completing a unit on cultural awareness; and accessing resources from local primary schools' cultural units. Providers delivering literacy within prisons reported a growing need to cater for the needs of Asian peoples.

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<sup>6</sup> The indigenous perspective on adult literacy programmes is being explored in detail through another component of the Literacy and Employment research.

### ***Needs of prisoners***

Providers working with prisoners described the prison environment as an important factor in provision; things that might affect them in the community do not always affect them in prison. Prisoners have few demands on their time and are not required to make choices about what they will do. The social and personal needs of learners in prison were seen to relate to: lack of education, family instability, mental health issues, and financial problems. A number are fathers whose children have been removed from their care. Social and health workers who contribute to living skills courses give prisoners opportunities to seek further assistance. Prisoners are encouraged to evaluate their supports for when they are released, and are informed of agencies to contact.

## **Funding and resourcing**

### ***How literacy providers are funded***

Some providers receive funding from more than one source. TEC provides some or all literacy funding for eight of the twelve surveyed providers. There are various strands of TEC funding, such as youth programmes and training opportunities programmes (TOPS). TEC no longer generally funds 1:1 literacy assistance, but it may be supplemented by Adult Literacy Learning (ALL) pool funding (under the TEC umbrella). One provider has renegotiated with TEC for 1:1 literacy assistance, but funding does not cover all of the assistance they provide.

Some providers are funded to deliver programmes to target populations – e.g. the Ministry of Corrections (MoC) funds programmes for prisoners, and Land Transport New Zealand (LTNZ) funds learner driver licence programmes. Both integrate literacy components. MoE funds one large provider. The amount received is based on equivalent full-time student numbers, and learning centre staff are required to justify extra support requested for students. Three providers reported using fundraising or philanthropic means to gain funds. Two providers obtain some funding through tuition fees. Work and Income funds one provider to deliver literacy assistance to clients referred from other providers.

### ***Putting funders' literacy requirements into practice***

Most providers noted that TEC requires them to integrate literacy into their programmes. This is achieved in a range of ways: specialist literacy tutors work 1:1 and in small groups while programme tutors deliver integrated literacy; referrals are made to outside organisations; and literacy components are delivered within unit standards. ALL funding can be provided for literacy assistance. To receive this, one provider outlined the literacy assistance they would provide with the funding, including 1:1 assistance for all learners, literacy seminars, sixth form English components, and high frequency help for those with high needs. A provider for MoC commented that they are not specifically funded to provide literacy, but embed literacy into all their programmes.

### ***Determining the appropriate time per client***

Most providers reported a level of flexibility in determining time required per client, based on the needs of individual students or groups. For some, this was regardless of whether funding

received was sufficient. Three providers offer individual tutoring to clients. Providers who deliver most of their literacy assistance within small groups do not work on a 'time per individual' basis. Several providers use assessment results and progress reviews with tutors to determine how much time a client needs. One allocated time to each course with two roving tutors splitting their time between courses and giving 1:1 assistance to high needs students. Another provider charts the literacy skills required for each unit standard on a programme matrix. The lowest and highest needs are coded and course supervisors scan each course group to determine which integrated literacy skills are required. Time allocation is guided by time available and the help the student needs. In workplace training, time available per client or group of employees is determined by what the employer can afford.

## **Literacy and employment issues**

### ***Meeting needs of students prior to obtaining work***

Literacy providers deliver courses in employment skills, including: public speaking, dispute resolution, time management, resume preparation, workplace presentation, identifying skills required to gain particular jobs, understanding employment contracts and the Employment Relations Act, and role-playing as preparation for interviews. Assistance may address personal issues preventing successful job application (for example, ill-health or obtaining clear drug tests). The positive outcomes of attending literacy courses include obtaining job interviews in the learners' fields of interest.

### ***Meeting workplace needs***

Workers in paid employment also request assistance from literacy providers for upskilling in areas such as computer skills. Of concern is when employees are hesitant to make these needs known to their employers due to fear of job loss or embarrassment. One provider delivers training within the workplace upon negotiation with employers. Packages are individually designed to meet the needs identified within each context. Employees are protected through provider/employer agreements regarding learner confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the provision of individual follow-up. Positive outcomes of workplace training include skill increases and employer awareness of improvements they can make in the workplace. These lead to social and attitudinal changes in employees, such as increased commitment, less absenteeism, and willingness to ask questions.

### ***Literacy and employment issues for non-English speaking students***

Non-English speakers may have professional qualifications from their home country, but be unable to obtain professional employment in New Zealand. Some operate businesses such as market gardens and need English skills to communicate with customers. Students requiring English language assistance often work shifts in the fast food industry or in rest homes, and their time available to attend classes can be limited.

## **Working with other providers and organisations**

### ***Interaction among Wanganui literacy providers***

Providers attend each others' workshops and share resources. Attendance at professional association gatherings such as the Literacy Practitioner's Network, ACE network meetings, and the PTE association were seen as beneficial. Staff development often takes place collaboratively despite the competitive funding environment. Diversity among the providers was mostly viewed positively as offering choice and allowing students entry at different points. Diversity also provides literacy in the context of other courses and encourages the sharing of ideas among professionals.

One provider reported little interaction with other providers due to the competitive market. Challenges in working together are discussed later in this report.

### ***Provider interaction with community organisations***

Wanganui literacy providers described interaction with more than fifty community organisations. Contact is made for referral of individual students, and for obtaining resources, information, or speakers for class work. Few difficulties were noted in working with these organisations, with most respondents positive about the assistance they receive. Many providers have had community experience and have established networks with community agencies. Making use of these agencies is an established part of their processes. It was seen as relatively easy to access community support organisations in Wanganui. Examples of agencies from each of the sectors mentioned include:

- Health services: Health nurses; alcohol and drug services; Breast Screen Aotearoa; mental health services; sexual health services
- Legal/Justice services: Police (tutors work with police to facilitate restorative justice or involvement in an appropriate programme); Kaitoke prison (presentations to students about prison life); Community Legal Advice Whanganui; Youth Aid; Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Service
- Education services: Special needs unit at local secondary school; Arahunga Special School; Community Education Service
- Disability services: IDEA (intellectual disability services); Disability Resources Centre
- Family and counselling services: Child, Youth, and Family Services
- Financial/employment services: Work and Income; Pak n Save (recruitment staff teach youth interview skills, relating to adults); banking groups (class presentations e.g. managing money, mortgages); Wanganui Enterprises (supported employment)
- Māori services: Waipuna Medical Centre; Tupoho Matua Whanau Trust (sometimes assist with emergency housing).

## **Effective service provision: challenges and suggested solutions**

### ***Wide variety of needs***

Fourteen of the twenty interviewees indicated that catering for a 'wide variety of needs' within each class creates a challenge in their work. The wide variety may be in age, literacy levels, cultural backgrounds, disabilities (e.g. learning, psychiatric, and physical), and across different

groups (e.g. youth, prisoners, and those whose first language is not English). Key challenges are: integrating literacy and numeracy while managing different speeds of working in group situations; finding age-appropriate subject matter; working with students with differing English-language skills who use a variety of written language scripts; catering for multiple learning styles; and catering for the increasing numbers of learners with complex behavioural, health and family problems, and disabilities.

Among suggested solutions were the tutor working 1:1 with students at lower levels while the rest of the class works on an activity; using students who have completed a unit as reader/writers to help others; grouping people with similar needs into small support groups; and meeting individual students' needs by home tutoring. For addressing a wide variety of ages a suggestion was to have a range of materials/examples available to suit different age groups. To meet diverse language and cultural needs providers suggested involving others to help translate and make participants feel more comfortable; demonstrating culturally appropriate behaviours as standard practice; employing a wide variety of cultures among staff; and 'understanding cultures' being presented as class material.

### ***Assessment***

Just over half of the respondents argued for assessment as a useful information-gathering tool, motivating students because it allows them to see their progress. However, almost half of the respondents felt that assessing learners presents a challenge to effective service provision. The concerns raised included: practical and attitudinal difficulties in assessing students with low literacy levels; that the amount of time spent on assessment tasks interfered with learning and resulted from over-emphasis on accountability; lack of understanding that assessment of adults differs from assessment of children; and the relevance of assessment for voluntary students and those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

One particular assessment challenge was the need for tutors to cater for students' preferred learning styles when developing assessment tasks, for example, some learners demonstrate their progress more successfully in practical assessment so observations of new skills may be made through such avenues as role-plays. Alternatively, interviews with parents, caregivers, and teachers about changes seen in students' skill levels, and in students' attitudes towards self and learning, may indicate wider success.

Further suggested solutions included making provision for oral assessment or reader-writers when low literacy prevents understanding of written questions; allowing re-sits of failed units when literacy levels have improved; using informal assessment of progress for non-English speaking students; using collaborative assessment with adult students; choosing modules from the NZQA framework with appropriate assessment methods; developing new assessment tools, and continual upskilling of tutors in the availability and use of assessment options.

### ***Interaction with other literacy providers***

Discussion of working with other literacy providers raised two key challenges. First, there were problems for providers created by the competitive nature of the current funding system. Second, there were student-centred problems, sometimes also related to the funding system, of providing continuity of student contact and staircasing between courses.



Most respondents stated that, because of the current funding system, they work in a competitive environment, with those providing services to the same groups of learners being in direct competition for funds. They viewed competition as a major challenge as it could prevent providers talking to each other or sharing resources or ideas. Also, the tendering model for contracts and applying for grants is considered to be time-consuming and risky. Changes in the funding available through Workbridge have made it difficult to obtain specialist support from another provider. One suggested solution was that an independent organisation be set up to map the roles of providers, to manage the sharing of students, resourcing, development, and professional development for literacy providers. Also suggested was that regular networking at professional meetings, such as the Tertiary Literacy Cluster, encourages collaboration.

As providers use different processes it can be difficult to transfer knowledge between literacy tutors or facilitators and this may lead to staircasing difficulties in identifying where a student can go next when they leave a provider. In particular, staircasing between Māori provider courses and other tertiary courses has not been established effectively. Moreover, by going to a specialist provider a student may initially make progress, but then discontinue attendance and slip back. A further concern was possible loss of privacy for students when they are referred on to other organisations. It was described as difficult to work with schools when they no longer acknowledge students as theirs.

Providers noted several solutions to these challenges. Tutors encourage students who stop attending specialist tuition to take responsibility for their own learning, and where the specialist assistance is funded by Work and Income, explain that attendance is required for continuation of their unemployment benefit. A literacy/numeracy tutor may be trained in tutoring students with specific learning disabilities. This training is then used if Workbridge funding is not available to refer a student for specialist tutoring. Some providers have the flexibility to see students who have previously left. A local specialist provider is used by others as a 'backup' service.

### ***Addressing learners' personal and social issues***

Acting in a social support role in addition to tutoring was seen as creating a challenge in five ways: the reduced time provision of social support left available for literacy assistance; the limitations placed on tutors by organisational resources and professional boundaries preventing them from taking on the roles of a parent or social worker; the personal impact on tutoring staff dealing with serious personal issues; claims that agencies such as police and schools may be aware of the more serious problems (such as where youth are obtaining drugs) without taking enough action; and the problem of provider loss of control over the client or losing the client altogether when a student is referred on for counselling.

One suggested solution was more networking with community agencies, which would also serve to clarify for literacy practitioners, what community organisations offer. However, there was a belief that families need to take more responsibility to work with agencies because agencies have little authority to intervene when families experience major problems. An alternative was for providers to employ a part-time Social Worker to help students with social problems preventing them from making literacy gains. One provider has an in-house social worker. Other solutions currently in place included management support to ensure tutors are

coping, supporting tutors in trying to resolve problems during working hours to avoid 'burn-out', and maximising the use of peer support.

### ***Gaps in literacy service provision***

The most frequently mentioned gap in literacy service provision was for youth, including children whose families have been involved with Child, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS), those who have left school due to bullying, boredom, or behavioural concerns, or have been suspended from school but are not attending alternative education programmes. There is also a funding gap where literacy providers are expected to transition youth attending alternative education back into mainstream schooling without receiving the same level of funding as schools. Suggested solutions for these gaps included a residential programme for street kids, employing role models who have experienced the same problems and moved on; a focus on preventative programmes for youth; and working with Work and Income to develop career plans to assist young people off benefits.

A further gap in service provision noted was for women doing unpaid work in the home who want to upskill to re-enter the labour market after caring for children or relatives. A suggested solution was for new forms of financial incentives from Work and Income to enable these women to expand their employment opportunities. Gaps were also identified for learners with intellectual disability, as well as those with mental health or social difficulties. This group can be hard to contact and tend to find it difficult to relate to people and to maintain appointments with agencies. A gap in provision was also noted for employees wanting to increase workplace skills but hesitant to identify this to their employers due to embarrassment. Providers noted a lack of programmes for Māori students apart from those delivered in Māori. Others missing support are those in their forties and fifties with significant literacy difficulties. Finally, it was noted that, in particular fields, there needs to be more literacy delivered within the workplace.

### ***Funding and resourcing***

#### ***How government policies impact on funding for literacy programmes***

**TEC Integrated Literacy Strategy:** One provider felt that they had benefited from looking more closely at their processes to ensure they were meeting TEC Integrated Literacy Strategy obligations. However, some concerns were a perceived reduction in the quality of professional development available for literacy tutors working for generic training providers, a lessening of importance of specialist skills, and a lack of clarity about what is expected of providers. Some specialist agencies were dependent on fundraising and some tutors were employed on a voluntary basis. Specific funding for a literacy support tutor was no longer available. The changes in funding practices and reporting requirements also take up a great deal of provider time.

**Adult Literacy Quality Mark:** Concerns were raised that TEC guidelines for registration under the Adult Quality Literacy Mark have yet to provide clear direction on literacy levels required for each programme.

**Immigration policy:** There were concerns about the decrease in numbers requesting English language assistance caused by government immigration policies encouraging people with

high levels of English skills and a job to come to New Zealand. Also, the requirement for those receiving ESOL services to be permanent residents creates access difficulties for 'non-permanent' residents who may live and work in New Zealand for a number of years.

### *The fit between funding and expectations*

Most providers reported insufficient resourcing to meet their objectives and expectations. One problem cited was because funding does not adequately cover literacy assistance, providers must rely on community groups, fundraising, and volunteer time supplied by staff to supplement their funding. Another concern was that funding for non-English speaking learners has remained at the same level for a number of years. The irregularity of attendance of some students creates difficulties in providing the flexibility and level of resourcing required. It was also noted that for a fee-paying service it may not be worth the time involved to apply for time-limited government pools of money and that it is difficult in the competitive proposal market to invest in the time and staff required to market services and obtain more work.

### *Reporting requirements*

Reporting requirements of funding bodies were seen as a challenge in various ways, including the amount of time and cost involved to complete them. One provider described paperwork and computer work doubled with the introduction of new reporting requirements to complete a financial template for TEC for each of their courses, including projecting their income up to 3 years ahead. This was costly in terms of hours of work and accountancy fees involved.

Providers described difficulties in understanding the reporting tasks, noting a lack of clarity about how they should demonstrate that they are delivering integrated literacy as required. In particular, the language used in guidelines for reporting by TEC and NZQA was cited as being too complex. Providers who now need multiple funders noted that this meant satisfying multiple reporting requirements from those funders. Further, one provider noted that the reporting requirements of TEC can have a negative impact on staff/management relationships. The reason given for this effect on relationships was that TEC now visit management in more of an 'inspecting' role than in their previously advisory role, they tend to visit the provider less frequently, and their requirements reach the tutors only through management.

Suggested solutions included simplification of the reporting guidelines presented by TEC and that TEC make more frequent visits to providers in the role of 'advisors' rather than as 'inspectors', spending time with tutoring staff as well as management.

The remaining key issues emerged spontaneously during the interviews, and were not in response to direct questions about challenges.

### *Learners' perspectives*

Providers noted that some elements of students' perspectives or attitudes created challenges to literacy service provision. These included: lack of confidence and self-esteem, impatience, lack of motivation to work, and avoidance of teaching environments. The providers understood that these negative attitudes about education and the students' own abilities may have arisen from previous criticism, labelling, and lack of success, particularly at school, plus a negative attitude towards education by family members. However, the outcome for some was a refusal to engage in school-like experiences. For others it led to problems understanding the need to

work to earn money or to work to develop a skill, avoiding working on anything outside their areas of interest, and having an unrealistic expectation of immediate results. Further problems noted were a hesitance to engage in critical self-reflection, and learners preferring to remain within their 'comfort zone'.

Suggested solutions included developing students' awareness of the importance of self-reflection and growth by encouraging them to take risks and widen their areas of interest. Taking younger students away on camp was seen as a way to do this because it encourages participation and bonding between them. Further suggestions were the use of a goal-setting system that clarifies for students the reasons for learning each skill, and engaging family members to work with providers in encouraging students in the importance of learning.

### *Lack of career structure for practitioners*

Concerns were raised about the limited professional qualifications and career structure available for literacy practitioners. Providers argued that without professional recognition, literacy tutors may be seen as an 'add-on' to some services rather than being acknowledged as experts.

### *Low literacy levels*

A number of providers reported that many of their students do not have secondary school qualifications and present with very low basic literacy skills. Those who do not learn the basics at a young age find it harder to learn later. Not knowing the basics as adults causes embarrassment and shame and prevents students from getting ahead in other areas. Some providers found that it was a challenge relating to students on an adult basis while presenting materials at this level. A concern was also identified for home-schooled students attending provider courses. If teaching parents are not aware of their own literacy problems, students may have a falsely elevated view of their own skills, which then prevents them from making use of assistance offered, such as reader-writers. This is difficult to address without impacting on the student's self-esteem.

### *School issues*

A level of frustration was expressed by several providers about the significant impact on adult learners of neither having completed adequate schooling nor having their needs addressed while there. Many students who have left school prior to the age of fifteen present with major learning needs as adults. It was noted that literacy issues are identified at schools but that schools are not seen to be addressing them adequately. There were three interrelated key challenges noted in relation to schools and alternative literacy provision for school aged learners. The first was the lack of funding and extracurricular activities for learners of school age attending literacy providers. The second was lack of cooperation from schools, and the third was the problem of integrating young learners back into the school environment after time spent with an adult education provider.

If secondary schools suspend or expel students with behavioural difficulties, the funding does not necessarily go with them to their next educational provider. A provider who delivers an alternative education programme noted they have very limited resources to address the learning needs of young people in this situation, but that schools tend not to share resources because they see their curriculum as different. When integrating alternative education students back into mainstream schooling after they have been out of the school system, they may

quickly fail to meet school behavioural requirements and be required to leave again. Providers find that this problem may be exacerbated if the school has been 'directed' to take them. The problem is also seen as circular, with low literacy initially contributing to behavioural problems and vice versa.

Providers suggested that changes to funding procedures for students who have been required to leave school would help solve the challenge. They also suggested directing students whose needs have not been met at secondary school to a specialist literacy provider for individual assessment and tuition, while the student also attends an employment programme. Another focus was on developing improved working relationships between providers and secondary schools. Allowing students to maintain links to the school through returning for certain subjects, or to participate in sport and recreation, should enable students to more easily return to school once other issues have been resolved.

Some providers, however, felt that schools need to be more accountable for working to resolve difficulties experienced by their students, including low levels of literacy and drug use. School programmes cannot be 'one size fits all' if they are to adequately meet the needs of all students. It was suggested that there was a need for the development in schools of education provision encompassing life skills and adventure, with a combination of discipline and fun. One provider commented on the importance of channelling the positive energy of youth instead of condemning them for the difficulties they experience.

## **Implications for policy development**

- Integrated literacy funding by TEC. Concern was expressed that this does not allow for the level of specialist support that is required by some students. This is discussed further in another report in this series: 'In Their Own Words. Policy Implications from the Wanganui Adult Literacy and Employment Research Programme' (Sligo et. al. 2006).
- Suggested changes to the reporting guidelines provided by TEC and format of the quality assurance visits made.
- Funding for specialist support previously made available through Workbridge. Aspects of this are no longer available and mean that some students cannot be referred for a type of support they require while continuing to attend their employment training provider.
- Further work on reciprocal working arrangements between a local tertiary provider and Māori trust.
- Development of career structure and professional qualifications for literacy practitioners.
- Development of improved working relationships between local schools and alternative education providers. This needs to allow for adequate levels of support and ensure acceptance of students returning to mainstream schooling.

- Changes to the funding procedures for students required to leave school for behavioural reasons. More support and resourcing is required by alternative education programmes.
- Increased capacity for schools to be able to address literacy issues at primary level.
- Provision needs to be made for covering costs of translating and interpreting services for students whose first language is not English, to maximize the effectiveness of the ESOL services available.
- Some providers receive funding from more than one source, and each funding body may have a differing definition of literacy. This has implications for providers working within a 'multi-definition' environment, and it is seen as important for funders to be aware of these.

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## Glossary

**ALL pool funding:** Adult Literacy Learning (ALL) pool funding. This is now known as the Foundation Learning Pool and the purpose of this is to provide funding for the delivery of high quality and intensive foundation learning opportunities that build learners' skills in literacy, numeracy, and language. [http://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/training/adult/adult\\_lit\\_pool.htm](http://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/training/adult/adult_lit_pool.htm) Retrieved 24/07/2006.

**ALPA:** Adult Literacy Practitioners' Association.

**Alternative Education:** The Alternative Education (AE) policy aims to cater for the needs and rights of students aged 13 to 15 years who have become alienated from 'mainstream' schooling. Students may fall into this category for a number of different reasons. Some students are habitual truants, while others are behaviourally challenging and are consequently excluded from school. The AE policy aims to provide a constructive alternative delivery of education for these students. <http://www.tki.org.nz/e/community/alterned/about/> Retrieved 1/08/2006.

**Bulk-funded:** "Bulk-funding means the government gives each school a lump sum to spend as they want on teaching staff." <http://www.nzbr.org.nz/documents/articles/articles-2005/050722bulkfunding.htm> Retrieved 1/08/2006.

**Gateway Courses:** "Gateway is designed to provide senior secondary school students with learning opportunities in non-conventional subjects. However, unlike STAR (see below), Gateway courses are limited to student placement (and generally also assessment) in the workplace." <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index> Retrieved 1/08/2006.

**Greenlight:** A programme developed for those 16 and over who wish to improve their literacy and study skills. Contains a home-based programme made up of 4 eight-week modules.

**NCEA:** The National Certificate of Educational Achievement is New Zealand's main national qualification for secondary school students and part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/> Retrieved 1/08/2006.

**NCES:** The National Certificate in Employment Skills (NCES) is delivered by a number of providers. "The NCES provides people with skills that are needed in most workplaces. Some people with the NCES will also have completed an industry qualification and others will be working towards one. The NCES is designed to be a starting point for further qualifications, and to complement them. All learner results relating to NCES and other qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework are recorded in a Qualifications Authority Record of Learning." <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-business/nces.html> Retrieved 1/08/2006.

**NQF:** The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is designed to provide: nationally recognised standards and qualifications; and recognition and credit for a wide range of knowledge and skills. Unit standards and achievement standards, National Certificates, and National Di-



plomas are registered on the NQF. Each standard registered on the Framework describes what a learner needs to know or what they must be able to achieve. Unit standards are developed by experts in their fields. Achievement standards are currently used only in school curriculum subjects for the National Certificate of Education Achievement. Because the standards are nationally agreed, learners' achievements can be recognised in a number of contexts. Their knowledge and skills will be transferable between qualifications and providers. The NQF has 10 levels - 1 is the least complex and 10 the most. Levels depend on the complexity of learning. Levels 1-3 are of approximately the same standard as senior secondary education and basic trades training. Levels 4-6 approximate to advanced trades, and technical and business qualifications. Levels 7 and above approximate to advanced qualifications of graduate and postgraduate standard. <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/> Retrieved 1/08/2006.

**NZQA:** New Zealand Qualifications Authority

**PTE:** Private Training Establishment

**STAR courses:** Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource. "The aim of the Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) programme is to enable schools to facilitate smooth transition and access from schooling to assist student transition to further education or employment." <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index> Retrieved 1/08/2006

**TEC:** Tertiary Education Commission

**Tertiary Education Strategy:** The Tertiary Education Strategy is a five-year blueprint for a more collaborative and cooperative tertiary system that contributes to New Zealand's national goals and is closely connected to enterprise and local communities. [http://www.tec.govt.nz/about\\_tec/strategy/strategy.html](http://www.tec.govt.nz/about_tec/strategy/strategy.html) Retrieved 1/08/2006.

**TOPS courses:** Training Opportunities Programmes

**WHAMPTE:** Whanganui Association of Māori Private Training Establishments.

## Appendix A: Employer E-Survey

Please indicate one of the following to indicate the type of industry you are involved in

- Agriculture, Hunting and Fishing
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Trade
- Communications
- Business
- Social
- Other, Please Specify

---

2

How many staff do you employ?

- 1-5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 50
- 51+

---

In the following questions please rate the importance of the skills / qualiites you

consider an employee needs to work for you

---

3

Gets on with others

---

4

Computer Skills

---

5

Other Technological Skills (excluding computer skills specifically)

---

6

Using Numbers / Calculating

---

7

NZQA accredited qualifications (excluding trade qualifications)

---

8

Being Healthy

---

9

NZQA accredited trade qualifications

---

10

Ability to read differing forms of communications e.g. regulations, memos, emails, contracts.

---

11

No Criminal Record

---

12

Ability to speak or communicate clearly

---

13

Ability to write differing forms of communications e.g. emails, letters, reports, invoices.

---

14

Flexibility

---

15

Reliability

---

16

Initiative

---

17

Qualifications not accredited by NZQA (refers to certificates, diplomas etc that are not part of the NZQA system)

---

18

Work experience in the field

---

19

Willingness to learn

---

20

Loyalty to employer

---

21

Attitude - Manners - Being polite

---

22

Confidence

---

23

Life skills

---

24

Presentation / Presenting yourself well

---

25

Motivation

---

26

Willing to work hard

---

27

Ability to follow instructions / to do as told

---

28

Work ethic

---

29

Commonsense

---

30

Honesty

---

31

When you employ someone, do you have a screening process to test their skills / abilities?

Yes

No

---

32

If 'yes', what do you do?

---

33

Please provide a definition of what literacy is for your organisation

---

34

How important is the ability to read in your workplace?

---

35

How important is the ability to write in your workplace?

---

36

How important are numeracy skills in your workplace?

---

37

If you have an 'applicant' without literacy and numeracy skills, what do you do?

---

38

If you have an 'employee' without literacy and numeracy skills, what do you do?

---

39

Where or to whom would you send someone who needs literacy assistance?

---

40

In your opinion, what are the barriers employers face in gaining new employees? e.g. Educational Barriers? Social/Community Barriers? Personal Barriers? Attitudinal Barriers? Workplace Barriers?



---

41

Please list any other comments you may have to make on issues of literacy and employment

---

42

Could the massey team contact you about any issues outlined by you (If yes - please ensure your contact details are completed below)

---

43

#### Contact Details

Name:	<input type="text"/>
Company:	<input type="text"/>
Address 1:	<input type="text"/>
Address 2:	<input type="text"/>
City/Town:	<input type="text"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>
Mobile:	<input type="text"/>
Fax:	<input type="text"/>
Email Address:	<input type="text"/>

---

44

Would you like to go into our prize draw? (If yes please ensure your contact details are completed above)

## **Appendix B: Provider Interview Guide**

### **1. Course/teaching details**

\*Please describe the range of literacy services provided by your organisation.

### **2. Perspectives on Literacy**

\*Describe the key goals and values that define the work of your organisation.

\*How do you define literacy? As an organisation? As an individual?

\*How do think your funding body defines literacy? What is your understanding of what they want you to do in terms of literacy? How is this put into practice?

### **3. Provider relationships with clients and their needs**

'Our last survey indicated that personal and social issues were a main factor causing clients to leave their courses before completion, and also that tutors were one of the main motivators for clients to continue.'

\*What do you see as your role /involvement in motivating your clients?

\*What do you see as your role in client issues that are barriers to their learning? What is the level of your involvement in the non-literacy needs of your clients?

### **4. Quality assurance/measurement**

\*What have you found to be the most effective methods of measuring the following?

\*Initial needs of clients; \* overall progress of clients; \*performance of your agency in terms of meeting its goals and objectives. What performance criteria does your organisation measure itself against?

\*What method of reporting is required by your funding body (or bodies)? What impact does this have on your provision of literacy services?

## **5. Funding/resourcing**

\*How do you determine the time required to provide appropriate literacy/numeracy support per client?

\*How do current funding levels affect your ability to provide this level of support?

\*What is the impact of national policy on funding and resourcing for your literacy programmes? Prompt: interviewers need to be familiar with relevant policies so prompt respondents if necessary

\*How do you think the expectations of others (e.g. of funders), and the objectives of your programmes, fit with the resourcing you have for these programmes?

## **6. Māori learners' needs**

\*Do you have literacy programmes, or elements within your literacy programmes, which are designed specifically to meet the learning needs of adult Māori learners? If yes, can you describe them?

## **7. Other learners' needs**

\*Have you identified any other cultural groups with specific literacy needs? If yes, please describe

## **8. Governance/relationship of providers to those in authority**

\*How does the management structure of your organisation work?

## **9. Involvement with other providers**

\*How would you describe your working relationships with other providers of adult literacy in Wanganui?

\*When you consider current adult literacy provision across Wanganui, can you identify any groups who fall through the gaps? Please describe these. Who addresses (what happens to...) their literacy needs?

## **10. Provider involvement with community organisations**

\*Which community organisations (non-literacy focused) do you have the most involvement with in your work with literacy clients?

For each different group noted, ask:

\*Describe your relationship with this organisation

## **11. Barriers to service provision**

\*What is your viewpoint on each of these challenges? What solutions can you suggest or have you tried?

The major barriers to effective service provision indicated in phase 1 were:

- a. Wide variety of needs (e.g. multicultural, variety of learning difficulties); undiagnosed literacy needs not being addressed; extent is worse than imagined
- b. Assessment issues
- c. Competitive environment (in terms of funding and....)
- d. Involvement required from other agencies; e.g. referral to literacy, follow-up after programme
- e. Need to be able to address personal/social issues as they are intertwined with completion of courses
- f. Diversity across literacy organisations

**12. Is there anything we haven't covered in this interview that we should know about to help us provide better programmes?**

## **Appendix C: Elements of literacy rating scale**

a. Participants were asked to rate the elements of reading, writing, spelling, numeracy, computer skills, communication, and ability to use information individually as to whether they were important to the interviewee's personal definition of literacy. Interviewees rated these elements on a scale from Strongly Agree (very important) through to Strongly Disagree (not at all important), with mediating ratings of (Agree, Undecided, and Disagree).

b. Participants were asked to rate the elements of reading, writing, spelling, numeracy, computer skills, communication, and ability to use information individually as to whether they were important to their organisation's personal definition of literacy. Interviewees rated these elements on a scale from Strongly Agree (very important) through to Strongly Disagree (not at all important), with mediating ratings of (Agree, Undecided, and Disagree).

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