



LITERACY & EMPLOYMENT

Overview

- ❖ Researchers at the Department of Communication and Journalism, Massey University,
- ❖ In partnership with the Whanganui District Library, have begun a major longitudinal research project funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology,
- ❖ Focusing on adult literacy and employment in Whanganui and Districts.

OBJECTIVES

Through a series of interlinked research projects we aim to achieve the following four objectives:

- To establish adult literacy needs of both employed and unemployed in Whanganui and Districts.
- To identify the social, attitudinal and economic barriers to adult literacy, numeracy and analytical thinking skills of employed and unemployed in Whanganui and Districts.
- To evaluate how effectively adult literacy programmes secure employment outcomes.
- To examine adult literacy learning processes and their relationship to employment.



WHANGANUI PROJECT GROUP OBJECTIVES

The Whanganui project group has added further objectives, specific to gaining tangible benefits for Whanganui. These include:

- Achieving positive, tangible and practical outcomes for the Whanganui community, with a well-researched plan of action for medium-long term 2005-2015 to address identified issues relating to literacy.
- Establishing a database of meaningful, relevant information relating to the links between literacy and employment in Whanganui and identify links to other social issues e.g. crime, health, and housing; and providing benchmarks to measure future progress.
- Developing collaboration between agencies within the Whanganui region, to strengthen the community and social infrastructure for future work and projects.
- Building the research capacity within Whanganui.



COLLABORATION

This project is funded for three and a half years, starting in Feb 2004, and is in excess of \$2 million.

To achieve its four research objectives, the Department is collaborating closely with community organisations such as;

- ❖ Literacy Aotearoa (Whanganui),
- ❖ Whanganui District Library,
- ❖ Te Puna Matauranga O Whanganui,
- ❖ Whanganui Community Foundation.

We are also consulting with various stakeholders such as, NZ Police, Work & Income, Enterprise Whanganui and many others.



RESEARCH IN A COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Learning Roles, Sharing Objectives, Creating Processes

- ❖ Challenges of community university research partnerships:
 - ❖ Roles: Is it partnership? Who has access to information? Who can act as researchers if they are also the researched?
 - ❖ The negotiation of objectives: Who audits the process to ensure all objectives are being met?
 - ❖ Channels for communication in structure and process e.g.
 - ❖ Between Massey and research partners
 - ❖ Between subcontractors
 - ❖ Constructing research instruments
 - ❖ Ownership of data
 - ❖ Purpose of reports



THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

- ❖ Challenges traditional research roles and the assumptions of authority and ownership in the research relationship –
 - ❖ Participatory relationship
 - ❖ Self-reflective practice
 - ❖ Awareness of researcher as subject
- ❖ The research model is a most significant piece of research in itself, reflecting challenges to traditional discursive boundaries, challenges to communication, and challenges to identities. We are in the challenging ground of postmodern research – everything is contestable, nothing has an answer.
- ❖ The definition of community itself is an active site of contested authority rather than a geographic location.
- ❖ The research on literacy mirrors the issues that literacy research itself confronts – Whose literacy? Whose information? For what purpose? Who is examining what and what realities are being constituted as a result?



WHO IS DOING WHAT?

- ❖ Annotated Bibliography

 - ❖ <http://literacy.massey.ac.nz>

- ❖ Key points:

 - ❖ Methodological issues

 - ❖ Models of understanding literacy – cognitive, sociocultural, integrated

 - ❖ Context for literacy

 - ❖ Purpose of research papers



METHODS THUS FAR

Community Phone Survey

AIM: To collect general community members' perspectives on employment issues in the Whanganui and Districts area.

SAMPLE AND METHOD: 400 people surveyed by telephone.

WHY? To provide a snapshot of the general Whanganui community's views on employment in the region and whether reading, writing, and numeracy skills were viewed as important in gaining work.



METHODS THUS FAR

Provider Survey

AIM: To identify and describe all known literacy provider agencies in the Whanganui and Districts area.

PHASE 1: To collect descriptive information on each provider to discover who the providers were, which communities they served, how they were funded etc.

PHASE 2: To interview each provider on perspectives of adult literacy provision in Whanganui and Districts.



METHODS THUS FAR

In-Depth Interviews

AIM: To examine adult literacy participants and non-participants perspectives on literacy and employment.

METHOD: Interviews that delve into socio-economic, schooling, learning, employment, motivational and power dynamics factors.



DEVELOPING IDEAS

- ❖ Case Studies and Focus Groups
 - ❖ Providers
 - ❖ Employers
 - ❖ Participants and Non-Participants

- ❖ Action Research

- ❖ Postgraduate Projects
 - ❖ Masters project looking at the Provider Survey Phase 1 Data
 - ❖ Proposed PhD looking at motivational and goal-seeking elements of literacy programmes

- ❖ In discussions with John Velvin (TEC) it was stated that he would be very interested to see more applications to the ALLP fund that were linked to the larger Literacy and Employment Project, and engaged the providers in the process, perhaps within the action research component.



WHANGANUI IWI ADULT LITERACY & EMPLOYMENT

TE PUNA MATAURANGA O WHANGANUI

WHANGANUI IWI EDUCATION AUTHORITY

- ❖ First major research project where Whanganui Iwi is working with the wider Whanganui District communities and Massey University
- ❖ As well as working on a collaborative research project, we are also developing our own project which looks at whānau, hapū and Iwi, adult literacy and employment needs and aspirations
- ❖ **Key objective:** to explore the relationship between ‘biliteracy’ and employment for Whanganui Iwi
- ❖ **Biliteracy – ancestral ‘River’ literacy skills and ‘western’ literacy skills** as a means of sustaining communities – both are equally important and equally valid
- ❖ **Employment outcomes which keep River descendants within their ancestral communities, or closely connected to them** – for improved economic, social, cultural, and environmental outcomes



FEEDBACK

- ❖ Feedback to you:
 - ❖ We would like to feed back the results of various surveys and interviews into group provider meetings for discussion
 - ❖ Up-date presentations given on request at provider meetings
 - ❖ Annual presentations in July to various community groups
- ❖ Feedback to the project team:
 - ❖ Contacting members of the project team (phone/email)
 - ❖ Website – currently working on a public feedback form and a discussion forum

Any other suggestions?



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