Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui
A Formative Evaluation

TRANSITIONING A COMMUNITY PROVIDER FROM LITERACY FOR THE WORKPLACE TO LITERACY IN THE WORKPLACE

Robyn Chandler • Gail Harrison

Massey University
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Executive summary

Background to the transition project and formative evaluation

Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation that engages in a range of adult education provision and activities locally and in the wider region.

In 2006, responding to a changing demographic of need, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui decided to complement their core community provision by advancing the workplace literacy development they had begun in 2005 with the support of Workbase.

The organisation decided to document this development through a formative evaluation process as part of their involvement in Massey University’s Literacy and Employment research project. In terms of their workplace literacy provision, from primarily working with learners on their employment-related literacy needs (literacy for employment), Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui wanted to move to a model where employers and the workplace were directly present in the learning relationship (literacy in the workplace). The development was intended to improve workplace literacy provision in the region, developing sustainable practices that answered local needs, including those of small- to medium-sized businesses, while keeping faith with the organisation’s social-justice and learner-centred kaupapa.

Evaluation methodology

The Evaluator and Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager worked as coresearchers on the evaluation. An action research process was followed and data collection and formative process methods included interviews, document analysis, surveys, environmental analysis, a reflective journal/log, case studies, cross-case analysis, report writing, and planning and feedback meetings.

The participatory evaluation process has been used as a strategy for change rather than a judgement on outcomes. The report focuses on findings likely to be of use to the wider group of stakeholders, and includes a description of the development process, examples of workplace literacy projects, and discussion of issues raised during the course of the development.
Summary of development and outcomes

By the end of the formal evaluation period, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui had achieved a sustainable approach to workplace literacy appropriate to the kaupapa of the agency. The Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui ‘model’ of workplace literacies provision works outward from the organisation’s existing strengths and practices; building on relationships and the commitment to meeting individual needs (where the individual is always understood as the member of a community) with a consequent flexibility and responsiveness of approach. The organisation deepened its understanding of workplace literacy needs in the region, what was required for effective provision, and had established mechanisms to achieve this.

Transition issues

The transition process highlighted a number of issues affecting the effective provision of workplace literacies. These included:

- The need for an informed and coordinated sector. Complex relationships encompassing more than the obvious employment and education partners are essential to meeting workplace needs. The demands created by first identifying and then negotiating the complexities of these multiple relationships must be recognised and supported. Ways to streamline these relationships and allow for open and easy communication must be created.

- Funding information needs to be accessible and appropriate funding sources available and easily identified. Despite government commitment to workplace literacy, current funding models favour a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. The diversity of learner, community, and workplace needs mean this is inadequate for pedagogical and economic reasons. Many situations do not ‘fit’ with existing funding profiles.

- The dominant model of workplace literacy must be able to incorporate the notion of learners being simultaneously in work and engaging in or preparing to engage in industry training and professional development.

- Models of provision (and attendant funding) need to be highly flexible to be able to work effectively with the factors that create barriers to engagement for learners and workplaces.

- Workplace literacy provision places special demands on a provider, including necessary relationship-building, development of the systems and processes
necessary to work with businesses and other partners in provision, and the specialist knowledge and skills required by the teaching staff. These demands need to be recognised and adequately resourced.
Introduction and background

Purpose of the evaluation

The genesis of this evaluation was the decision made by Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui in early 2006 to document the development of workplace literacy services through a formative evaluation process as part of their involvement in Massey University's Literacy and Employment research project. The outcomes of workplace literacy development processes and practices are not widely reported, and management at Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui felt that sharing the experience would allow others to also benefit from the learning involved (Vaccarino, Comrie, Culligan, & Sligo, 2006, p. 56). The formative evaluation process was to assist the development "to improve workplace provision in the region; to utilise other peoples' experience; and, to develop practices that answer local needs (including small to medium-sized enterprises)" (R. Chandler, field notes, December 4, 2006).

The initial intention was to "focus on the experiences of and outcomes for the agency as it markets and plans one or more workplace literacy programmes within companies in Wanganui" (Vaccarino et al., 2006, p. 57). An early outcome of the action research process was the reformulation of this original intention, retaining the emphasis on documenting and evaluating development but moving from a focus on specific programme development to foregrounding the broader process perspective: the transition of a community provider from their current provision of literacy for the workplace, toward providing literacy in the workplace.

This shift reflected a major concern for the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui manager charged with organisational development as to what were the potential implications of a move into workplace literacy provision and whether they were consistent with both the philosophy and sustainability of a community-based and focused provider. The underlying questions for the evaluation became: Is it possible to develop a workplace literacy programme that works within the organisational kaupapa of social justice and learner-centredness? What would this look like?

Nationally, it has been estimated that only 2% of employees can currently access literacy development and a joint strategy for workforce literacy released by Business New Zealand, the Industry Training Federation, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, and Workbase: the New Zealand Centre for Workforce Literacy Development (Workbase) has stressed that: "In order to reach the numbers in the workforce needing literacy upskilling (approximately 940,000 employees) there is an urgent need to
significantly grow the scale of activity in this area to increase participation levels” (n.d., pp. 9, 12).1

Government has committed itself to "increasing literacy and numeracy levels for the workforce", this being one of four "priority outcomes" in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2007-12 (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 1). The policy document is not incompatible with a learner-centred approach: "Evidence suggests that literacy, numeracy and language learning is most effective when it meets a student’s needs and is in a context that makes sense to them (such as workplaces)” (Ministry of Education, 2007, pp. 5, 34). Nonetheless, current funding models foster a one-size fits all approach, as providers are encouraged to apply for funding from the Workplace Literacy Fund (WPL Fund) for programmes with a minimum of five learners.2

**Background to and context for the transition project**

**Overview of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui**

Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui, locally known as the Whanganui Learning Centre, is a community-based adult education provider and a member of the national adult literacy organisation, Literacy Aotearoa. A not-for-profit organisation, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s mission is “To provide effective and holistic learning services which enable adults to participate confidently in their communities” (Literacy Aotearoa Whanganui), and all services and programmes are provided free of charge to the individual learner. Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui is governed by a voluntary committee but, unusually for such a provider, employs only paid staff.

Based in Wanganui city, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui also works in the centres of Marton, Taihape, and Ohakune. Accredited to deliver to level three of the Qualifications Framework, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui is one of fourteen Private Training Establishments (PTEs) in the region. Until recently, it has been one of the few regional agencies specialising in literacy support and training.

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1 These figures are based on the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) results.
2 The funding level identified specifies this number and applicants are advised that programmes delivering “small group provision as apposed [sic] to one-to-one provision” will be considered most favourably. The main aim of the fund is to provide workers with “literacy, English language and numeracy skills. Therefore, funding is available for literacy, language and numeracy training integrated with vocational/workplace training to help workers meet their employment and training needs. The TEC is seeking projects that closely align with the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) and the Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities (STEP)” (WPL Fund application form, pp. 2, 7).
The annual report for 2006 shows that Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui provision and activities for the year included:

- Foundation learning; one-to-one and in small groups
- Literacy needs assessment screening
- Learner and Restricted licence
- Computer literacy
- Entrance examinations for Police, Armed Services, and Prison Service
- Research contract services
- Mentoring services for Private Training Organisations
- Professional development support for local literacy tutors
- A clinical social worker
- In-work literacy tuition (Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Inc., 2007, p. 10).

Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui, then, is not entirely new to workplace literacy provision. In 2001, for example, the organisation was part of a adult literacy pilot scheme being set up with the food processing industry (Hyndman, 2001). More recently, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui became part of the Supporting Workplace Literacy Providers Project, under which Workbase was funded to build the capability and capacity of potential providers of workplace literacy programmes outside of Auckland (Workbase, 2005). Development in this area, however, had stalled, and, while Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui continued to work with students on their employment-related literacy needs (literacy for employment), employers and the workplace were not directly present in the learning relationship (literacy in the workplace).

By 2006 it had become clear to Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui that government directives and increased employment were resulting in fewer people presenting for pre-employment programming and, conversely, more approaches from learners seeking support either to move into work, to improve their employment engagement, or to progress within the employment environment.

**Target population for workplace literacy provision and relevant audiences and stakeholders for the evaluation**

Learners enrolled with Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui in 2006 were 25% Māori, 4% Pasifika, 2% Asian, and 64% Pakeha, closely reflecting the demographic makeup of the Wanganui District and wider Wanganui region (Statistics New Zealand, 2007b, p. 13).³

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³ Statistics in this section have been drawn mainly from the BERL report on Wanganui economic performance (Wu & Nana, 2007), the 2006 census, and other sources that give figures for Wanganui District (the Territorial Authority), and the 2007 Regional statement for tertiary education for the Manawatu-Wanganui and Wairarapa regions which gives data for the “wider Wanganui region,” which includes Ruapehu and Rangitikei as well as Wanganui district.
Just over half the learners were beneficiaries (53%), 14% were employed part-time, 11% were employed full-time, and 3% were students (Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Inc., 2007, p. 16). At this stage, it is not possible to quantify the level of literacy need in working-age individuals in Wanganui, however, this section looks at some demographic, educational, employment, and business profiles that give a context for local workplace literacy provision.

While the population of the wider Wanganui region is decreasing, growth in the younger age groups is driving an increase in the Māori population that is projected to continue, suggesting that by 2016, Māori aged 0-14 will form 31% of the regional population (2007 Regional statement for tertiary education for the Manawatu-Wanganui and Wairarapa regions, 2007, p. 17).

Reflecting the views of regional stakeholders, the 2007 Regional statement for tertiary education for the Manawatu-Wanganui and Wairarapa regions notes that:

Increased attention must be given to the needs of young Māori entering the workforce. Not only do these people represent our future, but also recent statistics indicate that many young Māori (males in particular) have not fared well in the compulsory sector. There is a need for greater engagement with iwi and wananga to ensure the needs of Māori are met appropriately and that Māori are attracted into education and training programmes (2007 Regional statement for tertiary education for the Manawatu-Wanganui and Wairarapa regions, 2007, p. 31).

According to the 2006 census, 31% of people aged 15 or over in the wider Wanganui region had no qualifications, with a slightly lower figure – 29% - for Wanganui District.

Almost a quarter of people in the district left school with a level 1-4 certificate (over half of whom left with a certificate at level 1); 14.5% gained a level 1-4 certificate post-school (at level 4 for over two-thirds of this group) (Statistics New Zealand, 2007a).

As at December 2006, there were 1,407 Equivalent Full-time Students (EFTs) in tertiary education in the wider region. There were 1,222 Industry Trainees (20% Māori) in the Wanganui District (3,992 in the wider region), of whom 82 were Modern Apprentices

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4 Analysis of the 1996 New Zealand IALS data (Culligan, Arnold, Noble, & Sligo, 2004, p. 88) predicted that approximately 39% of working-age individuals in the Wanganui area would function below literacy level 3, that is, below the minimum considered necessary to deal with the complex demands of day-to-day life and work (Comrie et al., 2005, p. 8).

Of a working-age population in the Wanganui District of 33,405, 42% were in full-time employment, and a further 15% employed part-time. Over 36% of people were not in the labour force, this group including those in educational institutions, and those permanently unable to work, among others (Statistics New Zealand, 2007a). The unemployment rate in Wanganui District in 2006 was 4% (Wanganui district community profile). Wanganui District has had a positive employment growth trend of 0.5 percent per annum over the past decade although growth of 3.3% in 2005 was offset by negative growth (-0.1%) in 2006, due to job losses in Primary Processing and outsourcing arrangements in the Electricity and Gas industries. Nevertheless, employment growth (1.3%) has continued across the remainder of the economy (Wu & Nana, 2007, pp. 11-12).

Of a total of 15,579 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) across the district, the three largest sector employers are Manufacturing and Building (25.6%), Social Services (23.7%), and Retail and Distribution (22.9%).

In the year to March 2006, the number of business units increased by 3.1% while the size of businesses decreased by 3.1% (Wu & Nana, p. 16). Wanganui businesses are on average slightly larger than those in the rest of New Zealand, employing 4.2 FTEs. The largest industry by FTE employment rates, however, is Business Services. Business Services is part of a sector that has 27.6% of the businesses in the district and averages only 1.9 FTEs per business unit, having decreased 4.4% over the decade to 2006 (Wu & Nana, 2007, pp. 19-22). Seventy-six percent of businesses in the district employ an average of 4.6 FTEs or less. Nearly 48% of businesses employ an average of less than two FTEs (Wu & Nana, 2007, p. 8).

Effective workplace literacy provision in the Wanganui district must be appropriate for a working-age population of whom half have left school with either no or low qualifications, and of whom nearly 4% are in Industry Training and 42% in full-time employment, mainly in small businesses. Provision must be appropriate for an increasingly young and Māori population.

The relevant audiences for and stakeholders in this evaluation include:

- The learners, tutors, management, and governance of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui
- Small- to medium-sized businesses in the Wanganui district and other provincial centres and regions
• People in work, particularly literacy learners or intending learners
• People intending to enter the workforce, particularly literacy learners or intending learners
• Whanganui iwi and the Māori community
• Workplace literacy providers or intending providers, particularly those with a community focus
• Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and vocational training providers
• Unions
• Government agencies involved with training and employment
• Those involved with funding workplace literacy provision/making policy on the same.

**Overview and description of report structure**

Following an explanation of the evaluation approach, and a description of the design and methods used, the next section of the report concentrates on documenting the development process and its outcomes to date. This is followed by a brief consideration of the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui workplace literacy “model” or strategy at this stage of its development, and a discussion of some of the key issues raised during the transition process. Detailed case-studies of three of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s workplace literacy projects are presented in the appendices.
Methodology

Evaluation approach

The approach to the evaluation is formative, process-focused, and participatory.

It is important to note at the outset that this is not an implementation evaluation. Although Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s involvement in the Workbase project mentioned above and continuing support from Workbase has helped shape its engagement in workplace literacy (and continues to do so), the point was not to ascertain the degree to which Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui implemented the plan which it agreed to with Workbase in 2005 (see below, p. 19).

Evaluation here has been used as a strategy for change rather than a judgement on outcomes. As Patton explains: “Formative evaluations aim at ‘forming’ the thing being studied” (Patton, 1990, p. 156), in this case, the ability of a community-based provider to engage in workplace literacy provision in a sustainable and philosophically coherent manner. While the action research process reached the point of attempting appropriate models for Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui and their community, the focus for reflection at this stage are the issues raised by this journey. Determining the ultimate success of the models essayed is for a future iteration.

The evaluation approach is participatory:

One of the negative connotations often associated with evaluation is that it is something that is done to people ... Participatory evaluation, in contrast, is a process controlled by the people in the program or community. It is something they undertake as a formal, reflective process for their own development and empowerment. In this sense, they do it (evaluation) unto themselves, rather then[sic] having it done to them (Patton, 2002, pp. 129-30)

As such, and as is common in formative evaluation (e.g. Patton, 2002, p. 157), this report is not the primary means of communicating the evaluation findings to Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui, its principal stakeholder. As already noted, however, the reporting of the process was felt to be of benefit to others and thus this report focuses on findings likely to be of use to the wider group of stakeholders. One of Somekh’s eight methodological principles of action research is that:

Action research involves the development of knowledge and understanding of a unique kind. The focus on change and development in a natural (as
opposed to an artificial) social situation, such as a workplace, and the involvement of participant-researchers who are ‘insiders’ to that situation gives access to kinds of knowledge and understanding that are not accessible to traditional researchers coming from outside. The publication of this knowledge makes it available for others to use, particularly when the details of the original context are fully described so that judgements can be made about its potential usefulness in other settings (Somekh, 2006, p. 7)

Knowledge and understanding that is of utility only to Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui has already been conveyed through the action research process, and will not be represented here.

**Design of evaluation**

The evaluation unfolded through an action research process of reflection and development, integrating research and action in a series of flexible cycles involving, holistically rather than as separate steps, the collection of data ... the analysis and interpretation of those data; and planning and introduction of action strategies to bring about positive changes; the evaluation of those changes through further data collection, analysis and interpretation ... (Somekh, 2006, p. 6).

All action research has a strong temporal dimension, and, as a developmental evaluation, the researchers used the organisation’s past, present, and possible future engagements with workplace literacy as a chronological structure for the planning and presentation of the evaluation. Two major cycles of “look[ing] – think[ing] – act[ing]” (Stringer, 2008, p. 37) were to take place: the first focused on organisational history, and the second, intended to utilise the findings of this first stage, immersed in current and developing practice.

**Methods of data collection and formative process**

The Formative Evaluator and Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager worked as co-researchers on the evaluation. An experienced researcher, the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager followed an action research process throughout the project, with her focus predominantly on current and emerging practice. Initially, the evaluator focussed on the organisation’s past engagement with workplace literacy, and her principal role was as a critical friend throughout the process.
Data collection and formative process methods included:

- **Interviews.** Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were used extensively throughout the evaluation. Data was collected on past and present engagements with workplace literacy and relevant contextual factors. Interviewees included past and present Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui staff, a number of employers and employees, government agency staff, a regional workplace literacy provider, and the Workbase Sector Development Coordinator. Planning and feedback sessions with the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager were recorded.

- **Document analysis.** Relevant organisational documentation from 2005-7 was reviewed. Sources included but were not limited to: planning documents, annual reports, meeting minutes, organisational correspondence, funding applications, programme documentation, forms, and various procedural documentation. Where appropriate, names were removed so as to preserve confidentiality.

- **Surveys.** Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui conducted two informal in-house surveys over a two month period that tracked new learners in order to establish the demand for and nature of potential workplace literacy provision.

- **Environmental analysis.** A focus on the context of practice continued throughout, the researchers conducting or drawing on relevant environmental analyses and other sources in order to establish the demographic, economic, political, and educational factors with which the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui development had to contend. Sources here included but were not limited to: the 2006 census results, the BERL report on the Wanganui district, existing publications by the Massey University Literacy and Employment project team, Gray’s Literature review to inform a work programme on lifting literacy, numeracy and language skills (2006), the Ministry of Education’s Tertiary education strategy 2007-12 (2007), and the 2007 Regional statement for tertiary education for the Manawatu-Wanganui and Wairarapa regions.

- **Reflective journal/development log.** The Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager kept a reflective journal that logged developmental activities over a three-month period. While primarily this was a reflective and documentary tool for the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager, it was emailed regularly to the Evaluator, thus also allowing for the communication of what was happening “on the ground”.


• Case studies. Drawing principally on selected interviews with employers and employees, the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager developed a number of case studies of current and developing workplace literacy practice.

• Cross-case analysis. This drew principally on the case studies included in this report and the survey results in order to depict the main themes of the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui development and key issues raised by the transition process.

• Report writing. The report was written collaboratively and the writing has been part of the formative process. As Zuber Skerrit (1996) remarks, “perhaps [the] most important audience [for an action research report], is ourselves [the authors]. The process of writing involves clarifying and exploring ideas and interpretations” (cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 227).

• Planning and feedback meetings. Both researchers engaged in planning and reflection. Particularly in the earlier stages of the evaluation this was with the assistance of the Massey Project Manager, who also prepared ethics documentation and processes for the project. Meetings were conducted face-to-face and by telephone, and email communication allowed the easy exchange of documents (for example, the log kept by the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager, and report drafts).

**Potential limitations**

The evaluation took place during a period of organisational change, and the workplace literacy projects developed within the constraints caused by this. The development was driven by one key individual within the organisation, who was thus the main contact for the evaluation. While the evaluation focus is necessarily shaped by this, following a co-researcher process, drawing on multiple data sources, and using a number of methods, allowed the researchers to access and reflect on a broad range of perspectives.
Literacy in the workplace - development and outcomes

This section looks at “what we did” and “what we learnt”. It includes data on learners and businesses presenting to the agency, a description of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui workplace literacy developments to date with a particular focus on three examples (the full case-studies of which are included in the appendix), and a summary of the key outcomes of the development from Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s perspective.

Workplace literacy provision at Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui - recent history

As part of the Supporting Workplace Literacy Providers Project, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui worked with Workbase from 2005 to develop their capability and capacity to provide workplace literacy programmes. The project included the development of an Action Plan that prioritised the following outcomes for 2006:

1) Increasing [Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s] market knowledge of businesses in the Wanganui district
2) Raising [Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s] profile as a workplace literacy provider
3) Gaining a contract to deliver a workplace literacy programme:
   a) Develop capacity to gain a contract
   b) Manage and progress leads
4) Progressing [Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s] research proposal with Massey University.

Three Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui staff attended Workbase training, and the Action Plan progressed. As part of this development, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui conducted a skills audit for a Wanganui employer.

A series of interviews were held by the Evaluator with key staff from Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui (including the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager) and the business concerned in order to reconstruct the engagement. A face-to-face meeting was then held with the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager during which the main findings were reviewed and reflected upon. As part of the reflective process for this stage of development, the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager also reviewed relevant organisational documentation.

5 Two of whom have since left the agency.
In summary, the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager concluded that workplace literacy development had stalled at this time due to the following:

- The time required to initiate development

- A time of organisational change with the departure of the then general manager of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui and therefore, interim management between the review and appointment of a new general manager. The past general manager had, along with the Education Manager, been one of the key drivers in the initial stages of the workplace literacy development project

- Workload. Agency personnel took up additional management roles in the interim period, impacting on their ability to dedicate time to the development

- Low awareness in the community of the scope of workplace literacy

- Limited information and low awareness of local and regional needs.

The Manager also commented that

... strategically ... we had to concentrate on our core business delivery and the maintenance of those contracts we already had .... So it was... just a rational process to ... postpone the ... workplace literacy development until such time as we felt as we were internally resourced to do it ... we ... had put quite a bit of effort into development but to no avail. And I thought personally there was a need for further analysis ... I wasn’t sure that the way that we were going about it was ... really founded upon community need matched with [a] community ... organisation’s capacity.

**Current and developing workplace literacy provision**

**Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui learners and employment skills: Analysing demand**

*Review of agency statistics - 2006*

A review of 2006 agency statistics by the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager showed that many learners were approaching Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui in order to gain skills for work. Of the 500 learners presenting annually to the centre it was noted that just over half were seeking to obtain a learners licence with many either in work or seeking work where a driver’s licence was an important tool for engagement.
Just over a quarter of the 2006 learners were seeking to improve their computer skills. For many, this was not only the desire to become more proficient with basic computer functions but to operate databases and other more advanced computer functions including MYOB. Employment and social objectives were noted by learners as motivators for engagement. Employment objectives were often specific to workplace environments and there was a degree of urgency for the learners to find solutions to problems.

One learner commented:

I was getting to the stage where I was finding that I couldn’t do certain things like hyper linking (going from one document to another document). If [my colleague] ... wanted to go into documents he could hyperlink into every other document and bring different dates up for different ... reports and stuff like that, and I can’t do it.

A little over a fifth of the 2006 learners sought to improve literacy, language, and numeracy skills for work and community engagement. Those presenting for assistance presented a wide range of need: from those who wished to sit pre-entry tests for the armed services, to those who wished to increase their skills to sit trade-based exams, to those who were having difficulties with paperwork both professionally and in their personal lives.

One learner who was building skills to undertake a trade certificate commented: “I just wanted a refresher ... I wanted to do level 5 ... I don’t like correspondence courses, because you haven’t got that one-to-one”.

Another learner gaining skills to enter into an apprenticeship commented:

I’m not good at reading due to family problems from a young age. I blocked everything out and now it’s hard to catch up on it ... I just want to do an apprenticeship because nobody else in my family has got a ticket and I want to be one of the first.

2007 learner surveys
In June 2007 Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui conducted informal in-house surveys over a three month period (July – September 2007). These two minor surveys tracked learners coming into the organisation, documented their employment status, whether they sought to improve their literacy skills for work or work advancement, and, if so, what their learning needs were in relation to employment.
Just over half of those engaging during this period were employed, with well over half of this group in full-time employment. Other new learners during this period were either Work and Income clients who were not in employment or people who identified as house persons or were retired.

The survey indicated that 79% of learners presenting for assistance wished to acquire skills for work. The remaining learners were looking to gain skills to assist them in their personal lives.

The analysis of this small sample confirmed a shifting demographic of need. The centre was not only increasingly catering for learners in work, including those in part-time work that were looking to advance their circumstances, but computer literacy was a dominant need.

Those seeking assistance with computer literacies did identify the need for other literacy skills in work, including literacy in Tikanga and Te Reo Māori. It seemed likely that computer literacies would function as a conduit to other literacy training.

Subsequent to this initial survey a smaller group of employed learners were asked to provide more details about their needs.

- All twelve of those surveyed had enrolled to improve their computer skills
- These learners identified that other literacy skills were important for work mainly English and maths. One third identified Te Reo Māori as important
- Just under half presented from government- or government-funded agencies
- Only two of this group identified that learning was not part of a formal professional development plan. All identified that engaging in learning was a part of their personal development planning
- Two-thirds were in part-time employment
- Two people surveyed did not want their employer to know that they were upskilling.

2007 learner survey - approaches from businesses
As well as the approaches from individual students, over the same survey period Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui was contacted by eight businesses in the district, covering a range of industries including Hospitality, Trades, Trade and Contracting services, Sales and Importing, Retail, and Education and Training.
Who identified the need?
Six out of the eight employers involved reported observing the need for literacy training in relation to employee performance. The issue of literacy needs was also raised during discussions with employees concerning plans for work enhancement and advancement.

In all but one case the employee had been involved in the identification of need. Two employees believed that they had initiated the request for assistance. In all cases employers, employees, and other support people then worked to consider how needs could best be met.

Why did they connect with the centre?
All but one of the employers involved had no formal expertise in identifying literacy needs. Where the employer did have expertise they were concerned that they knew little about adult learning approaches and adult literacy and because of this they preferred to utilise the expertise of a specialist in the field.

On hearing of the potential programmes offered through the centre, two employers wondered if they too could receive assistance to develop computer skills. One employer was interested in learning more about literacy skill acquisition.

Most employees identified a need to improve their skills either before connecting with the centre or after the initial diagnosis of need. Some were fearful about engagement while others were really keen to get going. Comments included that learners were pleased that “it was not like school”.

Most of those seeking assistance with computer literacies said on intake that they “just wanted to know the basics”. Most were self taught or had learnt what they knew informally.

Where skills in literacy, language, and numeracy were involved the need to upskill was considered from a variety of perspectives. For some, it meant the ability to keep up with workplace requirements, for others it offered the potential for job advancement. For two employees it was an opportunity to deal with something that had been a long term problem, although both were sceptical as to whether results could be achieved.

In all cases both employees and employers recognised the need for upskilling for work. Additionally, two learners and one employer identified social and family reasons for improving literacy skills.
How did they connect with the centre?
Most of the employers were unaware of who could provide the service locally. They found out about the centre from others, including word-of-mouth recommendations from the community and from community learners at the centre. One employer had been referred by Work and Income as they were supporting a cadet in a cadet-ship programme.

In one instance, the employee was sent out to search for a provider and connected with the agency by chance (see Appendix for more detail).

While half of the contacts made with the learning centre were entirely new, in another four cases assistance was sought based on prior knowledge of the centre, mostly on the part of the employee. In three of these cases the employee had a long-standing relationship with the agency or an employee of the agency.

In one case, a working relationship had formed over a period of five years. During this period the centre had provided training for staff along with informal mentoring support.

In another case, the employee had previously been a learner with the centre. He had since been accepted on to a trade training programme but left when it was decided he would not be able to cope with the LLN demands. He then became employed and was enrolled with the modern apprenticeship scheme (MAS). Following a full assessment carried out by Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui at the request of the MAS training provider, the learner re-enrolled with the centre in order to meet the demands of his apprenticeship training.

In the third case, the employee had a connection with a staff member at the centre. The staff member, acting as a private contractor, had worked with the employee for a period of two years before he came to the centre.

Word-of-mouth referrals, then, were clearly important; however, information contained in brochures and flyers also raised the profile of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui. One learner picked up information at their workplace and made contact with the centre, explaining that “the Training Manager I took over from had been in contact with you guys, there was a leaflet with your information on it. I just picked up the phone and gave you a ring. The information on there was relevant to what my needs are”.

What were the learning needs?
Learning needs fell into two distinct clusters: technological and literacy, language, and numeracy (LLN).
1. Computer literacies

Employees with computer literacy needs came from two businesses: an owner-operated retail business and a not-for-profit community provider of social support and adult education and training.

Employees in this cluster had had no formal training in computers. Many had low or no school qualifications. Although indicating that they “needed the basics”, all employees were experiencing difficulties in the use of computer programmes and operational principles that required problem solving and knowledge of systems specific to workplace needs and contexts. Computer literacy was a priority, and skills in English literacy, maths, and problem solving were not considered when the employees identified their common needs. All were looking for quick and easy solutions to their needs.

The retail workers were involved in middle level management. They had no previous formal training in computing and were learning on the job, sharing information between themselves, or receiving informal training and hints from higher level management.

One of these workers commented:

I have been with the company for about a year and a half, before that I was working in the same sector. I have never had formal training with computers and would like to advance my personal and business knowledge – hence getting in touch with you guys. Most people are like me pretty much I think.

She went on to explain that

I left school at 14 to go out into the big wide world to make some money … went into the retail sector and I’m still here. I enjoy contact with people. I excelled at school; I just got sick and tired of it and wanted to make money. I didn’t do much computing at school.

Enthused about learning, the employee has acted as an advocate in the workplace, encouraging both her manager and others to take up workplace literacy opportunities.

2. Literacy, language, and numeracy

Employees in this cluster had difficulties dealing with paperwork, either “on the job”, with associated study requirements, or, in one case, in the realm of social engagements.
Learning needs were highly varied within this group, specific to workplace environments and the needs of the learners concerned. For three of the learners, the need to address barriers and impediments to learning was apparent. These impediments included health, working conditions, stress, impacts of prior learning, and feelings of self worth.

Learners in this group were employed in trades, trades and contracting services, education, and hospitality.

**Literacy in the workplace - meeting demand**

By the beginning of September, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui had workplace literacy projects underway with six businesses and had begun working with two more. Three more projects had been scoped but were not to proceed for various reasons; however, two of the learners involved continued to attend group learning programmes at the Learning Centre.
Examples of workplace literacy projects 2007

The table below provides a comparative overview of three of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s workplace literacy projects from the LLN cluster (the full case-studies are included in the appendix).

Table 1. Examples of workplace literacy projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Early Childcare Centre</th>
<th>Café</th>
<th>Trades Services Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Wanganui district</td>
<td>Wanganui district, small, rural town</td>
<td>Wanganui district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Owner-operator + senior staff</td>
<td>Owner-operators</td>
<td>Owner-operator + senior staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational culture and staff training</td>
<td>‘Open-door’ policy. Collaboration between parents, staff, and managers. Support to meet industry requirements for Early Childhood Education (ECE) provision is provided by the Ministry of Education by way of a professional development funding scheme. All supervisory/teaching staff either working toward a DipECE or upgrading to a Bachelor's Degree. In-house support for external training.</td>
<td>Business an active learning organisation providing in-house NZQA training, and with a ‘big-picture’ focus on local partnerships to solve the local skills shortage (e.g. hospitality training at a local area school). Owner-operators are trainers, one a qualified Workplace Assessor. Staff incentives for industry training.</td>
<td>Support training for staff to meet industry-related requirements. Business provides computer training (one business arm) but looks to local providers where possible for other training needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recent issues that impact on training needs and delivery

- **Demand for quality service:** ‘Open-door’ policy emphasises quality. The owners report that customer demand for high quality service has increased over recent times. They note that “attracting trained industry workers has always been a challenge”.

- **Time taken in training:** Time for training. Training is time consuming. Contract tendering in a dynamic market places pressure on the business and staff to meet deadlines. Duration and intensity of work day, and location of work sites make training difficult to fit in.

- **Literacy skill levels of:** Qualified employees can still have high literacy and numeracy needs. New and younger people with huge gaps in some essential areas of basic education. Some staff do not have basic skills in LLN and are unable to engage successfully in trade training. Life
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>employees</th>
<th>Skills shortage</th>
<th>Motivation for engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| | Skills shortage nationwide and critical at the local level. Potential staff “have no specific industry training” and/or are school leavers with no qualifications. | **Employee**
| | Skills shortage nationwide. Lack of qualified tradespeople in job market, exacerbated by local building boom. | **Concern for the employee and their ability to complete training requirements.** |
| **Skills shortage** | | **LLN provision outside employer expertise; access to funding support; ability to meet business objectives; concern for employees.** |
| The need for specialist training input | Need for adult LLN expertise. Employer initially tried to meet the need but lacked time and knowledge. Management concern that employer/employee relationships could be negatively affected by some training. | **Conform to employer expertise; compliance issues; concern for the employee and their ability to complete training.** |
| | Specialist assistance is required from time to time: “It is in this area we need help with outside agencies”. | |
| | The company is not positioned to offer training to employees with LLN needs. Culturally appropriate learning approaches necessary. | |
| | | **Workbase**
| | | **Concern for the employee and their ability to complete training requirements.** |
| | | **Skills shortage nationwide. Lack of qualified tradespeople in job market, exacerbated by local building boom.** |
| | | **Conform to employer expertise; compliance issues; concern for the employee and their ability to complete training.** |
| | | **LLN provision outside employer expertise; access to funding support; ability to meet business objectives; concern for employees.** |
| | | **Concern for the employee and their ability to complete training requirements.** |
| Non-workplace factors | Staff turnover for “personal reasons”. Personal issues impact on staff ability to engage in and take up training. This includes psycho-social issues. Female staff often running households alone. Some follow partners (seasonal workers). The employer perceives that it is difficult for young Māori girls to assert themselves “and to achieve success”. Lack of self-efficacy and self-esteem impact on staff training uptake and output. | **Employer**
| | One employee left shortly after commencing literacy learning for “personal reasons”. Employee’s transport difficulties hindered engagement. Family responsibilities prioritised. | **Concern for the employee and their ability to complete training requirements.** |
| Locating assistance to meet the need | Employer lacked knowledge of adult literacy providers. Employee charged with finding a provider. | **LLN provision outside employer expertise; compliance issues; concern for the employee and their ability to complete training.** |
| | Informed by government agency already working with. | **Concern for the employee and their ability to complete training requirements.** |
| | Word of mouth. | **Concern for the employee and their ability to complete training requirements.** |
| Knowledge and expectations of workplace literacy provision | The employers had little or no knowledge of workplace literacy provision, and therefore few expectations. They looked to Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui to provide information. None knew of government policy and initiatives to support the development of foundation skills in the workplace. They had not heard of Workbase and did not know that the TEC was involved in funding support to employers. | **Concern for the employee and their ability to complete training requirements.** |

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**Notes:**
- LLN = Low Level Literacy
- TEC = Training and Employment Centre
- Māori = Indigenous people of New Zealand
- Since the table is not fully visible, the content may be incomplete or require further clarification.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Literacy needs</th>
<th>Engagement and delivery approaches</th>
<th>Issues raised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet job and professional development requirements; regain dignity in the workplace.</td>
<td>Each employee had different aims and job specific skill needs. One wanted to gain industry qualifications.</td>
<td>Ability to complete training requirements and become qualified; wanting to be a role model for children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related and academic: skills related to writing, spelling, grammar, and punctuation; understanding of literacy acquisition; techniques in constructing essays and assignments, improving computer skills.</td>
<td>Both contextualised to the industry and reflecting the interests and social needs (e.g. confidence) of both learners. Learner one: reading skills for home and work, number knowledge, general knowledge, problem solving, confidence, and self efficacy. Learner two: decoding unfamiliar &amp; technical text in job- and study-related materials, spelling, math, and study skills, critical literacy, problem solving, confidence, and self efficacy.</td>
<td>Decoding and encoding, and understanding technical job- and study-related text, spelling, punctuation, and numeracy skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of relationships necessitated by broad base of needs (workplace, university, and literacy provider). One-to-one tuition within work time and self-directed learning out of work time. Learner also came to centre to access tutor for academic skills.</td>
<td>Learner one: One-to-one tuition. Left employment but reconnected with Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui following this to continue learning. Learner two: One-to-one sessions with tutors and mentoring with training manager, self-directed learning and application of learning in and out of work time.</td>
<td>One-to-one tuition and self-directed learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential cost a factor, not funded by the Ministry of Education. Low level of information available – lack of knowledge of local provision.</td>
<td>Potential cost a factor, already investing heavily. Realisation of own and workplace needs. Learning both in and out of work time, sharing learning. Need for learning to be contextualized. Lack of basic skills &amp; work skills in region.</td>
<td>Difficult to find appropriate support &amp; information relevant to a pre-apprenticeship employee’s situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of need (mixture of basic and highly advanced literacy skills) and skills required to meet need. No formal relationship with Ministry of Education or the training provider, lack of clarity around funding, or what support available, and who is</td>
<td>Regional provision created challenges in regard to amount of travel, learner attendance, and lack of local tutors. Risk management – working regionally with limited resources. Coordinating activities between various agencies.</td>
<td>No development funding. Difficulty in accessing information about appropriate funding. Whose responsibility is it to support pre-apprentices? Lack of clear communication conduits with government, ITOs, and other relevant agencies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible to meet the learner’s needs. Accessing funding to meet needs in a timely manner.</td>
<td>Psycho-social needs of learners necessitating broader engagement with agencies. No development funding.</td>
<td>Need to accommodate cultural approaches and work around social constraints. Productivity issues make it difficult to accommodate business and learner needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These three examples give a sense of the diversity involved in regional workplace literacy provision, particularly as regards LLN provision. There are certainly common factors involved. All the featured businesses are concerned with ‘quality’, for example, and motivated in part by a concern for their employees. All are concerned with the time that training takes up, but supportive of staff training, and so on.

Within these commonalities, however, lie differences which influence the nature of effective literacy provision in each case. One business, for example, has severe time constraints that cannot be planned for in the long-term, that fluctuate due to market forces, with others more able to plan ahead and thus afford employees time for learning sessions. Despite the fact that all three businesses are supportive of staff training, there are differences in both degree and expression of this. One business is committed to in-house training; the others are reliant on external providers. This influences the complexity of the relationship building required, among other things.

Mixed delivery and learning approaches are necessary in all cases, in response to a variety of workplace and pedagogical reasons. The nature of the workplaces and the jobs involved impact on the possibilities for learning in the workplace; training must often take place off-site. Labour demands and learner needs make one-to-one tuition an important part of the mix. In one workplace, one-to-one tuition is part of a comprehensive training approach that includes on-the-job mentoring, in others, it forms the main delivery mechanism, and learners also pursue self-directed learning out of work time.

Even within the same workplace, learners’ literacy needs and goals can be very different, particularly where an industry qualification is desired.

Development update
Following completion of the evaluation period, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui applied for Workplace Literacy Funding (WPL) from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for two clusters of learners from six businesses with either computer literacy or LLN needs. Workbase advises providers to “cluster” learners for the purpose of accessing this fund in order to meet the TEC requirement for a minimum of five learners (see p. 9). In the case of the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui projects, computer learning and the businesses requiring it, lent themselves more naturally to group programmes. LLN programmes were, in the main, highly individualised.

Outcomes for Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui to date

Evaluating development at the end of the formal evaluation period, the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager considered that the organisation had achieved
an approach to workplace literacy appropriate to the kaupapa and current capability of the agency. This transition had involved consideration of:

i. Our strengths, working with what we did best, identifying links between current delivery and that of workplace delivery, building upon our relationships, our kaupapa, and a commitment to quality delivery.

These factors became a lens through which models of workplace delivery were reviewed in light of what would suit the local environment and match with organisational capacity and philosophy.

This also resulted in a better understanding of the opportunities and limitations of workplace literacy provision within a regional setting.

ii. Relationships – how these were formed, how needs were best met in accordance with our kaupapa. This included relationships with funders and organisations in the business of supporting learners in work, and providers of literacy services. It also included links with other programmes and providers. Specific outcomes included:

- enhanced communication with other agencies who support learners in work e.g. Work and Income providers, ITO training providers, regional cadet-ship facilitators, and support agencies for workers with special learning needs and
- With WorkBase as a supporter of emerging providers.

iii. Risk analysis – barriers to participation had been identified. Programme would need to be risk assessed before being initiated.

iv. Whose needs were being met? Learning would need to take place in the spirit of learning partnerships. This would apply between tutor and learner and learner and employer. Open and honest dialogue about needs, ways of meeting need, and progress against agreed need would have to take place vis a vis sound evaluative processes. Outcomes here included:

- A better understanding of workplace literacy needs, employer, and employee expectations
- Getting in touch with the views, needs, and expectations of local employers
• Development of evaluation procedures to monitor effectiveness of developments and client satisfaction

• Agreement on privacy agreements and conditions and ways of working across management/worker relationships.

v. Our profile within community and how information was best shared. Outcomes here included:

• The development of a communication strategy to engender engagement

• Relationship development with key business partners and learners as advocates of workplace literacy provision.

vi. Establishment of protocols, policies, and procedures for operation. Aside from those developments already mentioned, this included:

• Development of procedures for engagement with workplace literacy clients.

vii. Assessment of need and reporting on needs. Assessment procedures would need to be understood by and agreed to by all involved. Measurement tools would need to transparent and reportable.

viii. Tutors would require training and support to engage in workplace literacy, both to ensure learning was contextualised and roles and relationships were appropriately managed. Specific outcomes here included:

• Programme development and skill development for staff as learning is contextualised with specific workplace contexts

• Skill enhancement for staff that have entered a new area of delivery.

ix. Sourcing adequate funding that would enable quality delivery and development of a service to meet local needs. Specific outcomes here included:

• Identification and clarification of avenues for support e.g. funding and delivery mechanisms

• Experience in formulating and lodging workplace literacy applications.
x. Apportioning appropriate resources for development, delivery, administration, evaluation, and resource development. Specific outcomes included:

- Analysis of skill and resourcing requirements to enable developments to take place
- Development of financial systems to align with development components.

xi. Capacity building for the organisation itself. Outcomes included:

- Analysis of organisational capacity and requirements to advance and engage in workplace literacy developments.

xii. Development would need to be carefully managed to ensure the best possible outcomes and to protect staff from potential overload.

Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui had achieved an “inroad into workplace literacy delivery both for computer literacy and support for learners in the workplace with LLN needs”. They had also found that “there was not a great distance between our philosophy and that of the business owners. We, like employers, are outcome focussed, we did want to get to know what the employer saw as the needs … [of the] workplace” and assist in meeting those needs and enhancing productivity. They also found that employers involved in workplace literacy are, like them, learner centred, sharing concerns “about privacy and the well-being and learning of real people in the workplace”.


Making the transition - key issues

The Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui 'model'

In 2005, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui engaged in a development process that began with a formal strategy for entering into workplace literacy provision. In 2007 the action plan priorities have all been met (see above, p. 19), albeit in a different manner to that originally envisaged. Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui has ended up with workplace literacy that is “a result of who we are and what we know (our kaupapa), what we do (relationships and individual learning plans), and what we do best (diagnosis of individual needs, including ecological/cultural needs – for both the learner and the employer – flexibility)”. It is not a template strategy but a “built” strategy, constructed through relationships with learners, with employers, with community, and with staff: “Our development has relied most importantly on our relationships and ways of working with people”.

This strategy is, of course, pragmatic as well as philosophical. Reflecting on different stages of the transition process, the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager considered in her journal that there was “quite a different morphic approach now fitting more with what immediate needs are. Feel we are responding to the need as it arises which is enough for us”. Interestingly, this responsiveness parallels a similar development in Workbase’s own approach to supporting emerging workplace literacy providers: “Initially we had a much more structured approach ... we’ve changed our approach from a more ... directive one ... to a more responsive just-in-time approach”.

Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s development of their computer literacy provision illustrates their organic approach well. A successful existing community programme grew as learners advocated for the programme back in their workplaces. If learners agreed, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui contacted their employers, sending information about the possibilities for workplace literacy programmes. While this in no way excludes a more formal marketing strategy, it is a somewhat different approach to preparing a publicity pack and approaching business networks. The ‘informal’ strategy was highly successful: “It ends up that we have two businesses involved in computer training, both of these started with learners who came to the centre as ACE learners and once the benefits of this training was communicated to others more came on board”. Transitioning from providing literacy for the workplace to literacy in the workplace has, somewhat paradoxically, meant working from the inside outward, rather than the outside in.
**Literacies in the workplace: key issues**

This section discusses some of the key issues raised during the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui transition process.

**Lack of information and coordination across the sector and relevant agencies - “working in the dark”**

Gray’s 2006 review of international and New Zealand literature on workplace literacy identified a clear role for Government in “developing and implementing an information and marketing campaign tailored to the needs and interests of workers and management in different contexts” (Gray, 2006, p. 2). Very little government resource has been expended in this area to date. In 2005, Massey researchers commented on “Wanganui employers’ lack of awareness of what is offered by education providers, and particularly literacy providers, in the area” (Franklin et al., 2005, p. 34), this had not changed in 2006: “the majority of employers could not name an adult literacy training provider in Wanganui” (Neilson et al., 2006, p. 16), and Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s experience suggests little change in 2007.

Over the next two years, the Department of Labour’s ‘Upskilling Partnership Programme’ intends to establish a number of “working relationships based on sharing information and working together” between “employers and other partners, such as providers, unions, industry or other organisations, [in order] to establish tailored, effective, quality workplace literacy, numeracy and language programmes” (Department of Labour, May 9, 2007). As the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui development illustrates, it will be important that such relationships are understood in a broad and inclusive sense, as encompassing more than the obvious employment and education partners,⁶ and that the demands created by first identifying and then negotiating the complexities of these multiple relationships are recognised and supported.

... finding the information and working with others collaboratively is time consuming. Point in question was the lad who ended up on our foundation programme. He is also on a trade training course (distance package) and has

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⁶ As some of Gray’s sources stress, for example, Folinsbee (2001) outlines: Partners should include but not be limited to all levels of government, business, labour, education, community groups, learners, volunteers, social services, and the media. Themes around partnerships include accountability and the financial commitment of all partners, and coordination among all levels of government. There must be inter-ministerial partnerships at the level of the federal government. In addition, partnerships are important for sharing information, successes, resources, and developing collective efforts and systems (cited in Gray, 2006, p. 15)
... [an agency supporting learners with special needs] working with him. I managed to [help the groups to] sort this all out and now will have an ongoing relationship with the trade training body who is supervising his qualification.

For Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui, what the Manager described as “working in the dark” and the lack of clear communication conduits with government departments, ITOs, training providers, workplaces, and community agencies (with responsibility to support workers with special learning needs) inhibited development and support opportunities over the evaluation period.

**Funding: Knowledge of funding mechanisms, applying for funding**

At present, and as the above example suggests, a learner can be connected with myriad educational and government agencies, and yet be effectively unfunded in respect to meeting the literacy needs they need for work and required industry training and professional development. In many cases, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui found that information from Government departments and agents about supporting learners in formal training programmes was unclear and lacked consistency, and knowledge about funding streams available to workplaces was either unavailable or provided little clarity about which funding mechanism was best utilised.

Noting that skill shortages in nearly all the trades were “genuine”, and included such factors as the dearth of young people entering the trades in the 1990s and the low take-up and non-completion of trade qualifications, the Ministry of Education states that the “increasing rate of participation and achievement [in industry training] needs to be maintained to ensure long term sustainability of the trades” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 38). When information about how best to support an individual learner in employment ‘step-up’ to trade or professional qualifications is not readily available however, and there is no certainty about who should be supporting pre-apprenticeship training, a provider attempting to contribute to this outcome has a difficult job. Massey researchers have noted that:

Nationally, there seems to be a gap between what we hope for and what we are actually creating. What we hope for is to build fundamental competencies as a way to get people started on a lifelong staircase of learning. What we are getting is funding and delivery practice that emphasises (mainly low-level) employment outcomes for those with limited education, the provision of which tends to cease when a person actually achieves a job (Sligo et al., 2006, p. 68)

The existing gaps in dominant workplace literacy models and confusion over simultaneously supporting learners in work and toward or in training is implied by the
divergent emphases of the different funding streams. Work and Income “training support for employers”, for example, contributes to employee training, the needs of the learner. Workplace funding funds the needs of the workplace.

The nature of requests differ from the ‘one size fits all model’

The Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui experience confirmed that for many businesses, perhaps particularly those in a provincial setting, there may only be one employee per programme. Therefore, in terms of the numbers and approach demanded, business needs will not be met by current workplace literacy funding design regardless of whether information is available or not.

As well as factors such as business size, Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s experience also illustrates the diverse and dynamic nature of needs to be met, even within the same workplace; employers are not motivated by productivity per se, but seek to meet highly specific needs. Flexibility of design and delivery is essential, including the ability to be responsive throughout the period of provision as the needs of the workplace or worker change.

One of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui’s strengths is the focus on learner-centred provision. The organisation’s determination not only to preserve this in the workplace arena but to maintain its centrality is in keeping with the findings of a recent Australian literature review:

The research confirms the principles that already underpin good pedagogy—that effective teaching practice begins with the needs of the learner … Instead [however] workplace literacy skills encapsulate what employers, economists and government policy-makers perceive to be in the best interests of the economy. There needs to be a greater recognition of the diverse needs of adult learners (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004, p. 40)

The Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Education Manager has expressed concern that employment-focused programmes can “exclude the potential for communities or groups to determine their own priorities and to have an active voice in the development of services” (Harrison, 2006, p. 9). The organisation’s determination to retain a community focus - by continuing to develop their relationships with local iwi, for example - is also a strength in effective workplace literacy provision in the region, and needs to be recognised as such. Āneta Rāwiri’s literature review suggests “that to be effective and meaningful for indigenous communities, adult literacy strategies and policies for employment must be situated within the social, cultural, political and economic aspirations of those communities” (Rāwiri, 2005, p. 18).
The complexity of engaging with employers and employers’ policy, procedures, and practices

An experienced workplace literacy provider in the wider region has emphasised the time and resources involved in developing the necessary relationships with employers:

the background research that you need to put into it, the relationship building, you’ve got to take that into account and be prepared that it’s not going to be a cash cow tomorrow. And it may get to be a good revenue earner at some point, but at the same time you can have projects where ... there simply isn’t enough hours to ever counteract the relationship building that’s gone on.

The provider also emphasised the importance of having what Gray called a “company ‘driver’ or ‘champion’ ... [in order to obtain] a commitment to invest” (Gray, 2006, p. 4):

the tricky part is actually getting the employer buy-in. That’s the biggest key ... the degree of employer buy-in. You have to have somebody in that workplace that’s totally passionate about it, that puts it beyond the productivity. And you can’t afford for them to leave or suddenly something that’s working very well becomes something that’s a tag on to their workplace rather than integrated.

While the Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui model of building on existing relationships mitigates the potential drain on a small organisation to some degree, without development funding, the costs in time and resource are considerable (especially where no programme eventuates) and must be borne by the provider. Once engaged, successful programme planning and delivery are reliant on knowledge of the workplace and its systems and requirements. While some of these costs can be built into the workplace needs analysis component of WPL funding, this resource is not available through other funding avenues.

Barriers to participation

Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui employees and employers faced a number of barriers to participation, some of which have already been discussed above. For employers, lack of information and appropriate funding are major barriers to workplace literacy participation. Other important barriers include workplace constraints such as time available, whether it is possible to commit to and afford learners the time to attend learning sessions regularly, and the commitment of the employer. Employee-related barriers include socio-economic constraints, the impact of family responsibilities, personal and health-related issues, and attitudes to education and training, among
others. These non-training factors influence learning outcomes in workplaces but are an under-researched area in the workplace context according to Gray (2006, p. 7). Effective models of provision need to be highly flexible to be able to work with such factors.

**Organisational and tutor capacity**

Workplace literacy provision places special demands on a provider, including the development of the systems and processes necessary to work with businesses and other partners in provision, and the specialist knowledge and skills required by the teaching staff.

Gray (2006) points out that “relatively few providers have specialist skills in this area. Investment in professional development is needed to match the increase in demand that will follow from successful initiatives to engage employers” (p. 92). A number of Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui staff have completed training offered by Workbase, and this, together with ongoing mentoring from Workbase, has proved “invaluable” to the organisation.

Workplace literacy assessment processes are specialised (including the ability to conduct a skills audit of the workplace as well as literacy assessments of the workforce) and need to be clearly communicable to all parties involved. The need for appropriate and reliable adult literacy assessment models and practices has been recognised, and developments here will aid effective workplace literacy provision.

As well as being able to contextualise programme design and delivery to the needs of the workplace, workplace tutors must be able to deliver what Gray considers to be an increasingly wide range of programmes:

Changes in work practices have also led to a demand for new kinds of skills. As well as wanting employees to have technical knowledge and basic literacy and numeracy skills, employers increasingly expect their staff to have good communication, problem-solving and interpersonal skills and to be computer literate. This indicates a need to provide a range of training opportunities (Gray, 2006, p. 7).

A Massey survey of Wanganui employers suggested that “computer skills are not of such value that job hiring decisions will be made largely upon competency in this area” (Neilson et al., 2006, p. 15), nonetheless, as Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui discovered, technological literacy is increasingly demanded by both employers and employees. As well as the skills required by the tutors, computer literacy provision creates heavy resource demands on an organisation.
Workplace literacy requires skills traditionally outside the experience of many educators, as a previous Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui Manager explained:

It comes back to how you market yourself, how you present yourself, it’s about speaking the language of the party that you’re talking with and all those kind of good things that we know, and it’s about knowing our work.

In a sector that is under-professionalised, under-resourced, and underpaid, the demands on workplace practitioners are great. As workplace literacy provision increases, and educators become increasingly skilled and experienced, issues such as industry pay rates, and who will pay them, will need to be addressed.

The demands on an organisation are great. In the same way as a champion within a business is key to successful workplace literacy initiatives, the Sector Development Co-ordinator at Workbase has noted that “in the end it does tend to come down to an individual in an organisation”. As the government continues to progress its goals in regard to workforce literacy, it is hoped that such reliance on individuals will no longer be necessary, and both employers and emerging providers such as Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui will be enabled to fully meet the needs of those served by this area of provision.
References


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Appendix: Case studies

Education industry - case study

Location and key business areas

The business operates within the Wanganui district as an Early Childcare Centre and educational provider.

Education at the centre is based on the national early childhood curriculum, Te Whariki, which promotes investigative and discovery learning approaches. Programmes are structured around the current needs and interests of those children involved.

Management

The owner-operator is qualified in her own field (nursing) and has ten years experience in early childcare. The developer of the centre, she has recently stepped back from a leading management role. The day-to-day management of the centre has been assigned to senior staff under the supervision of the owner-operator.

Staffing

There are ten employees at the centre, all of whom are female and identify as New Zealand European.

Organisational culture and staff training

The centre prides itself in being a “home away from home” and has an open door policy for parents and whanau. As stakeholders, parents and whanau of participants (children) have regular input into the running of the centre. Feedback from stakeholders is welcomed, and gathered through formal evaluation processes in line with quality assurance and organisational procedures. Staff, management, and parents work collectively in a co-operative manner to consider how best to run the centre with the interests of children being paramount.

In order to meet the needs of stakeholders, meet quality requirements, and achieve development goals, staff are engaged in ongoing professional development and staff training programmes. All supervisory/teaching staff are engaged in professional development programmes. Five are qualified (provisionally registered) early child
care teachers (Dip. ECE), four of whom are currently upgrading to a Bachelors Degree. Three other staff are currently in training for the Diploma of Early Child Care Education.

The business owner actively supports staff to meet their professional development and training goals. Support to meet industry requirements for ECE provision is provided by the Ministry of Education by way of a professional development funding scheme.

Other staff at the centre include those involved with cooking and cleaning. These staff are also involved in training in line with specific industry requirements and business goals. The cook, for example, has a food-handling certificate.

**Recent issues that impact on training needs and delivery**

The owner considered the following to be issues that the business currently faces:

- Demand for quality services. With an open door policy stakeholders are critically aware of standards being achieved and actively provide feedback
- Skill levels of some employees. Holding a diploma or degree does not automatically preclude the need to upskill in LLN
- Time taken in training. Training staff is time consuming, particularly if the need falls outside basic industry requirements
- Specialist knowledge. Some training requires specialist knowledge, for example, LLN and adult education pedagogy
- Employer-employee relationships. Maintaining a positive working relationship with staff was deemed very important. The owner was concerned that getting too involved in training staff could impact negatively on the employer-employee relationship.

**Locating assistance to meet the need**

Whereas most training needs were being met, one employee was identified as requiring assistance to improve foundation skills in literacy and language. The employer was not aware of the services the Whanganui Learning Centre had to offer. She knew little of organisations that could assist, for example, she knew of English for Speakers of Other Languages, and a local PTE that “teaches some English standards” but not a lot else. She did report knowing about a place that helped children but not one that helped adults who had literacy learning needs.
In discussions with the employee and other staff members the owner charged the employee to find out who could provide assistance. Other staff assisted in locating assistance as someone knew of “a place” in the city and a learner who was doing computing there. Without this word-of-mouth referral she wouldn't have known about the Learning Centre.

**Knowledge and expectations of workplace literacy programmes**

The Ministry of Education provided support to employees to meet the needs of teacher registration. The employer was used to working with this fund and thought that LLN support might be included.

The employee made contact with the Whanganui Learning Centre and found that she could receive assistance free of charge. Both the employee and owner were happy for the learner to utilise this service to meet what they perceived as an urgent need. The owner was also happy to consider alternative methods of funding to provide extra support for the learner. She appeared unaware of targeted support systems for employees with LLN needs.

With little knowledge, the employer had few expectations of what a workplace literacy support programme could look like and looked to the provider to provide information and guidance.

**Motivation for engagement**

*The employer*

The owner wanted to meet a training need that was outside her area of expertise or experience. She was driven by the need to meet business objectives, and compliance and stakeholder requirements. A concern for the well-being of the employee was also expressed.

*The employee*

The employee was aware of the difficulties she was having at work and the impact on her work performance.

She commented that at one time the owner had gone through her ‘learning stories’ (reports on the progress of children) and had suggested that a programme of learning would help her to analyse what was going wrong with her writing. As a consequence of this exchange, the employee said that she was happy to go with the employer’s recommendation. In her words, she wanted “help to find out what I was doing wrong and to help correct it”.
Personal drive and prior experiences acted as personal motivators. The employee commented: “I wanna better myself. I feel sad I can’t write something as simple as a letter without spelling mistakes”, noting that as soon as she had started work she had to do a lot of writing. She said that people at her workplace would sometimes laugh or make a joke at her expense and that this was depressing until she gained enough confidence to say something, ask for and find help. She felt that her employer supported her quest for assistance which then led to other staff becoming supportive. Her partner also supported her.

**Learning needs and learning approach**

The employer noted the need when observing workplace practices:

> The notice board, portfolios … it took me a horrendous amount to go through – she’s done lots and lots of learning stories, and I did try to get her to give them to me to proofread before she printed them all out, but that didn’t happen, so before we sent them out to parents I had to go through the whole lot, so we really needed to do something about it.

The employee had identified the same need, but neither she nor her employer had the knowledge or skills to identify the gaps or strengths brought to the learning process. Assessment of literacy learning needs was not the domain of the owner of the centre, even though she had background knowledge in the literacy domain. The employee felt that the emphasis on ‘whole language’ when she was brought up may have impacted on her literacy learning. She also felt that she had received little encouragement to address her literacy needs at school:

> I did fifth form English twice and received extra tutoring to gain the qualification. It wasn’t till fifth form that I noticed a problem. I find it really annoying looking back how areas I needed improving I wasn’t told or given to change until I failed!

Her self-identified learning needs were pertinent but loose: “Upskill(ing) the basics of writing, spelling, grammar, and punctuation for my work and study”.

Understanding how literacy worked was also important for her teaching role. The owner had said she was primarily concerned that the employee “learn to spell correctly”, however, she was also concerned that she “be aware of when something isn’t right. To be able to guide preschoolers … [and get] potential teaching pointers … [as] some pre-schoolers are advanced in their awareness and are ready to begin writing”.

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The employee also sought assistance with university papers that were part of her work requirement to up-skill to a bachelor's degree. She was undertaking a correspondence course where she was not receiving the support she required to address her basic skills needs.

Following an in-depth diagnosis of needs, the Learning Centre made recommendations to the employee and employer about a potential programme of learning, identifying the need for two streams of programming. One would involve upskilling in the ‘basics’ and matching learning gaps in written literacy skills and numeracy. The other would involve techniques in constructing essays and assignments and would include the advancement of computer skills.

The use of computers as a literacy tool was identified from the outset. The employer had identified computer skills as a need in the workplace and when considering the needs of other staff she commented that “yes, probably some of them could get some computer skills. They should be the ones accessing it, we don’t mind funding it”.

Tutors worked within the guidelines and quality standards of Literacy Aotearoa Inc. The learning was wholly contextualised and assessment processes and results shared with the employee from the outset. Recognising the gaps in her learning, she was curious to know more and to understand how she could put the pieces of the literacy puzzle together.

Engagement

Once engaged, the employee was keen to attend learning sessions. The employer was supportive, enabling attendance during working hours. The centre faced the problem of locating a tutor who could meet the broad-based learning needs the employee presented with. Furthermore, the tutor would need to be available at a time to meet the needs of the employee and the workplace. Ideally, workplace visits and a review of workplace documentation would be factored into the design of a programme, as would regular communication between all parties. The ideal scenario would involve the participation of the learning support centre at the university the employee was studying with.

The employee was quick to engage in learning in her own time. Learning concentrated on basic skills and workplace documentation needs. There was little flexibility to provide a broader service due to funding constraints and within four weeks of engagement the employee came to the centre with a difficulty she was facing with an undergraduate paper. This need was accommodated by a tutor suitably qualified to offer this level of advice. A leader at the centre took on this role as although someone
in the community had been identified to assist they were not available due to other work commitments.

Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui was able to offer a programme of learning for this employee encompassing her needs. They pointed out that assistance to construct university papers was the domain of university; ways of accessing support needed to be investigated. Time was required to conduct these negotiations and ensure that the best interests of the learner were being met in a timely manner.

**Impacts of engagement**

All parties noted positive impacts of the learning engagement. The owner commented that “yes, [the employee] is gaining more confidence and she’s keen to come. The notice board hasn’t had the spelling mistakes – she is more aware. I think she will pick it up quickly if she is more aware”.

**Issues raised**

*For the employer*
- Cost was an ultimate consideration: “Cost will be a barrier, depends on how much it is out of the budget”

- The level of information available about workplace literacy programmes was low

- Knowledge about local provision was limited.

*For the provider*
- Time taken and costs involved in setting up a programme for this learner were prohibitive

- Relationships with other training providers, and in this case a university correspondence provider, were not formalised. Although informal conversations about learner support had taken place previously, the provider was not aware of any policy by which literacy providers could be funded to support literacy learners, or even if they should do so under current policy

- Information from Government departments and agents about supporting learners in formal training programmes was unclear and lacked consistency

- Knowledge about funding streams available to workplaces was unavailable. The provider was caught in a dilemma about whether to support or not to support
- The organisational kaupapa of the Learning Centre promoted learning at ‘no cost to the learner’. Whereas the organisation had funding agreements with Government departments, it had at that time not worked with private clients such as businesses. Working with businesses and charging employers for services required a shift in organisational processes and procedures.

- Working with businesses required a different level of operation and appropriate management structures. This necessitated setting up an administrative process and apportioning resources appropriate to the need.

- Privacy and confidentiality. In a new line of provision fundamentals of delivery would need to be reviewed to ensure that the basic kaupapa of the organisation was adhered to.

- Locating appropriate funding sources to provide a quality service. With this employee the Ministry of Education could be involved, so too could the TEC. Contacts with various agencies provided little clarity on which funding mechanism was best utilised. The provider was cautious of ‘double dipping’.
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants industry - case study

Location and key business areas

Located in a small, rural town in the Wanganui District, this business is open seven days and nights offering breakfast, deli, and evening à la carte menus to locals, tourists, and travellers who pass through the region.

Management

The ten-year-old business is operated as a partnership. Two owners manage the business and are qualified to provide staff training leading to NZQA credits. The managers, both New Zealand European, work in the business for more than thirty hours a week.

Staffing

The business employs up to thirty staff, the numbers dependent on seasonal demand. Fourteen staff have full-time positions. Staff include cleaners and women with school-aged children as well as students working as dishwashers, runners, and school holiday extras.

Staff members are predominantly Māori with the balance mainly New Zealand European.

Organisational culture and staff training

Staff training is seen as critical to the delivery of quality services, with the owners committed to setting employees on a “journey of training to match the growing needs of the café and industry”.

The owners acknowledge the value of skilled staff, commenting:

It is more accepted today the value of such positions ... [They are] trying in our industry to develop our front-of-house positions to career levels. There is [a] huge amount of knowledge and ability required to know and [to] be delivered in this area. The days of being a tertiary student fill-in job that just anyone could do is going.

In-house training plays a pivotal role in the business training strategy, described as “the way in the immediate future ... it does take time and money ... [but this is] well spent when you see the results!”
In recent times the business has ventured into a partnership with a local Area School teaching hospitality theory and practice for one day a week. The business owners believe that this partnership “will bring success in the hospitality training infrastructure in the region while contributing to a pool with potential employees”.

In 2000, the business began focusing the staff training around NZQA Unit Standards with one of the manager-owners obtaining a qualification in workplace assessment. This manager comments that “it was reasonably easy to implement this new training package as employees were willing and eager to have acknowledgement of their efforts”. Staff remuneration reflects the achievement of unit standards and is an added incentive to employees to further their knowledge. Staff retention has improved and the business won several regional awards. The business owners now find that their staff are “hungry for more qualifications” and match that need by providing in-house training for one to two training days a week. The owners believe that hospitality businesses still need to do more to recognise the value of front-of-house staff, and that the opportunity for these staff to achieve unit standards is a “step forward”.

In the workplace, unit standards are selected to match that which the employees are already practising in their everyday routines. Along with group training, one-to-one training is used when necessary to focus in on any specific areas of need. Once staff are competent in a particular area a formal assessment is conducted and the candidate’s achievement registered by the Hospitality Standards Institute (H.S.I.) with NZQA.

The owners are committed to staff training and want to find the best ways to assist their staff to advance their knowledge and skills. They cite successes and refer to employees who have made gains in the industry such as a young worker (22) who, having achieved the relevant standards, has recently been appointed Front-of-House Manager. Like other workers who have embarked on learning journeys, her input is valued by the business and she is making a career of her job at the café.

**Recent issues that impact on training needs and delivery**

The owners consider the following to be issues that the business currently faces:

- Demand for quality service. The owners report that customer demand for high quality service has increased over recent times. They note that “attracting trained industry workers has always been a challenge”

- Training is time consuming
• Skill levels of employees. New and younger people with huge gaps in basic education are attracted to being employed in the business. Their needs “range from numeracy and literacy skills to general manners when approaching customers and peers with vocabulary and industry language badly amiss”. While the owners can attempt to train in these fields, the skills required are outside their realm of expertise

• Skills shortage. The owners report that there is a 20% skills shortage nationwide in the hospitality industry. They consider that this shortage is critical - “probably 100%” - at the local level. Additionally, potential staff “have no specific industry training” and/or are school leavers with no qualifications, “95% of whom require training”. One of the owners estimates that “at times skills [they] bring are half that of a trained person, the business carries a lot of ‘waste material’”

• The need for specialist input. Because of the skill levels of staff and the gaps in essential areas of ‘basic education’ specialist assistance is required from time to time. As an owner comments, “It is in this area we need help ... [from] outside agencies”

• Staff turnover. Turnover impacts on training benefits, for example, “one staff member who committed to three years of training completed the first year then ceased employment when her personal life got tough”

• Staff with personal issues. Personal issues, including those of a psycho-social nature, impact on staff ability to engage in and take up training

• Socio-economic status. For single women who are heading households “it is not easy, they juggle babies, family commitment, all that inhibits engagement”

• Gender issues. Women sometimes follow their partners who are seasonal workers. Family responsibilities add to the load of women who are already busy

• Cultural issues. One employer feels that it is difficult for young Māori girls to assert themselves: “I really try to push these girls to identify their skills and to achieve success … to think of themselves as having a position of importance”

• Attitudes towards education and training. The employers consider that a lack of self-efficacy and self-esteem impact on staff training uptake and output, their “attitude is not pro-active”.

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The employers needed a solution to the skills gaps caused by the industry skill shortage and staff entering the workforce without many basic skills and with low or no school qualifications. In the first instance, the employers wished to address the low LLN levels that they perceived were holding employees back from fulfilling workplace tasks and from taking up industry training opportunities. They were also cognisant that there were many issues that impacted on take up and success of training, these were broadly determined to be life skills.

The Owner/Manager who is an industry assessor and trainer determined that it was not financially viable to bring in outside trainers. Initially she was prepared to assist staff to improve their LLN skills but she wasn’t versed in how to teach literacy and numeracy, let alone to adults. She sought solutions to this dilemma and by chance stumbled onto the concept of workplace literacy provision.

**Locating assistance to meet the need**

The employers had little knowledge of what adult literacy services were available. They were made aware of services offered by the Whanganui Learning Centre through Work and Income (with whom Literacy Aotearoa Wanganui have a contract) and a cadetship co-ordinator who was responsible for a programme operating regionally with a cadet placed at the café.

The cadetship programme provided a useful conduit for information and support, allowing the employer to access support for this first employee at no cost. This action in itself was the catalyst for the involvement of other employees and a broader identification of workplace needs. It also enabled the development of a relationship between the employers and the literacy provider, with Work and Income, the provider, the employers, the cadetship manager, and latterly Workbase, all having a role to play in setting-up a programme of learning for first one and then two staff at the café. Subsequently, an application for broader support was made to TEC under the Workplace Literacy Fund.

Once engaged with the provider the business was keen to have more information about government initiatives to support learners in work with literacy needs.

*A conduit through Work and Income and the regional ‘career start’ programme*

The Career Start programme has been operating in the region for around 2 years. Thirty-six young employees (15-24) have entered into the programme in that time, 20% of whom were Māori. Eight of these cadets retained permanent positions in employment, 6 moved from the district, 2 became pregnant and resigned, 5 were dismissed, and the balance resigned for another position. The programme is set up to assist young people on Work and Income benefits into work.
The cadets are often supported by multiple agencies, as in the case of learner one (see below). Needs are either identified in training by the cadetship coordinator or the employer. Privacy agreements can mean that all information is not shared with contracting parties, for example, the literacy and numeracy provider may not know that a learner is receiving drug/alcohol or mental health support and it is up to the learner whether they choose to disclose this information. Neither WINZ nor the cadetship programme have a literacy screening process. The cadetship coordinator explained that “[we] just get to know them. The screening programme would be low school achievement – [as identified in] our initial interview”.

The cadetship coordinator notes that ‘life skills’ is the biggest issue for an estimated 90% of the cadets, and he has been working to meet this need: “Some of the things I have been teaching them [are]– goal setting, how to handle failure, budgeting, planning, communication skills, conflict resolution, anger management, nutrition, principles of success, [about] drugs and alcohol”.

Over 60% of the cadets have no school qualifications. The cadetship coordinator considers that most lack numeracy skills, although again, this is not assessed: “It’s a confusing subject for most of them. Managing money, performing functions in the workplace. Not sure I could put a percentage on it. We don’t actually screen people.”

The cadetship coordinator feels that employers might not have any clear expectations of a programme of learning for their learners and are “just anxious that the employee can read and write”.

He suggests a Holistic approach. At the moment we are putting them into employment, we are training them here, we’re teaching them how to read and write but there is a whole area actually not being touched. I feel that our approach is lopsided, we need to deal with this whole area over here, but I don’t have the means to do this.

Of the nine cadets currently enrolled in the programme, five are studying via an ITO, one is studying with Massey, and the others are in literacy and numeracy training. The cadetship programme offers one avenue of supporting workers with LLN needs.

The learning centre has had four cadets referred in the past two years.
Knowledge and expectations of workplace literacy programmes

The employer and employee had few expectations of a programme of learning. As one employer said, “it was all new to me … I looked to pick something up and pass it on to others”. The employer was happy to let the provider drive the process to meet the needs of the individual, enthusing, “It was such an unexpected bonus having you. I am wondering how other staff could use the service before being at crisis level”.

After engagement with the first employee a second employee requested assistance.

Prior experience of learning created an element of apprehension for one employee in particular, who commented that “I didn’t know what to expect. Was surprised it wasn’t like school”. This learner became an advocate in the workplace, leading to the involvement of another employee: “I heard that it was good and wanted to join in”. Neither employer knew of a government initiative to support the development of foundation skills in the workplace. They had not heard of Workbase and did not know that the TEC was involved in funding support to employers.

Motivation for engagement

For the employers
The employers were looking to meet an identified training need that was outside their area of expertise and training. They were also looking for funding support to meet this need. They were motivated by business objectives and a concern for the holistic development of employees.

For the employees
The first employee wanted to improve reading and writing for work, to understand work practices, and to gain qualifications.

The second employee was concerned that she could not give change accurately, write down orders, or read unknown words on the menus. Adding up hours to fill in timesheets and worrying about moving into the kitchen and having to measure things were also concerns.

Learning needs and learning approach

Although the employer and employees were able to broadly identify learning needs, they were not able to identify specific gaps nor the strengths the learners brought to the learning process.
The first learner, for example, identified difficulties with reading for work, reading to his child, and reading newspapers and letters. He had not read important workplace documentation including his employment agreement. Following diagnosis by a literacy tutor his literacy and language needs were more clearly defined and general knowledge, problem solving, confidence, self efficacy, and number knowledge were also identified as areas of need.

The second learner needed to learn how to decode unfamiliar and technical text and be able to read aloud to customers when necessary. Critical literacy, problem solving, confidence, and self efficacy were also diagnosed areas of need.

The provider operated from a strengths-based and ecological perspective, not dissimilar to the processes and approaches taken with all adult learners at the Learning Centre. Tutors worked within the guidelines and quality requirements of Literacy Aotearoa, Inc and the kaupapa of the organisation. At times the learning was wholly contextualised to the industry, at other times it sprang from the interest and social needs of the learners. For example, an entry point for one learner was through popular music. By reading a song-sheet while listening to music they recognised the reading skills they did have and applied sound reading strategies when negotiating unfamiliar text.

Engagement

Learner one

Subsequent to assessment and the first learning session, one learner realised that they were more skilful than they had anticipated; while there were clear gaps in reading skills and strategies, there was also a solid foundation on which to build. His tutor commented that: “He was so pleased to have an opportunity to learn and surprised after assessment at what he could read. Every session the light went on. One-to-one [learning] was important. We had the chance to build a rapport and share learning”. After seven hour-long sessions the learner requested that sessions be doubled in duration.

Being engaged in the process of assessment and learning alerted this employee to the skills required to read and write. He was interested in this as he had a new child and was clear that he wanted his child to be able to read. The learner described his prior strategy of dealing with unfamiliar employment demands as watching other people and following instructions as best he could. After a few learning sessions, he noted that it was good to understand things at work, such as how to read and interpret temperature ranges.
The learner left the café for personal reasons and thus the learning relationship. Three months later, however, having moved to Wanganui city and without a job, the learner rang the Whanganui Learning Centre, keen to pick up from where he’d left off. The learning relationship was resumed, his tutor commenting that “it was good to see him coming to us again so that the learning can continue”.

**Learner two**

Simply having engaged in the learning process resulted in an increase in self awareness and confidence for this learner. She immediately took control of her learning, focussing it on her goal to move into the kitchen and begin a trade qualification.

Delivery was multi-faceted, fitting with the needs of the learner and the existing approach of the business. Learning had begun and continued to take place in the workplace under the guidance of the training manager; the learner motivated both by the expression of support and the desire not to make mistakes in front of her employer. This mentoring was complemented by hour-long one-to-one sessions with a literacy tutor, conducted off-site at the offices of Work and Income, and allowing for individual learning needs to be concentrated on. Self-directed learning began following the first learning session, the learner taking on the strategies suggested by her tutor and applying them both within and beyond work hours. For example, the learner reported that “Writing things down like what people order. The short way so that kitchen understands as well, it has got easier. I practise some of the words at home. Random words. Picking out key words to learn and writing them down”. The learner also drew on the knowledge of family and colleagues: “What else were you having difficulty with?” “Timesheets, adding up the hours. My Mum and … [another girl at work] taught me”.

Informal evaluation between the parties was an accepted part of the delivery model.

**Impacts of engagement**

The employers were quick to note the impacts of the combined learning approach. After three sessions of learning an employer noted that learner one now had “a bounce in … [his] step”, “he is really proud of himself”. She noted that while “he is still reactive rather than proactive at this stage he show a little bit more confidence” and was asking questions.

The employer reported that the second learner talks enthusiastically about her training with … [her tutor] and is very positive when talking to her peers about the same. She appears to be more
confident and is excited to go to … class as [she] realises just what …. has [been] missed out on. [The employee] … was interested in learning the application across the board of family of words etc and how they may work in with her job. Always smiling on … return.

The employees also noted the impacts of engagement. For learner two eight one-hour sessions of learning resulted in improved spelling, math (measurement and calculations), reading, and confidence: “I am finding it really good doing this course because my confidence has improved and I am able to read and add a lot better. It has made work a lot easier”. She remains at the café and is continuing her learning with the centre.

**Issues raised**

*For the employer*

- Limited expectations and experience of workplace literacy programmes. The employer was surprised and delighted to have some sort of assistance

- Workplace practices contributing to workforce literacy difficulties. The manager recognised that the way material was presented to staff (in forms, policies, and procedures) might impact on employees’ ability to read and comprehend workplace tasks and meet compliance. The employer decided to improve their computer literacy and review workplace forms to ensure they were easy for employees to utilise

- Supporting the entire person in the workplace. Concerned about supporting employees, the employers were aware that other life issues impact on the take up of learning. Analysis of need before the programmes began was a critical element of development. This took place by way of informal meetings, interviews with managers, and workplace visits

- Demands of a learning organisation. Employees were expected to learn out-of-hours when required, and to share their learning in the workplace

- Cost of commitment to learning. Given the lack of basic skills for many existing and potential employees and a local skills shortage, there was an overall concern about the ongoing costs of training

- Contextualising learning. The training manager gave an example:

  I feel it is important to associate the industry text to the training. This could be quite easy but also fulfilling as kids have so many gaps today … from …
how ovens operate ... not like microwaves instant radiation ... but rather convection where the air is heated in the oven to cook the food, so you can’t just stand there with the door open allowing all the hot air to escape, while one decides whether the hot cloth is at hand or down the far end of the restaurant ... This sort of thing happens regularly.

For the provider
Delivering a regional service is problematic. The provider faced the following difficulties:

- Lack of qualified literacy tutors in the region
- Attendance. The provider was dependent on learner attendance
- Travel. Due to the lack of qualified staff in the region a tutor travelled from Whanganui City on a weekly basis. Time taken to travel was a costing consideration
- Time taken in the development phase. A lack of development funding impacted on time taken to set up learning programmes.

The pre-existing contract with Work and Income allowed the provider to couple provision at the café with work with other local Work and Income clients, thus making this development possible.
Construction and trade services industry - case study

Location and key business areas

This long-established construction and trade services business operates from two sites in the Wanganui-Manawatu region. The business also provides computer training.

Management

The business is managed by the owner and senior management staff.

Staffing

There are 35-40 employees with actual numbers dependent on demand and contracting requirements. Staff are predominately male with 5% female. Fourteen percent of the workforce are Māori.

Organisational culture and staff training

Training is part of the organisational culture and management support staff to achieve industry related qualifications. Most staff employed are qualified. In recent times, however, the local skills shortage has meant that unskilled staff have been employed. Management have worked to support these staff to meet trade training requirements and are also concerned with their general well-being. Most training revolves around various trade qualifications, primarily at trade certificate level. Office staff and management are also engaged in ongoing training.

Where possible training requirements are met locally. Training programmes offered by the local business network are valued with the company also looking to ITOs and a local polytechnic to provide relevant training.

With an element of business operation dedicated to computer training the company is well positioned to meet computer literacy needs. The company is not able to offer training to employees with LLN needs.

Recent issues that impact on training needs and delivery

- Growth reflected in staffing. Staff numbers have increased from 14 to 49 employees over the past four years
- Lack of qualified tradespeople in job market. With a local building boom there is a lack of qualified trades people
High productivity and demand for quality service

Contract tendering. The business must tender for multiple jobs and at times this results in pressure on the business and staff to meet contracting deadlines

A fluctuating market. The company cannot project too far forward. Currently they are extremely busy - as one manager says “it is go, go, go” - they are not sure, however, if this will still be the case early next year

Compliance requirements in a growing and busy industry

The need to train unskilled staff and, in particular, staff who do not have basic LLN or life skills.

**Knowledge and expectations of workplace literacy programmes**

Neither the employer nor employee had specific knowledge of what a workplace literacy programme might look like; they also had limited expectations of how a programme could operate. Both wanted to solve the employee’s inability to negotiate literacy related tasks. Apart from the other employee initially involved in the programme, who subsequently left the company for “personal reasons”, others in the workplace did not face similar difficulties.

**Motivation for engagement**

*For the employer*

The employer wanted to support the employee to ‘step-up’ to further training.

*For the employee*

The employee with LLN needs who remained with the company recognised that he required help to upskill, was open with both his employer and other employees about the difficulties he faced, and was happy to engage in learning. His drivers included being the “first in a family” line to achieve training success. He also held aspirations for his children and wanted to be a role model for them. The employee commented, “I have two kids, 1 and 3 years. I hope they are better than me at reading because in their lifetime there’s going to be more reading”.

**Literacy needs and learning approaches**

Both the employee and employer identified the need to upskill for a trade qualification. Neither had the experience or skills required to deepen the assessment.
The learner’s goals were to get a trade qualification, to improve his reading and spelling, and address his difficulties with “big words and understanding the words, streets, areas, technical stuff, difficult in normal life too, newspapers. I can’t retain what I’ve read”.

Further diagnosis indicated that the learner was an unpractised reader and writer who would need to advance his skills to the level of spelling, punctuation, decoding and encoding, and understanding text required to negotiate technical language and follow trade training materials successfully. The learner would also need to raise his numeracy skills.

The employee felt that “family problems at a young age” and intermittent schooling had caused his literacy and numeracy difficulties.

The learner preferred to work on his own and the programme focused on one-to-one tuition.

**Engagement**

The employer commented that the learner “seemed very keen, is very keen … to participate”. The employee found learning sessions to be a motivator and recounted that after sessions he would “just go home automatically do it, start reading. That helped motivate me”. Despite this, however, participation was not sustained.

The employee commented, “I was just too busy working, everything else sort of wipes out. Learning could be on the job cos there is smoko times, morning and afternoon time 15 minutes. Not much time. Lunch is an hour”. Asked if it would help if he got an hour off during the day to attend sessions he commented:

> There is a lot of work and it’s physical as well, so I would be quite tired. Although sometimes I just go into a whole different phase so I would be prepared to come at 4 if they released me from work. Depends what time I finish. I work until the job’s finished – quite late. I do hockey twice a week.

Communication with the learner and the workplace revealed a number of issues that were getting in the way of participation:

1. The nature of the work
   The employee worked as a member of a team. The team often travelled out of town, or to sites that had special restrictions, for example, prison environments where they were at times ‘locked down’. This meant that the learner could not leave before others were
ready or before it was safe to do so. In these situations he had no way to return to the city for learning.

The employee’s labouring job involved working in outside environments, often on building sites. The employer considered that “On the job it is just not practical” and it was not cost effective or practical for a tutor to make site visits.

2. Transport
Even when the learner was in town and could leave the site, he was not guaranteed to have transportation. While he owned a private vehicle, this was shared with his partner who was caring for two young children. There were only certain days and times that he had access to the vehicle and these needed to match tutor availability.

3. Productivity demands of contracting
Operating at the height of a building boom, a primary concern for the company was productivity. All available workers were needed to be on the job to meet contract deadlines:

   With the amount of work on at the moment it’s pressure, pressure, pressure to get jobs done and it’s not just within our organisation. We are sub-contracted to other people so therefore they are wanting that done today. We have pressure on us all the time to meet deadlines and unfortunately [the learner] is part of that.

4. Time available for learning
As already noted, there was little time in a busy working day for the learner to engage in a dedicated learning programme. After-hours learning sessions were initially favoured by the employer who, on reflection, questioned whether this was a realistic option. The employee’s parental responsibilities and out-of-work interests also meant he saw difficulties with after-hours provision.

5. Communication
Although the manager worked to ensure good communication occurred, there were difficulties in this respect. At times when the learner was unable to meet his learning contract the message did not always get through to the Learning Centre tutor concerned. If the tutor turned up and the learner didn’t show it was a frustration and a cost to the Learning Centre. At this stage the learner was enrolled as a community student and the Learning Centre only charged TEC/ACE for actual attendance.
**Impacts of engagement**

The learning time was limited to three sessions. Despite this, the learner had noticed small changes such as being motivated to give things a go like reading the paper at work or reading something at home.

**Issues raised**

*For the employer*

The employer remains committed to locating appropriate support for the employee. Currently they are investigating funding streams and this includes the potential of tapping into iwi development schemes. The employer is endeavoursing to locate information about how best to support an employee with LLN needs in this situation but is finding it difficult to find the information to do so.

*For the provider*

There were a number of issues for the provider, these included:

- Time invested to assist the business to find support was not funded

- Time taken to support and deliver a programme of learning to the employee was poorly funded. It was difficult to turn a learner away if alternative funding could not be located, this included the potential of direct payment from the business

- Information about how best to support a learner ‘step-up’ to trade qualifications was not readily available. The provider had funding from TEC to support foundation learning, however, the terms of their contract with TEC did not suit the needs of this situation

- Flexibility in existing funding streams was required as was clarity about who should be supporting pre-apprenticeship training

- The need for flexibility in approach to accommodate cultural approaches

- The need for flexibility in approach to accommodate social and workplace constraints

- Networking elements required time, resourcing, and the establishment of relationships between the appropriate groups. For a community agency these aspects of development remain either un-funded or under-funded
The lack of clear communication conduits with government departments, ITOs, ITO training providers, workplaces, and community agencies (with responsibility to support workers with special learning needs) inhibited development of the programme and support for the learner.