

Workplace literacy programmes: answering policy questions

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3 studies



	Upskilling (2011)	Measures of Success (2013)	Skills4Life (2008)
Sites	15	18	53
Focus	Companies	Companies	Individuals
Average hrs. tchg.	45	25	30
Contextualised	Very high (17/18)	High (2/3)	No
Total pre/post-course	523/343	226	532/201
Post-course data	Within a month	3 & 6 mths. after	Up to 2 yrs after
Literacy assessment	Go!	Self-assessed	Go!
Numeracy	No	No	No
Writing	Yes	A little	A little
Impact on work practices	Extensive	Very little	Some

Key policy questions re Workplace Literacy Programmes (WLPs)

1. Are WLPs feasible?
2. Are they sustainable?
3. How do we run WLPs effectively?
4. Do WLPs recruit non-traditional learners?
5. Are they economically realistic?
6. Do participants improve their literacy skills?
7. What other impacts do WLPs achieve?
8. Do participants improve their workplace practices?
9. Are the changes related to changes in literacy skills?
10. How significant is the potential contribution of WLPs?
[Will WLPs solve 'the literacy problem'?]



Are WLPs feasible?

- ◎ Strong evidence
- ◎ They are feasible even within the constraints of busy workplaces and their on-going challenges and crises provided:
 - there is high commitment at all levels of the company
 - skilled providers and tutors are involved

Are they sustainable?

- ◎ Strong evidence (both how to do it and how not to do it)
- ◎ Importance of how the programmes are negotiated, set up and maintained
- ◎ ‘Cold turkey’ programmes are doomed to failure
- ◎ Q: how long should govt. funding be used?



How do we run WLPs effectively?

- Strong evidence
- Considerable evidence about how to run WLPs
- Benseman, J. (2010). Planning and teaching effective workplace literacy, language and numeracy programmes: what does research tell us? . *Journal of Adult Learning Aotearoa New Zealand* 38(2), 19-28.
- Benseman, J. (2013). Recruiting and retaining learners in workplace literacy programmes in New Zealand. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 53(1), 7-25.



Do WLPs recruit non-traditional learners?

- Strong evidence
- WLPs recruit, retain and have an impact on learners that are under-represented in other forms of literacy provision
- It is not difficult to target WLPs for recruitment, but mainly in large companies



Are they economically realistic?

- Limited evidence
- Wolf & Evans adamant that WLPs are extravagantly expensive
- Limited research on actual costings
- Upskilling: \$3400 (2200 Euro) per participant
 - \$73 (E48) per teaching hour
 - \$34-45 per learner hour for companies
 - Considerable variation

Q: what is reasonable?



Do participants improve their literacy skills?

- Contested evidence
- Quantitative analyses: mixed conclusions
- Qualitative analyses: yes

- Q1: how much impact on literacy skills can interventions of 30-100 hours achieve?
- Q2: how much of the impact is helping 'rusty learners'?



What other impacts do WLPs achieve?



- Strong evidence
- Up to 2/3 of participants report (and verified) wider impact on personal confidence, networking skills
- Limited impact outside the workplace

Do participants improve their workplace practices?



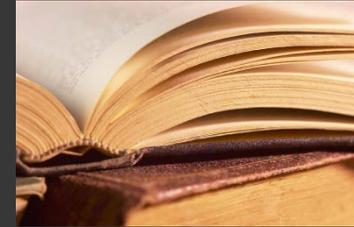
- Reasonable evidence
- Many participants transfer their new skills and confidence to doing their jobs
- Supervisors and managers verify these results
- Benseman, J. (2010). Transferring literacy skills in the workplace. *Reflect*, 13(Summer), 9-11.

Are the changes related to changes in literacy skills?

- Reasonable evidence
- Reported changes detail changes in workplace practices that involve literacy skills



How significant is the potential contribution of WLPs?



- Reasonably significant
- Complements other forms of provision
- Has helped normalise the literacy debate (like financial literacy and tertiary academic skill development)
- [Will WLPs solve 'the literacy problem'?]
- Probably not...



Questions?

- ⦿ Are there key questions I have missed?
- ⦿ How well does your knowledge/experience match these findings?
- ⦿ What research still needs to be done?