SUPPORT DOCUMENT

Building sustainable adult literacy provision: A review of international trends in adult literacy policy and programs – Support document

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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author/project team and do not necessarily reflect the views of ANTA, DEST or NCVER.

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Contents

Introduction

Structure of this report

The report is primarily descriptive and builds a picture of available knowledge for application to the Australian situation. It is written for an Australian audience. The report covers the following topics sequentially:

✧ an introduction to the study

✧ an overview of the international trends and drivers for development of adult literacy policy and programs in industrialised countries

✧ a snapshot of development of adult literacy policy and provision in each country, including Australia.

Compilation report

✧ A report compiled by Robin Ryan drawing on the detailed material contained here is also available. This report thematically summarises the research under the following headings:

✧ policy context and concepts

✧ program development and delivery

✧ regulatory frameworks, product development and quality assurance

✧ issues for the teaching workforce

✧ implications for Australian policy and practice.

The research brief

The aim of this report was to analyse, through a desktop audit, international trends in adult literacy policy and programs. The audit includes an examination of the significant research undertaken, and policy statements made by international institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The study also includes a description and analysis of the adult literacy policy initiatives, frameworks and program provision, including investment levels and outcomes, in a number of countries and an analysis of the extent to which 'new literacies' are being addressed in other countries.

The countries selected by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) for this study are:

✧ Canada

✧ Republic of Ireland

✧ New Zealand

✧ United States of America

✧ United Kingdom

✧ Australia.

Sweden was also included in the original brief; however, there appeared to be, by comparison with the other countries being studied, insufficient English language materials available on this topic. Therefore, and in view of the short time lines, this country was not included.

The countries chosen all are industrialised countries and members of the OECD; they all face similar economic and social challenges in what the OECD has described as the 'information age'. All countries have participated in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) over the last decade and have made significant policy responses to it (OECD & Statistics Canada 2000). Most of these OECD member countries are also facing similar challenges in their labour markets. Most have aging populations and are facing skill shortages in emerging areas of their economies. Employment in rural, mining and manufacturing industries is in decline, while employment in the service and information technology sectors is rising. All countries have adopted lifelong learning policies focusing upon human capital development in order to address future labour market needs.

Moreover, all the countries in the study follow western democratic traditions of governance. These forms of governance vary from complex federated systems in which education policy and provision is separated and located within various levels of government, to single national governments. The positioning of adult literacy within government systems and education traditions in each country have influenced the development of adult literacy policy and programs in these countries.

English is the national language of all the countries in the study; however, some like Canada and New Zealand, support multilingual language policies. They all face issues of social cohesion. A number of countries within the study have significant Indigenous populations who are disadvantaged in their access to education and other social services. All have increasing immigrant populations, linguistically and culturally different from long-term citizens.

In all of these countries adult literacy has been marginalised and is a comparatively under-resourced sector of education relative to the needs identified in the International Adult Literacy Surveys. In appendix 1 the comparative performance of countries in this survey is shown.

Methodology

The research has been restricted to a desktop audit of the available literature. Data from international organisations have been reviewed and the major trends identified have been used in structuring the report.

Data on each of the countries have been gained through extensive web-based searches and through contact with key stakeholders who were asked to provide access to material covering a number of themes related to policy-making and program delivery. Many of these respondents provided access to published and unpublished research and policy documents. Others provided some commentary on developments in their countries. The views and commentary provided informally by these respondents have only been used when referenced in the literature. Given the extremely short time lines, no systematic follow-up questionnaires or qualitative research were undertaken.

For each of the countries in the study data were sought which covered:

✧   a social and economic overview

✧   a historical view of adult literacy policy and program development

✧   the regulatory framework in which adult literacy policy and programs are administered

✧   funding levels for the years 1990, 1996 and 2001

✧ quality assurance systems such as curriculum, reporting frameworks, and assessment systems

✧ conceptualisation of literacies used in policy, curriculum and research

✧ teacher preparation and professional development.

✧ The themes for the data collection, a copy of the letter requesting information and a list of recipients and respondents is attached in appendix 2.

Funding data

In order to compare expenditure on adult literacy across the six countries, we proposed to research expenditure of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita at three different year levels (1990, 1996, 2001) from which an analysis could be conducted. The following databases were investigated:

✧ Australian Bureau of Statistics national accounting database

✧ UNESCO website

✧ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) online *World Factbook* 2003

✧ OECD website

✧ The 2003–04 Victorian State Budget

✧ The 2003–04 Australian Budget

✧ Economics journals online (using Emerald, J-Stor, Ovid etc.[1])

To enable expenditure comparisons to be made, governments need to separate expenditure on adult literacy programs from other expenditure line items.

Research in this area revealed a number of gaps. Expenditure on adult literacy provision was a budget line item only in the United Kingdom, but not in any of the other countries searched, including Australia. Thus we were unable to retrieve any reliable or useful data. Moreover, in some countries, adult literacy expenditure is included in education line items; in others, community services; and in others, a mix of both. Where expenditure on education is elaborated, adult literacy expenditure may be embedded in other data; for example, within higher education, post-compulsory or vocational education expenditure.

In federated systems (Australia, United States, Canada), incomplete data are available. For example, national data are available, but not state data or local data. This makes any comparison with single state systems difficult.

Where information about funding has been available in particular countries, it has been included, and is reported in the currency of the country being described.

Conceptualisation of literacies

The study is primarily concerned with literacy in English and is constrained in its discussion by the limitations of the sources available. Most policy documents are concerned with the dominant English discourses rather than with vernacular or non-standard English literacies. The study does not enter into lengthy debates about definitions of literacy. These have been more than adequately identified in recent NCVER papers, for example, *Literacy in the new millennium*

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[1] Emerald, University of Saskatchewan, viewed August 2003, <http://library/usask.ca/ejournals/publisher.phtml?id=1121>
J-Stor viewed August 2003, <http://www.jstor.org>.
Ovid, viewed August 2003, <http://www.ovid.com>.

(Lonsdale & McCurry 2004) and *Review of research: Literacy and numeracy in vocational education and training* (Falk & Miller 2001; Watson, Nicholson & Sharplin 2001) and in the academic literature.

The framing of the project brief around conceptualisations of adult literacy also raises the question of how to treat adult numeracy, adult second language, or the overarching concept of adult learning and education. While recognising adult numeracy and adult English as a second language as discrete fields of education practice, the treatment of these educational areas within government policies tends to include, or not distinguish between them. Throughout the report the term 'adult literacy' is generally inclusive of adult numeracy and English as a second language.

Lankshear (cited by Lonsdale & McCurry 2004) provides the view of literacy found most useful to this study. He describes four types of literacy within the context of the new economy. These are:

✧ the 'lingering basics' or those more traditional views of literacy which see it as a mastery of the basic skills necessary for understanding school work

✧ the 'new basics', in which the skills needed to contribute productively to a capitalist society are more abstract 'symbol-logical capacities'

✧ 'elite literacies', which refer to higher-order skills

✧ 'foreign language literacy' which enables participation in the operations and dealings of a global marketplace.

Within Lankshear's taxonomy we take the 'new literacies' of the research brief to mean 'new basics' covering what has been described by the New London Group[2] as multi-literacies; that is, literacies involving a multiplicity of communication channels and media, and a diversity of linguistic and cultural context (Cope & Kalantzis 2000, p.5). These literacies are concerned with not only text but visual images, as well as the diversity of text terminology associated with information and multimedia technologies.

In many countries adult literacy is delivered by volunteers and community groups without any funding from governments. While lack of government policies or policies promoting philanthropy may affect the provision of these services, this study is concerned with formal adult literacy policy and provision; that is, programs funded by governments or their agencies, either in part or fully, or subject to statistical and other reporting requirements. In most countries this provision occurs in post-compulsory education sectors, variously described as adult education, higher education, community education, vocational education and training and/or further education.

Programs delivering adult literacy use titles such as: adult literacy; adult basic education; adult basic skills; adult language literacy and numeracy; further education; English as a second language (ESL) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); reading, writing and numeracy; reading for…; writing for …; return to study; return to work; workplace literacy; workplace basic skills; prevocational courses; school certificates for adults; general education for adults etc.

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[2] The New London Group, of which Cope and Kalantzis are members, is made up of a group of international academics promoting a sociocultural perspective on literacy teaching in education.

International trends

Within international organisations such as UNESCO, the International Labour Organization and the OECD, there has been growing recognition of the importance of literacy development for adults in a world characterised by globalisation, technological change and organisational development (OECD & Statistics Canada 2000, p.xiii; United Nations 2002, p.3; International Labour Organization 2002, p.11).

These organisations, from their varying perspectives, send a strong message supporting the systematic and explicit inclusion of adult literacy provision within reformed education systems which support lifelong learning.

The United Nation's Literacy Decade

In its resolution 56/116, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the Literacy Decade for the period 2003–12. A draft plan of action has been developed by the United Nations which seeks comments and proposals from governments and relevant international organisations in order to develop a targeted action-oriented plan for implementation through the General Assembly (United Nations 2002). This plan supports the Commission of Human Rights resolution on the right to education. Australia is yet to provide a response.

At the core of the plan of action is the identification of the key role played by national governments, in coalition with their communities, in promoting literate societies, arguing that: 'The state must play the central and crucial role in planning, coordinating, implementing and financing programmes for Literacy for all' (United Nations 2002, p.5).

The action plan also recognises the changing definitions of literacy:

> Literacy policies and programmes today require going beyond the limited view of literacy that has dominated the past. Literacy for all requires a renewed vision of literacy.

> In the rapidly changing world of today's knowledge society, with the progressive use of newer and innovative technological means of communication, literacy requirements continue to expand regularly. In order to survive in today's globalised world, it has become necessary for all people to learn new literacies and develop the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information in multiple manners.

> (United Nations 2002, p.4)

The key areas of action recognise the need for coordinated and complementary actions focused upon policy-making, a diversity of modes of programs, capacity-building, research, community participation, and monitoring and evaluation (United Nations 2002, pp.5–7).

International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization has commenced revision of the Human Resource Development Recommendation, 1975, in response to the shifts towards economies and societies which increasingly rely on human knowledge and skill in producing goods and services and in securing employment for people. The report, *Learning and training for work in the knowledge society,* identifies basic literacy as essential for learning and for 'trainability', as well as for employability (International Labour Organization 2002, p.7).

It has been increasingly recognised that people's endowment of skills and capabilities, and investment in education and training, constitute *the key* to economic and social development. Skills and training increase productivity and incomes, and facilitate everybody's participation in economic and social life. (International Labour Organization 2002, p.3)

Many countries are formulating their human resource development objectives in terms of lifelong learning. The 'learning chain' of lifelong learning includes early childhood developmental education accessible to all children; universal, free and compulsory basic education; increased access for all to secondary education; training and learning opportunities in schools and enterprises; widespread opportunities to obtain further and higher education and training; accessible continuing education and training for adults; gender balance in access to education and training; and access to educational opportunity for minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

The International Labour Organization has developed a three-pronged strategy to meet the challenges of globalisation and improve competitiveness, while reversing growing inequalities in labour markets (International Labour Organization 2002).

The first aspect is designed to address the development of knowledge and skills which are necessary in order to be competitive in tighter international markets. The International Labour Organization notes that: 'Widespread digital literacy must be based on a system of quality basic education' (International Labour Organization 2002, pp.11, 89).

The second aspect to this strategy envisions education and training militating against the negative effects of globalisation, as it focuses 'on helping [the large number of workers who have lost their jobs in industrial and public sector restructuring] to develop new skills that will enhance their chances of funding their own' (International Labour Organization 2002, p.11).

The final element of the strategy deals with education and training addressing vulnerable groups in the community—women, low-skilled workers, where: 'The focus will be on developing their basic skills, including basic literacy and numeracy' (International Labour Organization 2002, p.11).

Underpinning the International Labour Organization's strategy are three elements considered crucial to an education and training system's ability to meet these challenges:

✧ basic education for all, including the 'foundational' skills of literacy and numeracy, citizenship, social skills, learning-to-learn skills and the ability to solve problems together

✧ core work skills for all which, in Australia, would include the key competencies and employability skills

✧ lifelong learning for all, which encompasses the following key elements:

✧ focus on the centrality of the learner

✧ accommodation of the diversity of learner needs

✧ emphasis on the motivation to learn

✧ recognition of the multiplicity of education and training policy objectives

✧ understanding that an individual's learning objectives may change over their lifetime

✧ recognition that all kinds of learning—formal, non-formal, informal—are valid. (International Labour Organization 2002, pp.12–13)

The International Labour Organization report also notes, in the context of basic education, that:

> In advanced industrialised countries, which have extended basic education to most of their populations, the emphasis is on improving educational quality and access of disadvantaged groups in education and initial training opportunities. (International Labour Organization 2002, p.32)

The new human resources approaches imply a number of fundamental differences between the old human capital development models about learning. The new model places the individual at the centre of learning and affirms the human right to education. It reflects the ascendency of human capital over physical capital in the new economies, so that increasingly, it is the skills and knowledge of workers which are important, and that individuals become the architects for developing their own skills. The way skills and knowledge are acquired has shifted away from formal transmission models of knowledge to constructivist or learning-to-learn models. The modern information communication technologies provide valuable tools for this new learning to individuals (International Labour Organization 2002 pp.3–4).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

As the global economy emerged in the early 1990s, the OECD, which represents a group of major industrialised countries, became interested in acquiring an increased understanding of literacy and the distribution of literacy skills across countries and populations. This new global economy was characterised by a re-integration of Europe, while the rapidly developing economies in Asia and South America created new forms of cooperation, as well as potential competition. Successful economies were export-oriented, were aided by rapid technological advances and benefited from rapid flows of information and financial capital. These changes exerted a dramatic effect on labour markets, with many jobs becoming obsolete and new occupational areas emerging. The results of the first International Adult Literacy Survey indicated that this economic and social transformation was taking place at such a rapid rate that, if OECD countries were to maintain a competitive advantage, then substantial interventions and initiatives would be necessary (OECD & Statistics Canada 1995, pp.21–5). As this report notes:

> The central importance of the human factor in securing an adequate foundation for economic growth, personal development and social and cultural revitalisation underscores the imperative of cultivating a highly literate population. (OECD & Statistics Canada 1995, p.23)

The OECD report therefore concluded that cultivating and developing literacy should be an important element in any country's long-term policy strategies. The literacy survey also demonstrated the importance of gaining systematic knowledge about literacy and how it is acquired. Additional OECD research such as the *Reviews of national policies on education*: 'sends a strong message about the importance of the community and voluntary sector in delivering adult education and strengthening a culture of literacy and civic society' (cited in OECD & Statistics Canada 2000, p.51).

These reports point to need for education systems to be flexible and to have the capacity to reach out to adults who might not otherwise participate in adult learning.

Since 1994, the OECD, in cooperation with Statistics Canada, has conducted systematic large-scale national comparative surveys of literacy in the adult population—the International Adult Literacy Survey. A number of conclusions drawn from the first survey are cited above. Other OECD surveys, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), have collected data on the literacies—applying knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics and science—developed as part of schooling (OECD 2003, p.3). Young people in their final years of schooling in the countries selected for this study, performed at least at level 3 of a 5-level scale, indicating that they are all above the OECD average (OECD 2003, p.4).
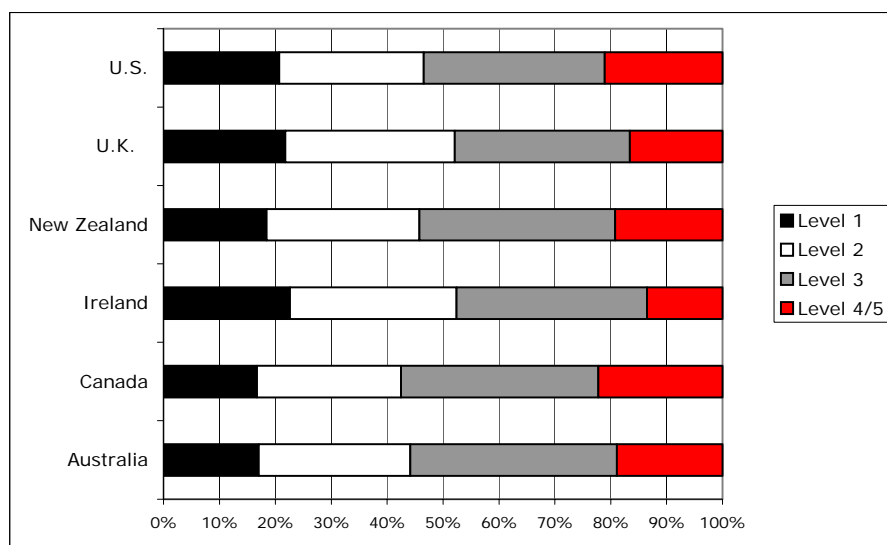
The Second International Adult Literacy Survey

Literacy in the information age: Final report of the International Adult Literacy Survey, published in 2000 reported on a comparative study of 20 countries, using three dimensions of literacy across five levels. It provides details of how countries perform by comparison with other OECD countries and it identifies those groups of people to whom policy-makers could target new initiatives.

The dimensions of literacy profiled in the survey are: 'prose literacy'—the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, poems and fiction; 'document literacy'—the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and graphics; and 'quantitative literacy'—the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a cheque book, figuring out a tip, completing an order form or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement.

The scores range on a scale from 0 to 500 points for each domain. Each of the scales is split into five different levels from level 1 for the lowest literacy proficiency to level 5, the strongest level of literacy proficiency (OECD & Statistics Canada 2000).

The relative performances of the countries included in this study are included in table 1. Comparative data on all scales are attached in appendix 1.

Table 1: Comparative performance among countries per cent of population 16–65 on the prose scale

Source; Hagstan (2002, p.19, selected countries from table 3, prose scale)

The results of the second International Literacy Survey exert a major impact in three distinct ways.

First, the survey contributes to new understandings of literacies as 'a relative concept that must be set in the context of economic and social demands' (OECD & Statistics Canada 2000, p.24). The literacy practices in modern pluralist democracies are changing and becoming more demanding and, as the OECD notes:

> … literacy is defined as a particular capacity and mode of behaviour: the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home at work and in the community – to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's potential. (OECD & Statistics Canada 2000, p.X)

Secondly, it has provided impetus to large-scale and comparative international research. The results of these surveys served to remind industrialised countries that literacy was far from being an issue only for developing countries but was a major force in maintaining social wellbeing and promoting further economic growth.

All countries were shown to have significant proportions, that is, between 45% and 55%, of their populations at levels 1 and 2 of the scale. The International Adult Literacy Survey data provide a huge amount of demographic material which can, if examined very carefully, assist in shaping programs, although one commentator has cautioned consumers, policy-makers and educators, in interpreting results (Sussman 2003, pp.i–v). In re-examining the Canadian results she warns against a simple conflating of levels 1 and 2. She highlights the differences in these groups which should assist in targeting services to them more effectively; for example, understanding the impact of poor literacy on the wellbeing of older citizens and effective types of provision to meet their needs.

The country findings and their comparisons with other OECD countries have been instrumental in facilitating policy responses leading to a renewed focus on adult literacy in all countries except Australia. A new round of OECD surveys, the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL), is currently being conducted and will undoubtedly provide further opportunities for large-scale and comparative research.

Thirdly, the surveys and the reports analysing the data provide insights into effective policy measures. One message is very clear. It is no longer sufficient to rely on reforms to school education to develop successful global economies and maintain cohesive societies. Because technological, economic and labour market change is now so rapid, it is essential that a diverse range of educational interventions are available to people throughout their lifetimes. Moreover, for many countries, the reforms to education need to target those already in the labour market. As Hagstan notes:

> Initial education alone is not enough to improve the literacy level of a population. There must for a means of improving the skills of adults.

> (Hagstan 2002, p.55)

The introduction of new information communication technologies (ICT) is not only transforming literacy practices but also the way in which people learn (International Labour Organization 2002, p.89; Chappell et al. 2003, p.6). As these new technologies cannot be anticipated, continual access to education and training throughout life to upgrade and build skills and knowledge is now an essential requirement of a national education system.

Canada

Social and economic overview

Canada is a vast country stretching millions of square miles, but with a population of only 33 million people. The physical distances between communities and the generally sparse population have contributed to strong regional identities shaping Canada's form of government and policies, including those pertaining to education. Canada has no federal department of education.

Canada has a diverse ethnic population, comprising 28% originating in the British Isles, 23% of French origin, 15% of other European origin, 2% Amerindian, 6% other, mostly Asian, African, Arab, and 26% of mixed background (Central Intelligence Agency website 2003). Four main cultural groupings which impact on policy are distinguishable. Equally predominant are the Anglo Saxon and French; the third category comprises native cultures who were here before the colonisers arrived, while the fourth comprises all the other ethnic groups, representing many races and nationalities immigrating in the post-Second World War period. Canada continues to encourage immigration, with targets established to attract skilled and business migrants and to increase the number of foreign students and temporary foreign workers (Shohet 1999). Canada has two official national languages, French and English.

Canadian gross domestic product in 2002 was US$923 billion (Central Intelligence Agency website 2003). During the 1990s Canada's unemployment rate was close to 10%. It is estimated that, by 2004, more than 70% of all new jobs created will require some form of post-secondary education, and that skill requirements in the Canadian labour market will continue to rise in the years ahead. The Canadian labour force is ageing. More than one-half of the people who will be in the labour force in 2015 are already in it. It is estimated that more than 40% of working-age Canadians lack the basic literacy skills required for successful participation in a rapidly changing labour market (Parliament of Canada 2003).

Canada lies in the shadow of the economy of the United States and has just embarked on an aggressive policy to compete as a major player in the global economy. Canada launched its Innovation Strategy in 2002 with the release of two companion documents: *Achieving excellence: Investing in people knowledge and opportunity* (Government of Canada 2002a) and *Knowledge matters: Skills and learning for Canadians* (Government of Canada 2002b).

Regulatory framework

Canada is one of the few industrialised countries without a national system for adult basic education. Literacy and adult basic education, like social services areas; for example, welfare, health, education and training, are under the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial governments. Thus, like Australia, it is not possible to talk about a single system of service provision in relation to adult learning and literacy. Each of the ten provinces and three territories has its own constitutionally guaranteed system, any one of which may differ from each other as much as systems in two different countries (Shohet 1999, p.1).

The federal government plays a role in developing policy directions and in providing some funds for literacy initiatives through provincial transfer payments and through the National Literacy Secretariat (Movement for Canadian Literacy 2003a). The current agency for this policy and planning role is the government department, Human Resource Development Canada.

The Canadian Innovation Strategy is the policy mechanism for a whole-of-government approach to achieving national goals. The role of this strategy is to harness and coordinate the activities of federal portfolios as well as to ensure collaboration between all sectors of other tiers of government at regional and local level. Targets have been set for all stakeholders; for example, target 5 of the innovation strategy is: 'Over the next five years, increase the number of adults pursuing learning opportunities by 1 million'.

History of adult literacy

Canada has a long history in adult literacy, commencing with the Reading Camp Movement, later to become Frontier College, one of the primary providers of adult education Canada. Impetus for further development came in 1976 when Audrey Thomas published the first detailed analysis of illiteracy in Canada (Parliament of Canada 2003). This analysis used census data on school grade completions to estimate the number of adults in need, and collected all available data on provision across the country from federal and provincial sources and from numerous organisations of different types—government, research, and community-based. In 1989 the Survey of Literacy Skill Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) was conducted and the first International Adult Literacy Survey followed in 1994. These surveys have given advocacy groups data on which to campaign vigorously; however, the strong focus on workforce literacy and family literacy[3] in developments since 1998 has caused tensions in the field, whereby competition for scarce resources between traditional adult literacy provision and these new models of delivery is created (Shohet 1999, p.28).

International Adult Literacy Survey

Canada participated in the first International Adult Literacy Survey in 1994. Generally speaking, Canada's performance was considered quite good, outranking the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia on all three literacy scales. This was contrary to predictions of a continuing erosion of literacy skills. On the other hand, the improvements in education retention rates and higher-level recent graduates did not translate into the overall performance. This suggested that factors other than schooling are affecting the literacy skills of Canadians (Statistics Canada 1996, p.2). Considerable differences in performance were noted between different Canadian regions and reflect the different education systems (Statistics Canada 1996).

Significant issues emerged from the Canadian International Adult Literacy Survey and were noted by advocates for adult learning and literacy education. These strands of interest, particularly relating to health and social wellbeing (Statistics Canada 1996; Movement for Canadian Literacy 2003a) distinguish the Canadians' response from those of other countries in this study.

The survey has had a dramatic affect on the policy formation in Canada. It has drawn attention to the overall figures and the incapacity of the current, fragmented system of literacy provision to deliver outcomes. The Movement for Canadian Literacy notes:

> … even well-intentioned literacy programs cannot address these issues without appropriate resources and a broader social shift. Since literacy is about all of us, the challenge for Canadian society is to truly become a culture of lifelong learning.

> (Movement for Canadian Literacy 2003a)

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[3] Family literacy programs are designed to address the literacy issues of adults as they support their children's education.

Developing national adult literacy policy

Adult literacy has been put on the national agenda through two 'speeches to the throne',[4] and more recently, by linking adult literacy to essential skills in the development of the Innovation Strategy.

In November 2002, the Innovation Agenda consultations culminated in a National Innovation Summit at which literacy was placed at the top of the skills and learning priority list. Paralleling the government's consultations, the Movement for Canadian Literacy has been consolidating opinions from the literacy community through its own 'National Literacy for Action Agenda' consultations (Movement for Canadian Literacy 2003b).

In June 2003, the federal parliament tabled the report, *Raising adult literacy skills: The need for a pan-Canadian response* (Parliament of Canada 2003). The report recommended that:

✧ The federal Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) Minister meet with provincial and territorial ministers to develop a pan-Canadian accord on literacy and numeracy skills development, which paves the way for increased federal investments.

✧ A federal literacy policy be developed applicable to all federal departments, which reviews existing and emerging literacy programs ensuring that they advance literacy goals, support access to literacy programs and promote clear communications with the public.

✧ The National Literacy Secretariat budget be increased from $28.2m to $50m per year. One-third of the increase should go to eligible projects for a multi-year period to assess the impact of stable core funding on the acquisition of literacy skills.

✧ An Aboriginal Literacy Strategy be designed in consultation with the Aboriginal community, and provincial and territorial governments. During the period of its development, a new Aboriginal Funding Stream should immediately receive an allocation of $5m. In addition, $15m should be allocated to Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements to fund Aboriginal workplace literacy initiatives.

✧ Greater use of prior learning assessment for low literacy learners be encouraged, resurrecting the concept of a 'learner passport'.

✧ The National Literacy Secretariat be expanded to support community learning and family literacy projects.

✧ Spending be increased in part II of the *Employment Insurance Act* by $100m.

✧ Literacy development become a key component of ongoing efforts to remove barriers to work and learning for people with disabilities.

✧ The mandate for the new Canadian Learning Institute include literacy research.

Officials at Human Resource Development Canada have begun development of framework for the Canadian literacy strategy.

Current adult literacy provision

Conceptualisation of literacies

A variety of terms is used to refer to adult literacy across Canada, a situation which reflects the autonomy of jurisdictions of the provinces and territories over education. Across Canada, the terms 'adult basic education' (ABE) and 'literacy education' are used, but not necessarily defined

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[4] A Ministerial statement in Australia approximates a Canadian 'speech to the throne'.

in the same way as in the United States. Adult basic education is generally used to describe education for adults up to grade school level, while literacy education usually refers to education for adults up to grade 9. Nonetheless, the term 'literacy' is increasingly being used interchangeably with adult basic education in many provincial documents. Shohet notes that many provinces use the International Adult Literacy Survey definition (Shohet 1999, p.1). In addition, as Shohet notes, there are gaps between the conceptualisation of literacies by practitioners and bureaucrats:

> As practitioners have broadened their understanding and practice of literacy education, policymakers have been tightening the definition of what counts as literacy and what outcomes are acceptable.
>
> Whether programs focus on academic or school-based literacy or on the practices related to the uses of literacy for daily living, the question of boundary persists. The boundary issues ultimately determine the scope of literacy programme eligible for funding.
>
> (Shohet 1999, pp.20–1)

The diversity of definitions and conceptualisations of literacy ultimately impact on curricula and assessment. Some organisations talk about 'new literacies' and 'multi literacies', but many practitioners, policy-makers and the public at large remain fixed on the idea of literacy strictly as a print-based concept (Shohet 1999, p.21). Having said that, as is typical of Canada, there is considerable questioning of the definitional boundaries; for example, the discussion hosted by the Centre for Literacy, Quebec, promoting the interface between literacy, media and technology. Another initiative, Connect, provides an online database of online resources which integrates literacy with the teaching of computer literacy (National Adult Literacy Database 2003). There is also considerable experimentation with online and flexible learning models in more remote and less populated provinces. In this context, in 1995 Canada commenced discussions about the need for policy and action to deal with new technology and adult literacy teaching (Godin 1995), and is probably the most advanced country in the study in its adoption of technology in communication in the field, and in innovations for dealing with new literacies.

Overall, Canadian conceptualisations of literacy encompass those provided by Lankshear. There remains a strong 'lingering basics' approach alongside attempts at 'new basics', incorporating multimedia and multilingual and cultural sensitivities. Adult literacy and second language acquisition programs are available in both English and French.

National infrastructure

National Literacy Secretariat

The National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) was established in 1987 and works with provincial and territorial governments, the volunteer sector, business, labour, the literacy community and federal government departments to help advance literacy issues and policy developments on a national and international scale. The secretariat, located in the federal department, Human Resource Development Canada, reflects the trend for aligning adult literacy education with notions of human capital or workforce development.

The mandate of the National Literacy Secretariat is to serve as a focal point for sharing information and expertise on literacy issues and acting as a catalyst for literacy action on behalf of Canadians. With an annual budget of about $30m, it supports a number of projects and initiatives to:

✧ develop learning materials

✧ improve access to literacy programs

◆ increase public awareness

◆ improve coordination and information among literacy partners and advance literacy research.

The secretariat does not fund the delivery of direct ongoing literacy training.

The National Literacy Secretariat offers a viable model for building national infrastructure in a federated system in which the responsibility for education is located with regional governments. Significant achievements are the establishment of the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD), electronically linked to and supporting local resource centres; the support of coalitions in each of the provinces and a national-level facilitation of cross-government partnerships; for example, the health and literacy program with the Canadian Public Health Association. The National Literacy Secretariat has received some criticism relating to projects considered ineffectual or unworthy, and for an unhealthy dependence on a single funding supplier using a short-term project funding model. Shohet points to the irony of holding the National Literacy Secretariat accountable for lack of improved literacy performance for the period from the 1989 Survey of Literacy Skill Used in Daily Activities up to the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey while it had no power to directly fund delivery of training services (Shohet 1999, pp.17–19).

National literacy organisations

Seven key national institutions support adult literacy work:

◆ The Movement for Canadian Literacy (MLC) is a national coalition of the provincial and territorial interests, providing a national forum for exchange, collaboration, support and promotion of English literacy issues in Canada.

◆ La fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF) fulfils a similar role for French-speaking literacy interests across the country.

◆ The national Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA) was incorporated in March 2003 after several years of development work. Its mission is to advance and support aboriginal literacy.

◆ Two country-wide literacy delivery organisations provide support to programs which use their specific approaches to literacy training:
  ◆ Laubach Literacy Canada links Laubach-based literacy groups across the country and provides resources, support and training for thousands of volunteer tutors.
  ◆ Frontier College recruits, trains and supports volunteers, mainly college students, to run reading circles, homework clubs and one-to-one tutoring programs through community partnerships at more than 300 sites across the country.

◆ The National Adult Literacy Database, a comprehensive electronic clearing house of literacy resources, provides literacy organisations across the country with technical support, online materials, website development, discussion systems and a virtual library.

◆ ABC Canada is a foundation of business and labour which supports literacy by raising public awareness and funds to support local literacy groups. By engaging support of corporate Canada, they have made possible a number of promotional activities such as the 'Look under learn in the yellow pages' campaign, the Peter Gzowski golf tournaments and the Canada Post commemorative literacy stamp. ABC Canada has also carried out national research on literacy issues.

Research and development

In 1998 the National Literacy Secretariat, in cooperation with the National Sciences and Humanities Research Council, launched a new program 'Valuing Literacy in Canada: A New Research Agenda'. It supports three research projects which link universities with providers in an effort to connect theory with practice. A task of one project is to map previous adult literacy research in Canada (Shohet 1999, p.16).

Delivery

It is almost impossible to present a complete or objective picture of adult literacy provision in Canada because there is no consistency of government data across the provinces. Funding is sourced from many different streams and ministries, federal and provincial; reporting is fragmented and similar kinds of provision are called by different names, making it almost impossible to arrive at accurate figures on participation or costs (Shohet 1999, pp.11–14).

The delivery of literacy training programs is mainly funded and coordinated by provinces and the territories within their education and/or training systems. This is often done in partnership with voluntary organisations, formal education institutions (for example, school boards and community colleges), business and labour. Provinces and territories are under no obligation to designate specific funds in support of core literacy programs, as is the case in the United States. As a result, literacy services in Canada vary considerably in resources and accessibility from one region of the country to another.

Each province and territory has at least one coalition which is funded to provide support and services to literacy organisations within their region. Volunteers deliver a significant amount of literacy instruction. Provincial and territorial literacy coalitions provide a wide range of crucial support and service to the literacy organisations in their area.

Adult literacy generally operates on the fringes of the education sector. In 1999 more than 800 formal and informal programs were involved in literacy in some way across Canada. In the formal accredited education sector, provision is institutional and generally leads to a school-level certificate, or is a component of training for a trade; it may be offered at secondary schools, community colleges or worksites. In the informal sector, which is usually community-based and non-accredited, provision can be as varied as providers are innovative; it can be undertaken through a volunteer engaged in one-to-one tutoring; or it can take place through participatory popular education and may be accessed via the workplace, church, library, community-based organisation, cultural communities, family centres, health centres and others.

Both English and French as a second language are provided predominantly in the urban areas where larger immigrant communities settle. The funding for such programs is difficult to trace and the practice of placing learners in either English as a second language (ESL)/English as a foreign language (EFL) or adult literacy classes commonly occurs, usually depending on funding and availability of places.

Literacy services for Indigenous communities vary greatly. In some western provinces native students comprise the majority of all adult literacy students. Native Canadian learners, like Australian Indigenous people and New Zealand Maori and Pasifika peoples, are the most socially and educationally disadvantaged group in the community. Work is just commencing in Canada to redress that disadvantage. Some excellent models of service delivery are emerging in which native practitioners are involved, and literacy is addressed in the context of traditional practices and responds to contemporary community concerns (George 2002; Shohet 1999, p.7).

The complexity of adult literacy programs across jurisdictional boundaries in Canada is well described by Hoddinott, using qualitative research undertaken in 1998. She reports that access to programs cannot be guaranteed and notes the paucity of credit-accruing courses, and describes issues related to student financial and learning support, the difficulties experienced in meeting different and complex funding targets (to accommodate the need adults of different ages with diverse requirements for literacy skills), and the issues of subcontracting and developing partnership arrangements in communities to maintain programs (Hoddinott 1998, pp.165–72).

Curriculum frameworks

A review of the Canadian literature reveals that there is no national curriculum framework; rather, a proliferation of learning models and innovative practices responding to local needs. These are supported by a number of guides or handbooks on developing literacies within partnerships, as a community development practice, or as participatory practices (George 2002; Frank & Smith 2000; eds Norton & Malicky 2000).

There is a decade-long tradition in workplace education which commenced with a functional literacy approach, but which is increasingly informed by a critical cultural perspective and includes new literacies (Folinsbee & Hunter 2002). There is no federally endorsed approach to workplace literacy but an encouragement of innovation and creativity which includes a variety of approaches, including classroom instruction with customised curriculum, peer instruction, the integration of basic skills into trades training, volunteer tutoring and computer-based approaches (Hayes 2003).

Like the United States, standardised tests are used to measure progress and for accountability purposes. The United States school equivalency certificate, GED, is also used in Canada.

Essential skills framework

A framework for essential skills has been developed by the federal department of human resources (Human Resource Development Canada website 2003). These skills are similar in style to developments elsewhere, such as the Equipped for the Future Framework in the United States and the National Reporting System in Australia (Merrifield 2000; Stein 2001; Coates et al. 1996). Essential skills are described as enabling skills which help people perform the tasks required by their occupation and other activities of daily life; provide them with a foundation to learn other skills; and enhance their ability to adapt to workplace change. Essential skills include the following:

✧ reading text

✧ continuous learning

✧ document use

✧ working with others

✧ writing

✧ numeracy (maths)

✧ thinking skills

✧ oral communication

✧ computer use.

A sophisticated database has been developed which links essential skills to the national occupational classifications to provide profiles for specific occupational groups. The database and profiling provide a useful tool for planning of workplace education programs. TOWES (a test for workplace essential skills) (National Literacy Secretariat 2003), sample workplace documentation, and other resources to support instructors have also been developed (see TOWES website 2003). Test items in the TOWES have been scaled to accomodate the International Adult Literacy Survey (Yanamoto & Kirsch 2002; Evett 2002) and research continues in the development of further test items. The assumption is that the essential skills framework and its tools are being utilised in the delivery of workplace education since the literature gives no indication on the extent to which this framework is used in more general adult literacy provision.

Funding

The National Literacy Secretariat has distributed Canadian $22.5m annually towards literacy provision during the last few years. In 2003 funding has been increased to $50m. No estimates of the amount contributed by provinces and territories towards the delivery of adult literacy are available.

Teacher preparation

There is an extremely strong tradition of volunteerism in the delivery of adult literacy in Canada. However, since the 1950s, the Canadian Association for Adult Education has advocated for the professionalisation of the field.

A number of universities offer adult education degree and certificate programs with the result that a community of practitioners with academic credentials has developed. Most other teachers have moved to the adult literacy field from elementary or secondary schooling systems. Each province is promoting consistency of training and evaluation, but there is no general agreement nationwide as to how adult literacy teachers should be trained and assessed.

Many provinces have developed their own systems for evaluation and equivalence of qualifications. Generally speaking, most adult literacy practitioners are employed on sessional contracts. Shohet suggests that 'until there is stable systematic provision of service with equitable working conditions for teachers, there is unlikely to be a universal requirement for accreditation' (Shohet 1999, p.25).

The Movement for Canadian Literacy has urged the professionalisation of the adult literacy field with the establishment of employment standards, opportunities for professional development (staff and volunteers), standards for (optional) certification of literacy workers, ways of sharing new knowledge and best practices, adequate compensation, and increased recognition (Movement for Canadian Literacy 2003c). However, there are no strategies for how to achieve these goals in the action plans currently being developed.

The National Literacy Secretariat has been proactive in research into the interface between adult literacy and the communication and information technologies (National Literacy Secretariat 1995). It is worth noting that, in relation to this issue, teacher training has been recognised as a major concern. As the National Literacy Secretariat comments: 'The teaching "establishment" was reluctant to use the tools associated with the information highway and move away from traditional teaching methods' (National Literacy Secretariat website 2003).

Aotearoa/New Zealand

Social and economic overview

New Zealand sits in relative isolation in the South Pacific. It has a population of four million people. The indigenous peoples, Maori, make up 15%, migrants and refugees 8%, and people from Pacific islands (Pasifika) 6%, with the rest of the population being the descendants of the colonial settlers (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.4). It is likely that the Maori and Pacific people will make up the majority of population in the future (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.13). New Zealand has two official languages, Maori and English. The Treaty of Waitangi provides a legal framework for determining the rights and development of Maori interests and is influential in policy development and provision of services.

Dramatic economic reform was introduced in the 1980s; however, there has been a return to more socially oriented policies. Dominating this debate is the desire to address the socioeconomic disadvantage suffered by the Maori people since the Treaty of Waitangi, while at the same time lifting the overall economic performance of New Zealand in the global economy. The New Zealand economy has been transformed over the last 20 years from being one of the most regulated in the OECD to one of the most deregulated. The distribution of jobs in the labour market has shifted dramatically; for example, employment in manufacturing, construction and agriculture has declined, but jobs that require more education and higher skills such as those in professional, managerial and technical areas are increasing. New Zealand is economically dependent on international trade, and even in those areas of agriculture and manufacturing which have survived, there is a need be competitive in the global market. Unemployment is running at 5% (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming). The gross domestic product (GDP) in 2002 was US $78.8 billion.

Since 1996 the New Zealand Government has operated a unicameral parliamentary system elected using a European-style proportional system which has led to the proliferation of small parties and coalition governments and a return to more socially oriented policies.

History of adult literacy

Like many other countries in this study, adult literacy emerged in New Zealand in the 1970s when a community literacy program, supported through training from Massey University, commenced. In 1976 the National Council for Adult Education ran its first seminar on literacy. As community programs flourished along the lines of the British model, funding for program coordination was sought firstly through the McKenzie Education Foundation as a seeding grant, and then through government funding. By 1978 there were 60 community-based programs in New Zealand.

In the early 1980s the Labour Government included adult literacy as part of an education policy package. The literacy federation, Adult Reading and Learning Assistance (ARLA) was formed and registered as an incorporated association and received a grant of $10 000. By 1989 this grant had risen to $400 000. The funds contributed to a network of paid coordinators to support both Maori and Pakeha ('white') development. As concerns about literacy became linked to rising unemployment, funding was increased, and a number of new initiatives were established during International Literacy Year, among them a workplace literacy project. Workbase, the National Centre for Workplace Literacy and Language, was founded in 1996 from this workplace literacy

project. Adult Reading and Learning Assistance has since been renamed Literacy Aotearoa and is a community-based organisation.

The New Zealand Government initiated major policy reforms in education and training in the 1990s with the National Qualifications Framework being developed to provide people with national, recognisable and portable credentials which reflect attainment of knowledge and skills. This framework provides credentials for some adult literacy programs. New Zealand does not have a school equivalency certificate such as the GED certificate in the United States, but NQF (National Qualifications Framework) levels 1 and 2 contain a series of communication standards designed for both first and second language speakers. Adult literacy provision, particularly with its community focus, has not been easily located within the new post-compulsory education policies and has remained marginalised (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming).

International Adult Literacy Survey

The National Research Bureau, under contract to the Ministry of Education, undertook the International Adult Literacy Survey in New Zealand with a random sample of 4223 adults aged between 16 and 65. As Cain Johnson notes: 'One specific effect of the IALS is that adult literacy is now seen to be integral to a range of other issues' (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.14).

The study in New Zealand had results comparable to other OECD countries but served to highlight the particularly low levels for Maori, Pasifika and immigrant groups. The survey levels reflected the levels of schooling rather than ethnic background, with 75% of those in level 1 not completing primary schooling (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.21; Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.11).

The results of the International Adult Literacy Survey prompted considerable public debate and informed the overhaul of post-secondary education which has occurred since the Labour Government took office in 1999.

A report was subsequently commissioned with funding from the Ian Axford (New Zealand) Fellowships in Public Policy to make recommendations for an adult literacy policy. The report, *Changing skills for a changing world* (Johnson 2000), identified the following issues in relation to literacy:

✧   lack of strategic vision by government

✧   fragmented literacy sector resulting in limited coherent advice to government

✧   inadequate funding.

The report also identified obstacles to the development of a coherent adult literacy system as:

✧   a lack of a coordinated literacy infrastructure (responsibility spread across several departments)

✧   limited quality assurance processes/accountability (no outcomes reporting system)

✧   inadequate professional development and career pathway for teachers

✧   inadequate funding for programs and research

✧   marginalisation from key policy framework (National Qualifications Framework, industry training strategy standards).

The report also recommended a strategy to enable funding for community programs, family literacy and vocational literacy.

Particular groups in the community also responded to the outcomes of the International Adult Literacy Survey; for example, Workbase, provided an analysis of the data for specific industries (Workbase 1999).

At the same time, education and training in New Zealand was under review, and a number of significant reports have been published which have shaped current New Zealand adult literacy policy and provision. These include the reports by the Tertiary Education Committee (TEC), *Shaping a vision* (Tertiary Education Commission 2001c*), Shaping the funding system* (2001a), *Shaping the strategy* (2001b), and the *Tertiary education strategy 2002–2006* (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002). Other reviews focused on the potential role of various providers in sectors of education, and highlighted the importance of foundation skills to many sectors of the New Zealand community (Office of the Minister of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.5; Lynch 2001, pp.11–14; Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.36)

These strategies and reforms in education are directed at realising the goals of the government's Growth and Innovation Framework summarised as:

✧   economic transformation

✧   social development

✧   Maori development

✧   environmental sustainability

✧   infrastructure development

✧   innovation.

Strategies for adult literacy and adult English as a second language have now been developed for implementation of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2002–2006 (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, 2003a).

Regulatory framework

The Tertiary Education Commission was established under the provisions of the *Education (Tertiary Reform) Amendment Act 2002* and the minister responsible is the Associate Minister for Education (Tertiary Education). The Tertiary Education Commission is responsible for funding all post-compulsory education and training offered by universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, private training establishments, foundation education agencies, industry training organisations and adult and community education providers.

A Chief Advisor, Adult Literacy, was appointed in mid-2001, and advisory positions for adult literacy, English for speakers of other languages, and adult community education, have been appointed in the regional offices of the Tertiary Education Commission to implement the strategies. An interdepartmental committee on adult literacy (IDCAL) has been appointed to ensure cooperation among government portfolios with an interest in adult literacy. Much work has to be undertaken to overcome the fragmentation of responsibility for policy and delivery of adult literacy services (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.18).

The government's *Tertiary education strategy* recognises foundational skills as an issue for all levels of post-secondary education, not just for those at the bottom levels (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.36). The government has noted that it is important that future policy determines which levels of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework are included as foundation skills. In the context of foundation education for adults, the strategy notes:

> … a broad range of learning contexts is now available for adults to access foundation education. This includes the workplace, the home and family environment, local community-based provision (for example, evening classes in tertiary providers or schools,

adult education providers, churches), and iwi (tribes) … Specific programmes are funded through Training Opportunities and Youth Training programmes, foundation and bridging courses at TEIs [tertiary education institutes], levels 1 and 2 education purchased through Industry Training Organisations, and home, work, marae [Maori community organisations] or community-based literacy and ESOL programmes. This breadth and diversity must be maintained and extended in the future to meet the wide diversity of learning needs.

(Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.38)

The Tertiary Education Commission has responsibility for implementing the government's adult literacy strategy, *More than words* (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2001) and the *Adult ESOL strategy* (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2003a) targeting the current populations who are 'below the bar' of literacy adequacy (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.5).

The adult literacy strategy aims to strengthen the capability of the adult literacy sector to provide world-class learning environments, develop tutor skills, and increase learning opportunities.

Any adult who wants to develop their literacy skills for everyday living, participating in the community, supporting their children's education, undertaking other tertiary study, improving employment prospects, getting a better job, enhancing on the job training, gaining on the job qualifications can participate in the literacy programme.

(Tertiary Education Commission website 2003)

The target for the first three years of the strategy is to:

✧ expand the range of provision by building on existing and experienced providers

✧ increase workplace provision

✧ trial new provision in underdeveloped areas, adopting methods such as family literacy and community-based partnerships between established providers and Maori, Pasifika and other ethnic communities

✧ build a quality assurance system

✧ develop capacity of providers (teacher qualifications, networks and staff development).

The benchmark for success will be an improved outcome following participation in subsequent international surveys (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2002, p.7).

The four key elements of the English for speakers of other languages strategy are:

✧ better coordination and collaboration

✧ enhanced access and affordability

✧ expanding provision and increasing quality

✧ ensuring the diversity of learner needs is matched with appropriate provision.

Current provision

Conceptualisation of literacy

There have been strong divisions within the adult literacy field in Aotearoa/New Zealand between the community and the workplace sectors (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.17) with each preferring their own definitions of literacy. Literacy Aotearoa prefers a

Frierian-type [5]definition while Workbase favours a functional context definition. There are also tensions with the competency-based criterion-referenced system implemented through the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (Sutton cited in Johnson 2000, p.43).

The definition of literacy used in the important text, *Changing skills for a changing world* (Johnson 2000, p.23) is the OECD 1997 definition where both workplace and community sectors are included. However, in the 2001 adult literacy strategy, *More than words,* literacy is not explicitly defined, although the approach adopted in this policy is inclusive of family, community and workplace perspectives. The Tertiary Education Commission makes use of the following definition in guidelines for program funding.

> Literacy is broadly defined as 'using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential'. Literacy includes reading, writing, listening, speaking, skills in using modern communications technology, mathematics, problem-solving and critical thinking …
>
> (Tertiary Education Commission website 2003)

Attempts are being made to bridge the divisions between the holders of the functional context view of literacy and those holding the Frierian view, with the establishment of the Adult Literacy Practitioners' Association. Nevertheless, the differing perspectives on the nature of literacy held by Literacy Aotearoa and the Tertiary Education Commission ensure a diverse literacy provision, resulting in an integrated and coherent adult literacy effort. Literacy Aotearoa has New Zealand Qualifications Framework accreditation to train tutors. Literacy Aotearoa also provides accredited training to its members.

Cain Johnson and Bensemen describe the new policies as being consistent with lifelong learning theories involving multiple agencies in delivery. Multiple agencies provide options for culturally appropriate forms of education and honour the spirit of bi-culturalism prominent in New Zealand. The issue of 'foundational skills' provides an opportunity for the marginalised areas of community education to be included in the formal education and training system (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.15).

National leadership activities

Prior to the implementation of the *Tertiary education strategy* and adult literacy ESOL strategies, no national coordination or management of services was conducted. Benseman (2003) notes, for example, that there has been no coordinated program of research to inform either policy or practice:

> Much of the research covered in the review is what is termed grey or feral literature that is, not readily available in the way that more mainstream research is …
>
> (Benseman 2003, p.2)

Ministers from many portfolios had interests in either operational aspects of service delivery, or the outcomes of programs, which resulted in competing interests, lack of collaboration and fragmented funding.

In 2002 the Adult Literacy Innovations Funding Pool was established to support three elements of the *Tertiary education strategy.* The pool would:

✧ contribute to the achievement of Maori development aspirations

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[5] Friere, an influential educationalist theorist, has been particularly popular among adult educators, providing models of participatory and liberationist informal education in which literacy learning is directly related to the relationship between the individual and their experience of the world.

✧ raise foundation skills

✧ educate for pacific peoples' development and success.

A range of projects were funded as 'tasters' and reports of nine innovative programs subsequently funded have been published and disseminated (Ministry of Education [New Zealand] 2003c, pp.6–8). Funding guidelines in 2003 and 2004 reflect the lessons learned from these pilot projects and enable other providers to expand provision and cater for specific groups.

A range of initiatives designed to build the capacity of the system to deliver adult literacy programs has also begun. These include publication of the literature review of New Zealand adult literacy research (Benseman 2003). A review of a number of the National Vocational Qualifications standards in which literacy is developed, commencing with level 3+, with an expectation of review of level 1 and 2 in 2004 is also underway. Other initiatives in this area include the development of the Adult Literacy Quality Mark by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority; the development of the Adult Literacy Achievement Framework (ALAF); and the development on the New Zealand Literacy Portal based on the United Kingdom Basic Skills *Observatory.*

The Tertiary Education Commission is developing models of agreements or charters to enable partnerships with educational and community organisations to manage the expansion of provision.

Delivery

Community literacy

Literacy Aotearoa is a federation or coalition of 65 community-based providers who deliver adult literacy services in a wide range of contexts, including schools, iwi (tribes), private training establishments, workplaces and churches. Literacy Aotearoa is contracted by the Ministry of Education to provide coordination of literacy services nationally, and to develop literacy initiatives, in particular whanau/family literacy and training. Provision is generally one-to-one or small group activities. This provision currently sits outside the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.13) but will in time, be covered through the implementation of the Adult Literacy Achievement Framework and be subject to quality assurance plans.

The range of community organisations supporting literacy provision is being expanded by new Tertiary Education Commission funding arrangements in the 2004 Literacy Funding Pool. Funding is allocated annually through submissions. As Shohet (1999) has shown in relation to Canada, this type of funding model has proved difficult in supporting capacity-building of providers.

Workforce literacy

Workbase, renamed the New Zealand Centre for Workforce Literacy Development in 2003, is positioning itself as the leader in workforce literacy provision. Workbase has pioneered workplace literacy provision and developed useful and practical resources to support this work.

In 2003 it offered the following services:

✧ *workplace learning solutions*: delivering tailored solutions for workforce literacy needs

✧ *research, development and information*: leading workforce literacy research and development to inform policy and practice and the provision of comprehensive information

◆ *practitioner and provider support*: supporting literacy practitioners with professional development, curriculum and teaching resources; working alongside providers to achieve quality workforce literacy provision

◆ *sector leadership and funding*: advising government and business on policy and investment decisions and administering the Workplace Basic Skills Development Fund.

In addition, the Tertiary Education Commission has announced further funding—the Workplace Literacy Funds—to support literacy development for adults already in the workforce. These funds are directed at industry training organisations and employers. The program is similar to the Australian Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program and requires a contribution by the employer and the services of experienced literacy staff.

English for speakers of other languages

The New Zealand Government offers all new immigrants with resident status free access to the Kiwi Ora program, a flexible online English and settlement program. Other English as a second language services and migrant resources services are offered, such as home tutoring coordinated by the National Association of Home Tutor Programmes, which is also available in most of the major urban centres. The association provides tutor training with New Zealand Qualifications Authority accreditation, and coordinates matching of learner and tutors. About 2500 learners are assisted each week through this scheme.

About 75% of these learners go on to ESOL tuition at polytechnics and to the Multi Cultural Centre for Learning and Support Services (MCLaSS). These services are open to refugees and non-residents and often offer additional services, such as childcare and more intensive tuition, up to 10 hours per week.

The Pacific Island Centre offers similar services to Pasifika peoples but there are no data available in these facilities.

Integrated literacy

Skill New Zealand manages two programs, Training Opportunities and Youth Training, both of which can include integrated elements of literacy and numeracy, with 40 providers registered with the Tertiary Education Commission to deliver the programs. Trainees undertaking these programs are able to claim travel costs. Literacy is also offered to support vocational courses. As in Australia, these are regarded as 'multifield' activities and deliver New Zealand Qualifications Framework programs. However, in New Zealand, specific adult literacy, numeracy and communication courses are being developed at level 1 and 2 of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework and will have the capacity to be tracked.

Some adult literacy services are occasionally provided through the Department of Work and Income and tertiary education institutions, particularly polytechnics. While many offer second language tuition, literacy does not seem to be a priority for most. Again the extent of provision is not known.

Family literacy

Despite New Zealand's reputation for early childhood literacy programs, there has been no activity in family literacy. These programs are well established in the United States and tackle the literacy issues of adults as they parent and support their children's education. In 2002 NZ$300 000 was allocated to develop a family literacy system to examine intergenerational learning issues (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.18).

Curriculum frameworks

Adult Literacy Quality Mark

To meet this standard, providers of adult literacy programs must show evidence of five best-practice indicators. It is anticipated that these standards may be extended to literacy providers in other contexts (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.19). The following are the standards to be reached in order to achieve the Adult Literacy Quality mark:

✧ Providers use adult-specific initial assessment tools on program entry.

✧ The needs analysis forms the basis of learning plans, goals and teaching and learning.

✧ Learners have individual learning plans.

✧ Programs use quality adult teaching and learning methods, and staff are appropriately qualified.

✧ Providers have processes for ongoing assessment and reports.

Adult Literacy Achievement Framework

This framework consists of a number of profiles which contain descriptors of literacy behaviours, skills and knowledge. This framework is currently being trialled with a range of providers and will be implemented in 2004 (Tertiary Education Committee website). The profiles reflect Luke and Freebody's four roles: text breaker, text maker, text user and text analyst (Freebody & Luke 1992), and in their application, cover Lankshear's description of 'new basics'.

Funding

Until recently, funding for adult literacy activities has been fragmented. The New Zealand Government made grants to major organisations such as Adult Reading and Learning Assistance (now Literacy Aotearoa), Workbase, and national associations for English for speakers of other languages and Maori and Pasifika interests, to deliver programs and support services. In 1990, section 321 of the *Education Act* provided about NZ $12 million of the tertiary education budget annually for 'other tertiary services'. The NZ $12 million was allocated across 14 providers, five of whom were involved in literacy. (Specific amounts are not available.) Some literacy provision was integrated into and funded through Training Opportunity and Youth Training programs and funded as part of NVQ levels 1 and 2.

The Tertiary Education Commission has introduced a number of funding streams which increase funding and expand the range of providers and partners, for example, through the adult literacy pool, workplace literacy funding, family literacy funding.

In 2001, $12m was allocated to adult literacy and language, covering 16 846 enrolments (Lee pers. comm 2003). Funding since the implementation of the tertiary education strategy, the adult literacy strategy and the related English for speakers of other languages adult literacy strategies, is estimated to have risen by 25%. While current provision is meeting only a small proportion of the estimated 200 000 in need, the priority is to gradually build capacity and accountability of the system.

Table 3: New Zealand Adult literacy and English for speakers of other languages provision*

Speciality	Provider	Students	Waiting list	Funding
Literacy	Literacy Aotearoa	8 935	265	1 763 250
Literacy and ESOL	Workbase	900	0	not public
ESOL	National Association of Home tutors	10 000	1134	1 918 574
ESOL	Multi-Cultural Centre for Learning and Support Services	117	102	199 800
ESOL	Pacific Islander Education Resource Centre	90	0	751 122
TOTAL FUNDING		20 042	1501	4 632 746

Notes: *Training Opportunities, Youth Training and ITO embed literacy in training

Funding for primary providers is from 'other tertiary education' category of funding.

Workbase funding is not public and is only partially acquired from government sources.

Approximately $3m is available for literacy delivered through Training Opportunities and Youth Training programs and industry training organisations (ITOs).

Source: Johnson (2000, table 6, p.45)

Teacher preparation

Workforce profile

The precise number of full-time, part-time and volunteer instructors is not known; however, it is clear that New Zealand does not yet have a workforce of experienced adult literacy specialists. As Moore (cited in Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming) notes: 'Overall, the level of expertise in the field is quite low'. Those who work in the field receive low pay and have low status, and the short-term and unpredictable funding streams provide little incentive for taking up work in the field (Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.20).

Most community-based programs rely heavily on volunteers, and while their efforts are valued, the need for full-time professional staff has been recognised. A great deal of time and money goes into the training of volunteers but retention of both volunteer and paid staff is difficult (Literacy Aotearoa cited in Cain Johnson & Benseman forthcoming, p.21). Research also indicates a shortage of Maori tutors relative to the Maori community's literacy needs and the preference among Maori learners for Maori tutors (Johnson 2000).

Certification

Tutor training programs for ESOL home tutors, literacy tutors and workplace tutors have been accredited with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Standards for adult literacy practitioners are also being developed by the New Zealand authority. Certification has been seen as an essential plank in building the delivery capacity of the system.

United States of America

Social and economic overview

The United States is the third largest country in the world in size and population. It has the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world with an estimated gross domestic product of US $10.4 trillion in 2002.

Massive labour market changes are being forecast in the United States, with projections of a skills shortage of twelve million qualified workers within a decade. The level of academic foundation skills demanded by the workplace and in society has continued to rise; the labour market demands that workers adapt as new technology is introduced; organisations restructure and employment opportunities appear and disappear. Millions of working adults, along with unemployed, dislocated and discouraged workers need to upgrade their basic skills to find and keep employment (Department of Education [United States] 2003a, p.3).

It is unlikely that these shortages can be filled through immigration. Many immigrants are highly qualified, but on average, have significantly lower literacy skills than native-born workers.

The United States is a country of great diversity and its population is increasing. Figures from the 2000 census show that whites make up 77.1%; Black, 12.9%; native Hawaiin and other Pacific Islander people 0.3%; other 4% (Central Intelligence Agency website 2003). However, enrolment figures for 2000 in adult education and literacy indicate that Hispanics and African Americans represent more than half of all enrolments (D'Amico 2003). This situation is complicated by the fact that, while English is the national language, Spanish is spoken by a sizable and growing minority. This diverse population is not distributed evenly so that there is a need to target specific types of provision to meet the identified needs of communities.

Regulatory framework

The United States, like Canada and Australia, is a federation. Federal legislation is the mechanism for distribution of federal funding and implementation of national policy objectives. Policy and accountability arrangements for federal funding are outlined in legislation and funds allocated to the states. State governors designate a state agency to administer their state programs and may provide matching funds. Education is the responsibility of the states and local authorities. Federal funding for adult learning and literacy is administered through the Office of Vocational and Adult Education in the Department of Education. As Sticht notes:

> The federal legislation generally provides the guidance for the many disparate programs operating across the country and provides the coherence for the third unique system of education existing alongside K-12 and the higher education system.
>
> (Sticht 2002, p.38)

Since 1991 the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) has provided a range of national coordinating functions. The institute, which serves as a focal point for public and private activities to support regional state and national literacy, is administered by the Secretaries of Education, Labor and Health and Human Services, who make up the Interagency Group Governance. A ten-member advisory board appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate includes prominent individuals from a wide range of groups with a stake in literacy—academic and non-profit institutions, business, industry and labour, and private foundations.

The Department of Education has concluded that, 'based on the way adult education has developed in America, the network of basic education programs in states and local areas is not a cohesive education system' (Department of Education [United States] 2003a, p.4).

History of adult literacy development

The various strands of the historical development of adult literacy in the United States have influenced the conceptualisation of literacies (Comings, Garner & Smith 2002). Sticht notes the influence of the following factors on the development of adult literacy in the United States:

✧ the foundational role played by the military in providing literacy instruction and standardised testing procedures to gather information

✧ the charitable activities in providing adult education to the under-educated and the poor

✧ the continuous stream of immigrants who have created a persistent need for a system of adult education to provide instruction in English and citizenship

✧ the constant debate between advocates for a broad liberal education and those committed to the development of human capital (Sticht 2002, pp.19–33).

Federal funds have been legislated for adult literacy since 1964, with funding, participation and scope of provision growing significantly since this time. The professionalisation of adult literacy commenced with the 1966 *Adult Education Act* building on early human resource development emanating from the taskforce and manpower policies of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

In 1990, the President and the governors adopted six national education goals, including one which states:

> By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. (cited in the National Literacy Summit 2000, p.14)

Thus, adult literacy in the United States was given an equal standing nationally with the other education sectors, and literacy itself was provided with a broader and more comprehensive definition. The National Literacy Policy followed in 1991.

The *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act 1998*, established accountability requirements, including that of state-developed outcomes-based performance standards for adult education programs as one means of determining program effectiveness. The mandate for the development of the National Reporting System (NRS) was then expanded to fulfill *Workforce Investment Act* requirements. The 1990s also saw the development of the Secretary for Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and the Equipped for the Future (EFF) framework building a vision of the types of skills required by adults in the twenty-first century and an alternative to equivalence to K–12 (that is, schooling from kindergarten to 12 years of age) education.

International Adult Literacy Survey

The International Adult Literacy Survey was conducted in the United States as the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) in 1992 and reported in 1993 (Kirsch et al. 1993) and has been influential in continuing policy development. The National Adult Literacy Survey tested 26 000 Americans who were 16 years of age and older and found forty million American adults functioning at the lowest level of literacy and ninety million functioning at the two lowest levels. As the Department of Education noted: 'These individuals are not equipped with the skills needed to work effectively in the high skills jobs that increasingly characterise the economy' (Department of Education [United States] 2003a, p.3).

The survey also served to highlight areas of concern in social policy, which have since received closer attention, and a strengthening of partnerships at both the national and local levels between education providers and social service providers. The survey drew attention to:

✧ the relationship between low literacy and poor access to health services and information; an Action Agenda for health literacy has subsequently been developed (World Education 2001)

✧ the relationship between low literacy and involvement in the correctional system, subsequently leading to increased federal funding

✧ re-enforcement of family literacy, subsequently resulting in a funding increase and more intensive research on instructional methods

✧ the needs of those already in the workforce with literacy needs, leading to a renewed look at service delivery to this target group.

Recent media reports have challenged the use of the National Adult Literacy Survey data as an indicator of the scale of need for literacy education among adults in the United States. It appears likely that adults characterised as performing at levels 1 and 2 of the International Adult Literacy Survey could perform more literacy tasks both within and above their assigned level than was previously believed (Kolstad cited in Sticht 2003b, p.2).

Irrespective of this re-interpretation of the survey data, a re-assessment of the situation has taken place and has played a major role in policy development. Comings and his colleagues have identified three 'challenges' to Americans in preparing for and participating in the economy of the twenty-first century (Comings, Sum & Uvin 2000).

✧ The language challenge group includes immigrants with limited English speaking skills.

✧ The education credential challenge group includes native-born and immigrant adults who speak English proficiently but who dropped out of school before achieving a high school credential.

✧ The new literacy challenge group includes adult who speak English proficiently and have a high school credential but whose basic skills are generally considered insufficient for the modern workplace.

Table 4:   United States—the three literacy challenge groups

	Language	Credential	New literacy	Total
1992 national estimate for all three challenges				
Number of adults (18–64)	5 466 383	23 247 930	34 288 383	64 002 696
Per cent of total adults (18–64)	4.7%	17.0%	20.1%	41.8%

Source: Comings, Reder and Sum (2001, p.3)

These figures are now a decade old. The replication of the National Adult Literacy Survey in 2002 and its application to 2002 census data will provide an indication of whether the populations in the three challenge groups have increased or decreased.

In 2000, policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and adult students met in Washington DC, in a national literacy summit facilitating a yearlong discussion among key stakeholders about the future directions of adult literacy. The action agenda produced a blueprint for expanding and improving adult literacy services and set three priorities:

✧ increasing resources by changing existing policies and support to higher-quality programs and by expanding federal, state and private funding

✧ increasing access by providing better outreach and support to potential students

✧ improving instruction by developing standards, training staff and expanding research and development (cited in Comings, Reder & Sum 2001, p.22).

The new basic skills have been defined as the ability 'to solve complex problems, think critically, communicate effectively and use computers and other technology'. Murnane and Levy argue that adults with these skills will speak English, have a high school credential and have a set of literacy skills equivalent of National Adult Literacy Survey level 3 or higher (cited in Comings, Sum & Uvin 2000, p.vi).

In recent developments the Bush Administration has embarked on reform of the American education system, commencing with the enactment of *No child left behind* (Department of Education [United States] 2001b) while the process of re-authorisation of the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act 1998*, provided the opportunity to develop adult education and literacy policy as another facet of education reform (Department of Education [United States] 2003a).

The *Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) Act 2003*

The most recent legislation, the *Adult Basic and Literacy Education Act* of 2003 outlines the Bush Administration's vision for adult basic and literacy education.

> Adults will have opportunities to improve their basic and literacy skills in high-quality research-based programs that will equip them to succeed in the next step of their education and employment.   (Department of Education [United States] 2003a)

The strongest driver towards policy development and investment in adult literacy in the United States today, as described by the Assistant Secretary for Vocational Education and Training, picks up on traditions of adult education in that country, but strongly reinforces the human capital needs of the economy. The difference is that adult literacy is moved away from the responsibility of the individual and now placed within a public policy framework (Comings, Sum & Uvin 2000, p.v).

The policy imperative in the United States is predominantly economic (Merrifield 1998, pp.1–9) and the discourses are framed within a deficit model in which literacy and basic skills are seen as the first two steps towards post-secondary education qualifications, which, in turn, are seen as prerequisites to success in the labour market. The act describes a national basic skills deficit. As D'Amico comments:

> The principles that the President set out in *No child left behind* are basic principles for the Federal role in education and they guided our thinking about improving the educational outcomes for these low literate and basic skills deficient adults.   (D'Amico 2003)

The key strategies of the act are to:

✧ hold local programs and state agencies accountable for student achievement

✧ require state-developed or state-adopted content standards and aligned assessments

✧ promote local use of research-based practice

✧ provide increased options for basic skills acquisition, including capacity-building for community-based provision

✧ expand appropriate technology options

✧ promote collaboration and resource sharing across agencies

✧ coordinate the delivery of services through the 'One Stop Career Centre' system.

The new act further expands the range of organisations offering literacy education to enable for-profit organisations to compete for grants.

The act promotes greater alignment to the school system. Moreover, while insisting on greater levels of accountability, no national system is provided or suggested; nor is there a provider registration system or a system for recognising informal learning outside the GED certificate.

Basic skills are being redefined in relation to school equivalence, signifying a move away from the adult-oriented Equipped for the Future Framework. There is no evidence of policy-makers addressing the new literacy practices required by the modern workplace or the multi-literacies identified in research in the late 1990s (Mikulecky & Kirkley 1999; Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996)

Current adult literacy provision

Federal contribution

National coordination and leadership—National Institute for Literacy

The act re-affirms the National Institute for Literacy as the national coordinating body for a range of services and confirms the ongoing governance arrangements. An allocation of 1.55% of federal funds is made towards national coordination and leadership activities.

These activities focus on:

✧ support of cross-agency planning and coordinated adult education services

✧ provision of technical assistance to state agencies and eligible providers to assist in the development of performance accountability, standards and assessment, technology, workplace education and professional development

✧ independent evaluation and assessment

✧ national needs assessment, including estimating the number of adults functioning at different levels of literacy proficiency

✧ rigorous research which promotes scientific investigation into the validity of theories and effectiveness of practices in adult basic and literacy education.

The following is a list of current programs and services offered by National Institute for Literacy in fulfilling its mission.

Programs

✧ The Equipped for the Future framework has developed content standards for adult education which explain what adults need to know and be able to undertake to meet the demands of their roles as workers, family members, and citizens. Created with extensive input from the field, the project seeks to improve the quality of adult education services by more clearly defining the results which can be expected from it.

✧ Research into adult learning disabilities and production of a multi-volume series on identifying and effectively serving adults with learning disabilities has been funded by the organisation, Literacy and Learning Disabilities.

✧ The Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) brings together dozens of literacy-related databases and websites into one information system. It also includes more than 50 discussion lists as well as instructional materials on a variety of topics.

✧ Partnership for Reading, an element of the *Reading Excellence Act*, is a new National Institute for Literacy project. It will disseminate scientifically based reading research through existing networks to classroom teachers to strengthen reading instruction.

Services

✧ *America's literacy directory* (ALD) refers potential students and volunteers to local literacy programs. The directory is available online or by calling the National Institute for Literacy Hotline.

- ✧ *Literacy fact sheets* include facts and statistics pulled from more than 50 research studies.
- ✧ *Policy and legislation* monitors and explains the federal literacy budget process and other relevant legislative activity, including the *Workforce Investment Act.*
- ✧ The former Literacy Leader Fellowship Program Research provided small grants to literacy practitioners to conduct a range of research or to undertake product development to promote best practice in adult and family literacy.

Research

Federal funding, supporting a research program, is allocated through the Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the National Institute for Literacy, as well as through partnership arrangements with state agencies and research organisations.

A number of national centres provide relevant research:

- ✧ The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)
- ✧ The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disability Center
- ✧ The National Center for Adult ESL Education (NCLE).

These centres engage in research projects and dissemination activities through publication, web information and professional development activities.

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, a consortium of research organisations, is funded as a national research and development centre by the Department of Education through the Office of Educational Research and Improvement and the National Institute for Post Secondary Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning. The centre was established in 1996 and its grant has been extended until 2006.

Research in the recent past has concentrated on the development of the Equipped for the Future Framework and the development of National Reporting System, participation studies and evaluation of instructional methods. New initiatives have explored the efficacy of scientifically researched instructional approaches and the establishment of lab sites promoting partnerships between research and practice.

Partnerships

The United States has been relatively successful in attracting the cooperation of business and organisations in support of new initiatives. This reflects the influence of a strong philanthropic culture and the advocacy of National Institute for Literacy and other literacy coalitions. The partnership with the American Medical Association in developing strategies and programs relating to health literacy is one example (World Education 2001). A number of major philanthropic trusts, such as Kellogg and Toyota, support family literacy initiatives. Major business sponsorship is being brokered to develop programs relating to the use of technology in adult literacy education. The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), established in 1989, is supported by a grant from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust (National Center for Family Literacy website). At the program level, funding models promote auspicing and partnership arrangements among service providers.

State role

The federal legislation provides the framework for performance agreements and plans by the states, and proscribes proportions of funding for specific activities to be reported on. The states and their contracted agents are responsible for the delivery of services and programs. State funds are allocated according to the following formula:

- ✦ 12.5% on state leadership activities focusing on development of content standards and alignment of assessments
- ✦ 5% for state administration
- ✦ 5% to support workplace education programs in partnership with employers
- ✦ 8% to operate correctional and institutional programs
- ✦ 30.5% to award competitive grants and contracts to deliver programs.

Delivery

The United States has an extremely strong volunteer sector. The two oldest and largest literacy volunteer organisations, Laubach Literacy International and the Literacy Volunteers of America merged to form ProLiteracy Worldwide in 2002. The combined organisation offers support services to some 225 000 adult learners through a network of approximately 160 000 volunteers and 1450 local, state and regional literacy providers (Sticht 2003b).

Adult education and literacy providers generally offer three primary types of services:

- ✦ Adult basic education (ABE) provides instruction to adults with low literacy skills.
- ✦ Adult secondary education (ASE) provides instruction which leads to a high school certificate such as the GED.
- ✦ English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provides instruction in speaking, reading and writing English.

Delivery is conducted in the classroom or via one-to-one tutoring. In some instances the two approaches to instruction are combined. Larger programs are able to offer classes at different skills levels, while smaller programs offer a few classes which accommodate a range of abilities. Some programs offer 20 hours of tuition a week while others are operated in closed cycles of a few months to a year, and still others run ongoing classes with open-entry admission, whereby the places of students who drop out are filled. Class sizes vary (Coming, Reder & Sum 2001).

The GED is a set of five tests which measure writing skills, social studies, science, interpretation of literature and the arts and maths. It is the most common alternative for adults who wish to earn a high school credential. The current certificate was devised in 1988 with a new version of the tests released in 2002. The new test significantly changes the concept of 'basic skills' and includes greater emphasis on information processing, problem-solving and data analysis (Reder 2003).

Adult basic education, adult secondary education and English for speakers of other languages programs also take place in specific contexts. The two major settings are family literacy and workplace literacy. Of the almost four million adults enrolled in 1998, 1.5 million were in adult basic education classes, one million were in adult secondary education classes and 1.8 million were undertaking English for speakers of other languages classes.

Some research has been undertaken in the United States to provide a database of types of programs (Garner 1998). The typology used rates programs on the extent to which they are contextualised or decontextualised and is based on research which shows that learners learn more effectively when instruction reflects or is based on their prior or workplace experience (Fingeret et al. cited in Garner 1998). It was found that:

> The model of literacy instruction wherein students are taught to read and write from skills-based material, and where the teacher is considered the expert and the director of this learning, is deeply embedded. (Garner 1998)

Stites, in reviewing the literature on the implications of new learning technologies for adult literacy and learning, concludes that learning how to use computers and the internet, and learning how to learn with computers and the internet are important basic skills for the life in the twenty-first century. He points out that the new learning technologies are well suited to learner-centred, goal-driven, socially interactive and authentic application to support adult literacy and lifelong learning (Stites 2003, p.3). Leu (2003) takes this view even further and points to changed literacy practices involved in the use of information technologies and notes that these particular skill sets need to be taught, recognising that the technology itself will continue to change at a rapid pace. Unfortunately, literacy policy in the United States fails to acknowledge the fundamental role of the new technologies in literacy but concentrates on the use of technology as aiding instruction.

The conceptualisation of literacy supported by evidence-based research in instructional material and teaching approaches reinforces the notion of Lankshear's 'lingering basics'. There is an emphasis on cognitive development, and reading focusing on encoding and decoding processes and standardised assessment. These are largely described in equivalence terms to K to 12 (kindergarten to age 12) schooling (Kruidenier 2002; Department of Education [United States] 2001b). Changes in K to 12 concepts of basic skills seem the main driver to adding new literacies to the conceptualisation of adult literacy, rather than either the SCANS or the Equipped for the Future framework (EFF).

Family literacy

Family literacy provides integrated educational services for families, including adult education for parents in conjunction with early childhood education for their children. Services also focus on developing the parents' knowledge and skills as their children's first teachers and encouraging active involvement in their children's schooling.

Workplace literacy

In the United States as elsewhere, workplace literacy provides basic skills instruction for workers either at work or in community settings. Developed in partnership with employers, these programs provide customised instruction focused on job performance. Many large businesses already provide basic education as part of their training effort. The use of incentives and subsidies using public funds appears the most effective method in jump-starting activity and is used in many states. Useful models are the Workforce Improvement Networks in Pennsylvania and Virginia and efforts in Massachusetts (Levenson 2003).

Providers

The distribution of grant recipients for the delivery of adult literacy follows:

- 59% to public schools
- 15% to post-secondary and community colleges
- 14% to community-based organisations
- 4% to correctional institutions
- 8% to other organisations such as libraries, business councils and sheltered workshops.

Curriculum frameworks

Efforts to identify standards for basic education—such as SCANS and the Equipped for the Future framework—have made progress in expanding the vision for the field, building consensus

and providing guidance on the specific skills and knowledge adults need to be successful in the twenty-first century.

Equipped for the Future

Since 1993 the National Institute for Literacy has led a collaborative, nationwide effort to develop adult learning standards to guide instruction and assessment and to improve the quality and results of adult literacy programs (Merrifield 1998; Equipped for the Future website). The 16 Equipped for the Future standards define the knowledge and skill that adults need in order to carry out their roles as parents, citizens and workers successfully in the twenty-first century. These skills include strong reading, writing and maths skills. They also include the skills needed to communicate and work well with others, to solve problems, and to keep up with change. This framework reflects the purposes for which adults use literacy and is increasingly used to guide content of instruction or as a curriculum framework. However, it is difficult to gauge from the literature how extensively the framework is used or whether it is primarily used in workplace or employment-related provision. The National Summit on Literacy recommended its use, but the *Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) Act 2003* has not endorsed a particular framework for informing instruction or reporting outcomes, leaving the decision about these mechanisms with the states.

The National Reporting System

Since 1998 the National Reporting System has been the mandated quality assurance and accountability mechanism. Educational gain, one of the key outcomes in the National Reporting System, provides a measure of student literacy gains resulting from instruction. This measure applies to all students in the program except pre-designated 'workbased project learners'. To determine this measure, local programs assess students on intake to determine their 'education functioning level'. There are four levels for adult basic education, two for adult secondary education and six levels of English as a second language. Each level describes a set of skills and competencies which students, entering at that level, can achieve in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, functional and workplace areas (Department of Education [United States] 2001a).

A critical element of the National Reporting System is the ability for states and local programs to measure and document learning gains on the educational function levels. The National Reporting System allows states, in measuring learning gains, to establish their own procedures for student placement and assessment. In this way the variation in each state's instructional emphasis, goals and assessment procedure are accommodated. The National Reporting System score is translated from other endorsed standardised assessment systems such as the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASA), Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Standard Performance Levels (SPL).

The United States National Reporting System is substantially different from the Australian National Reporting System, with the former more akin to the quality standards of the Australian Quality Training Framework, while the latter provides the outcomes statements for language, literacy, numeracy and learning required across five levels or the outcomes against which assessments can be moderated.

Funding

Federal contribution

Table 6 outlines estimates for federal funds and enrolments in the years selected for this study.

Table 6: United States federal funding for literacy

	1990	1996	2001
Federal funds in United States $m	160	250	1 185.5
Enrolments	3 100 000	4 000 000	2 900 000

Source: extrapolated from Sticht (2002, p.34), McLendon (2002)

Between 1996 and 2001 there has been a significant increase in funding but a drop in enrolments. Falling enrolments coincide with the introduction of the National Reporting System with its emphasis on standardised testing to measure learning gains. As there is no explanation as to why the drop has occurred, Sticht has proposed two possible explanations: reporting prior to the establishment of the National Reporting System was not reliable; or, alternatively, learners have dropped out of programs as a consequence of increased standardised testing due to the implementation of the National Reporting System since 1998. This experience raises serious questions about the way in which performance measures are implemented to meet policy targets (Sticht 2003b, p.4).

While recent increases are welcome, Sticht highlights the inadequacy for funding for adult literacy:

> If the number of adults in the lowest level of adult literacy is correct, then the $571,262,500 million for the State Grants for 03–04 comes to less than $15 for each of the 40 million American adults in the lowest level of literacy. It is less than $6.50 for each of the 90 million adults that the USED says 'are not equipped with the skills they need to work effectively in the high-skill jobs that increasingly characterise our economy'.
>
> (Sticht 2003a)

State funding

The figures given in table 6 take no account of the input from the states and private funding. In this context Sticht reports that:

> Over the years the federal funding share of adult literacy had declined and the share of matching funding by states and local education agencies has increased … By 1998, federal funds for adult education has risen to $345 millions … while around $958 millions was available from state and local matching funds. (Sticht 2002, p.34)

Basic grants to states are allocated using a formula based upon the number of adults in each state over age 16 who have not completed high school. States prepare plans for providing adult education services over a five-year period.

Other sources of funding

Organised labour makes a substantial investment in literacy provision—at least tens of millions of dollars annually—contributing to basic skills training and literacy services for its members. Businesses invest only $30m to $40m in training, amounting to one per cent of payroll costs. Of that training, basic skills training makes up only one per cent of total hours delivered.

Institutions of higher learning also invest in adult basic eduction by offering remedial courses for incoming students with low basic skills. Many community colleges are working with local employers and labour unions to develop courses intended to enhance skills of existing employees or to train potential employees for high-demand jobs, such as those in the technology sector. However, a number of post-secondary institutions are beginning to back away from providing remedial and other courses for students with low literacy levels (National Literacy Summit 2000, p.19).

Community groups and libraries or philanthropic organisations also provide literacy services. In one state it has been estimated that only 10 of 130 programs receive government funding (National Literacy Summit 2000, p.19).

Teacher preparation

Workforce profile

Few full-time jobs are available for adult education and literacy instructors and those which are available offer low pay and few, if any, benefits. The overwhelming majority of paid instructors are part-time (87%) and many more workers are volunteers. Most adult English as a second language teachers have a college degree, but rarely with a specialisation in adult education, literacy or second language learning. Many teachers work in several different programs or function as both teachers and administrators within one program. Staff turnover is high and many teachers and administrators leave the field after a few years (Crandall 1994). Increasing the proportion of well-paid, full-time instructors is seen as essential to improving the capacity and quality of the field and to making work in adult education an attractive professional option (National Literacy Summit 2000, p.29).

Certification

The content and context of adult literacy is changing and the changes have implications for teacher preparation, standards and certification. For example, while instruction was predominantly based on GED, standards related to K–12 (kindergarten to age 12) were seen as sufficient; however, since the SCANS and the Equipped for the Future framework have been introduced, there is a greater emphasis on adult learning.

Many factors have converged over the past decade to steadily accelerate the drive for professionalisation of the field of adult literacy. Measures for increasing accountability to accommodate the *Workplace Investment Act 1998* and the development of the National Reporting System are two elements which have influenced the change in pace. Evaluation and quality processes frequently count the existence of ongoing staff development and program planning processes as an indicator of quality (Sabatini, Ginsberg & Russell 2002).

Certification of teachers is a state and employer issue. In the United States the K–12 certification boards are critical stakeholders for any initiatives aimed at adult literacy. According to a 2001 National Institute for Literacy survey of state professional development systems, 22 states require instructors to be certified in K–12, secondary, or adult education (Tolbert 2001, p.1). The teacher competencies developed and field-tested by the national Professional Development Network for Adult Learners (PRO-NET) project have the potential in the future for use in professional certification of literacy teachers (National Literacy Summit 2000).

Currently there are no pay incentives for instructors to achieve certification. In fact, most instructors sacrifice a day's pay to participate in in-service training. Improved, expanded and continuous training of teachers, administrators and volunteers is essential to improving the quality of provision. In 1999, fewer than 100 colleges and universities nationwide offered graduate degrees in adult education and literacy.

The quality of staff has been identified by the National Literacy Summit as a key issue. The action agenda from the summit proposed the following as a means to fulfil priority 3—'create a system of high quality education and support services that helps adults meet their goals as parents, workers and community members':

> Ensure that all states establish a certification process for instructional staff based on standards that value academic knowledge and life experience, and include alternative assessment methods such as portfolios.   (National Literacy Summit 2000, p.11)

Professional development

Professional development systems for adult educators vary from state to state in aspects such as style of delivery, state contributions, training requirements, and evaluation methods. Despite a variety of delivery modes, all states encourage instructors to participate in professional development activities (Tolbert 2001, p.1). Only ten states do not provide funding in addition to the federal contribution for professional development. Despite the recognition of the importance of ongoing professional development, funding since 1998 has decreased (Tolbert 2001, p.11).

Republic of Ireland

Social and economic overview

The Republic of Ireland occupies five-sixths of an island situated in the North Atlantic west of Great Britain and is located strategically on the major sea and air routes between North America and Western Europe.

Ireland has a population of 3 924 140 and is becoming increasingly diverse through a small but growing immigrant population of refugees and immigrant workers. A small percentage of the population are identified as 'travellers' with their own language and cultural traditions.

Ireland has a small, modern, trade-dependent economy which has seen extraordinary growth in the last decade. Agriculture, once the most important sector, is now dwarfed by industry, which accounts for 38% of gross domestic product and about 80% of exports, and employs 28% of the labour force. Although exports remain the primary engine for Ireland's robust growth, the economy has also benefited from a rise in consumer spending, construction, and business investment. The gross domestic product in 2002 was estimated at US $113.7 billion (Central Intelligence Agency website 2003). Unlike other OECD countries, Ireland enjoys close to full employment but is experiencing skills gaps in many industries.

Over the past decade, the Irish Government has implemented a series of national economic programs designed to curb inflation, reduce government spending, increase labour force skills, and promote foreign investment.

Ireland was one of ten nations which adopted the European Union currency system in January 1999 and is a participant in European Union-sponsored projects supporting social inclusion.

Regulatory framework

Institutional frameworks for training and learning supported by legislation are currently being established. Influenced by initiatives in Europe, adult literacy has been identified as a national priority, particularly since lifelong learning policy and research from the OECD has been systematically implemented. Literacy is viewed as fundamental to building the capacity of Ireland to participate and compete in the global market and to achieve social cohesion. In the development of new policies re-invigorating education, in particular the post-compulsory education sector, a National Adult Literacy Plan has been developed and is included in the National Development Plan 2000–2006 and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000–2003.

The National Development Plan 2000–2006 sets out an integrated program of education, training and infrastructure measures to promote social inclusion, employment, competitiveness and growth, environmental sustainability and regional balance.

Adult literacy services, which are located under the umbrella of the National Development Plan, are administered through the Ministry of Education and Science through structures set up for adult education. In Ireland adult education is defined as: 'Systematic learning undertaken by an

adult who returns to learning having concluded initial education and training' (Department of Education and Science [Ireland] 2000, p.12).

The conceptualisation of adult literacy in policy has been informed by a definition formulated by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and its ethos of learner centeredness (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2001b, p.5). Literacy is defined in the following:

> Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and numeracy. It also encompasses aspects of personal development—social, economic, emotional—and is concerned with improving self-esteem and building confidence. It goes far beyond mere technical skills of communication. The underlying aim of good literacy practice is to enable people to understand and reflect critically on their life circumstances with a view to exploring new possibilities and initiating constructive change.
>
> (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2002d, p.8)

History of adult literacy development

Up to 1970 there was no formal recognition of an adult literacy problem in Ireland (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] website 2003). The National Adult Literacy Agency, a membership organisation providing advocacy and coordination for adult literacy services was formed in 1980. Since 1985, when it received a grant-in-aid to support provision via volunteer adult literacy schemes, its role in administering funding for adult literacy provision and initiatives in Ireland has grown.

Limited funding for adult literacy began in 1985. Adult literacy organisers were employed through vocational education committees (VECs) to manage volunteer tutors' delivery of literacy services in the community, to pay group tutors and to provide learning materials. In 1997, the funding for the services amounted to Irish pounds 870 000 and provided for 5000 students, the majority of whom were involved in one-to-one tuition with volunteer tutors.

International Adult Literacy Survey

The International Adult Literacy Survey was conducted in Ireland in 1995 with a sample of 2439 adults and results published in 1997. The results of the survey shocked the public in Ireland and focused their attention on the urgency of their adult literacy problem. The survey found that 25% of the Irish population scored at the lowest (level 1) in the document scale, with a further 32% at level 2, that is, 57% of population with low-level literacy. The percentage at level 1 was the lowest for any country except Poland.

The survey drew attention to:

✦ the substantially lower levels of literacy in older age groups

✦ the close links between lower scores and lower education levels

✦ an association between low income and low literacy levels

✦ an association between low levels of literacy and low levels of participation in second-chance education and training (Department of Education and Science [Ireland] 2000, p.34).

The survey results for Ireland were timely in that they were able to inform policy development relating to lifelong learning which was taking place in the late 1990s. Adult literacy received unprecedented funding and attention in the green paper on adult education (Department of Education and Science[Ireland] 1998). The initiatives in the green paper have been extended in the white paper (Department of Education and Science [Ireland] 2000) in which further activity through a National Adult Literacy Plan was proposed.

The National Adult Literacy Plan

The National Adult Literacy Plan (Department of Education and Science [Ireland] 2000, appendix 1) aimed to:

✦ continue to increase the number of clients reached (target is 118 000)

✦ prioritise those with lowest literacy levels

✦ implement the quality framework for the adult literacy services developed by the National Adult Literacy Agency in collaboration with international partners to monitor the effectiveness of the service

✦ increase integration of literacy provision for the education and training of the unemployed within the Community Employment Schemes

✦ encourage greater flexibility to enable Foras Aiseanna Saothair (FAS) or Labour Training Organisation and vocational education committees (VECs) to mix and combine schemes to optimise the use of local resources to best cater for emerging needs

✦ adopt the National Adult Literacy Agency's consortia framework proposal as a basis for ensuring referral of those with literacy needs into appropriate training and education programs

✦ develop new strategies to address the under-representation of men in literacy and other basic education programs and to develop specific initiatives for disadvantaged groups (for example, people with disabilities, the homeless, 'travellers', refugees and asylum seekers)

✦ explore the potential of information and communication technologies and broadcasting in literacy training

✦ expand workplace literacy provision

✦ increase collaboration with the public library services.

✦ increase collaboration with Teagasc[6] and other relevant interests in relation to meeting the literacy needs of the farming community.

Other strategies announced in the white paper have streamlined allowances and incentives for adults to engage in training and are also applied to adult education as well as other forms of post-school education. These include training allowances, child-care and transport support.

There have been some implementation issues (National Adult Literacy Agency 2001b, p.3). The consultative structures recommended in the white paper, such as the National Adult Learning Council and the local adult learning boards, have not been established. In the interim, a National Adult Literacy Implementation Planning Group chaired by the National Adult Literacy Agency has been proposed to facilitate the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Plan (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2003).

The proposed structure calls for a National Adult Learning Council (NALC) comprising key stakeholders, meeting four times a year and advising the Department of Education and Science on key issues. A twice-yearly forum with the social partners, such as the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Prison Education Service, Local Employment Service, the National Training and Development Institute, and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) is proposed.

Local advisory boards, mirroring the National Adult Learning Council structure, are also proposed to make decisions at the local level. Delivery of programs occurs through the vocational

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[6] The government department responsible for rural affairs and agriculture

education committees. Local adult literacy schemes/centres are drawing up local adult literacy action plans to facilitate effective implementation. This development is being supported by the National Adult Literacy Coordinator located at the National Adult Literacy Agency and funded by the Department of Education and Science.

Since 1997, Ireland has adopted a staged and integrated approach to the expansion of adult literacy services. An initial step was to establish the Adult Literacy Development Fund to support a range of pilot projects to test models and innovative approaches to inform future practices in the area. These initiatives were designed to promote public awareness, develop new outreach strategies for those most in need and establish referral networks and more flexible delivery mechanisms. The service is now in a period of consolidation after successfully building up from a low investment base. The main focus now is on quality assurance.

Current provision

Conceptualisation of literacies

In Ireland adult literacy is conceptualised within a basic skills framework similar to that of the United Kingdom, which covers Lankshear's 'new basics'.

Ireland is currently developing quality and assessment frameworks for adult basic education, with funding from the Department of Education and Science, to establish new accountability standards for adult basic education in response to the white paper. These developments are influenced by the 'ethos' of adult education work in Ireland, which is described as 'learner centred' and informed by research, current literacy theory and by international experience such as the Equipped for the Future framework and National Reporting System development in the United States. There are no long-established accountability systems in Ireland so the National Adult Literacy Agency is in a unique position to create a custom-built system. To date, guiding principles, quality areas and statements of quality and a nine-step process have been established. These have been piloted and are now being implemented accompanied by staff development (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2003, pp.1–3).

The Assessment Framework For Literacy and Numeracy defines what an adult needs to know and be able to undertake to function effectively in daily life. Programs therefore are able to provide clear objectives, to guide instruction and assessment, and program effectiveness can be readily measured. It is hoped to develop from the assessment framework a single nationally endorsed assessment system with defined stages of progress for assessing literacy levels within local adult literacy services. The assessment framework feeds into the quality framework.

The assessment framework has been developed through the collation and analysis of activities undertaken by practitioners and through broad consultation, and provides a window on how practitioners in Ireland conceptualise the complexity of literacy and literacy learning. The framework addresses four learning areas:

✦ using oral language to listen and be heard

✦ writing to convey information, ideas and feelings

✦ reading for understanding

✦ using basic maths to solve everyday problems.

Four cornerstones of progress have been identified:

✦ knowledge and skills base—in oral language, writing, reading and basic maths

✦ depth of understanding and critical awareness

✧ fluency and independence

✧ range of application.

✧ The framework uses three levels of task complexity to consider the interplay between social context and task complexity, and allows for three stages of performance at each level (Lynch 2003, pp.3–8). It would appear that the framework has the capacity to measure literacy uses, including application in diverse education and workplace contexts and is inclusive of visual literacies and the application of new technologies (Lynch 2003, p.3).

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland was established in 2001. Of the ten levels of awards or qualifications, it is expected that 'the stages of progress will marry well with level 1 and 2 thus enabling progress to be measured and providing a link to the qualifications framework' (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2003, p.6). Adult literacy programs are likely to be certified at levels 1 and 2.

The Irish, aware of the difficulties of implementing a quantitative system; for example, the experience in the United States where the National Reporting System was integrated with the Equipped for the Future framework, are opting for a more European qualitative model which will meet the Department of Education and Science's accountability requirements (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2003, p.9).

National coordination

The National Adult Literacy Agency is a non-profit organisation concerned with national coordination, training and policy development in adult literacy. The agency plays a key coordinating role in the delivery of adult literacy services and continues to have a significant role in the new structures and implementation plans for the National Adult Literacy Plan. This role is not without problems, with some tensions developing about the role of the agency in supporting an ever-widening range of adult literacy options offered through the vocational education committees (Conboy 2000, p.19).

The National Adult Literacy Agency provides curriculum and professional development support to local vocational education committee adult literacy schemes or centres, and disseminates information via its website, publications and resource library. The agency also develops and promotes partnerships with organisations in relation to specific projects and work programs (National Adult Literacy Agency 2002d). This is reflected in its membership of strategic committees and its partnerships in specific projects. For example, the National Adult Literacy Agency is advising the Food Safety Authority on a food safety program to assist workers with low literacy. The agency also contributes to the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) Quality Assurance Consultation Network and is involved in the development of a national qualifications framework. The agency is a member of the Information Society Commission and is represented on the Irish Trade Union Trust. The National Adult Literacy Agency supports the literacy initiatives of Foras Aiseanna Saothair, the national further education and training body and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in integrating literacy into community, employment and vocational training.

The National Adult Literacy Agency has a long history of engaging in research which is used to inform policy and practice. Significant research in 1995 was undertaken to investigate participation rates in adult basic education (Bailey & Coleman 1998), which has provided data to develop the National Adult Literacy Agency consortia model and to influence recruitment and delivery options and responses to the white paper.

Examples of the research and development, including that undertaken by the National Adult Literacy Agency are listed below:

✧ a quality framework (National Adult Literacy Agency 2002e)

❖   an assessment framework (National Adult Literacy Agency 2001a, 2002c; Lynch 2003)

❖   a training needs analysis for practitioners (forthcoming)

❖   workplace basic education research and development (National Adult Literacy Agency 2002a)

❖   health and literacy research (National Adult Literacy Agency 2002f)

❖   evaluations of TV and radio series (Grummell 2001; McSkeane 2002)

❖   development of guidelines for inclusion of people with disabilities

❖   awareness raising of the needs of adults with specific learning difficulties

❖   a range of activities in support agencies to integrate literacy in further and vocational education and training (Conboy 2000, 2002).

Delivery

Adult literacy schemes

One-hundred-and-twenty-six locally based vocational education committee adult literacy schemes provide learner-centred tuition on an individual and/or group basis to adults with reading and writing difficulties, who in the majority of cases, are experiencing varying levels of disadvantage. This service is provided free of charge and is available in most cases during the day and in the evening.

Almost 23 000 learners typically receive two hours literacy tuition per week—equivalent to two weeks full-time education. Over half of all learners are aged between 25 and 44 years. Over 70% of all learners participate in small group tuition. Sixty per cent of all learners are female and 40% are male. Some concerns have been expressed about the need to address more intensive types of provision similar to the return-to-study model for adult basic education (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2001b, pp.8, 16).

There is no national, formal or standardised curriculum for beginner adult literacy learners. Curriculum for one-to-one learners is typically negotiated at the local level between the learners and the tutor, in line with learners' goals, interests and needs. The assessment framework aims to address supporting learning for this group. Many practitioners are strongly resisting certification at this level and are arguing for continued government support for a mixed non-formal and formal provision (Conboy 2000, p.61).

Learners in small groups are typically working towards accreditation. These include the Further Education and Training Awards Council foundation modules in maths and communication, and junior cycle and senior cycle level English and maths programs at the second level of the qualifications framework.

Participation shows a four-fold increase since 1997 when 5000 people were attending the literacy service. However, this is less than 5% of Irish adults who experience literacy difficulties, and in general, they only access 2 to 4 hours tuition per week (National Adult Literacy Agency website 2003).

Vocational education committees are positioned to deliver and broker the range of adult literacy services—one-to-one, small group, integrated with other community adult education provision and workplace-based delivery. Generally speaking, these integrating initiatives have worked well, although they demand the formation of complex relationships at grass roots levels among the agencies and personnel (Conboy 2000, pp.24–5).

Workplace initiatives

Given that the bulk of Irish adults who are likely to experience literacy difficulties, that is, 440 000 of the 500 000 people performing at the lowest International Adult Literacy Survey level, are already in the workforce, approaches to workplace literacy training have been strongly promoted.

National policy (including the national partnership agreement, Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000–2002, the National Development Plan 2000–2006 and the white paper, *Learning for life* [Department of Education and Science 2000]) has strongly encouraged the further development of workplace literacy. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs report (2000 cited in National Adult Literacy Agency 2002a) and the *Report on in-company training* (cited in National Adult Literacy Agency 2002a) by the same group state that the key for low-skilled employees lies in the development of workplace basic skills training. The report from the Joint Committee on Lifelong Learning, *Actions for a learning society*, highlights literacy and numeracy as an issue that 'warrants greater government action and a greater sense of urgency' (cited in National Adult Literacy Agency 2002a).

A Workplace Literacy Strategy Group was established by the National Adult Literacy Agency in October 2001 to advance the development of workplace literacy programs. It consists of representatives from government departments, employer groups, unions, practitioners and learners.

The delivery model adopted in Ireland is not directly linked to accredited vocational or workplace training but is a separate course negotiated to meet identified learner needs in basic skills. A program may include literacy, numeracy, communication skills, computer skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving and report writing. They are offered on site, where possible, otherwise in a mutually convenient location (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2002a). In 2002, 34 local authorities and vocational education committee literacy schemes worked to develop workplace programs. Three hundred learners in approximately 46 groups participated in the workplace program (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2003, pp.12–13).

In order to build capacity to provide workplace literacy, the National Adult Literacy Agency delivered the Certificate in Workplace Basic Skills training to 16 experienced literacy tutors. A workplace literacy policy and guidelines for Irish employers has been published to report on research co-funded by the Combat Poverty Agency in 2002.

The National Adult Literacy Agency guidelines on integrating literacy in all training for further education and training centres draws on the model developed by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) for integrating language, literacy and numeracy into workplace training (National Adult Literacy Agency 2002b).

Technology

The National Adult Literacy Agency, through a grant from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has been able to develop its website, launching the *Literacy tools* site in 2002 and has incorporated resources for tutors and independent learners. The website contains features to introduce learners to email, management of passwords etc., and searching the internet. There is no evidence of a broadening of understanding of basic skills to include the new literacies of information communication technologies. *Literacy tools* currently provides on online learning environment which could be developed further and an alternative means of providing resources and professional development for practitioners.

However, the agency has successfully explored some low-tech options. Three TV programs supported by a hotline and printed materials have been conducted and evaluated. The first series of *The read write now* programs were watched, on average, by 162 000 people per week, making the

series the highest rated educational broadcast on radio station RTE. In general, as many women as men watched the program, but the morning repeat of the program had twice as many male viewers as females. The National Adult Literacy Agency received over 10 000 calls from adults wishing to receive their free learning pack but, who, in the main, did not wish to join an adult literacy service. In addition to the 10 000 packs which were distributed to independent learners, a further 8000 went to education and training services engaged in literacy work and 120 000 to the adult literacy service (Bailey 2001).

The agency has made a strong case for a well-developed and resourced information communication technologies infrastructure in literacy provision schemes, and for the development of resources relating to information communication technologies (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2001b, p.13).

English for speakers of other languages

In the past few years Ireland's population of non-nationals has increased. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is in demand from refugees, asylum seekers and immigrant workers unable to attend education and training. The National Adult Literacy Agency has published guidelines for schemes and produced resources and professional development for practitioners. Vocational education committee literacy schemes deliver ESOL classes.

Family literacy

As noted earlier, family literacy refers to a various programs that address the intergenerational nature of literacy. The impetus for family literacy is that parents are usually the primary educators of children. Adults with literacy difficulties are often motivated in addressing this issue because of the educational needs of their children. Family literacy programs usually involve interactive literacy activities between parent and child, training in parenting activities, and age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Family literacy programs are offered by vocational education committee literacy schemes. A family literacy training module is included as part of the National Adult Literacy Agency– Waterford Institute of Technology National Certificate in Literacy studies.

Health literacy

In 2001 the National Adult Literacy Agency established, with the Department of Health and Children, the Health and Literacy Project. The first stage involved research into low levels of literacy as a barrier to good health. The second stage will identify possible ways to remove those barriers and the production of comprehensive health and literacy guidelines targeted at health practitioners to assist them in identifying and supporting clients with literacy difficulties. Health and literacy was chosen as the National Literacy Awareness Week theme in 2002. The agency is also engaged in other activities such as literacy awareness training for health practitioners, working with health promotions staff to make their materials more accessible, raising the profile of health and literacy issues nationally and locally, and suppling health and literacy materials for health and literacy practitioners.

Integrated literacy

The Return to Education Programme is a joint initiative between National Adult Literacy Agency, vocational education committees and Foras Aiseanna Saothair. It is an intensive literacy program for Community Employment (CE) workers on Foras Aiseanna Saothair community employment schemes. The Return to Education provision has continued to increase, with over ten new programs begun since September 2001. There are currently 46 of these in 26 vocational education committee areas and ten Foras Aiseanna Saothair regions.

Table 7: Funding for adult literacy, Ireland

	1996	2001
	Funding in millions of Irish pounds	
Funding	0.85	73.8
Enrolments	5000	

Teacher preparation

Workforce profile

There are 126 locally based vocational education committee adult literacy schemes employing 61 full-time and 80 part-time adult literacy organisers and 27 full-time paid and 1255 part-time adult literacy tutors. In addition, a further 4136 trained volunteer tutors provide 10 000 hours of tuition per week.

In 2003 the National Adult Literacy Agency is undertaking a needs analysis of the capacity of the vocational education committee adult literacy schemes.

Certification

Ireland has recently established a National Certificate in Literacy Studies. There is agreement for a minimum-level qualification and the need for the Department of Education and Science to facilitate existing practitioners to gain those qualifications. As the white paper notes:

> Many of those employed in Adult Education field have been recruited on the basis of a second level teaching qualification or a trade or business qualification. While a number of them will have taken a variety of orientations and other programmes related to working with adults, they will not, in most cases, have been accorded professional recognition for this. Many with an Adult Education qualification, but who lack a 'teaching' qualification, may find it impossible to secure stable employment in their chosen field. There are also many workers in the community and voluntary sector with expertise and experience in this area but who lack the professional recognition of a formal qualification.

> (Department of Education and Science [Ireland] 2000, p.150)

The Irish Government has enacted legislation for the establishment of a National Qualification Authority of Ireland to develop a national qualifications framework for non-university vocational education and training awards at further and higher education levels. The act provides for the establishment of two councils, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). The role of the bodies is to:

✧ determine the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners

✧ establish and publish policies and criteria for the making of awards and the validation of programs

✧ make or recognise awards

✧ monitor and evaluate the quality of programs.

The act provides for an all-embracing network of relationships between providers in the further and higher education and training sectors, including a legislative requirement on the universities to cooperate with the new structures.

The development of a national qualifications structure is a fundamental ingredient in a comprehensive system of lifelong learning (International Labour Organization 2002, pp.71–2).

Such a system will presumably deal with the skills needs and qualifications issues for the adult education sector itself and for adult literacy practitioners operating across the whole system.

In 2002 the Waterford Institute of Technology became the awarding body for future National Adult Literacy Agency–Waterford Institute of Technology accreditation programs. Certificate and diploma awards have become more streamlined, with tutors and organisers training together on common modules. The 12 modules of the National Certificate in Literacy Studies are now available as single certificates. Development work has commenced on two new modules: 'Workplace basic education and training of trainers,' and 'English for speakers of other languages' (National Adult Literacy Agency [Ireland] 2002g, p.31).

Professional development

The training section of National Adult Literacy Agency offers a wide range of training and staff development programs. These include

✧ in-service training for vocational education committee adult literacy schemes

✧ National Adult Literacy Agency–Waterford Institute of Technology accreditation programs

✧ National University of Ireland, Maynooth integrating literacy certificate

✧ literacy awareness training for other professional groups, such as health and business

✧ organiser, tutor and learner forums

✧ provision of advice, professional development etc. to bodies developing strategic literacy plans

✧ English for speakers of other languages training and support.

The strategy to support an integrated literacy approach has involved the National Adult Literacy Agency in development of guidelines for a whole-centre approach for further education community employment participants, along with vocational training for staff in vocational education and training centres.

The United Kingdom

Social and economic overview

Officially known as the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom is made up of islands, including the northern one-sixth of Ireland between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, north-west of France.

In the post-Second World War era the United Kingdom has rebuilt itself into a modern and prosperous European nation. As one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, a founding member of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and of the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom pursues a global approach to foreign policy. It is currently determining the degree of its integration with continental Europe. Constitutional reform is also a significant issue in the United Kingdom. The Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly were established in 1999. The United Kingdom Government is a bicameral, constitutional monarchy with local government administered through local cities, boroughs and counties.

The population in 2002 was estimated to be 60 094 648. The United Kingdom is ethnically and culturally diverse, with the English making up 81.5%, the Scottish 9.6%, the Irish 2.4% and the Welsh 1.9%. Those originating from the islands of the West Indies, Pakistan and other places make up 2.8% of the population.

The United Kingdom, a leading trading power and financial centre, is one of the strongest economies of Western Europe. Over the past two decades the government has greatly reduced public ownership and contained the growth of social welfare programs. Services, particularly banking, insurance, and business services, account by far for the largest proportion of gross domestic product, while industry continues to decline in importance. Inflation, interest rates, and unemployment remain low. Gross domestic product was running at US$1.52 trillion in 2002. The United Kingdom still remains outside the European Monetary Union. The education and training budget in 2000–2001 was £400m.

Regulatory framework

Responsibility for education lies primarily with the Department for Education and Skills; however, the whole-of-government approach to education has led to the development of an elaborate set of partnerships between government departments and external business and community organisations.

A new body, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, has been established to support the development of service delivery to the post-16 education and training sector. Local learning skills councils have been established to plan, coordinate and monitor the allocation of funding and delivery of services.

The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit is based within the Department for Education and Skills. It oversees *Skills for life*, the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills in England. There is a regional coordinator for each of the nine regions of England who acts as a link between the local learning skill councils, local authorities, 'learning partnerships' (voluntary groupings of learning providers collaborating to ensure maximum services within a particular local community), providers, and other relevant agencies at regional and local levels.

The Social Exclusion Unit is a policy unit located in the Office of the Prime Minister fostering 'joined up' (cross-agency collaboration) solutions at the local level.

History of adult literacy

Adult literacy, recognised as basic skills in the United Kingdom, came to the fore during the 1970s when a number of reading campaigns were conducted in the hope of eradicating illiteracy (Wells 1990, pp.2–7). A specialist quasi-government agency was set up in 1975 by the National Institute for Adult and Community Education (NIACE) to support these short-term campaigns. Previously known as the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, and now as the Basic Skills Agency, the organisation has survived as a key player in the development of adult literacy in the United Kingdom (Basic Skills Agency [United Kingdom] website 2003).

The 1980s saw cuts in expenditure and a move away from welfare issues; however, the major organisations survived. The International Literacy Year in 1990 offered new opportunities to highlight issues of adult literacy. Further advances were made possible with innovative provision, including the increased use of broadcasting to reach a wider audience, the introduction of family literacy programs and the investigation of curriculum development options, and certification in conjunction with the debate about national core curriculum in schools (Wells 1990, pp.2–7).

The legacy from both the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit and the National Institute for Adult and Community Education has been a relatively stable base for independent research, curriculum and professional development, a practice of partnership with local government and community, and the development of an adult learner-centred approach. The impact of the Basic Skills Agency has been to forge a formal status for basic skills across all ages and education sectors, a unique achievement among the countries in this study.

International Adult Literacy Survey

The International Adult Literacy Survey was undertaken in the United Kingdom by the Office of Statistics in 1997 and covered a sample of 3811 adults. In the United Kingdom these results have contributed, with other local studies such as those carried out by the Basic Skills Agency, to an analysis of the need and support requirements of adult literacy education (Bynner & Parsons 1997). The results of these surveys were mapped against the definitions of literacy levels used in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's National Framework of Qualifications and in the national curriculum for schools. This clear identification of need, related to international and national standards, along with international policy recommendations emerging from OECD research, fed directly into the Moser report (Moser 1999) and the green and white paper development (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001).

The basis for the current measures of adult literacy is outlined in the adult literacy and numeracy policy, *Skills for life* (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001). The Moser report identified the mismatch between current provision and its capacity to deliver outcomes, and the enormous potential demand revealed in the national and international research (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001, p.9).

Since then, policy developments in the United Kingdom, through successive departmental reports, research reports and strategies (Moser 1999; Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001; Brooks 2001; Bynner & Parsons 1997; Basic Skills Agency [United Kingdom] 2000) have placed the challenge of improving adult literacy at the forefront of social policies articulated (National Literacy Summit 2000 [United Kingdom]) as a whole-of-government approach. The requirements for adult literacy have been clearly established and articulated in policy, not as a short-term campaign, but as a feature of future skill development.

The national adult literacy and numeracy strategy, *Skills for life* (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001) identifies seven million adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills and a half million adults who need support using English. A particular focus was placed on poor adult numeracy skills. The strategy sets targets for those identified as most in need:

✧ unemployed people and benefit claimants

✧ prisoners and those supervised in the community

✧ public sector employees

✧ low-skilled people in employment

✧ other groups at risk of exclusion.

✧ The initial target was to improve the skills of 750 000 adults by 2004. An investment of £1.5 billion over three years has been committed.

✧ The strategy tackles the other major challenge, that is, developing the capacity of the system to deliver.

> We intend to build for long term success by engaging potential learners through every possible means and by creating, for the first time, a thorough, high-quality literacy and numeracy learning infrastructure.
>
> (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001, p.9)

Elements of the strategy to build this capacity are:

✧ increasing demand through publicity campaigns and a single national referral point (Basic Skills Agency co-ordinator)

✧ a set of national standards which will provide a framework for all adult literacy and numeracy qualifications and programs of study to be developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

✧ a national core curriculum (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)

✧ a bank of teaching support materials (Basic Skills Agency)

✧ national literacy and numeracy tests (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)

✧ a national research centre

✧ qualifications for adult literacy and numeracy teachers and further education teachers Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO)

✧ a program of accredited continuous professional development (Basic Skills Agency)

✧ development of a teacher supply plan (Basic Skills Agency and Learning Skills Council)

✧ pilot projects in utilising volunteers effectively (Active Community Fund)

✧ use of technology to meet learners' needs

✧ implementation of the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark and inspections by the Adult Learning Inspectorate and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Two other significant features of the adult literacy and numeracy strategy are the thrust for 'inclusion'—a policy influenced by United Kingdom engagement in European Union activities—and its philosophy of developing inter-government and community partnerships.

Current provision

Conceptualisation of literacies

The definition of literacy used in the United Kingdom for funding purposes is located in the strategy, *Skills for life:*

> Literacy and numeracy skills provision caters for the literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy needs of all post-16 learners, and including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, from pre-entry level up to and including level 2. This includes all forms of provision, whether delivered as stand-alone, as part of a vocational programme or bolt-on course, and whether delivered full-time, part-time, or through self-study or Information Communication Technology (ICT).

> (Department for Education and Skills [United Kingdom] 2001, p.54)

This conceptualisation doesn't deal with 'what' literacies are available but is more oriented to the contexts of delivery. The standards and core curriculum spell out the types of literacies in some detail.

National infrastructure

Research and development

Basic Skills Agency

The Basic Skills Agency is the national development organisation for literacy and numeracy in the United Kingdom. In the post-16 area the Basic Skills Agency manages the following programs and initiatives (Basic Skills Agency [United Kingdom] website 2003):

- ✧ the Adult and Community Fund which aims to build capacity of community organisations to deliver learning

- ✧ the lap-top initiative

- ✧ community-based English for speakers of other languages programs

- ✧ a project to produce a suite of diagnostic assessment materials for use with adult learners. All tools produced will be matched to the national standards, the adult core curricula for literacy and numeracy, the pre-entry curriculum and the English for speakers of other languages curriculum

- ✧ projects to embed literacy in local government

- ✧ financial literacy initiatives

- ✧ Link Up, a pilot project exploring ways of effectively recruiting and working with numeracy, literacy and language volunteers. There are currently 20 Link Up pilot projects up and running in England

- ✧ the Basic Skills Brokerage scheme, engaging employers to address the basic skills needs of their workforce. The scheme facilitates workplace basic skills training for employees through a network of trained business brokers

- ✧ *The Observatory,* the electronic gateway to resources and information about basic skills in the United Kingdom featuring a section on 16+.

The Learning And Skills Development Agency (LSDA)

The Learning and Skills Development Agency is an independent, national strategic agency for the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training with a remit from

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government to work across the whole learning and skills sector. The agency has a board appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

The Learning and Skills Development Agency is funded by the Learning Skills Council, the Department for Education and Skills and other government bodies. Activities cover professional and curriculum development, research and dissemination functions, policy analysis and consultancy and expert advice.

Research and development

The National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy is a consortium of partners led by the Institute of Education with:

✧ Lancaster University

✧ University of Nottingham

✧ University of Sheffield

✧ East London Pathfinder Consortium

✧ Liverpool Lifelong Learning Partnership

✧ Basic Skills Agency

✧ Learning and Skills Development Agency

✧ London Language and Literacy Unit, London South Bank University

✧ National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

✧ King's College, London.

The centre aims to improve practice and inform policy through the generation of knowledge, by creating a strong research culture and by developing professional practice. A research strategy for 2003–2007 has been published (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Numeracy and Literacy 2003). The centre's program includes:

✧ research into literacy and language (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and numeracy as discrete but overlapping elements in basic skills

✧ explanation of how best literacy, numeracy and English language needs can be integrated into vocational and academic programs of learning, taking into account the increasing importance of information communications technology as a crucial medium and set of skills.

✧ recognition of the diversity of learners and the range of learning environments.

Pathfinder projects

Since the launch of the policy, considerable experimentation has occurred through nine Pathfinder projects located in distinctive regional areas of the United Kingdom. The role of Pathfinder projects is to test the infrastructure arrangements and specific learning options available for literacy provision and examine the impact of variables, such as course duration and intensity, flexibility options such Learndirect, using e-learning and new technologies, and whether levels of participation are influenced by financial incentives. These projects will also evaluate the new standards, assessment tools and core curriculum (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001, p.43).

A strong feature of the implementation of *Skills for life* policy has been the collection of data and evaluation of the efforts to date. The curriculum reforms appear to have been welcomed by both learners and teachers; learners do appear to have made gains (data from before and after tuition

were used); and the system has expanded demand, participation and satisfaction (Department for Education and Skills [United Kingdom] 2002a, 2002b).

Delivery

The National Learning and Skills Council plans and funds delivery of literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages programs. It sets targets and funding for local councils and monitors the performances of providers in meeting quality and targets. It reports these outcomes directly to ministers.

Each council is responsible for ensuring that a full range of programs is available, and has capacity to use funds from a variety of sources, including the European Union, to develop approaches to suit their communities.

It is estimated that 70% of provision occurs in further education colleges; other significant provision occurs in adult and community education settings and workplaces. Many of the University of Industry's Learndirect activities are co-located with further education colleges, and other providers (Host Policy Research 2002, p.3).

Unemployed and government benefit recipients

Jobseeker initiatives

It is estimated that there are 870 000 adults in the United Kingdom in receipt of government job seeker benefits, of whom 32% are estimated to have literacy and numeracy needs (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001, p.13). Employment Services screens and offers assessment to individuals receiving jobseeker allowances. Some concern has been expressed in relation to linking benefits to participation in adult literacy, given that all other tuition in the United Kingdom is free. Mandatory participation schemes in Australia have been shown not to improve recruitment and participation (Rahmani & Crozier 2002).

Other benefit recipients

There are plans to extend screening and assessment to other holders of benefits, as part of the 'New Deal' suite of initiatives to reduce unemployment. Literacy support is to be offered to lone parents through New Deal for Partners and to disabled adults through New Deal for Disabled.

Measures to encourage participation by these groups in literacy programs are being tested in a series of pilot projects. The measures to be piloted will include, for example, financial incentives, mutual obligation commitment, and/or allowing 'guided learning hours' for those on jobseeker allowances. Employment services will be encouraged to support those with literacy levels below level 1, who gain work, to continue with their literacy learning in the workplace.

Services for the disabled

Access and equity policies are being modified in the Education Needs and Disability Bill to encourage post-16 providers to treat students with disabilities 'no less favourably than other students'. Additional funding has been provided to help providers improve their facilities and teaching provision to be more accessible to people with disabilities and to meet the needs of these learners. These students are likely to need literacy and numeracy support before taking on further education (Department for Education and Employment 2001, p.19).

The Basic Skills Agency, the National Institute for Adult and Community Education and the Learning and Skills Development Agency have been charged with assisting providers to develop models of good practice and resources for these learners with physical and learning disabilities.

The *Access for all* manuals provide guidelines for teachers working with learners with disabilities and learning disabilities.

Workplace

Approximately 1.5 million adults in employment have been identified with literacy and numeracy needs. Many are in low-skill jobs and short-term employment. The *Skills for life* policy calls for companies to integrate literacy and numeracy training into their own human resource strategies. There are plans to initiate group training initiatives for small businesses to enable resources and experience to be shared. Funding for this purpose will be provided to the Employer Learning Networks.

Thirty national training organisations and the Basic Skills Agency are mapping occupational skills to the new basic skills standards (Basic Skills Agency [United Kingdom] website 2003). This mapping will provide more direct links to recognised vocational training, while the Department of Trade is developing an employer toolkit which will be promoted on its website (Department of Trade [United Kingdom] website 2003).

The Basic Skills Agency and the Learning and Skills Council are developing models of brokerage of workplace basic skills development to facilitate constructive relationships between business and training providers. The first report on progress to meeting education targets refers to the need for:

> Faster turn-around by awarding bodies in approving brokered training programmes as leading to recognised qualifications within the national qualifications framework.
>
> (Department for Education and Employment 2003, p.23)

Union activity

Workers undergoing union training are also being targeted. Plans for supporting statutory learning are being investigated and the Union Learning Fund is being supported with £2m to raise literacy and numeracy awareness and training coaches.

Public sector initiative

The government has recognised its own obligation to 'lead by example'. Ten thousand employees are targeted for literacy and numeracy support through this initiative. Literacy and numeracy now forms part of every department's training and development plans. The Department for Education and Skills will develop screening assessment tools based on the Learndirect centres.

Staff identified with literacy and numeracy needs will be entitled to paid study time. The Department of Defence has already developed a literacy and numeracy action plan and is targeting its members to have level 2 qualifications within three years of joining the service. The National Health Service is taking similar action and has undertaken a needs analysis in relation to its own staff. Initiatives in local government are also proceeding. These initiatives target the needs of staff but also raise awareness of literacy and numeracy in the delivery of services in their industry sector (Department for Education and Employment 2001, pp.20–2).

Community

Initiatives for young people

It is estimated that, of the 580 000 16-year-olds who leave school early, 150 000 have skills below level 1 in literacy and numeracy. Twenty-two per cent of this group do not go on to either training or work and are among the most marginalised. Connexions, a one-stop shop offering counselling services to young people, will be a key service to link young people to literacy and numeracy programs and will involve the use of personal advisers. This organisation will also work

with young people in low-skill occupations to assist them take up their rights to time off for study. Young people wishing to undertake Modern Apprenticeships will have their literacy and numeracy skills assessed, and if below level 1, these skills will be addressed before vocational training. The New Skill qualification has been developed for this age group.

Community development

The Voluntary Organisations Partnership program has been established to assist welfare organisations play their role in the literacy and numeracy strategy. One element of support will be the training and development of staff of community and voluntary organisations to enable them to identify literacy and numeracy needs and to support their clients' participation in literacy and numeracy programs. Many of these organisations work with travelling families and other groups at risk of social exclusion (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001, p.30).

A large proportion of the programs are funded by the Adult and Community Learning Fund, in which literacy and numeracy are often combined successfully with other activities; for example, the *Big Issue* project, or linking programs to gardening, driving tests, sport and recreation activities.

Family literacy initiatives

Concern at intergenerational lack of achievement has focused some attention on family literacy programs as a means for fostering involvement between children, their parents and the community. Through partnerships with the schools, the National Health Service, the Probation Service and courts, screening techniques will help to identify those in need of literacy services. New initiatives such as the *dads and lads* and *pacesetter* programs target fathers and sons, and increase opportunities through new technologies. Family literacy programs will be expanded in conjunction with the establishment of new nurseries.

Flexible learning

The University for Industry (Ufi), the Department for Education and Skills and the Basic Skills Agency have been involved in a research project examining the effectiveness of information communication technology as a learning tool for people with basic skills needs. The project is now complete and has resulted in the production of a guide for learning centres, *Using ICT to develop literacy and numeracy: A guide for learning centres working with adult learners* (University for Industry & Basic Skills Agency 2002), as well as a research report.

The guide is aimed at two audiences—those centres which have information communication technology experience, but are perhaps unsure how to attract and maintain learners with basic skills needs, and those centres which have experience of working with learners with such needs, but have been unsure about using information communication technology with this group.

It appears that most of the core basic skills curriculum published in print version is also published in online and electronic versions. Online assessments and practice assessments are also available from government-funded websites (for example, *Observatory*, *read.write.plus* [Department for Education and Skills], *Learndirect*).

Learndirect is a national multimedia learning network, directing learners towards opportunities that already exist and pointing out where new courses are needed. Learndirect was rolled out nationwide in Autumn 2000, accompanied by a national TV and press advertising campaign promoting the services of the helpline in providing information and advice on a variety of adult learning opportunities. By 2001 the Learndirect network had opened more than 900 learning centres across England. The centres are situated in venues which people frequently visit, such as shopping malls, pubs, community centres and football clubs. It has established partnerships with

600 organisations and set up 71 hubs, or regional centres of operation (Literacy Trust website 2003). Learndirect offers 550 courses, including online literacy and English for speakers of other languages. The extent of the effort with basic skills is not quantified and evaluations to date show disappointing outcomes, with only 55% completing a qualification (*Guardian* 2002, cited by Literacy Trust website 2003).

The BBC continues its long tradition of supporting adult literacy through the Skillwise website which provides resources for tutors and learners, and guides to radio and TV programs.

Prisons

Just over 130 000 people are or have been in a prison each year. It is estimated that 50% have poor reading skills, 66% have poor numeracy skills and 81% have writing skills below level 1. Responsibility for prison education has been transferred from the Home Office to the Department for Education and Employment and a new unit, the Prisoners and Learning Unit has been established by the Prison Service and the Department for Education and Employment. Screening tools have been developed in pilot projects to assist in the identification of need. Prisons in Pathfinder program areas will have access to the new literacy standards, core curriculum and national tests. Offenders on early release and probation will be linked to literacy and numeracy services (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001).

Curriculum frameworks

Adult literacy is conceptualised within a basic skills framework in the United Kingdom to the point of its being formally recognised as three entry levels, and levels 1 and 2 of the national qualifications framework (Qualifications and Curriculum Council website 2003). Table 8 illustrates this. The standards include the skills required at each level of literacy, covering reading, writing, speaking and listening, and in numeracy, covering interpreting, calculating and communicating mathematical information. The basic skills component could be described as being akin to Lankshear's 'new basics' with higher levels of the qualifications framework taking in the 'elite literacy'. This construct is very similar to the National Reporting System used in Australia. However, its simpler construct has limited its conceptualisation of literacy and numeracy by leaving out the critical literacy indicator and estimation (in numeracy).

These levels have been mapped to school-age levels with entry-level skills equivalent to primary education, and levels 1 and 2 to the end of compulsory education. This has allowed for a clear definition of educational needs for those over 16 and in the post-compulsory education and training system. These equivalencies are outlined in the table below:

Table 8:   Equivalence between levels in the United Kingdom education system

| National Curriculum	Basic skills	Key skills	National qualification
		Level 5	Level 5
		Level 4	Level 4
		Level 3	Level 3
	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
NC level 4/5	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1
NC Level 3	Entry Level 3		Entry
NC level 2	Entry level 2		
NC level 1	Entry level 1		

Source: Department for Education and Skills ([United Kingdom] 2002a, p.4)

The booklets, *Getting the basic skills right in …* (Basic Skills Agency [United Kingdom] 2003) provide mapping of basic skills to Occupational Standards with accompanying resources.

These standards are used as the basis for screening instruments and pre- and post-training assessments to gauge progress in meeting the strategy's objectives (Qualifications and Curriculum Council website 2003). Materials for a core curriculum and an assessment task bank have been created, which indicates a more prescriptive approach than the previously learner-centred ethos prevailing in the United Kingdom. There is some danger that the associated assessment regime may narrow the focus of provision. Hodgson and Spours imply that this has occurred with the new Key Skill qualification (Hodgson & Spours 2000).

The Learning Skills Infrastructure (figure 1) illustrates the relationships between the various elements of the delivery mechanism.

Figure 1: The skills for life learning infrastructure
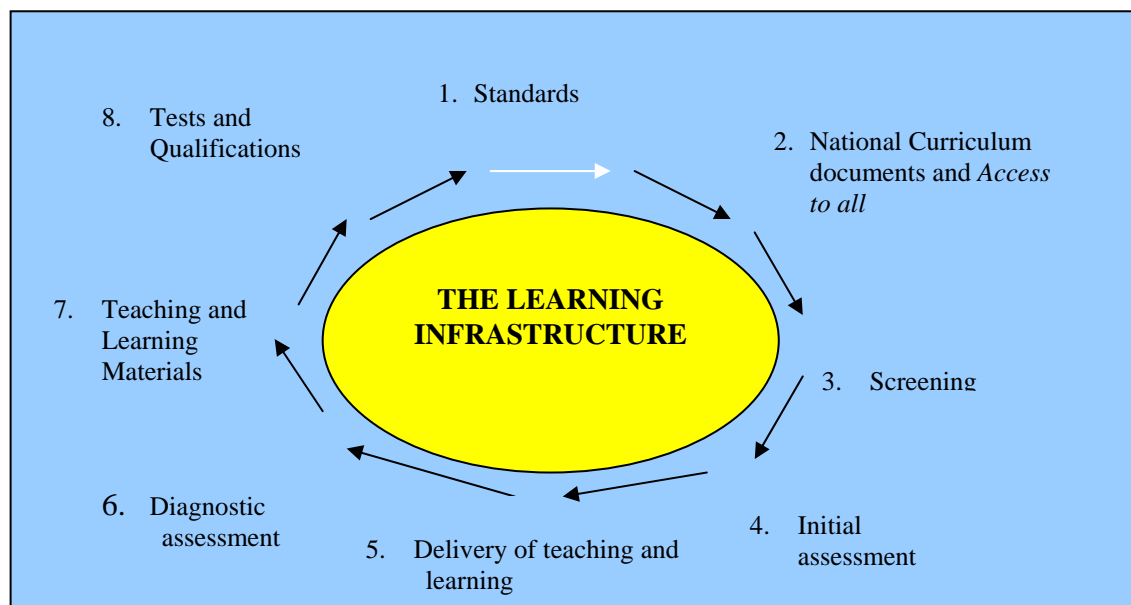
Source: Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] Read-write-plus website

Providers of skills qualifications are subject to inspection to ensure the standards are being met. A guide (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2002) covers the key skills of communication and application of numbers, whether delivered as stand-alone provision, as part of a vocational program or a discrete course, and whether delivered full-time, part-time or through self-study or information communication technology.

Funding

In the period between 2001 and 2004 the United Kingdom is planning to increase expenditure by 55%. By 2001 an estimated 400 000 adults were participating in adult literacy programs. The strategy aims to have 750 000 targeted learners participating by 2004 (Department for Education and Employment 2001, pp.35–6).

European Union funding, 'Socrates/Grundtvig' is also available to providers through the British Council for a range of international and local partnership programs to support adult education and lifelong learning.

Teacher preparation

Workforce profile

Earlier research (Brooks cited in Host Policy Research 2002, p.3) has claimed that the workforce involved in basic skills provision in the post-16 sector is 25 000. This figure includes those working in further education colleges, communities and workplaces, teaching subjects such as literacy, numeracy, and English to speakers of other languages. It is estimated that 10 000 volunteers (Department for Education and Employment [United Kingdom] 2001, p.50) assist in this provision.

The condition under which this workforce works is highly varied. Research in further education colleges suggests that most are teaching in full-time and fractional positions. Providers in government-funded work-based learning are newer to the system and tend to be recruited for full-time or part-time work. Staff are frequently subcontracted from other providers. Change in work practices has been attributed to bringing about a decline of casual work in these settings. On the other hand, work in the adult community education sector is typically casual. Overall, of workers in the whole post-16 sector, literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages teachers, are the most casualised (Host Policy Research 2002, p.5).

The composition of the workforce is similar to other countries. As Host Policy Research notes:

> Those involved in discrete delivery of literacy, numeracy and ESOL are predominantly women, white and able bodied and in their mid or later career.
>
> (Host Policy Research 2002, p.5)

Working in basic skills is not attractive to new entrants to the labour market or to younger professionals. It is expected that turnover rates will accelerate as current teachers over 45 choose to reduce their working hours or retire. There are few teachers from minority groups—either ethnic communities or with disabilities.

Certification

In 2001, the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) introduced generic qualifications at level 4 for teachers working in the post-16 sector. Specialist literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages qualifications have also been developed. The organisation has been commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills to establish a register of all teachers who have completed stages 1, 2 and 3 of the endorsed further education teacher training qualifications.

These generic qualifications have now been sub-divided into three discrete stages to reflect the variety of contexts in which teachers work. Teachers of literacy, numeracy and/or English for speakers of other languages need to complete generic qualifications and the appropriate specialist qualification to be considered a fully qualified teacher. Institutions awarding these qualifications will also be broadened from universities to include other organisations (Department for Education and Skills [United Kingdom] 2003).

It has been suggested that the field in the United Kingdom is a 'qualifying' rather than a 'qualified' workforce. While a quarter of teachers are estimated to have generic teaching qualifications, it appears that teachers are recruited and they then engage in both generic and specialist training. Skill and knowledge deficiencies are emerging, not through lack of qualifications, but as a result of dramatic changes to curriculum, assessment and support structures for learning, a situation which reflects the transition to the new qualifications structure for the field. Needs for teacher training are greatest in the fields of adult English for speakers of

other languages and workplace provision. Consultations are currently underway to look at strategies to enhance supply of qualified teachers and to sustain capability.

A needs analysis of teacher supply and demand has been commissioned and is being carried out by the consultancy firm, Host Policy Research.

Professional development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme

Since 2001 the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit has sponsored a series of intensive training programs for existing tutors and is implementing an ongoing professional development program. This training and a variety of models have been extensively trialled through the Pathways projects. Teachers who teach six hours or more hours per week have had free access to this training; so far 12 000 teachers have availed themselves of this training. Teachers of ESOL and the pre-entry curriculum framework also have access to training. Funds have been set aside for training for tutors working less than six hours (Department for Education and Skills [United Kingdom] 2002a, p.29).

The Basic Skills Agency is currently working on a project with community partners to recruit and train volunteers.

Australia

Social and economic overview

Australia has a population of 19.2 million, the majority of whom live mainly on the south and east coastal strips. Australia has a diverse population. Indigenous peoples make up 2% of the population. The first colonisers, from the late eighteenth century were Anglo-Celts. After the Second World War Australia experienced an influx of Europeans. Recent immigration policy has shifted away from family reunion to a skills needs basis. New immigrants are subject to an English language test. Just over 13% of the Australian population comes from a non-English speaking background (NCVER 2001, p.8).

Australia's domestic market is small and heavily dependent on imports of many consumer and capital goods which need to be offset by exports. Exports of primary products, coal and minerals continue to be critically important to the country's balance of payments; however, these industries contribute only about 5% to total gross domestic product. Estimated gross domestic product in 2002 was US$528 billion (Central Intelligence Agency website 2003).

Australia exhibits one of the characteristics of advanced capitalistic economies with employment shifting from the declining manufacturing industry to the service sector. There is a strong emphasis on high-technology industries. Australian business is enthusiastically embracing the internet and new technologies. As Leu notes:

> In just two years, from September, 2000 to September 2002, the amount of information downloaded from the internet by business and government nearly doubled from 457,000,000Mbs to 820,000,000Mbs with the number of subscribers in these areas increasing from 432,000 to 650,000, or twenty seven percent. (Leu 2003, p.6)

Employment patterns are changing. Workers are increasingly likely to change jobs during their lifetime; they are more likely to have 'non standard employment', that is, be employed part-time, casually or on contract (ANTA 2003b, p.4). In the last two decades, unemployment in Australia has remained relatively high, ranging from 5–10%, with much higher rates of unemployment among young people. These rates are declining. As in Canada, the bulk of the current workforce will still be in the labour market in the next 15 years and will need to adapt as technology and economies change. Approximately 12% of the adult population are engaged in education and training. However, further education and training tends to be concentrated on the best educated in Australia rather than on persons with low levels of literacy (Burke 2003, p.12).

Regulatory framework

Australia has a federal system of government. Under the Australian Constitution, the national government has defined powers and all residual powers lie with the states and territories. Effective cooperation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories has become an important feature of Australian Government.

Adult literacy policy and provision are primarily located within the education portfolio. Education is the responsibility of the states and territories. Other portfolios with an interest in adult literacy include the Department of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs and the departments responsible for employment, family and community services, and the arts and communication.

In the vocational education and training (VET) sector, with the establishment of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in 1993, a large number of initiatives, which are national and nationally consistent in their focus and scope, have been implemented cooperatively through agreement at ministerial level between the Commonwealth and states and territories (NCVER 2000a, p.2).

The Australian National Training Authority brings together the Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments to provide the policy and regulatory frameworks for the VET system. Governments implement the National Training Framework which includes training packages (industry standards related to the Australian Qualifications Framework) and the Australian Quality Training Framework to enable consistency, quality, and national recognition of provider services (ANTA website 2003).

Consultations for the new ANTA strategic plan, *Shaping our future 2004–2010*, concluded with the Ministerial Council (ANTA 2003b) endorsing the strategy. This strategic plan is framed within an inclusive discourse and within a lifelong learning framework to include transitions for young people and mobility for an existing and ageing workforce. *Shaping our future* explicitly acknowledges that, among the drivers to greater investment in vocational education:

> … is the growing significance of knowledge and the ability to handle new literacy demands; innovation and the ability to develop and apply new technologies; as well as the relatively decreasing significance of land, manual labour and resources to economic growth.

<div align="right">(ANTA 2003b, p.4)</div>

It also explicitly identifies strategies in relation to people experiencing barriers to participation and achievement in vocational education and training because of language, literacy or numeracy constraints, along with strategies for identifying new and emerging skills sets (ANTA 2003b, p.9). Detailed action plans are being developed for the strategy in 2004.

An earlier VET strategy, *Bridge to the future 1998–2003*, recognised, in an objective to achieve equitable outcomes in VET, strategies to meet the needs of five target groups: women, Indigenous people, people with disability, people from remote/rural areas and people from a non-English speaking background. Specific and detailed strategies have resulted for two of those target groups. *Bridging pathways* (ANTA 2000d) sets out strategies to improve the participation and outcomes for people with disabilities and *Partners in a learning culture* (ANTA 2000c) provides a blueprint for Indigenous people. In a synthesis of recent NCVER research on equity in vocational education and training, Bowman suggests a review of these equity groups and the inclusion of adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills based on the Australian International Adult Literacy Survey data (Bowman 2003).

Funding

The overall vocational education effort in Australia is funded from government resources (recurrent funds) and private contributions (for example, companies purchasing training for their employees). Individuals also make a contribution through the payment of fees. In 1997 public funding of vocational education and training in Australia reached A$4.0 billion which represented almost 0.8% of total gross domestic product in 1997. The Australian Government provides around 30%, with the remainder provided by the state and territory governments (NCVER 2000a, p.11).

History of adult literacy development

There are three distinct periods of adult literacy development in Australia:

✧ 1970–1986

✧ 1987–1995

✧ 1996–2003.

1970–1986

The 1974 Kangan report (Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education 1974) focused attention on literacy and numeracy as part of a broader equity issue and recommended the development of programs within the VET sector to address barriers to participation. Kangan strongly advocated a humanist perspective on education, viewing the role of technical and further education (TAFE) as serving an educational and social purpose rather than simply serving a labour market function. This tension between a humanist and human capital approach is present throughout the development of adult literacy policy and provision (Watson, Nicholson & Sharplin 2001).

During the seventies the programs and models of provision were based on the adult literacy campaign in the United Kingdom; that is, an adult education response providing local community-based programs utilising volunteer tutors. This provision was located within an adult education tradition with little public funding or consequential accountability (McKenna 2001; Shore 2003).

1987–1996 'the literacy decade'

The surge in policy and program development commenced in 1987 when attention was drawn to adult literacy through its inclusion in Lo Bianco's important report, *National policy on languages* (Lo Bianco 1987). This policy coincided with advances in socially inclusive policies summarised by the term 'multiculturalism' which attempted to harness ideas of productive diversity and social justice with reforms to the employment and education systems (Castleton & McDonald 2002, p.5; Falk & Miller 2001, p27; NCVER 2000a, p.6; Commonwealth of Australia 1991b).

Implementation of recommendations of the *National policy on languages* led to a three-year funding initiative, the Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC). This campaign provided a springboard for further research and development, promoting a nationally coordinated agenda for International Literacy Year (ILY) which, in turn, led to green and white paper developments, culminating in *Australia's language and literacy policy* (Commonwealth of Australia 1991a, 1991b) which identified the central importance of literacy:

> Language and literacy policy is now firmly on the agenda of mainstream education and training systems and institutions and is recognised by government, business and industry as central to the process of individual and national development.
>
> (Commonwealth of Australia 1991b, p.2)

The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) established a set of goals and a national coordinating structure and, through direct Commonwealth initiatives, broadened the range of options from community-based volunteer programs to include labour market and workplace provision—which formed the basis of provision for the next decade.

Coordinating structures

The Australian Government established the Australian Language and Literacy Council within the National Board of Employment, Education and Training to commission reports, consult on key issues and advise governments.

The National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) coordinated a research and clearinghouse function using a distributed model. The institute's Adult Literacy Research Network linked professional associations, policy-makers and researchers through state-based 'nodes' of activity and coordinated a research program and stimulated dissemination and application of research (Adult Literacy Numeracy Australian Research Consortium 2003).

The Adult English Sub Committee for the Ministers of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) reached agreement on a national implementation plan for achieving the goals of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy, known as National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy or NCAELLS (1993).

The language and literacy policy set out detailed objectives against which the Commonwealth, states and territories established targets to meet the goals of the language and literacy policy. These objectives were:

✧ setting directions

✧ diversifying and expanding provision of adult English language and literacy programs

✧ widening the resource base

✧ ensuring equitable access

✧ ensuring quality outcomes

✧ demonstrating effectiveness and value for money.

This resulted in the commissioning of a suite of projects to provide national and systematic implementation. Two major projects, the National Framework of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence (Australian Committee on Training and Curriculum 1993) and the National Reporting System (Coates et al. 1996) were developed to provide a framework for measuring outcomes from adult language and literacy programs. Other initiatives to meet the language and literacy strategy objectives included the National Staff Development Committee adult literacy strategy, which developed a group of accredited professional development courses for adult literacy practitioners (TAFE National Staff Development Committee 1994). Projects examining accreditation and registration issues (Plimer 1994), strategies for professional development, projects to develop teacher competencies (Scheeres et al. 1994), evaluation (Stossiger et al. 1996) and a national research agenda (Brindley et al. 1996) were undertaken.

Australia used the focus of International Literacy Year as a platform to promote adult literacy policy and provision (Falk & Miller 2001, p.7). This period of development of systemic approaches to adult literacy policy and provision peaked in the decade 1987–1996. Castleton, Sanguinetti and Falk comment on this period:

> During the early nineties … Australia was regarded internationally as being at the vanguard of adult literacy policy and provision. Now, however, years after the ALLP lapsed and in the absence of a national adult literacy policy, it is lagging behind many OECD countries.
>
> (Castleton, Sanguinetti & Falk 2001, p.5)

State and territory authorities, to varying degrees, developed their own strategies to reach the goals of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy and the targets set in the subsequent strategy. However, Queensland was the only state to develop its own cohesive policy and strategy. In this period most states developed accredited curriculum using a competency-based approach (Castleton & McDonald 2002, pp.30–1), provided infrastructure support to practitioners through publication and resource centres, and implemented professional development programs seeded by Australian Language and Literacy Policy funding. It has been observed that, as soon as Commonwealth funding ceased to flow to support the language and literacy strategy, adult literacy policy and provision tended to be driven by state policy priorities (Castleton & McDonald 2002, p.22).

1996–2003

In 1996 two events crucial to the development of adult literacy in Australia occurred. There was a change of government at the federal level and the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted the Survey of Aspects of Literacy (SAL), the International Adult Literacy Survey in Australia.

Change of government and policy direction

The change of government in 1996 had a huge impact on policy and led to a decline in the Australian Government's contribution to provision and a significant cut in funding for adult literacy.

The Australian Government's labour market programs were replaced by new initiatives to assist the unemployed. The Special Intervention Program, a literacy and numeracy program for the unemployed, and other initiatives with literacy components suffered as a consequence of this policy change (Rahmani & Crozier 2002, p.36). More than $193.7 million for adult literacy and English as a second language support for job seekers was redirected to the Intensive Assistance component of the new government's Job Network employment service scheme, through which employment services and any training required were purchased through private and community providers (O'Neill 1998).

Focus on the implementation of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy gradually waned and the structures for coordination were disbanded. The National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its councils were abolished. The collaborative structures encouraging dialogue between the state, territory and Commonwealth authorities ceased. Many of the initiatives during this period, such as the National Reporting System, the research strategy and the professional development strategy were unable to be implemented nationally without cooperation between Australian governments. The national clearinghouse and research management role taken on by the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia ceased in 1998, with the research brief moving to a consortium of universities, the Adult Literacy Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC), to carry out a research program for the Australian National Training Authority.

Since 1996 the states and territories have each developed their own unique approaches to adult literacy policy in response to the ANTA strategic plan, *A bridge to the future*, with the gains made in response to the national language and literacy strategy becoming fragmented (Castleton & McDonald 2002, p.9). Two of the state-funded support structures—the Adult Literacy Information Office (ALIO) and Adult Education Resource and Information Service (ARIS) have been disbanded or limited to serve only specific sectors of the field (Johnston, Kelly & Johnston 2001; Hazel 2002).

International Adult Literacy Survey

The International Adult Literacy Survey was conducted in Australia in 1996 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as a household survey with a sample of 9300 adults aged between 15 and 74 (ABS 1997b). The Australian study was called the Survey of Aspects of Literacy (SAL) in recognition that the conceptualisation of literacy was of 'information processing' and did not assess writing performance (ABS 1997b). The results were published in two reports, *Aspects of literacy: Profiles and perceptions* and *Aspects of literacy: Assessed skill levels* (ABS 1997a, 1997b).

It is significant that, apart from the immediate media coverage, an early forum convened by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy in 1997, a publication, *An ACAL View* (Australian Council for Adult Literacy 1998), along with a few articles in professional newsletters (cited in Hagstan 2002), and the application of the data in some isolated industry strategy plans (McKenna 1999;

Del Grosso & McKenna 2001), little attention has been paid to the survey, either as a basis of research or policy development (Castleton, Sanguinetti & Falk 2001; Hagston 2002).

The survey, however, did have some impact. The release of the data was timely in providing arguments to maintain the raft of existing programs. The Literacy and Numeracy Programme was introduced in 1998 as a way in which unemployed 18 to 24-year-old jobseekers could satisfy their 'mutual obligation' requirements in the new policy. It also provided strong evidence of 'a direct association … between levels of literacy skills and labour force experience' to give support to the new program (Rahmani & Crosier 2002, p.1).

Current adult literacy provision

Conceptualisation of literacy

Policy and provision in adult literacy in Australia is conceived in many different and sometimes contradictory ways. This is partly a result of the history of the field as well as the purposes being served. In most cases the theorising of the concept of literacy is in advance of its application in either policy or provision. As Lonsdale and McCurry note: 'There is a gap between current federal and state policies and current conceptions of literacy' (2004, p.5).

The definition appearing on the Department of Employment, Science and Training *literacynet* website best typifies the multiple intentions of government in supporting adult literacy provision:

> Literacy provision must be available so that adults can fully participate in the labour force; use literacy skills at work; participate in adult education and training and use literacy at home and in the community. Literacy is not only about skills acquisition but the application of these skills in multiple environments for multiple purposes. Language literacy and numeracy are crucial underpinnings to learning to learn, generic skills and essential skills for the Australian population.   (Department of Employment, Science and Training website 2003)

Clearer purposes are defined within specific program funding and administrative guidelines.

Falk and Miller, in a recent review of the literature on adult literacy and numeracy in VET have identified three main groups of literature about approaches to literacy and numeracy (Falk & Miller 2001, p.2). They describe them as follows:

✧ *Basic skills approaches* view reading and writing as perceptual and/or cognitive skills. There is an emphasis on how sight word recognition and phonics affect the acquisition of literacy.

✧ *Growth and heritage approaches,* 'whole language', focuses on the processes by which literacy acquisition occurs as part of the social context in which it occurs.

✧ *Critical–cultural approaches view* see literacy as social practice and in a cross-cultural perspective.

Many practitioners are critical of the perceived vocational orientation of programs and are antagonistic to competency-based systems per se, perceiving them to be not 'learner centered'. There are pronounced ideological tensions among practitioners (Shore 2003) and with policy-makers, which is also at odds with the most recent theoretical advances (Lonsdale & McCurry 2004).

Despite the theoretical and curriculum advances in the curriculum frameworks Falk in his 1995 study found:

> Teachers of adult literacy classes have been found to teach a set of fairly traditional 'school-based' skills and knowledge. They support this choice by reference to 'students'

expressed need' for skills such as spelling, grammar, punctuation and so on.   (Falk 1995, p.142)

He went on to comment that:

> The theoretical base from which this 'basic skills' view derives is the one which allows staff to enact a pedagogy which runs quite counter to the available knowledge and research about the difficulty of transferring learning.   (Falk 1995, p.142)

McGuirk's more recent study reveals that, while the conceptualisation of literacies within current curriculum frameworks has been informed by critical–cultural approaches, the references cited by teachers as being influential on their practice follow quite diverse patterns, with only about half being aware of the more recent theories (McGuirk 2001, p.65). The explanation for this huge variation in practice and the conceptualisation of literacy most probably lies in the way adult literacy teachers have been prepared. This issue is dealt with in the section on teacher preparation.

There is little reliable data about either the application of new technologies in adult literacy provision or whether new literacy practices are explicitly and effectively taught. Some developments have occurred as part of the ANTA Flexible Learning Framework Equity Toolbox funding. Evaluation of these resources indicates that some of these products have been compromised by poor design, poor expert advice in which contradictory pedagogic approaches have been given, and an inability to link to the training system as intended (Palmieri 2002, pp.37–44). Other research (Corbel 1997; Javed 1998) provides useful insights and tools for practitioners, but it is unlikely that new concepts of multi-literacies will be systematically included in curriculum until these are embedded in accredited curriculum and frameworks for generic skills and supported by professional development for teachers.

Delivery in the vocational education and training sector

✧ Teaching instruction for adult literacy in Australia falls into three main categories:

✧ informal, non accredited programs

✧ accredited stand-alone courses, constructed using templates compliant with the Australian Quality Training Framework, with a competency-based approach and recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework and delivered by recognised training providers

✧ integrated approach supporting the acquisition of literacy skills embedded in vocational education and training qualifications.

Informal provision

Most informal and non-accredited training occurs through community provision. Volunteer tutor programs still operate in Australia, and in some state and territories they are coordinated through the state training system and funded by grants from the ANTA Adult Literacy Programme. Some of these courses use the National Reporting System as a guiding teaching and learning framework, for example, the Queensland Community Grants. Most of these activities can be described as teaching Lankshear's 'lingering basics' but some, particularly those working with disadvantaged community groups, are informed by the growth and heritage approaches described by Falk. There are no statistical data on enrolments or outcomes of these programs.

Formal, stand-alone adult literacy courses

Providers, or registered training organisations (RTOs) deliver accredited courses meeting the standards set out in the Australian Quality Training Framework. These courses are categorised as multi-field activities in the vocational education and training statistical collection.

A plethora of certificates covering adult literacy, English as a second language, numeracy, basic education and foundation studies are registered on the national database, the National Training Information System (NTIS), and reflect curriculum development of the last decade. Some of these certificates are directed at specific target groups such as Indigenous learners, learners with disabilities and learners in pre-vocational settings. Unlike the United States and Canada, these certificates do not provide equivalent school exit qualifications.

The courses target those adults who have not benefited from completing compulsory education, and aim to get learners to an equivalent Year 10 standard. They provide frameworks for developing and assessing linguistic skills that can be applied in contexts of the learners' or providers' choosing. Most of these courses have been informed by, or are mapped to the National Reporting System. They are used as the basis for purchasing student contact hours in adult language, literacy and numeracy by the Australian Government, state and territory training authorities, and adult community education boards and councils.

In the 2001 statistical collection, courses conducted in the field of study 'multi-field' made up 11.1% of vocational education and training (NCVER 2003c).

Integrated delivery

O'Neill and Gish, researching employer and trainee opinions of English language and literacy in the workplace, indicate that, in the vocational education context, the preferred approach to teaching English language and literacy is its integration into training packages. Training packages are defined as 'an integrated set of nationally endorsed standards, guidelines and qualifications for training, assessing and recognising people's skills, developed by industry to meet the training needs of an industry or group of industries' (NCVER 2000b, p.39). Their report cites research findings providing substantial support for the effectiveness of this approach (O'Neill & Gish 2001, pp.128–9).

With the development of the national training system a deliberate decision was made to move from a curriculum model to an industry-driven competency-based approach (NCVER 2000a, p.32). From 1997 industry training advisory boards have been responsible for developing the training packages containing the units of competency to form training standards, packaged at levels of the Australian Qualifications Framework to build nationally recognised qualifications. Adult literacy and numeracy has been built into training packages so that the literacy and numeracy practices used in work and described in the standards for assessment and training are taught and assessed along with technical skills. This is consistent with the view of literacy as a social practice and not simply as skill that can be isolated from the situation in which it is performed.

The concept of an integrated approach (Courtney & Mawer 1995; National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1996; Fitzpatrick & Roberts 1997) was developed on the basis of an ANTA Ministerial Council decision in 1994:

> Standards should … encompass all aspects of competency including underlying knowledge, ability to transfer skills to new applications and language, literacy and numeracy competency.
>
> (ANTA 1995 cited in National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1996)

The integrated approach is articulated in ANTA policy as part of strategies to achieve equity and mobility within the training system (ANTA 1999b), within guidelines for the writing of training packages (ANTA 2000a) and in resources to support the national VET system (ANTA 2000a, 2003b). The Workplace Communication Project 1997–1999 (an ANTA project), provided expert consultancy services to ANTA and the industry training advisory boards, and funded a number of specific industry initiatives and professional development resources to assist trainers and

assessors to build literacy and numeracy into standards (Australian Council for Adult Literacy 1999; ANTA 2000b; Wyse & McKenna 2001; Courtney & Mawer 2002).

ANTA maintains panels of experts to review each training package and its support materials and other products such as its Innovative Grants program and the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program to ensure language, literacy and numeracy are appropriately integrated as part of its continuous improvement policy for the VET sector. Registered training organisations are responsible for addressing language, literacy and numeracy as part of compliance with *Quality standards for RTOs and auditors* (ANTA 2001a, 2001b), which is a component of the suite of measures making up the Australian Quality Training Framework.

Language, literacy and numeracy are specifically referred to in standards 6, 8 and 9 of the framework (ANTA 2003a). For example, standard 9.3 states that:

> The RTO must ensure that in developing, adapting or delivering assessment products and services, language, literacy and numeracy requirements develop the learning capacity of the individual and are consistent with the essential requirements for workplace performance specified in the relevant units of competency or outcomes of accredited courses.
>
> (ANTA 2003a, p.19)

Information from the National Reporting System has been used to inform the process of identifying the underpinning language, literacy and numeracy (ANTA 1999b). Core units of 17 training packages have been mapped to the National Reporting System (Fitzpatrick & McKenna 2000, 2002) to assist providers and practitioners with the identification of language, literacy and numeracy in standards.

The integrated approach is still evolving in response to the continuing development of training packages. There has been little recent research on the extent to which these developments foster integration, or evaluations of the efficacy of the teaching and learning practices being employed, their consistency over various industry sectors, or the transferability of literacies into different contexts. Little is known about the distinction between literacy demands made by performance in the workplace or those skills required for learning and participating in various forms of training.

Most training packages have core or mandatory units of competency which cover generic skills such as 'communication', 'calculate' or activities that are communication-rich, for example, 'working in teams'. These units have not been systematically identified as a means of calculating the 'integrated' provision nor has there been an analysis on the completion rates of these units of competency. There is currently no way of measuring the extent to which literacy is effectively developed in VET. O'Neil and Gish assert that:

> While the integration of ELL [English language and literacy] skills into training packages is sound policy and functional skills are comprehensively described in the NRS, additional information is required to enable more consistent effective delivery in keeping with organisation and technological changes occurring in the workplace and employer requirements … There is a lack of a system view or an across industry view of the scope, range and demands of ELL skill for both workplace performance and learning and in the context of workplace change and lifelong learning.   (O'Neill & Gish 2001, p.144)

The extent to which language, literacy and numeracy act as barriers to success in training and employment are also unknown. As Watson, Nicholson and Sharplin note:

> The impact of low levels of literacy and numeracy on participation in VET is largely unmeasured and based on anecdotal evidence. A lack of clear measures or measurement system limits the ability to quantify the impact.   (Watson, Nicholson & Sharplin 2001, p.1)

Two current developments, the recently released *High level review of training packages* (Chappell et al. 2003) and research projects commissioned to understand and provide models of inclusion of generic and employability skills of which literacy and numeracy are foundations, may impact on

future development and provide a capacity to measure effectiveness of integrated delivery. To date, the body of knowledge on applied linguistics informing adult literacy curriculum and the National Reporting System have not been referred to in the literature on generic and employability skills in Australia (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry & Business Council of Australia 2002; Callan 2003; Clayton et al. forthcoming; Hawke forthcoming; Kearns 2001; Miles Morgan 2003; NCVER 2003b; Ratio Pty Ltd & Down 2002; Virgona et al. 2003). These issues are explored in greater depth in the final chapter of this report.

The contribution of the Australian Government

Department of Education, Science and Training

The Adult Literacy Policy and Programmes Section, Vocational Education and Training Reform Branch, directly administers a research and development program, the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Programme, and the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

Research and development

The Adult Literacy Programmes and Policy Section of the Department of Education, Science and Training applies for $2m annually from ANTA National Projects. The section administers the Adult Literacy Innovative Grants for innovation and resource development; the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research manages a research program; TAFE NSW manages a national referral and information service, the Reading and Writing Hotline; and the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) manages a bi-monthly newsletter, *Literacy link*, and a series of public forums. The department maintains the *literacynet* website to provide information about programs and links to research and support agencies.

The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program

This program has an annual budget of $12.4m from the Department of Education, Science and Training and provides workers with English language and literacy skills sufficient to enable them to meet the demands of their current and future employment and training needs. The program caters for approximately 300 projects covering 18 000 workers each year. The program provides Workplace-based English language and literacy training integrated with vocational training, some resource development and strategic national industry based projects. Workplace English Language and Literacy training programs report outcomes using the National Reporting System. Guidelines for the program in 2004 have been extended to include information communication technology-related training. The qualitative evaluation of this program conducted by Pearson et al. indicates that such training provides direct savings to businesses, provides access to and acceptability of further training among workers, impacts on participation in teams and in meetings, leads to promotion and job flexibility, and is valued by business (Pearson et al 1996, p.3).

The Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme

This program provides up to 400 hours of basic adult language, literacy and numeracy training, which is designed to lead to measurable improvement in language, literacy and numeracy competencies of participants. Since its inception in 1998 this program has expanded from being an option for 'mutual obligation'[7] for young job seekers, to a program available to any job seeker wishing to participate. All applicants are assessed using the National Reporting System and are referred, if eligible, to one of the following streams of training:

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[7] In ' mutual obligation' programs recipients of benefits are obliged to participate in a nominated activity.

✧ *basic English language*: language skills training for people whose first language is not English and whose skills are assessed as (entry level) National Reporting System level 2 or lower

✧ *advanced English language*: language skills training (with an emphasis on employment and vocational skills) for people whose first language is not English and whose skills are assessed as National Reporting System level 3 or higher

✧ *literacy and numeracy*: literacy and numeracy skill training for participants whose skills are assessed as (entry level) National Reporting System level 2 or lower.

All job seekers between the ages of 15–20 are eligible. Job seekers aged between 21 and 74 who are recipients of Youth Allowance, Newstart Allowance Disability Support Pension Parenting Payment (single and partnered), who are generally participating in the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program, and Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) participants are also eligible. Holders of temporary visas and migrants subject to the two-year waiting period for social security are also eligible (Department of Education, Science and Training [Australia] 2003).

The training is undertaken for between six and 20 hours per week over a period of 20–52 weeks.

Around Australia, 54 registered training organisations have been contracted to deliver assessment and training services in the program. These include community organisations, TAFE institutes, private providers, a number of universities and not-for-profit organisations. Contracted organisations are required to use accredited courses and report outcomes using the National Reporting System. The scale of fees for contractors is based on clients achieving National Reporting System outcomes. Approximately 18 000 adults participate annually.

The New Apprenticeship Access Programme

This program does not directly provide literacy and numeracy training. However, about one-third of courses do provide some vocationally focused literacy and numeracy training appropriate to particular trades as part of an integrated model of delivery.

The Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

The Adult Migrant Education Programme (AMEP)

This program provides up to 510 hours of basic English language tuition to migrants and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds to assist them to settle in Australia. Around six million hours of adult English language tuition is provided each year from an annual budget of approximately $92m (Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs website 2003). In 2001, 33 000 adults from over 100 different language backgrounds participated.

The program operates outside the vocational education and training system but purchases services from providers in the system. The program operates its own quality assurance system and uses the Certificates of Spoken and Written English to track outcomes. Some funding is set aside for a research and development program. Tenders for provision and the research program are advertised every three years.

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Intensive Assistance providers in the Job Network can provide literacy and numeracy assistance, either directly or by purchasing assistance for their clients. The extent of this provision is not known. Many of these clients are referred to recurrently funded literacy and numeracy courses.

The contributions of the states and territories

States and territories use a percentage of their VET recurrent funding along with their own contribution to deliver language, literacy and numeracy programs within their communities or to fund special initiatives which support essential skills development (Department of Employment, Science and Training [Australia] *literacynet* website 2003). The national statistical system, the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard, categorises courses such as general education, prevocational and language, literacy and numeracy courses as multi-field activity. In 2001, 11.1% of students were enrolled in the multi-field activities (NCVER 2003c, p.12). This indicates a decline from 1996 when 21.7% (NCVER 2003a) were enrolled in the same field of study. Funding input is difficult to calculate as the states and territories vary in their contracting practices and price per student contact hour. There is no information about the completion rates or outcomes of these programs and how effectively they link to state and national vocational education policies and strategies.

There is considerable variation among the states and territories about where responsibility is located and the policy drivers for informing local initiatives. Some states locate responsibility for adult literacy within units concerned with adult community education or adult education, others regard it as part of access and equity, while yet others have integrated adult literacy within vocational education and training in response to meeting ANTA strategic objectives.

Curriculum frameworks

The National Reporting System (NRS)

The National Reporting System for Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy (developed by Coates et al. 1996)*,* commonly referred to as the National Reporting System, was developed to report on outcomes of labour market programs. The development of the system was informed by an eclectic set of linguistic, education and assessment theories and practices, including the work of Kirsch and Mosenthall responsible for the International Adult Literacy Survey methodology. The development team was advised by an equally diverse group of academics, practitioners and policy-makers. It built on the linguistic foundations of the national framework (Coates 1994) which was a part of the continuing work of academics involved in the developing theories of multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis 2000). It explicitly deals with social inclusion and technology and promotes a critical–cultural approach to literacy which attempts to cover the range of social purposes for which people use literacy. However, it also covers understanding of the mechanics of language, including the basic skills and whole language approaches. It provides a reporting framework over five levels, covering six aspects of communication, and the macro skills of reading, writing, oral communications, numeracy and learning strategies. The 'sample activities' component which provides examples in different social aspects at the five levels, has been updated to accommodate technological change and new work practices (Wyse & Brewer 2001). There is, however, a need to revise other components of the National Reporting System in the light of changes in technology, literacy practices and to the vocational training system since 1996.

The Australian National Reporting System resembles the American Equipped for the Future framework rather than that country's National Reporting System which is a quite different type of document. The American system provides a series of standards for quality provision and is more akin to a quality system like the registered training organisation standards in the Australian Quality Training Framework. While a component of the American system does deal with reports on pre-training and post-training assessment to establish progress, it does not provide the framework for measurement. The measurement aspects of the American system are selected from a range of approved standardised tests available in the United States. One component reports on the employment outcomes for participants.

Teacher preparation

Workforce profile

McGuirk in her report, *Adult literacy and numeracy practices, 2001: A national snapshot* (2001, pp.17–26), interpreted data on current adult literacy provision and practitioners. Her study, drawn from a self-selected sample of practitioners, teaching accredited language literacy and numeracy certificates, indicates that 85% of teachers are female; 50% are employed on a casual basis; 20% are on contract; and only 30% have permanent employment. Practitioners are frequently employed by more than one provider.

This workforce, consistent with social trends, is aging. Twenty-nine per cent are 50 or over, approximately 50% are aged between 40 and 50, 30% are aged between 30 and 40 and only 2% are under 30. The majority of teachers come from a primary and secondary school teaching background.

O'Neill and Gish, whose study relates to trainers of apprentices and trainees in the vocational system, identified the need for this group of practitioners to develop their own teaching skills in the language and literacy area (O'Neill & Gish 2001, p.129), but recognised that developing functional literacy skills in the context of VET is a specialist task (O'Neill & Gish 2001, p.148). In their study, they make a distinction between developing the skills needed for work performance in a given industry or workplace context and the skills required for participating in learning which enables the capacity to be adaptable and autonomous (O'Neill & Gish 2001, pp.144, 147). Watson, Nicholson and Sharplin also highlight the difficult issue of training in literacy and language skills for VET trainers:

> The central conundrum for literacy and numeracy teacher development is how to develop a specialist field of practitioners while also creating a literacy and numeracy knowledge base in all VET teachers and industrial trainers.   (Watson, Nicholson & Sharplin 2000, p.47)

Certification

The qualifications of teachers of adult literacy range from primary and secondary, to post-graduate degrees in adult literacy and basic education, or teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) or masters degrees. A large number have the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

McGuirk's study demonstrates that adult literacy teachers generally gained their first qualification in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s prior to advances made in adult literacy curriculum in the 1990s and the most recent changes to the vocational education and training system. However, those with qualifications related to adult literacy have gained them since 1990. The preferred courses were post-graduate studies in teaching English to speakers of other languages and adult literacy and basic education. Since 2000 this has declined, with the most recently qualified practitioners undertaking the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (McGuirk 2001, pp.19–20).

Qualifications for teaching are set out in the relevant industry training package or the human resource statement of accredited courses. There are currently no nationally mandated qualifications for teaching adult literacy or providing literacy support in integrated provision.

Standard 7, *Standards for registered training organisations and auditors* (ANTA 2001a) sets out minimum qualifications for trainers and assessors in the VET system. The Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training or equivalent is required in addition to vocational qualifications. Teachers of general education in the VET system have no recognised vocational qualifications.

University-based courses for the preparation and professional development of adult literacy practitioners are in decline. Most of the courses conducted by universities in the 1990s became

full fee-paying courses and have subsequently lacked demand (Riddell 2001; Fitzpatrick forthcoming).

The Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training is currently being reviewed. The range of qualifications is being expanded across six fields of learning to meet the expanding contexts of the VET system. Knowledge of literacy and numeracy is being embedded in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Training and the possibility of a language, literacy and numeracy qualification to create a framework for professional development and a career pathway for adult literacy practitioners is being investigated (Fitzpatrick forthcoming).

Professional development

As in other areas of the Australian workplace, the responsibility for maintaining professional skills in the VET sector lies with the individual or their employer; however, as Chan Lee and Thompson note, professional development opportunities in adult literacy have diminished over recent years:

> There is a general demise of true professional development (as apposed to staff training) provided by employers, and there has been a serious decline in opportunities for post-graduate study in adult literacy and TESOL. (Chan Lee & Thompson 2001, p.6)

The national VET system manages the professional development programs, Reframing the Future and Learnscope, both of which are available to staff of registered training organisations.

Few of the state and territory training systems or adult community education boards fund systemic professional development except to promote new initiatives. There is little offered to practitioners to update understandings of theoretical work or its application to specific aspects of teaching and learning. In this context McGuirk comments:

> … one can say that current professional development is largely pragmatic and targeted at meeting the needs of the changing curricula and funding requirements. There appears to be little in the way of more 'theoretical' or reflective analysis of pedagogy or practice which is an issue for future consideration. (McGuirk 2001, p.28)

Furthermore, those professional development programs which have been developed and address teaching and learning issues are considered to be out of date. Most of the National Staff Development Committee modules and the adult literacy teaching (TAFE National Staff Development Committee 1995) and adult numeracy teaching courses pre-date the development of the National Training Framework (Chan Lee & Thompson 2001).

Questions need to be asked about the capacity of current practitioners to teach some of the new literacy practices incorporated in the new technologies used in education and workplaces. As Leu argues, as literacy itself changes, there has to be a commitment to include new technologies and their literacies in teacher education courses and provide for continuous professional development (Leu 2003, p.25).

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Appendix 1: Comparative performance among countries per cent of population 16–65 on each scale

Prose scale

Country	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Australia	17.0	27.1	36.9	18.9
Canada	16.6	25.6	35.1	22.7
Ireland	22.6	29.8	34.1	13.5
NZ	18.4	27,3	35.0	19.2
Sweden	7.5	20.3	39.7	32.4
UK	21.8	30.3	31.3	16.6
US	20.7	25.9	32.4	21.1

Document scale

Country	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Australia	17.0	27.8	37.7	17.4
Canada	18.2	24.7	32.1	25.1
Ireland	25.3	31.7	31.5	11.5
NZ	21.4	29.2	31.9	17.6
Sweden	6.2	18.9	39.4	35.5
UK	23.3	27.1	30.5	19.1
US	23.7	25.9	31.4	19.0

Quantitative scale

Country	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Australia	16.8	26.5	37.7	10.1
Canada	16.9	26.1	34.8	22.2
Ireland	24.8	28.3	30.7	16.2
NZ	20.4	28.9	33.4	17.2
Sweden	6.6	18.6	39.0	35.8
UK	23.2	27.8	30.4	18.6
US	21.0	25.3	31.3	22.5

Source: Hagston (2002, p.19)

Appendix 2: Items relevant to methodology

Letter to identified literacy researchers/policy-makers

July 11th, 2003

Dear colleague

I am writing to seek your assistance in a research project to inform adult literacy policy development in Australia.

Communication in Education and Training Pty Ltd (COMMET) has recently won a research project, **Analysis of international adult literacy policy and programs,** for the National Centre in Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in Australia. The research team for the project is Dr Joy Cumming, Griffith University, Lynne Fitzpatrick and Rosa McKenna (COMMET).

The project commenced in early July 2003 and completion of the first draft report is due at the end of August. The paper will be published by NCVER in October 2003.

This desk study of the policy and research literature of six countries aims to describe and analyse major adult literacy policy initiatives, frameworks and program provision, including investment levels and outcomes; to analyse to what extent 'new literacies' are being addressed in other countries; and to discuss implications for policy and programs in Australia. The countries selected for analysis are Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

You have been identified as a significant stakeholder in policy or research in your country and we are seeking your assistance in gathering relevant documentation for the study. You can assist by referring us to existing information on websites or sending .pdf or electronic versions of documents. Documentation that informs the themes outlined below would be most useful at this stage.

As you can see we are working to a very tight time line so a quick response replying to this email with URLs and attachments, will be highly valued. However, if you wish, feel free to forward to colleagues who might also contribute and to add whatever insights you have on policy development in adult literacy. This phase of the project will conclude at the end of July, which allows us a short period for follow-up interviews/questionnaires to collect qualitative data.

We do hope you can assist us.

Rosa McKenna
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Themes for data collection

International Adult Literacy survey

✧ Country performances and issues identified in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

✧ Policy responses to the Survey

Conceptualisation of literacies

✧ National adult literacy policies, strategies or national adult literacy programs

✧ Other social and economic policies driving response to adult literacy

✧ Research

Administrative structures

✧ Government structures for administering funds

✧ funding

✧ In federated systems, how are responsibilities allocated between different levels of government and government agencies?

✧ Systems for measuring and reporting outcomes

Pedagogies/curriculum framework

✧ curriculum, assessment or reporting frameworks

✧ Methods of delivery

Provision

✧ Programs

✧ Targeted programs directed at specific demographic groups

✧ Quality assurance policies or strategies

✧ Barriers to participation and completion

✧ Evaluations

Teacher qualifications: preparation and in service

✧ Human resource policies for the employment of tutors/teachers/trainers

✧ Qualifications

✧ Entry-level preparation

✧ Features of the current cohort of teachers in the system

✧ Change management and professional development policies or strategies

List of recipients

Name	Position	Institutions	Country
Eunice Askov,	Professor of Education Co-Director, Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy	Penn State University	United States
Judy Alamprese	Principal Associate	ABT Associates	U.S.
Hal Beder	NCSALL Coordinator and ABE/GED Labsite Director	Rutgers University;	U.S.
Bob Bickerton	State Director	Adult Education for Massachusetts	U.S.
John Comings	Director NCSALL Senior researcher and lecturer	Harvard Graduate School of Education	U.S.
Marilyn Gillepsie	Educational Researcher	SRI International Office Washington D.C.	U.S.
Glynda Hull,	Professor of Language, Literacy, Society and Culture	Graduate School of Education, University of California Berkley	U.S.
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Cristine Smith	Deputy Director NCSALL	World Education, Inc	U.S.
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Michael Norrish		New Zealand Qualifications Authority	New Zealand
Inez Bailey	Director	National Adult Literacy Agency	Ireland
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Allan Quigley	Professor	St. Francis Xavier University	Canada
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Sue Shore	Director	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian research Consortium	Australia

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Catherine Gyngell	Director, Language and Literacy Policy and Programmes Branch	Department of Education, Science and Training	Australia
Dr Uldis Ozolins	Director	Language Solutions	Australia

Responses

My thanks are extended to those who responded to my request for assistance. Responses were received from the following people and organisations with publications, electronic texts of papers and policies, unpublished and draft papers, references to texts and websites. In some cases they were able to answer questions and clarify issues.

Respondent	Contribution
Cheryl Keenan	Links to relevant government policy and research
John Comings, NCSALL Director	links to relevant sites and sent manuscripts of draft Vol 4 Annual reviews
Cristine Smith	Links to relevant research
Gemma Lynch	Sent copies of recent reports, links to other information and a detailed commentary responding to the themes
Anne Lee	Sent copies of recent reports and clarified information in regard to structure and expenditure
Sue Shore	Links and copies to international and Australian research
Glynda Hull	Links to research and policy and commentary on IALS interpretation in U.S.
Mary Hamilton	Links to policy and research in England and Scotland
John Benseman	Links to research and draft of paper on New Zealand developments
Catherine Gyngell	Sent outline of Australian programs, conference paper and other evaluation reports
Heather Lloyd	Sent copies of recent reports and developments, presentation s on workplace provision