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Adult Literacy in New Zealand

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This chapter provides an overview of recent developments in adult literacy in New Zealand. It is particularly timely because the New Zealand government's interest in and commitment to adult literacy has been gaining momentum in recent years; the government doubled adult literacy funding from 1999 to 2002. In May 2001, it launched the Adult Literacy Strategy, a comprehensive, long-term approach to improving adult literacy and closing the gap between the number of adults with literacy needs and the number participating in literacy programs. Although New Zealand has yet to provide a comprehensive system commensurate with need, it has constructed a framework for the adult literacy field that the United States can learn from as it struggles with similar issues.

NEW ZEALAND'S HISTORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Although many similarities exist between the United States and New Zealand, including a growing gap between rich and poor (with a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities and adults with pressing literacy needs

represented in the latter group), there are important differences. These include New Zealand's size (its landmass is similar to California, but its population of roughly four million is more comparable to South Carolina); geographic isolation in the South Pacific (its nearest neighbor, Australia, is 4 hours away by plane); greater dependence on overseas markets; an extremely deregulated economy; and differences in ethnic makeup and historical and ethnic politics. New Zealand has a government dominated by a left-of-center governing coalition. In its most recent election for prime minister, both major party candidates were women, and the current Prime Minister, Helen Clark, is the second woman to serve in that role. The current governor general (the titular head of state) and the chief justice are also women. Because New Zealand uses the European model of coalition governments, small political parties have significantly more power in shaping the nation's political agenda than in the United States.

Recent Political History

Many political observers saw New Zealand as having strong liberal, progressive ideals in most spheres of life in comparison with other countries (Kelsey, 1995). After all, the country has been labeled the "social laboratory of the world" (Sinclair, 1968) and takes pride in its generally egalitarian ethos. New Zealand has a proud history as a leader in social policy innovation; in addition to being the first nation to give women the right to vote in 1893, it was also an early provider of universal health coverage for all its citizens, both adults and children.

However, a series of national (Conservative) governments carried out a New Right political revolution that ended in the late 1990s, driven by New Right goals of minimizing the role of government and making decisions based on competition in the market. Although these government reform programs were substantial and far reaching, support for such radical change gradually dwindled as evidence mounted that reforms did not produce expected economic miracles. Social discontent also grew as it became evident that poorer sectors of New Zealand society had paid a disproportionately higher price for the changes. (See, for example, Kelsey, 1995; O'Brien & Wilkes, 1993.) In particular, opposition grew to the "blitzkrieg" style of reforms characteristic of the New Right, and this culminated in a national referendum to change the "first past the post" electoral system¹ (used in Britain) to a mixed member proportional

¹Many people saw this form of government as giving full license to undertake wholesale change with scant consultation once elected.

(MMP)² system similar to that used in Germany. This form of government is particularly significant for a country that has no upper house structure, such as the United States Senate, or a federal structure, such as Australia.

Since its introduction in 1996, MMP has undoubtedly changed the country's political landscape, as the two major parties have had to reach ongoing political agreements and compromises with the smaller political parties to pass legislation. Such requirements have slowed the pace of political change and introduced greater consultation both inside and outside Parliament. With the advent of MMP, many of the liberal, progressive ideals have returned, especially in the two most recent left-of-center coalition governments led by Prime Minister Helen Clark. Support for New Right goals is now largely confined to one small right-wing party.

Recent Economic History

Dramatic economic transformations over the past few decades, including momentous structural changes in the 1980s, have had a major and lasting impact on education and training policy. Until the late 1960s, New Zealand's economy was closely tied to Great Britain, which provided a guaranteed market for New Zealand's mainly agricultural products. Extensive import barriers and tariffs characterized the highly regulated economy and strict import licensing laws established in the 1930s under the first Labour³ government. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the economy relied heavily on import and export exchange controls, which protected profits and jobs. Unemployment was remarkably low, averaging less than 1% of the workforce. A large proportion of the workforce was relatively unskilled, but it was possible to earn a good living from unskilled work until the 1980s.

Starting in the late 1960s, the economy began to stagnate, following a major balance-of-payments shock and a gradual breakdown of wage-setting institutions. Other factors contributing to New Zealand's stagnation included a high degree of exposure to the worldwide oil shocks of the 1970s, the loss of the preferential trade relationship after Britain joined the European Common Market, and lower profits from farming—the backbone of the economy—as agricultural prices fell on the world market.

²In simple terms, voters have two votes: one for a local area representative and the other for political parties at the national level. Parliament is therefore made up of both local area Members of Parliament and those drawn from national lists of representatives from different political parties, the proportion of which is determined by the national party vote.

³Traditionally linked to trade unions and other left-wing organizations.

In 1984, a new Labour government initiated major and controversial economic policy changes, called *Rogernomics* (named after the then-minister of finance, Sir Roger Douglas). These changes included devaluing the New Zealand dollar by 20%; immediately eliminating agricultural subsidies; implementing a monetary policy designed to reduce inflation from levels of around 18%; and removing controls on financial institutions, wages and prices, and capital flow in and out of the country.⁴

By 1990, the government had “transformed the economic policy framework from one of the most regulated in the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] to one of the most deregulated” (James, 1999, p. 2). This restructuring and disinflation sought to promote economic efficiency by replacing producers in a protected domestic market with internationally competitive enterprises responsive to true international price and profit incentives. Some internationally competitive industries, such as forestry and paper, emerged. In the short term, however, whole sectors became less profitable, some relocated to such low-wage countries as Fiji, and unemployment rose from 2% in 1976 to a 11% in 1992. More recently, the unemployment rate has hovered around 5%.

Over the past several decades, the distribution of jobs has shifted considerably. As shown in Table 6.1, blue-collar jobs declined as white-collar work, which generally demands higher education and skill levels, rose. Several important industries have lost a significant number of jobs over the past few decades. For instance, manufacturing jobs declined from 24.2% of the workforce in 1956 to 16.3% in 1997. Construction jobs declined over the same period from 12.9% to 6.6%, and agriculture employment from 19.8% to 8.7%. However, jobs that require more education and higher skill levels have grown. For example, business and finance grew from 2.1% to 12.5% over the same period. The labor market is becoming more selective as boundaries between education and training, work, and retirement blur. Furthermore, these trends intensify with the shift to knowledge-dependent, information-based economies.

⁴The downturn of the 1980s had a considerable impact on the literacy field’s development because it led to a push to get the business community more involved in workforce literacy. This has been the primary focus of Workbase, which has sought to publicize the importance of workplace literacy and to develop appropriate workplace programs. Workbase has had some involvement in providing services, especially in pioneering innovative approaches. The number of other literacy providers offering services to workplaces—including some not-for-profits set up specifically to do this, some tertiary education institutions, and, increasingly, community-based providers that offer literacy as one component of their overall operations—has also grown.

TABLE 6.1
Industrial Structure of the Labor Force
in New Zealand (in percentages)

	1956*	1986	1991	1997
Agriculture	19.8	10.9	10.4	8.7
Mining	1.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
Manufacturing	24.2	21.3	16.8	16.3
Electricity	1.5	1.1	0.8	0.6
Construction	12.9	6.8	6.2	6.6
Wholesale/Retail	13.4	19.7	20.7	21.6
Transport	—	7.5	6.2	6.0
Finance/Business	2.1	8.3	11.8	12.5
Social	13.0	24.1	26.8	27.2

Notes. *These figures were available for males only.

Sources: *The 1993 Official Yearbook, 1986 Census, 1993 household Labour Force Survey, 1997 Household Labour Force Survey*, published by the New Zealand Department of Labour.

The prevailing view in the early 1990s was that New Zealand had low economic growth because its workforce was underskilled by world standards, and New Zealand was not adequately prepared to compete effectively in the global marketplace. This assertion provided the impetus for a significant educational reform agenda, including the National Qualifications Framework (discussed on p. 170).

Recent Social History

Migrant and Refugee Issues. Migrants and refugees comprise 8% of New Zealand's population (Dalziel, 2000). In the last half century, New Zealand has accepted more than 20,000 refugees from troubled areas around the world, including Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, and Sudan. Numbers of refugees and countries of origin have varied over the years and included an influx of Hungarians after the revolution there in 1956 and Vietnamese after the war in Vietnam. According to the New Zealand Immigration Service, others fleeing persecution in their homelands include Chinese, Russian Jews, and Iranian Bahais. In addition to refugees, New Zealand attracts a substantial number of immigrants each year. In 1997–1998, 30,678 people were approved to migrate to New Zealand.

Except for Pakeha (non-Maori), people from South Pacific nations (usually referred to as Pasifika or Pacific people) have been the most numerous

and the most influential migrants to New Zealand.⁵ They began migrating in the late 1950s and 1960s after being encouraged to help New Zealand meet its manual labour shortages. Currently, Pasifika make up 6% of New Zealand's total population. They consist of six primary ethnic groups: Samoan (50%), Cook Island Maori (22.5%), Tongan (16%), Niuean (8.5%), Fijian (2%), and Tokelauan (1%). Pasifika are highly urbanized: About two thirds live in Auckland, and another 14.5% live in Wellington (Fakahau, 1998).

Many migrants and refugees are not native speakers of English and enroll in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programs on arrival. In 1999, fewer than 25% of refugees to New Zealand had literacy skills in their own language, and 80% were beginners in English (Ministry of Education, 2000). Clearly, English literacy is an important issue for the migrant and refugee community. Ministry of Education research shows that Pasifika have very significant literacy and English language needs—the most significant of any demographic group in New Zealand (Fiske & Ladd, 2000, p. 30). About half of New Zealand's Pasifika over age 15 have some form of educational qualification (either recognized on the Qualifications Framework (see p. 170) or awarded by a school or an accredited educational institution). In 1997, the proportion of Pasifika leaving school without any educational qualification was 26%, compared to 18% for all students, and only 1 in 13 high school graduates of Pacific origin enrolled in a university. This gap is narrowing, and between 1990 and 1996, the number of Pasifika graduating from universities increased by over 200% (Anae, Anderson, Benseman, & Coxon, 2002).

The Pasifika unemployment rate is high (about 17%) compared to the national average of around 5%. Of Pasifika who are employed, about two thirds are in full-time jobs. Nearly 75% of Pasifika in New Zealand's workforce are in low-paying positions, including manual labor, service and production, and transportation—industries that are in some cases reducing the size of their workforces and increasing skill demands. Youth unemployment is the highest of any ethnic group in New Zealand, 33% for youth ages 15–19 (Fakahau, 1998).

Like Maori, Pasifika are relatively young compared to the rest of New Zealand's population, which suggests investing in educating them will have a longer term payoff. In 1996, Pacific men had a median age of 19.5 years, and women had a median age of 21 years. The median age of New

⁵ However, recent figures from Statistics New Zealand have shown that Asian residents now outnumber Pasifika.

Zealand's overall population was 32.3 years. In addition, the Pacific population is growing 11 times faster than any other population group and is expected to double by 2031 (Statistics New Zealand, 1998), making it increasingly important to find effective ways of closing the socioeconomic gaps—including the literacy gap—between Pasifika and other New Zealanders.

Maori Issues. An important ongoing debate in New Zealand society has centered on how to address the socioeconomic gap between New Zealand's indigenous people, the Maori,⁶ and the non-Maori majority (known as Pakeha). The Treaty of Waitangi, considered the founding document of New Zealand, defines the Maori-Pakeha relationship. In 1840, the British Crown and many—but not all—Maori chiefs signed the treaty, which was controversial at the time and remains so today. At the heart of the controversy is the signing of two versions of the documents—English and Maori. Ostensibly, the two versions were translated identically, but there were important differences. For instance, the English version stipulated that the Maori chiefs gave up their sovereignty to the Queen of England, and the Maori version allowed the Queen to govern them but guaranteed Maori the right to self-determination (*tinio rangatiratanga*).

Both versions of the treaty granted the Maori people the rights, privileges, and duties of English citizenship. The treaty also established a policy for land sales, guaranteeing the Maori the full, exclusive, and undisturbed possession of all of their land, forests, fisheries, and so forth for as long as they wished. If and when they decided to sell their land, however, both versions of the treaty gave the Crown the exclusive right to buy it so that it could, in turn, sell it to English settlers. In practice, the Maori were often denied the rights, privileges, and duties of English citizenship the treaty guaranteed. As the influx of European settlers increased in the mid-1800s, the Crown sought to extend its practical sovereignty, leading to tensions and a series of land wars with some Maori tribes in the 1860s and subsequent land confiscations. Maori feel a strong and spiritual connection to their land and had difficulty adjusting after that connection was broken. Government land policies were also more subtly directed toward creating strong incentives for Maori to sell their land, and many Maori have long considered these policies unjust.

After World War II ended, the Maori population quickly became urban as the Maori land base eroded and the demand for unskilled labor in the

⁶Maori currently constitute approximately 15% of the total population.

cities increased. The exceedingly rapid urbanization caused adjustment difficulties for both those who stayed in rural areas and those who migrated to the towns. Like colonized indigenous people in other countries, Maori are overrepresented on most indicators of poverty, including educational achievement, income levels, unemployment rates, health, and housing. For instance, Maori leave school earlier and with fewer qualifications than Pakeha. In 1997, Maori completed an average of 4.1 years of secondary school, compared with 4.6 years for Pakeha.⁷ The proportion of Maori leaving school with no qualifications was 38%, compared with 18% of all students (Fiske & Ladd, 2000, p. 30). Maori unemployment in 2000 was about double that for Pakeha—an improvement over 1999, when it was 2.5 times higher.

In a variety of guises, the government periodically attempts to rectify Maori/Pakeha inequalities. In February 2000, for example, Prime Minister Helen Clark stated that closing the socioeconomic gaps between Maori and non-Maori would be among her administration's top goals. She announced a new, high-powered Cabinet committee to "aim for higher employment, better health, better housing, and higher educational achievement among Maori" (Ministry of Maori Development, 2000, p. 1). This series of initiatives ran into considerable political opposition because it was seen as favoring Maori unfairly and the "closing the gaps" campaign ceased. However, the funding was retained within government budgets and has been used by the various departments for largely the same purposes in less prominent ways.

NEW ZEALAND'S RECENT LITERACY MOVEMENT

Historically, New Zealand has taken pride in its literacy achievements for children.⁸ Although some observers (Reid, 1994) have been less convinced of these achievements, comparative studies have generally shown New Zealand to be at least comparable with other Western countries.⁹ For example, in the latest OECD study, the Program in International Stu-

⁷Secondary school has a maximum of 5 years attendance.

⁸Based on international comparative research, the work of educators like Marie Clay and Sylvia Ashton-Warner, and the publishers Learning Media and Wendy Pye.

⁹New Zealand data for these studies is distinctive in having what is termed a long "brown tail"—Pakeha children score consistently among the best in the world, but Maori and Pasifika are well below this level, resulting in a lower average rating overall.

dent Assessment (PISA), New Zealand's average scores in reading and in mathematical and scientific literacy were among the six best among 32 countries, and it had the highest proportion of its students (19%, compared with the average of 10%) at the highest reading literacy proficiency level (Ministry of Education, 2002). The report also notes widely spread scores across all three types of literacy nationally and within schools, confirming Reid's observation that New Zealand's children perform particularly well at the top end of the spectrum, but there is another large group at the bottom end. This tends to be obscured when examined in terms of national averages.

The discrepancy between children's and adults' literacy scores in these studies (OECD, 1997) is greatest for New Zealand. This mismatch may partly help explain why government officials and politicians were slow to accept adult literacy as an issue for New Zealand and why the issue has received little recognition and few resources until recently. In other words, because children's literacy was not seen as a problem, the government assumed that older adults—whom they viewed as being these children, only older—did not have a problem.

Early Literacy Efforts

Unlike the United States, where adult literacy has been an acknowledged issue for a much longer period (Sticht, 2002), New Zealand traces its modern adult literacy movement only to the early 1970s.¹⁰ In 1974, a local minister's wife—Rosalie Somerville, who had been teaching several parishioners with reading difficulties—started the Hawkes Bay New Reader's Programme. She persuaded Massey University's Extension Department to run two training courses, resulting in 17 trained literacy tutors in Hawkes Bay, and the first community literacy program began in earnest.

Interest in literacy grew, and in 1975 the National Council of Adult Education (NCAE) and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research publicized an estimate that between 50,000 and 100,000 adults read at a lower level than a typical 10-year-old.¹¹ The Logan Campbell Trust gave Mary Clay, a University of Auckland professor, a \$NZ 2,000 grant to start a community-based adult literacy program. Then, in 1976, with the help of a grant from the Department of Education and UNESCO, NCAE ran the

¹⁰This section is drawn primarily from *The Fragile Web* (Hill, 1992) and *The Fourth Sector* (Benseman, Finsden, & Scott, 1996).

¹¹As has happened in other countries (Limage, 1990), these figures were essentially pulled out of a hat to have some form of proof of the issue.

first national seminar on literacy, *Assisting Adults with Reading Problems*, in Levin. The national government's Minister of Education set up a Literacy Project Working Party to define the issue and suggest an action plan. Unfortunately, the group spent most of its time trying to define literacy, and little came of the discussions. Additional student-oriented, free, and confidential programs were established. Like the British model (several New Zealanders had visited British programs), most programs decided to seek one full-time staff member for each 35 students. The McKenzie Education Foundation provided a 3-year grant totalling \$NZ 30,000 to pay the salary of an NCAE adult reading assistance officer, with the understanding that the government would continue funding the position when the grant expired in 1981. The officer's role was to develop a national network of volunteer literacy programs and in particular to train volunteer tutors, who were the mainstay of provision in these early years.

In 1979, the Department of Education made money available to Hawkes Bay Community College to employ Rosalie Somerville as a full-time organizer of the reading program. An NCAE Adult Reading Advisory Committee survey found at that time:

- 59 volunteer literacy programs throughout the country had helped a total of 2,078 students since their inception.
- More than half the students were under age 25.
- 92% of students spoke English.
- 217 people were on waiting lists to get into the programs. (Hill, 1990)

The government, under a new Minister of Education, was unwilling to provide additional literacy funding, so the NCAE and volunteer literacy programs launched a publicity campaign designed to generate support for government funding. This included a letter-writing campaign to the Minister of Education and Members of Parliament (MP), and student and tutor visits to their offices. Many MPs expressed surprise on learning that literacy was an issue in their districts.

In the early 1980s, the Labour Party included adult literacy as part of its educational policy package. Russell Marshall, the Labour shadow minister of education, called adult literacy a hidden problem and promised the Labour Party's support for extra funding, giving the adult literacy field hope that its status would improve. The subsequent election of a Labour government in 1984, therefore, "appeared to signal a new era of hope for adult and community education" (Benseman, 1996, pp. 5–6).

New Zealand began forming a literacy federation in 1981. Some of the community literacy programs were initially reluctant to develop a national organization, fearing it might destroy the local programs' volunteer spirit. Others welcomed the organization, hoping it would have an impact on government and serve as a resource for the field. In 1982, the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance (ARLA) Federation registered as an incorporated society and received a \$NZ 10,000 government grant.

By 1989, the ARLA Federation's annual grant from the central government¹² had increased to \$NZ 400,000. These funds created a network of paid coordinators and progress toward bicultural development¹³ within programs. The government's general recognition of the local programs' work and concern about increased unemployment helped lead to the increase.

The workplace literacy of workers was probably key to keeping adult literacy on politicians' agendas, although this caused disquiet among some sectors of the field. Some literacy practitioners felt workplace concerns became dominant, but community-based provision survived this period reasonably well because of the political interest in workforce skills.

Therefore, although the 1990s began rather bleakly for most education outside the formal institutions in terms of funding and policy recognition, the decade—particularly its second half—proved significant for adult literacy education. In 1996, Workbase, a new literacy organization that had grown out of a development project started in the International Literacy Year in 1990, split off from ARLA and became an independent not-for-profit organization responsible for workplace literacy initiatives. ARLA has since been renamed Literacy Aotearoa and is the major provider of literacy programs, along with Skill New Zealand (a Crown Agency that assists learners and industry throughout the country), prisons, and a range of smaller private and community-based providers.

Measuring Adult Literacy Skill Levels

Until 1997, little was known about New Zealand's adult literacy rate. That year proved a turning point when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) results in *Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society*

¹²Virtually all education in New Zealand is funded by a central government; local government has no role in this respect, and there are very few philanthropic bodies involved as funders.

¹³Based on an equal partnership between Maori and Pakeha, as set out in the original Treaty of Waitangi.

TABLE 6.2
Skills of Adults at IALS Level 1

<i>Could Usually Perform</i>	<i>Could Not Usually Perform</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign one's name • Identify a country in a short article • Locate one piece of information in a sports article • Locate the expiration date information on a driver's license • Total a bank deposit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate eligibility from a table of employee benefits • Locate an intersection on a street map • Locate two pieces of information in a sports article • Calculate total costs of purchase from an order form

(OECD, 1997). IALS was the first-ever national assessment of adult literacy skills in New Zealand¹⁴ and built on the OECD's studies of seven other countries presented 2 years earlier. The National Research Bureau, under contract with the Ministry of Education, undertook the IALS survey in New Zealand. The IALS examined literacy across three domains, and a person could be at different levels of each domain:

- Prose literacy: the ability to understand and use information from texts such as fiction and newspapers.
- Document literacy: the ability to locate and use information from timetables, graphs, charts, and forms.
- Quantitative literacy: the ability to use numbers in context, such as balancing a checkbook or calculating a tip.

The IALS scaled literacy tasks by difficulty from 0–500 points. Rather than arbitrarily setting a point on the scale to divide the “literate” from “illiterate,” the scale was divided into five broad literacy levels for each domain, with Level 1 being the lowest and Level 5 the highest. Adults at Level 1 generally have significant difficulty handling even the most basic printed materials. Table 6.2 gives examples of the types of activities that adults at Level 1 can and cannot generally do.

¹⁴A current review of research about New Zealand adult literacy has identified only a very small number of studies (Benseman, 2002a). The research is dominated by one-off program evaluations, and most are small-scale studies, making it difficult to generalize beyond specific contexts in which they were conducted. Postgraduate students carried out a large proportion of the studies for master's theses and the studies are of variable quality. Most studies were done with minimal funding, which has undoubtedly influenced both the quality and size of the research.

In keeping with contemporary definitions of literacy that include being able to use information effectively, the survey assessed people's ability to use specific skills. It covered a wide range of literacy activities that people encounter in their daily lives, such as reading a timetable, interpreting information from tables and charts, and reading instructions from a medicine bottle. For instance, one survey item asked respondents to use a medicine label to determine "the maximum number of days that you should take the medicine," requiring them to locate the phrase "not longer than seven days." Other questions were based on using a bike manual, a pamphlet about a job interview, a photocopy order form, and a weather chart. The IALS tested for reading comprehension, critical thinking, and numeracy skills, but not writing.

A random sample of 4,223 New Zealand adults aged 16 to 65 took part in the survey. The OECD found that there are "significant literacy skill gaps in every country . . . at least one quarter of the adult population of the countries surveyed fails to reach the minimum level of competence needed to cope adequately with the complex demands of everyday life and work" (OECD, 1997, p. 3). Findings in New Zealand matched this general conclusion, with almost half the adults surveyed scoring below the minimum level of competence (Level 3) in all three domains. Twenty percent of adults (about 200,000) were at Level 1, meaning they have difficulty functioning at the level necessary in everyday life and work. Another 800,000 were at Level 2. Proportionally, the numbers of adults at Levels 1 and 2 are almost identical to the United States and Australia.¹⁵

Figure 6.1 shows the number of adults at Levels 1 and 2 in each country. As the IALS rates Level 3 as the minimum level of competence, Levels 1 and 2 can be considered the number of adults with literacy needs. The figure shows that this amounts to about half the adult population in most of the countries surveyed, including New Zealand.

Almost one fifth (18%) of New Zealand's adults scored at the lowest level of the prose domain. This is about the same as Australia (17%), the United Kingdom (22%), and the United States (21%). Figure 6.2 shows the number of adults at each literacy level in each country.

¹⁵Princeton University's Educational Testing Service designed the IALS methodology, which employed a sophisticated testing and scaling method. The sample was stratified by geographic region and population size with meshblocks (smaller regions) randomly selected within the meshblock. Households were randomly selected within the meshblock. One person was selected per household. There was a 74% response rate, and data weighting adjusted for most bias associated with differential nonresponse.

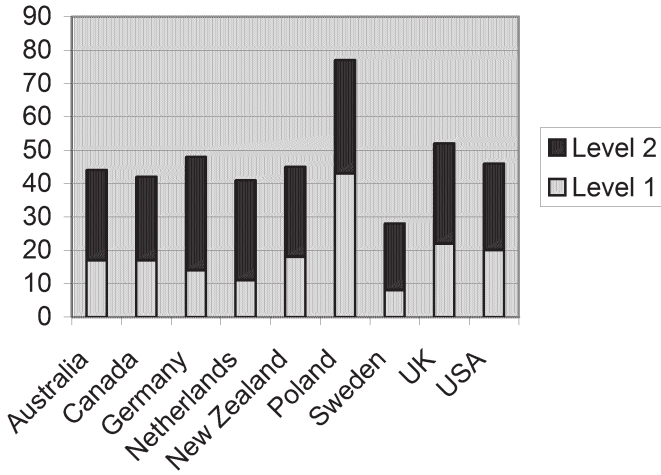


FIG. 6.1. Percent of adults with lowest literacy skills.

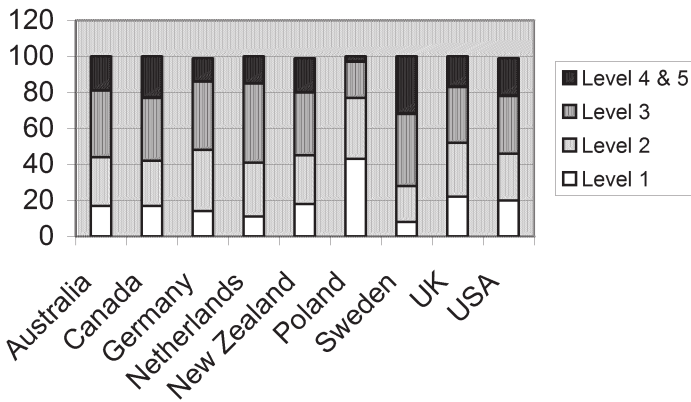


FIG. 6.2. Percent of adults at each literacy level.

Contrary to popular opinion in many countries, the IALS found that literacy was an issue across many segments of the population in all the countries surveyed. It stated, “Low skills are found not just among marginalized groups, but among significant proportions of adult populations in the countries surveyed” (OECD, 1997, p. 18). Low literacy was not limited to any one ethnic group, although some groups were represented disproportionately in the lower levels. In New Zealand, the literacy breakdown by ethnicity is shown in Fig. 6.3.

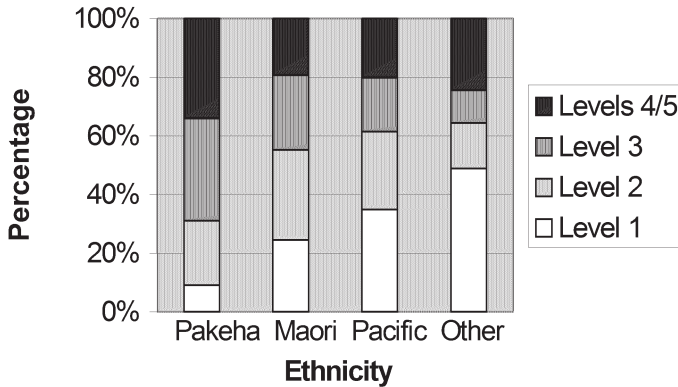


FIG. 6.3. Literacy levels by ethnicity (Johnson, 2000).

Although the IALS measured English literacy skills, 10% of respondents in New Zealand had a first language other than English, including Maori and Pacific languages. English is New Zealand's primary language,¹⁶ so adults without adequate English literacy skills face difficulties communicating in daily life.

Who are these adults with literacy needs? Not surprisingly, the IALS found that adults with less formal schooling have lower skills. Nearly 75% of adults who had not gone beyond primary school were at Level 1 in each domain. Overall, Pasifika, Maori, and non-native English speakers (including migrants and refugees), people with low levels of schooling, unemployed and low-skilled workers, older adults, and low-income people generally had greater literacy needs than the rest of the population. Maori performed an average of 35 points lower than non-Maori on the survey's 500-point scale. This translates to the difference between a Level 2 and a Level 3—a significant difference, because Level 3 is considered the minimum necessary for effective functioning in daily life and work. These differences disappear, however, when controlled for educational levels—Maori and Pakeha with the same educational levels performed at the same level in the IALS. Pacific scores were lower again, especially for women (only 18% of Pacific females were in higher levels, compared to 42% of Pacific men). According to the OECD, "Higher levels of literacy are needed now more than any time in the past. And the demand for literacy in the future can only increase" (p. 11). The IALS report concludes,

¹⁶Maori is recognized as New Zealand's other official language but is not widely spoken, especially by non-Maori.

“Literacy is strongly associated with economic life chances and well-being. It affects . . . employment stability, the incidence of unemployment, and income” (OECD, 1997, p. 17).

Literacy Needs in the Workplace

Both employers and government agencies are increasingly recognizing literacy as a problem in New Zealand. For instance, a 1993 Workbase survey of 17 companies (with more than 300 respondents) found that 21 of 26 human resource managers said more was being demanded of employees than 2 to 3 years earlier (Moore & Benseman, 1993). Skill New Zealand notes:

There has been ongoing commentary from employers about the poor basic skills of new recruits and existing employees. Often these issues emerge when an enterprise faces restructuring or introducing new technology. Industry Training Organisations have identified poor basic literacy skills as posing a barrier to the achievement of workplace skills and qualifications. (Skill New Zealand, 2000, p. 5)

Certainly this is the case in New Zealand. People with better literacy are more likely to be employed, have higher incomes, and receive further training. Seventy percent of unemployed New Zealanders are below Level 3 in all three domains, compared with about 40% of employed adults.

If not addressed, the problem could be exacerbated in coming years. Nearly half (48%) of unemployed 16- to 25-year-olds in New Zealand are at Level 1 of the prose literacy scale. This compares to 12% of those who are employed. Many of this group will be in the workforce for the next 40 to 50 years.

The IALS found that three broad industry groups in New Zealand—manufacturing, construction, and agriculture—have the most literacy needs (defined as having the highest percentage of workers at Levels 1 and 2). Table 6.3 provides a breakdown of literacy levels by industry sector.

Recognizing the importance of increasing its investment in education and training in making the economy more competitive, the New Zealand government initiated an array of major policy reforms in the early 1990s. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the cornerstone of these reforms, is a system that provides individuals with nationally recognized and portable credentials that reflect attainment of knowledge and skills. A government agency, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA, or QA), oversees the NQF system. New Zealand does not have a high

TABLE 6.3
Literacy Skills by Industry Sector in New Zealand
(in percentages)

	<i>Level 1 (low)</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Levels 4 & 5</i>
Agriculture	14	33	37	16
Mining	25	17	42	17
Manufacturing	17	32	32	18
Electricity	7	29	36	29
Construction	13	36	38	13
Wholesale/Retail	8	29	44	20
Transport	12	21	50	17
Finance/Business	3	14	43	39
Social	6	18	39	38

Note. Source: Workbase, 1999.

school equivalency credential like the certificate of General Educational Development (GED), so the NQF certificates provide credentials for adult literacy programs, representing an assessment of skills and knowledge.

The NQF has eight levels representing increasing complexity and difficulty. For instance, NQF Level 1 designates entry-level education and training, and includes learning up to the complexity of a Year 11 equivalent at high school. At the top, NQF Level 8 includes postgraduate study. Each registered standard (also called a *unit standard*) is assigned to one of these eight levels. More than 13,000 standards have been registered in subjects ranging from forestry to history to office systems. As learners achieve outcomes, stipulated in the registered standards, these are listed on their individual “Record of Learning.” Each registered standard also has a credit value. Learners are awarded qualifications at different levels after they acquire the stipulated unit standards for that qualification (more than 500 Framework qualifications are registered).

When first conceived, the NQF sought to ensure that skills learned in a variety of settings (e.g., schools, tertiary institutions, workplaces) would be recognized equally. The NQF has made qualifications more transferable, transparent, and explicit about learning that has occurred. Its proponents credit it with giving people greater assurance about the quality of their credentials, and making it easier for employers to understand links between different qualifications. Vocational providers—including polytechnics, Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), workplace education

and training programs, and private training establishments (PTEs)—have generally adopted the framework more extensively than universities. In practice, however, some of the tertiary sector (especially universities and adult and community education providers) have stayed completely outside the NQF because they see their primary goal as assisting students, not employers. This position has resulted in the tertiary institutions accepting the framework to varying degrees.

Therefore, at the moment, the NQF seems to be a better indicator of skills acquired through vocational training than across all forms of education and training. In particular, the NQF is not easily accessible to people with literacy needs. Although the NQF Level 1 contains a series of communication unit standards designed for both first- and second-language speakers of English, the level of competence these standards require varies greatly. Many of these standards require completion of specific but often unrelated tasks, rather than reflecting the more complex integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills necessary to function in daily life.

The Industry Training Strategy, a major legislative initiative designed to increase the skills of the workforce, was another important element of the reforms. The Industry Training Act of 1992 launched an industry-led effort to improve the quantity and quality of training tied to national standards, explicitly including workers traditionally underrepresented in workforce training, such as Maori, Pasifika, and women.

The Effect of IALS in New Zealand

There is little doubt that governmental and ministerial interest in adult literacy increased significantly following the publication of the IALS. Until the early 1990s, New Zealand was still officially reporting to UNESCO and the OECD that it had no illiteracy (Watson, 1999). Apart from one article published in a national education newspaper some time after the publication of the results, IALS results were widely accepted as a valid measure of literacy skills (Elley, 1999). Today, largely as a result of the IALS findings, New Zealand has laid the groundwork to significantly improve adult literacy, although much is still to be achieved if it is to match top-performing Scandinavian countries. One specific effect of the IALS is that, for the first time, adult literacy is starting to be seen as integral to a range of other issues. Adult literacy historically has been synonymous with a group of low-educated social casualties. IALS was instrumental in showing that literacy difficulties are not confined to this stereotyped group

and can be found to varying degrees among all social groups, including those in high-status occupations.

The 1997 publication of New Zealand's IALS findings prompted considerable debate in public media and within key educational bodies such as the Ministry of Education, which created a new senior position of chief advisor in adult literacy in 2001. Since the election of the Labour government in 1999, optimism around adult literacy has been renewed.

The new government's Tertiary Education Strategy recognizes foundation skills as an issue for all levels of postsecondary education, not just for those at the bottom levels. A series of review documents have been the forerunners to a large-scale overhaul of all postsecondary education. These include four documents published by the government-appointed Tertiary Education Advisory Commission: *Shaping a Vision* (TEAC, 2000), *Shaping the System* (TEAC, 2001c), *Shaping the Strategy* (TEAC, 2001b), and *Shaping the Funding Framework* (TEAC, 2001a). The Ministry of Education (2002) has since published a Tertiary Education Strategy, the first of its kind for New Zealand.

In addition to these reports, there has been a review of adult and community education¹⁷ and an adult literacy strategy—both of which are also the first reports in these areas accepted by a government in power.¹⁸ The Ministry of Education's strategy,¹⁹ known as *More Than Words* (Ministry of Education, 2001a), announced by Minister of Education Trevor Mallard in May 2001, says that, long-term, all New Zealanders should enjoy a literacy level that enables them to participate fully in all aspects of life, including work, family, and the community, and have the opportunity to achieve literacy in both English and Maori. The short-term focus is on building quality systems and improving the capability of the adult literacy sector. The 28-page document outlines the government's aims for the field's development in the medium term and effectively is the planning blueprint for the work of the newly appointed chief adviser in adult literacy and several additional appointments expected over the next 2 years.

¹⁷Adult and community education refers to noncredit educational services for adults (usually based in the community, rather than formal institutions), which sometimes includes adult literacy provision. Adult literacy is provided by a wide range of postschool organizations; some tuition is part of a larger educational program (e.g., trade training), and others (e.g., Literacy Aotearoa) are adult literacy-specific organizations.

¹⁸Reports were written for adult and community education in the past, but governments of the time never accepted them.

¹⁹The Ministry of Education official who wrote the document chose the word "strategy" rather than "policy" because he thought it would appear more practical and therefore have a greater chance of being implemented (personal communication).

The strategy is built heavily around the results of the New Zealand IALS (a seven-page appendix details the study's results). After providing a justification for government involvement in adult literacy, the strategy states three aims:

- Raise levels of the current adult population who are “below the bar” of literacy adequacy.
- Invest in the current working-age population who have adequate literacy, to ensure that over time they remain literate as new technologies and work practices increase the literacy demands in their workplaces.
- Ensure that school leavers have adequate literacy so that those entering the workforce and adulthood are not in need of remedial literacy education. (Ministry of Education, 2001a)

The remainder of the report describes three key strategies to achieve these aims: increasing the opportunities for literacy learning, developing the capability of providers, and improving the quality of literacy services. The commitment to develop organizational structures and provisions is in keeping with the Treaty of Waitangi's bicultural spirit. As shown earlier, Maori are still overrepresented in most negative social and educational statistics, including a low level of adult literacy. In keeping with the treaty, providers (especially Literacy Aotearoa) have debated how to structure their organizations, allocate resources, organize services, and determine skills taught to achieve more equitable outcomes for Maori. These debates have continued for more than a decade and have been acrimonious at times. The net result, however, has been a greatly heightened awareness of Maori adult literacy needs, considerable autonomy for Maori to operate in ways they consider culturally and politically appropriate, and a distinctive bicultural flavor to most aspects of the field that is probably unique to New Zealand.²⁰

The report *More Than Words* (Ministry of Education, 2001b) clearly identifies the Ministry of Education as a central source of the field's funding, but it also stresses the need for the increased involvement of other government bodies, workplaces, tertiary education providers, iwi (tribes), community groups, and other key stakeholders. Although this call for involvement from nongovernment funding sources can be interpreted as a New Right-like move to minimize the state's involvement, it can also be

²⁰It is certainly the element most commented on by overseas visitors.

seen as indicative of a move toward lifelong learning involving multiple agencies in providing learning opportunities.

All of these documents refer to the concept of lifelong learning generally and adult literacy specifically (Benseman, 2002b); “raising foundation skills” is also one of the six key strategies the Tertiary Education Strategy identified. The current Labour government has stated that implementing the changes recommended in these reports will be the main focus of its educational initiatives for its next 3 years of office.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the elements identified in the government strategy, policy-makers must address five key obstacles to meet the adult literacy challenge that the IALS identified (Johnson, 2000):

- Lack of a strong and coordinated adult literacy infrastructure.
- Limited data on outcomes and accountability measures.
- Historical marginalization of literacy in key policy frameworks (as noted previously, this is just beginning to change).
- Few professional development opportunities for teachers.
- Inadequate funding.

Recommendation #1: Establish a clearly coordinated system of school, community, and workplace providers who share the goal of improving literacy.

The absence of any overarching national structure or system has left the adult literacy field fragmented, underfunded, and without the capacity to address the adult literacy needs demonstrated by the IALS. Lack of consensus between literacy practitioners and government officials on what literacy is, why it is important, and how to best address it, may have contributed to the problem.

Various government departments have initiated a number of responses to literacy over the years, but they have varied in terms of both the definition of literacy and the type of response, and have not reflected an understanding of the depth or complexity of the issue, according to interviews with numerous literacy professionals (Johnson, 2000). Most have focused on short-term courses designed to quickly lift literacy levels (Literacy

Aotearoa, 2000). Many initiatives have focused on only one strand of literacy—such as workplace literacy only or community literacy only—at the expense of the other strands, thus exacerbating tensions in the field and reducing collaboration.

Similar obstacles exist at the organizational level. The two key national organizations, Literacy Aotearoa and Workbase, differ in terms of philosophy and approach, which manifests itself in their separate lobbying of government over priorities and long-term goals. This is not surprising, as Literacy Aotearoa's focus on community-based programs and Workbase's focus on workplace literacy result in different understandings of what literacy is, why it is important, and how best to assist adults in achieving their literacy goals. Finding areas of agreement is the next step in improving coordination and collaboration and ultimately building a comprehensive adult literacy infrastructure.

Some collaboration is occurring, however, at the local level between, for example, Literacy Aotearoa programs, local Maori organizations, and private providers in some towns. In Christchurch, the Canterbury Adult Basic Education Network includes practitioners, researchers, and tutors. The members have a wide range of interests and involvement in literacy, including vocational literacy, family literacy, the literacy needs of those with mental health problems, the use of computer technology for teaching literacy, and the effects of illness/abuse on literacy learning in childhood. The network meets regularly and has produced a directory of local providers. It is currently conducting a longitudinal research study of participants in adult literacy classes that explores factors that prevented adults from acquiring the skills they needed in school and what triggered a desire to start learning again.

A related issue is the lack of coordination and collaboration among and within government agencies. A number of government ministers have adult literacy responsibilities in their portfolios. Like the literacy field itself, they seem to define literacy differently. For instance, one Associate Minister of Education responsible for community issues sees literacy primarily as a community education issue.²¹ On the other hand, another Associate Minister of Education, who is responsible for industry training, is most concerned with how it affects industry and has more interest in workplace literacy issues. Others with an interest and central roles to play are the Minister of Education and Minister of Maori Affairs/Asso-

²¹ Observations about both Ministers are based on personal conversations with them and key Ministry advisors.

ciate Minister of Education. Although having multiple ministers with an interest in adult literacy is in some ways a strength, in other ways it leads to fragmentation. With the formation of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)²² in early 2003, the situation may become even less clear. The newly formed Interdepartmental Committee on Adult Literacy (IDCAL) will have an important role, as will that of chief adult literacy adviser in the Ministry of Education.

Finally, any new infrastructure should include community, vocational, and family literacy. New Zealand is world-renowned for its innovations in children's reading, but it has yet to develop a family literacy system. This is about to change, however, as a feasibility study was funded in South Auckland, following a visit by Bonnie Lash Freeman of the National Center for Family Literacy, and in November 2002, an additional Ministry of Education grant of \$NZ 300,000 to develop programs was announced. Family literacy in particular has the potential to help the lowest level readers in schools, and, if it proves effective in New Zealand, it would represent a significant development in breaking down age barriers characteristic of a traditional educational system.

Recommendation #2: Develop a system for measuring literacy achievement.

Before informed adult literacy policy and funding decisions can be made, two key questions need to be answered: What is the impact of adult literacy programs to date, and how are these results related to what happens in the programs? A national coordinated system for literacy needs to both monitor and evaluate student achievement so that program and policy refinements are based on reliable information about what is working and what is not. This is a "chicken and egg" issue. Many providers are so financially strapped that they need additional funding to implement systems for tracking outcomes; the government, on the other hand, needs demonstrated outcomes to justify increasing providers' funding levels.

Providers, funders, and the government need data on literacy program outcomes, and adult literacy programs have no single set of national outcomes against which to assess their performance. Specifically, information is needed on how long participants stay in adult literacy programs; how much they learn; whether or not they go on to further education or training;

²²The body developed to implement the recommendations of the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission.

and, most importantly, whether they are better able to cope with the print they encounter in daily life after participating in an adult literacy program.

New Zealand also needs to develop a nationally consistent way of reporting adult literacy gains. Unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) may be used as a limited proxy measure of literacy, but they are usually task-based and do not offer a coherent construct of literacy. There is no common language for learners, providers, and purchasers of literacy programs to use in describing literacy gains, and no way for government or other funding bodies to know whether investment in adult literacy is increasing skill levels in the adult population.

A potentially important step occurred recently when the Ministry of Education commissioned literacy experts Liz Moore and Alison Sutton to develop and pilot a National Reporting Framework (NRF) project. The NRF, which is now under development, consists of a number of profiles containing descriptors of literacy behaviors, skills, and knowledge. As learners increase their range of reading and/or writing skills and demonstrate increasing control over language, they also display greater independence in reading or producing increasingly complex texts. As it is envisioned, tutors and learners will use a variety of assessment methods and interpret the assessment information to judge which literacy profile best describes the learner's literacy capability at a given time. Providers will collate the results of this process to track progress over time. The pilot of the NRF will provide information about the most useful ways of collecting information and reporting it to the various audiences. Other countries—such as Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom—have introduced a similar system, with the accompanying professional development of tutors and, in some cases, the development of standard curricula. It is too soon to know the extent to which these will be adopted in New Zealand. However, the NRF will not provide information about the return on investment in adult literacy education for some years, until the field is ready to widely incorporate the NRF into provider reporting.

Another positive step toward a system for measuring literacy achievement occurred when Literacy Aotearoa recently developed quality assurance standards for community-based providers, and the Ministry of Education commissioned the development and piloting of a quality standard for vocational providers in 2000–2001. Providers seeking to achieve the standard must show evidence of five best-practice indicators in their programs:

- 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 reporting. (Literacy Aotearoa, 2000)

Literacy providers will verify that these indicators are met through an audit process.

Finally, key adult literacy stakeholders are in the process of negotiating with the Ministry of Education and NZQA to determine how the adult literacy standards should be extended to literacy providers in other contexts and who should award it. Standards should apply to all programs, not just those offering qualifications, so that all learners have the opportunity to attend high quality programs and no “creaming” (i.e., admitting only students most likely to succeed) occurs. Otherwise, the founding ethos of adult literacy in New Zealand demonstrated by Rosalie Somerville and the other original Hawkes Bay volunteer tutors²³—voluntary attendance and a learner focus—will be lost.

Recommendation #3: Recognize the role of literacy in advancing the goals of other sectors and adopt policies promoting literacy throughout all social service and education sectors, including the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

All social service and education sectors, including health and labor, need to recognize literacy’s role in helping to solve other problems. Much adult literacy instruction occurs incidentally as a byproduct of achieving other objectives within the Training Opportunities and Youth Training programs and the Industry Training Strategy, for example. Other policy initiatives that should explicitly incorporate literacy as a viable part of their efforts are the Tertiary Education Commission’s work plan, the Modern Apprenticeship Program (aimed at increasing the number of young people in apprenticeships), the Children’s Literacy Initiative (aimed at further

²³For more information on the volunteer leadership and learner focus of New Zealand’s early adult literacy movement, see Hill (1992).

improving literacy in schools), and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Although most vocational literacy providers accepted the NQF from the outset, many community-based literacy providers initially resisted it because they felt it was inconsistent with a learner-centered philosophy and primarily aimed at employer requirements. Earning qualifications is not usually the central purpose of community-based adult literacy programs, but many now assist students in earning NQF qualifications, in part because some funding streams are linked to programs offering NQF-related provision. This has ramifications for adult literacy because the curriculum in many programs is closely tied to unit standards, and funding depends on students acquiring these standards. According to Workbase, “these unit standards . . . often limit what is offered in learning programs, especially where funding is tied to unit standards based programmes” (Workbase, 1999, p. 6). Both government and private funders usually require learners in literacy programs to acquire a certain number of credit hours per week. This is not always possible for providers working with adults at the lowest skill level, and therefore has troubling implications for these programs’ future funding.

Recommendation #4: Increase professional development opportunities and working conditions for adult literacy practitioners.

Although no one knows the precise numbers of full-time, part-time, and volunteer instructors, it is clear that there are few full-time jobs available for adult literacy professionals and that New Zealand does not yet have a cadre of experienced adult literacy specialists. Low pay, low status, and short-term and unpredictable funding streams mean educators have little incentive to enter the adult literacy field and undertake professional education beyond an introductory level.

The number of informal professional development opportunities—seminars, workshops, and conferences—is increasing, but there are few opportunities for literacy practitioners in New Zealand to gain higher level formal qualifications. A series of NQF unit standards have been written for adult literacy educators, and a number of providers are planning qualifications using these standards, so there are positive developments in this direction, but it will take some time for these qualifications to have an impact. Several universities are planning courses in literacy and language with an adult literacy stream, but they are unlikely to come

to fruition until 2004 because of the lead time necessary to establish these qualifications.

Because paid jobs in adult literacy are so few, most community-based literacy programs rely heavily on volunteers. Within the literacy field, there is a sense of an important role for volunteers in adult literacy, particularly working with adults in one-on-one settings, but there is also an understanding that volunteers are not a substitute for full-time professional staff. Case studies, a literature review, and interviews conducted for *Changing Skills for a Changing World: Recommendations for Adult Literacy in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Johnson, 2000) found a range of quality in literacy tutoring, and noted that programs spend great amounts of funding and time on volunteer training. According to Literacy Aotearoa, “Retention of personnel, both volunteer and paid or part-time, is difficult when they are offered employment elsewhere. Economics dictate that people take on employment when and where they can” (Literacy Aotearoa, 2000).

The Maori tutors interviewed for *Changing Skills for a Changing World: Recommendations for Adult Literacy Policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand* raised related issues. They described a general consensus among Maori that many Maori learners prefer Maori tutors and there is a shortage of Maori tutors relative to the Maori community’s literacy needs. Informal feedback from interviews indicates that approximately half of Maori students who are told they will have a non-Maori tutor do not return after an initial interview. Concern was also expressed that adult literacy programs could provide better tutor training to encourage more Maori to become tutors. Literacy Aotearoa offers an example of Maori tutor training that works well; in addition to the standard model of training done for several nights a week for several hours, Literacy Aotearoa trains tutors over a weekend on a marae (traditional Maori meeting house), using a distinctive Maori way of learning.

Recommendation #5: Provide funding commensurate with the adult literacy need and include special funding streams for different literacy sectors.

Historically, adult literacy has received scant government attention and funding. Despite recent funding gains, adult literacy currently receives less than 1% of the annual Vote Education budget. Prior to 1996, adult literacy received about 25% less annual funding than it does now. Unlike

the United States, New Zealand does not have a large philanthropic community, so it is even more important that the government play a role.

Low funding prevents the adult literacy sector from meeting the demand for its services. According to IALS (OECD, 1997) data, only about 17,000 adults with pressing literacy needs participate in literacy courses annually. Many get only 1 to 2 hours of services per week because of limited funding.

A history of inadequate government funding for adult literacy has exacerbated the tension between the community- and workplace-based sectors. As workplace-based programs have emerged in recent years, some community-based programs have felt threatened. With such a large need for literacy services, both community-based and workplace programs are essential. Their motives and philosophies may vary, but both have distinct strengths and are necessary components of an integrated, comprehensive adult literacy system.

Given the tensions between sectors of the field, funding should be restructured in a way that does not force organizations to compete. One way to achieve this would be to set up several funding streams for adult literacy that are linked to providers' proven effectiveness. For example, there could be one funding stream for community-based organizations (perhaps with a special stream for ESOL), another for workplace literacy, another for family literacy, another for Maori-focused programs, and so forth.

CONCLUSION

Adult literacy in New Zealand has developed in just 30 years from a marginal, low-status, poorly funded enterprise that depended on the goodwill of a band of dedicated volunteers to a more visible, diverse, and vibrant sector of educational provision for adults—although it clearly also has some way to go compared with other educational sectors. This transition has often been slow, spasmodic, and fraught with difficulties but has culminated in adult literacy being increasingly accepted as an integral part of the current educational system—with an increasingly prominent role in terms of both education policy and funding. Although there is a generally cautious feeling of having arrived, much remains to be done. There is still a significant gap between the assessed degree of need and actual provision of services. Policymakers have a key role to play and, in recent years, the government has stepped up to the plate with major funding increases designed, in part, to close this gap. Finally, there is a desperate need for an

information base from research and other data sources to inform decisions about how the increased funding can be used most effectively. And there is a clear need to move beyond a group of well-intentioned practitioners and program planners to a more educated body of professionals with sufficient resources. A reasonably modest set of goals has been set, and a range of initiatives is being devised to work toward them. Time and perhaps the next IALS will determine their degree of success.

POSTSCRIPT

Since this chapter was completed, a number of significant developments in New Zealand adult literacy have occurred. To implement its adult literacy strategy, the Ministry of Education developed four key initiatives. First, an Adult Literacy Achievement Framework was developed and piloted nationally, to provide a common reporting structure and a common language for providers to discuss learners. Second, a Qualifications Authority-based Adult Literacy Educators Qualification is being designed for practitioners, up to certificate and diploma levels. Third, an Adult Literacy Quality Mark is being piloted as a quality assurance tool for service providers. Fourth, a national Adult Literacy Practitioners' Association has been formed to support adult literacy practitioners.

Together these four developments are seen as the cornerstones of a national integrated literacy system that involves the key participants in literacy services: the service provider, the tutors (practitioners), and the learners. New Zealand has also signed up to take part in the new round of the National Adult Literacy Survey in 2004.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Parts of this chapter are based on a comprehensive report, *Changing Skills for a Changing World: Recommendations for Adult Literacy Policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, researched and written by Alice Johnson as an Ian Axford Fellow in Public Policy in 2000. Alice Johnson spent 9 months researching adult literacy in New Zealand, reviewing dozens of studies and conducting four original case studies, with guidance from John Benseman of the University of Auckland and New Zealand Department of Labour researchers. Her research included interviews with more than 80 practitioners and policymakers, as well as more than 100 adult learners,

from across New Zealand. The original 109-page report was included in the consultations leading up to the writing of the Labour Government's National Adult Literacy Strategy and was published by Fulbright New Zealand. It is available online at <http://www.fulbright.org.nz/voices/axford/johnsona.html>

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