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Current Research

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

ABC Life Literacy Canada conducting employer survey

<http://abclifeliteracy.ca/take-our-employer-survey>

ABC Life Literacy Canada is inviting employers to complete an online survey about themselves and their employees to guide them in creating literacy and essential skills tools and resources for the workplace. The survey includes questions about employers' location, industry, goals, challenges, prospects and how they have changed in the past few years. Questions about employees include: their education, the "essential skills" they regularly use on the job, and tools and equipment they use. The survey also asks about the extent, frequency and nature of workplace training offered as well as training they would like to offer if they could, and factors preventing them from offering training. The survey will be online until late December 2012.

Keywords: ABC Life Literacy Canada; Employers; Online surveys; Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Reports, Articles and Books

Workforce Development

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. (2011). *Promoting College and Career Readiness: Bridge Programs for Low-Skill Adults*. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/brief-1-bridge-programs.pdf>

This brief describes recent approaches to bridge programs that aim to support adult learners to identify career and education goals and build the skills they need to pursue postsecondary education or employment. The programs provide a link from adult education to community college occupation programs. Little empirical evidence is yet available to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs, but three statewide initiatives, in Washington, Oregon, and Illinois, were chosen as examples of promising practices. The authors find an emerging consensus that key elements of a bridge program should include “coordination among ABE, postsecondary education and workforce development staff”, an academic program that is contextualized and integrated, a career and college-awareness component, and “advising and transition service”.

Keywords: Adult basic education; Bridge programs; Postsecondary education; Research briefs; State programs; United States; Workforce development

Social Innovation

Cels, S, De Jong, J, Nauta, F. (2012). *Agents of Change: Strategy and Tactics for Social Innovation*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

This book presents several case studies of social innovation in various countries, including the United States, Canada, Japan and Germany, in domains such as health care, education and local government. The authors define social innovation as the transformation of the ways societies address social problems and produce public goods and services. The case studies thus involve people and organizations involved in producing public goods and services, in the government and non-profit sectors. The authors identify strategies and tactics that were successfully used to promote innovation.

Keywords: Canada; Case studies; Germany; Japan; Social Innovation; United States

Adult Education

NIACE. (2012). *Review of Informal Adult and Community Learning - National consultation for citizens: final report*. Available at

<http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/i/a/iacI-citizens-final.pdf>

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) was asked by the British government to undertake a citizens' survey to contribute to the *New Challenges, New Chances* consultation on the future of informal adult and community learning. NIACE conducted an on-line survey, but designed an intermediary-facilitated group response version to allow organizations to support people who have difficulties with Internet access. The survey ran from August to October 2011. 6,306 individuals and 227 groups from all across England responded. Although self-selecting rather than limited to a sample, the respondents came from diverse age groups, with a range of income levels, employment circumstances and qualification levels. The survey asked what informal adult learning people were interested in. Digital technology was the most popular topic, especially for those with low literacy levels and few educational qualifications. A majority preferred conventional modes of learning, that is, in classrooms. Most said that decisions about the allocations of public funding for informal education should be made by local communities.

Keywords: Adult Education; Digital technologies; England; Informal learning; Online surveys; United Kingdom

Embedding

Perin, Dolores. (2011). *Facilitating Student Learning Through Contextualization* (CCRC Working Paper No. 29, Assessment of Evidence Series) New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. Available at <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=866>

"Contextualization" is the approach of teaching basic skills in the context of disciplinary topic areas. This literature review looks at studies on two forms: contextualized instruction and integrated instruction. The researchers found twenty-seven studies, seventeen on contextualized instruction, nine on integrated instruction, and one on both. Some studies had methodological weaknesses (e.g. lack of a control group, self-selection of participants). The authors summarize evidence from the stronger studies. Overall, they find "preliminary support" for the hypothesis that contextualization could help low-skilled students learn more effectively.

Keywords: Embedding; Literature reviews; Low-skilled students; Postsecondary education

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Benseman, John. (2012). Adult refugee learners with limited literacy: needs and effective responses. English Language Partners New Zealand. Available at <https://akoatearora.ac.nz/ako-hub/ako-aotearora-northern-hub/adult-refugee-learners-Benseman>

This report documents and analyzes the learning needs and issues of adult refugees in New Zealand with low language and literacy skills. The research included a literature review and a study of learners in six courses in two locations in New Zealand. The study included observation of courses in session and semi-structured interviews with 36 learners (out of an initial sample of 40), 6 bilingual tutors, 2 course tutors and 2 program coordinators. The researcher found few studies matching the specific focus of the review. However, there is some research evidence of the social, psychological and economic advantages to refugees of being literate in the host country's language, of how lack of literacy in a person's first language complicates the task of becoming literate in a second, and of the inadequacies of, and barriers to, ESOL provision for adult refugees in New Zealand. The review also found evidence that learning progress for ESL literacy learners is very slow, and requires many hours of tuition, that effective teaching approaches take the stress and trauma of refugees into account, and that bilingual tutors tend to be more effective. The study permitted learners to identify the challenges they faced in learning and the factors that helped them learn; tutors noted that refugees often were constrained in their learning by psychological trauma and often started from very low levels of basic learning skills. For cultural reasons, learners often found it difficult to engage in "learner-centred" activities, at least initially. Many tutors commented that too many formal assessments were being required and they preferred to rely on their own professional judgment. They also identified several successful teaching strategies, including incorporating everyday life tasks and issues into lesson plans.

Keywords: English as an Additional Language (EAL); ESL Literacy; Immigrants; New Zealand; Refugees

Official Language Minorities

Centre for Community Organizations (CoCo). (2012). *In the Know: Identifying Multiple Aspects of Quebec's Community Sector*. Available at <http://coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/In-the-Know-Executive-Summary-English.pdf>

This study, which ran from 2009 to 2012, was commissioned by the Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome et aux initiatives sociales (SACAIS) in Quebec. Using a community-based action research (CBAR) approach, it sought to "document the diversity of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups in Quebec and to better understand how they interact with wider structures, such as the Quebec government and its funding programs." The researchers used an online survey tool, asking organizations about the regions they worked in, demographic information of the groups, the language capacity of the group, legal status, sources of funding, eligibility for Quebec government funding, and network affiliations. The researchers found that since 2003 organizations were having a harder time securing "global mission (i.e. core) funding from the Quebec government, and

some organizations were unaware that such funding existed.

Keywords: Centre for Community Organizations (CoCo); Community-based action research (CBAR); Community organizations; Cultural communities; Funding; Official language minorities; Policy; Quebec; Quebec Anglophones

Outcomes of Learning

Cara, Olga, & Brooks, Greg. (2012). Evidence on the Wider Benefits of Family Learning: A Scoping Review. UK Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/e/12-1238-evidence-benefits-of-family-learning-scoping.pdf>

This document is part of the “Review and update of research into the wider benefits of adult learning” commissioned from the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) by the UK Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. The aim of this larger review was to update knowledge on the wider benefits of learning. The researchers sought new evidence on the wider benefits of family living in England and internationally and tried to identify forms of wider benefit noted in the literature, as well as gaps in evidence. Only research published since 2008 was included in the searches, as this review built on a review carried out by Brooks et al. in 2008. The researchers also focused on studies that had the best quality evidence and methodology. Only ten publications were found that reported new findings; of those, only three had gathered quantitative evidence. They concluded that there was therefore room in the field for better research and recommended that two studies be undertaken: One would match data from the Individual Learner Record (ILR) with data from the 1958 National Child Development (NCDS) cohort study and possibly also with Millenium cohort datasets to investigate wider benefits of learning such as improvements to wellbeing and health, self-efficacy and parental behaviours. The other would be a quasi-experimental study on whether parents who participate in family literacy programs go on to gain more employment or become more involved in their children’s schools.

Keywords: England; Family literacy; Literature reviews; National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC); Outcomes of Learning; United Kingdom

Dolan, P, Fujiwara, D, Metcalfe, R. (2012). Review and Update of Research into the Wider Benefits of Adult Learning. *BIS Research paper Number 90*. UK Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/r/12-1243-review-wider-benefits-of-adult-learning.pdf>

This is one of a number of new research reports commissioned by the British Department for Business, Education, and Skills. The researchers conducted a review of the literature since 2008 and analyzed data from the British Household Panel Survey to see if adult learning could be shown to cause desirable outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing, and improved parenting, civic participation, attitudes and behaviours. For the review they ranked studies

according to the rigor of the analysis in establishing causality. They found that adult learning had positive impacts on reported life satisfaction and happiness, self-confidence, satisfaction with social life and leisure, self-reported health satisfaction, and was associated with increased trade union membership and involvement in voluntary work, greater desire to find a better job and improved financial expectations. The researchers recommend that more quantitative studies be done, and randomized trial studies in particular.

Keywords: Health outcomes; Literature reviews; Longitudinal surveys; Outcomes of learning; Wellbeing; United Kingdom

Dolan, Paul, & Fujiwara, Daniel. (2012). Valuing adult learning: comparing wellbeing valuation to contingent valuation. *BIS Research Paper Number 85*. [UK] Department for Business, Education, and Skills. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/v/12-1127-valuing-adult-learning-comparing-wellbeing-to-contingent.pdf>

This report comes out of two studies commissioned by the British Department for Business, Education, and Skills attempting to assign monetary values to the benefits of adult learning. The researchers used two methods of valuing adult learning: wellbeing valuation and contingent valuation. Wellbeing valuation estimates the amount of income that brings about the same change in life satisfaction as that brought about by adult learning. Contingent validation asks people what they would be willing to pay for instruction if it results in benefits such as helping them to find employment. The wellbeing valuation study used data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), a nationally representative sample of over 10,000 adults conducted each year since 1991. The researchers found one adult learning variable that affected self-reported life satisfaction level – having taken a part-time course to improve job prospects. They estimated that the value of such a course was £1,584. For the contingent valuation the researchers surveyed a sample of adult learners who'd recently completed an informal adult and community learning or Basic Skills qualification and those who'd recently completed a full Level 2 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). The researchers conducted 1,001 interviews from a sample of 3,647. They made a list of ten possible benefits of courses and then asked the respondents what they would be willing to pay for a course that provided these benefits. The respondents were, on average, willing to pay £1070 for a course that would enable them to “progress in their work or career”, while a course that made them more satisfied with their life overall was valued at £947.

Keywords: Contingent valuation; England; Outcomes of Learning; Social Return on Investment (SROI); Return on Investment (ROI); United Kingdom; Wellbeing valuation

Duckworth, Kathryn, & Cara, Olga. (2012). The Relationship between Adult Learning and Wellbeing. [UK] Department for Business, Education, and Skills. *BIS Research Paper Number 94*.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/r/12-1241-relationship-adult-learning-and-wellbeing-evidence-1958.pdf>

This is one of a number of new research reports commissioned by the British Department for Business, Education, and Skills on the outcomes of adult learning. Identifying a need for “more robust” UK evidence on the extent of participation in lifelong learning as well as its characteristics and benefits, the researchers drew on the most recent waves of longitudinal data from the 1958 National Child Development Study to examine patterns of participation in lifelong learning and to model the effects of such participation between the ages of 42 and 46 on wellbeing and health-related outcomes between the ages of 46 and 50. They found that participation in non-accredited learning had stronger impacts on wellbeing than did participation in accredited learning, for which findings were mixed. No evidence was found that learning affected health-related behaviours such as smoking, alcohol use or exercise.

Keywords: Formal learning; Health outcomes; Informal learning; Longitudinal surveys; Outcomes of learning; Wellbeing; United Kingdom

Jenkins, Andrew, & Mostafa, Terek. (2012). Learning and Wellbeing Trajectories among Older Adults in England. *BIS Research Paper Number 92*. [UK] Department for Business, Education, and Skills.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/l/12-1242-learning-and-wellbeing-trajectories-among-older-adults.pdf>

This is one of a number of new research reports commissioned by the British Department for Business, Education, and Skills on the outcomes of adult learning. This research sought to identify the effects of participating in learning on the wellbeing of older adults (aged 50-69) as well as the determinants of their participation. This study aimed to find quantitative evidence from a large nationally representative sample, unlike previous studies. It used data from the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing (ELSA), originally conducted in 2002 with follow-ups in 2004-05, 2007 and 2009. Four types of learning activity were measured: 1) Obtaining qualifications; 2) Participating in formal courses; 3) Participating in education, music and arts groups and 4) Participating in sports, gym and exercise groups. Wellbeing was measured using CASP-19, a subjective wellbeing measure specifically designed for older adults and which measures aspects of wellbeing: control, autonomy, self-realization and pleasure. The researchers found strong evidence that participation in informal education has small but significant impacts on wellbeing, some evidence of impact from obtaining qualifications, and no evidence that participation in formal programs affects wellbeing.

Keywords: Formal learning; Health outcomes; Informal learning; Longitudinal surveys; Older adults; Outcomes of learning; Wellbeing; United Kingdom

Sabates, Ricardo, & Parsons, Samantha. (2012). The Contribution of Basic Skills to Health Related Outcomes During Adulthood. *BIS Research paper Number 91*. UK Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/c/12-1239-contribution-basic-skills-to-health-outcomes.pdf>.

This is one of a number of new research reports commissioned by the British Department for Business, Education, and Skills on the outcomes of adult learning. The researchers sought to determine whether adult basic skills can contribute to better health outcomes in adulthood, using data from the 1970 British Cohort Study, an ongoing longitudinal study of over 17,000 cohort members born in Great Britain in 1970. The researchers used data on cohort members' self-reported health outcomes at ages 34 and 38, and data on basic skills in literacy and numeracy from a 2004 assessment consisting of questions adapted from the 2002 Skills for Life Survey. They found that a lack of adult numeracy skills was associated with deteriorating self-rated health, and poor literacy and numeracy skills were associated with worsening health conditions limiting daily activities. They found no evidence of a link with depression, and only weak evidence of an influence on health behaviours such as smoking.

Keywords: Health and Literacy; Health outcomes; Outcomes of Learning; Return on Investment (ROI); Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Social Capital

Taylor, Maurice, Trumpower, David, & Pavic, Ivana (2011). *A social capital inventory for adult literacy learners*. Retrieved November 16, 2012, from http://www.nald.ca/library/research/mtaylor/social_capital_inventory/social_capital_inventory.pdf

This study reviewed the literature on adult learning and social capital with specific attention to research in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Framework and indicators for measuring social capital found in the review, the researchers developed a new measure called the Social Capital Inventory (SCI), and piloted it in a six-week program designed to prepare adults for positions as custodians in hospitals or schools. A panel of experts, including adult educators, counselors and researchers, examined the tool and adult learners helped with the wording of the questions. Based on feedback from learners, a workshop was developed to familiarize learners with the concept of social capital. Further testing and data collection with the tool was to be carried out in the months to come.

Keywords: Assessment tools; Canada, Literature reviews; Social capital

Keywords

Adult basic education
Adult education
Assessment tools
Bridge programs
Case studies
Community-based action research (CBAR)
Community organizations
Contingent valuation
Cultural communities
Digital technologies
Embedding
Employers
English as an Additional Language (EAL)
ESL Literacy
Family literacy
Formal learning
Funding
Health and literacy
Health outcomes
Immigrants
Informal learning
Literature reviews
Longitudinal surveys
Low-skilled students
Official language minorities
Older adults
Online surveys
Outcomes of Learning
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Postsecondary education
Quebec Anglophones
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Research briefs
Return on Investment (ROI)
Social capital
Social innovation
Social Return on Investment (SROI)
State programs
Surveys
Wellbeing
Wellbeing valuation
Workforce development
Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES)

Name Keywords

ABC Life Literacy Canada
Canada
Centre for Community Organizations (CoCo)
England
Germany
Japan
National Research and Development Centre for
Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC)
New Zealand
Quebec
United Kingdom
United States