

Workplace Literacy in UK, NZ, Australia

Presentation made on May 16th – 2006

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Workplace Literacy in the UK, NZ and Australia

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Introduction

I'm going to discuss various forms and levels of stakeholder involvement in workplace literacy in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, exploring their strengths and challenges, in the hope that this can lead to discussion today of what this means for Canadian development in the field. During the discussion I will point out some of the key issues in each country. The strengths I want to talk about include:

- that there have been adult literacy strategies developed in all three countries, enabling wider access to literacy development for workers
- that employers, educators, and unions have all been brought to the table in the UK and, to a lesser extent, Australia and NZ.
- that research has been developed in the field which indicates how people engage with literacy in the workplace
- that this research is beginning to inform provision
- that in each country, professional development initiatives are taking place to support capacity building in workplace literacy
- that funding models are being developed specifically for this work
- that there are now a range of models of provision available to choose from

There challenges are that due to the rapid pace of globalisation, there has been a sense of urgency, or “crisis” associated with the development of workplace literacy, which has meant that some aspects of strategy development have been too hurried. A few years on, we need to reflect on how well the strategies have been thought out, in terms of research findings, the use of knowledge and experience gained from practice, getting employer buy-in and overcoming employer resistance.

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The Context of Workplace Literacy

First I want to situate workplace education in the current global context. Economic globalisation is commonly believed to depend on an educated, flexible and highly literate workforce. It is commonly assumed that workers are not engaging with literacy practices or training in the workplace because they lack essential skills, and that this lack is the reason for any number of mistakes that impact on production or service targets, and, ultimately, the ability of the company to be locally or internationally competitive. It's true that textual practices in the new workplace demand new ways of speaking and listening, and reading and writing. But how people understand and improve practices of reading and writing at work is much more complex than tweaking a few identified technical language skills. Many academics are arguing that this narrow focus will never work.

Leslie Farrell, an Australian academic, points out that new textual practices always imply new working identities; new working knowledge and new working relationships in local workplaces, and these challenge existing identities, knowledge and relationships. Workers not only have to get to grips with the technical aspects of texts, but also with the (formal and informal) way things are done in different workplaces. According to Jim Gee (1998), workers tend to learn about literacy in the workplace collectively, where learning about the job is inseparable from doing the job. Learning about, and doing the job is carried out in ways that hold knowledge inside the organisation by sharing it in teams. Managers use learning in the new work organisation as a way of transmitting the core values of the organisation and creating new organisational identities, and of facilitating rapid change. Brian Street (2001) observes that the communicative requirements of the new work order (requiring workers to handle change, ambiguity and variation) are in direct contradiction to the current school-like functional skills approach to adult learning promoted in policy documents. He asserts that both adult education and employers will suffer from such contradictions. All this has significant implications for workplace education policy development and implementation. But despite an increasing volume of research in how literacy is actually practised and learned in workplaces, the functional skills approach persists.

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Historical Developments

The initial global push for adult literacy development came from UNESCO in the late 1960s and 1970s. Adult Literacy became embedded in international policy discourses following the UNESCO proclaimed International Literacy Year (1990).

At the same time emancipatory educationalists such as Paulo Freire and others were becoming known globally for their participatory and political literacy work. In an era prior to the explosion of competency based training (CBT) and standardised testing, many adult literacy practitioners had begun to explore Freirean critical literacy pedagogy, and much academic research and community-based teaching carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s drew on his work. During the 1990s, countries focused increasingly on building vocational skills and attributes in secondary and tertiary level teaching programmes in each country. In this early period, and in line with what some have called the “new vocationalism”, governments were beginning to intensify their interest in up-skilling working populations, which included addressing what governments call basic, foundation or essential skills.

In several countries around 1990, surveys of adult target groups and employers were having an impact on public, worker and employer perceptions of the role of adult literacy in the workplace. Promotional research (e.g. ALBSU 1995), aimed at promoting the concept of learning at work, focused on the cost to industry of low literacy, emphasising that literacy development would improve accuracy, promotional prospects for individuals, acceptance of change, communication, job satisfaction and the company image (Frank and Hamilton 1993; Atkinson and Spilsbury, 1993). Carnevale et al. (1990) surveyed employers in the USA, in order to learn about the actual basic skills employers want in their workforce. Improved basic skills were presented as inevitably linked to improved productivity and predicted an employer demand for higher skills that could not be met by the labour pool in years to come.

These reports have helped create a demand for literacy learning over the last two decades. The International Adult Literacy Surveys have confirmed anxieties over low

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levels of literacy in the community and at work. Perceiving the literacy development of populations to be in crisis, governments have been eager to develop strategic planning to address the issue. Critics have argued that strategies have been put in place that are inadequately researched, and that a limited analysis of basic skills issues in the workplace tends to result in the lowest paid and least powerful being targeted as responsible for a range of problems. This, they claim, rather than creating a safe opportunity for workers to improve their education and their prospects, can result in insecure employment for those without a certain level of qualification.

The Nineties in Australia, NZ and the UK

Following International Literacy Year, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) was launched (1991). In the UK at this time, the Basic Skills Agency was about to fund 81 pilot projects around the country in Further Education colleges, to explore the establishment and delivery of workplace literacy provision. And in New Zealand, the Adult Reading and Learning Association (ARLA), a federation of community-based providers, or 'schemes', was funded to set up a "Workbase" project.

I'm going to sketch a picture of how each country got from where they were in the early nineties to where they are in 2006, beginning with Australia, since it was already well in the lead a decade ago.

Australia

The Strategy

In 1991, as a result of concerns about the effect of literacy levels on the capacity of Australian industry to adjust to changing international economic conditions, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training investigated the impact of low literacy levels on productivity and skills improvement in the workplace. The Committee reported workers with inadequate literacy skills across a wide section of industries and workplaces and recommended the urgent establishment

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of an adult literacy strategy that would meet the needs of workers from both an English and non-English speaking background.

The 1991-92 the Australian Commonwealth Budget allocated funding for a Workplace Literacy Programme. In the following financial year it merged with the English in the Workplace program to become the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL). Under this Programme, funding was allocated to workplaces and organisations in industry to develop and implement literacy training activities and resources. By 1993 an Integrated National Literacy and Language Strategy was in place. The Strategy was an attempt to align literacy provision with vocational education and training, labour market programs, immigration settlement programs, and workplace restructuring programs.

Professional Development

This early development in adult and workplace literacy required adult literacy tutors to develop professionally and to become professionally qualified. Professional development programmes were (and continue to be) offered through Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges and universities. Again, the higher level qualifications have led to a higher level of research and debate in the field, well before either the UK or New Zealand had developed a national strategy.

Research

In 1997 the authors of *Australian literacies* avowed that there was no general literacy crisis in Australia but, rather, 'systematic underperformance' by particular groups. To achieve acceptable literacy outcomes for all, they argued for a multi-dimensional concept of 'literacies' encompassing a 'repertoire' of capabilities (including technical, cultural and critical dimensions). The publication is said to have influenced the development of research, practice and policy across Australia. Certainly the quantity and quality of research produced within academia in the early nineties (and which is ongoing) asks many hard questions and challenges pre-conceptions in ways that have not been

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apparent in NZ or the UK. For a period in the early and mid-nineties, examples of good practice were seized upon by providers and practitioners in NZ, UK, in parts of Europe such as the Netherlands, and elsewhere as they searched for new assessment, delivery and materials development ideas they were not funded to develop themselves.

Integrated Practice Models

One such Australian delivery innovation was the Enterprise-Based Tutor, who would spend up to half a week based in an individual company exploring and advising, as a consultant, on whole organisational communications issues. Solutions might include, for instance, a learning programme, 1-1 mentoring, Clear English support for managers or cultural awareness. In the mid-nineties, the Australian National Training Authority began to explore findings from research which suggested that literacy could not be taught as an isolated set of discrete skills but instead should be embedded in an organisational practice context. i.e. that literacy should be “built-in, not bolted-on”.

This led to the development of integrated language and literacy provision within vocational training packages. The training packages enable tutors to contextualise and customise learning to the client workplace. They contain competency standards, qualifications, materials, tutor guidelines and information for each vocational area. The literacy tutor can assess and identify literacy learning required in the organisation where s/he is delivering a programme, and integrate this with vocational learning. In 2000, the Authority published a guide for language and literacy practitioners entitled “Built-in, Not Bolted-on” showing in detail how literacy practitioners should integrate language and literacy competencies into vocational competencies. There has been hot debate in Australia about the visibility of literacy when integrated within vocational training packages, and about the role of the literacy specialist in relation to the vocational tutor. However, the training packages do offer relatively flexible ways of working with companies to customise language and literacy provision.

In Australia the Unions have highlighted the need for training, especially in the area of literacy, language, and numeracy skills. They have been criticised for adopting an

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agenda which meets the narrow, skills needs of employers rather than the wider needs of members.

The UK

Before the Strategy

In the UK in the early nineties, the government funded Basic Skills Agency (formerly the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit - ALBSU) was the major umbrella for workplace provision. In 1992 it funded Basic Skills Units in Further Education colleges to set up workplace basic skills projects and also created benchmarks and quality awards which determined how workplace literacy should be practiced. Based on a community literacy model, much of this provision was in learning centres in the college, or in workplace learning centres, in classroom like settings, using off the shelf materials. Such initiatives failed to gain the commitment of employers, and tended to stigmatise workers whose attendance at the classes was very visible. In addition, provision was individually focused, with students working through the BSA "Wordpower" and "Numberpower" booklets. At completion, student would be awarded a "Wordpower" or "Numberpower" certificate, which had dubious exchange value in terms of employment.

Professional Development

In 1994/5 the Workplace Basic Skills Network was established at Lancaster University, following the completion of the ALBSU pilot projects and in response to a call by providers and practitioners for more shared information about projects in workplace literacy. The Network helped to bring providers and practitioners together through conferences and bulletins. It offered information on research in other countries (e.g Australia, the USA and Canada) and a suite of professional development programmes in workplace literacy, which were delivered around the country and paid for out of further education professional development budgets. In the absence of an adult literacy strategy and workplace literacy funding in the UK, this initiative helped to build professional capability in the field.

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The Strategy

The New Labour government came to power on a platform of “education, education, education” in 1997. *A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy* (1999) has based many of its policy recommendations on IALS findings. The report made twenty-one recommendations to the DfES aimed at tightening up the adult basic skills sector. Recommendations included ways of establishing and reaching national targets; of increasing participation and ensuring entitlement and expanding opportunities in the community and the workplace; of ensuring high quality; of developing a national curriculum and delivering the strategy; of expanding research and, finally, of co-ordinating and funding the strategy. The recommendations specifically addressing basic skills in the workplace including the setting up of a Workplace Basic Skills Development fund, day release for workers at level one basic skills, and TUC led training of ‘union learning representatives’ to support and advise workers and employers on basic skills provision, and funded through the Union Learning Fund. The Moser report recommends that agencies be established to *create* as well as respond to learner demand, suggesting this role be taken by the TUC, the University for Industry (now LearnDirect) and other national bodies. Some critics say that this is a disturbing aspect to the UK campaign, as it is more about the appearance of meeting targets than about providing quality, participatory and customised provision. In 1999, the Workplace Basic Skills Network (now The Network) was core funded by the DfES to build professional capability in the UK.

The Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) in the DfES, which became the Skills for Life Strategy team, has developed a whole-of-government, approach to implementing the adult basic skills strategy. That is to say, it has attempted to integrate the activities not only of education departments and agencies, but also of work related government departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry, and national skills agencies. The Skills for Life team is supported to implement the strategy by the BSA, the TUC, NIACE, and others, and by partnerships between further education colleges, local unions and employers. The Department of Trade and Industry provides some funding through the Regional Development Agency and Sector Skills Councils (formerly NTOs)

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to ensure that local industry, councils and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) are able to work together to support the Basic Skills Strategy.

Research

While the UK's whole-of-government approach to literacy has been impressive, at the time of the initial implementation of the Strategy, there was a weakness in terms of developed literacy theory and documented practice models pertaining to the UK, and in terms of numbers of trained workplace literacy practitioners in the field, especially at higher education levels. Brian Street, an academic working in Kings College, London (1997:19), had noted "a lack of pedagogical theory in adult education in general and of theory on adult literacy in particular" in the UK.

More Professional Development, Better Research

As part of this new wave of workplace literacy funding and activity, the Network was supported financially by the Learning and Skills Council and 47 local learning and skills councils to roll out professional development programmes to every FE college. The Network was able to base its professional development programmes on research and practice in a range of countries (particularly Australia), and to push the boundaries of existing UK provision, introducing organisation-wide consultative approaches. However, practitioners were often constrained in developing effective workplace literacy programmes by the systems and structures of their employing institutions. Because of years of casualisation in a 'Cinderella' field, workplace literacy practitioners are not easily able to make demands upon their employers for increased professional learning and qualifications. Even if some can, the measure of 'qualified' practitioners is done through increasingly technocratic standards. Micheal Eraut, professor of education at the University of Sussex, notes that the professional should be able to indicate

a knowledge base that...can range from knowledge about techniques to a critical understanding of the concepts, theories and principles which underpin current

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practice; so that they can understand the significance of innovations and properly evaluate their work (Eraut, 2000:204).

In 2001, in addition to the Network's suite of professional qualifications, a new wave of 'Intensive Training' was developed and rolled out by the BSA to equip tutors to teach the new curriculum, which it sees as "part of a major step change in raising standards, increasing participation and increasing diversity" (BSA, 2001:2). The first intake of trainers, who would later be delivering the curriculum training to other tutors, was required by the BSA to sign an agreement stating that they would deliver the course as written. A practitioner required to completed this training, regrets its prescriptive elements, and her own lack of time in her job to reflect:

...these days, people's jobs often preclude the time needed, just to step back and think. As with all learning, thinking time is so valuable. From it, and the evaluation, we learn more productive ways of doing things. (Holland, 2004:189)

Until recently there was still very little research carried out in the UK that was not of a promotional nature, and which sought to explore how literacies were actually practiced in adult contexts, including the workplace. In 2002 the National Research and Development Consortium was established, which included among others, Lancaster University, Kings College and the BSA. Its purpose is to conduct research and development projects in the fields of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

Integration and Practice Models

In the UK, an understanding of what it means to integrate literacy within *whole organisational practices* seems not yet to be reached. Literacy is not simply about addressing a lack of skills in individuals, but about practices in the context of the whole of an organisation's routines, systems and culture and relationships. An understanding of this should lead to an assessment of the whole organisation's communication practices. There are references to the use of an Organisational Needs Analysis on the DfES website, yet many programmes are still focused on individual deficit.

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There is some integration of materials. Attention has been given, in the last two to three years, to “embedded literacy”, which involves ‘embedding’ literacy elements in ‘authentic workplace materials’. However, the use of embedded literacy materials is shaped to accreditation outcomes rather than worker/learner understandings of the complexities of organisational literacy practices. Glynda Hull (1995) notes that integration should involve more than identifying literacy elements in workplace texts for the purposes of accreditation:

It’s not sufficient, I would argue, to simply go into a workplace and collect the documents people are required to read and build a curriculum around those. One needs, rather, to take into account how work is organised and how that organisation affects who is required, allowed, expected to read and write what and why (cited in Jackson, 2004:4).

Too often, because of their own casualisation, practitioners are not able to work consultatively in workplaces or even visit the site and the shop floor. With some notable exceptions (Braddell 2006), the programmes practitioners teach have typically been negotiated prior to their first visit, by their manager, the local union and the employer. The practitioner has little opportunity to meet with people at all levels in the workplace, to learn about how the organisation operates and how workers use texts, and to explore communications-related issues in workers’ communities of practice.

Union Support

The unions, as well as the further education sector, co-operate fully with the whole-of-government strategy. Indeed, the TUC has had massive injections of funding since 2000 to support unions to negotiate workplace basic skills and to train workers (not always members) to become union learning representatives. Local Unions “train” learning representatives who have been selected ideally by the union but not always. A workplace of 600 employees might have 3-4 representatives. The union will have prepared the training with the help of the BSA, which includes cost to industry statistics,

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and information about learners' deficits. The training is supposed to be three days in duration but is frequently shorter. Learning is individually, not collectively focused. Evaluation reports consistently show that ULRS are unsure about their role .i.e. how to advocate for and advise about literacy provision, how to recognise individuals in need...By 2003 4,500 ULRs had been trained, and there are now purported to be approximately 6000 union learning representatives. There has been no union education/organising component to this role, it is simply to support the adult basic skills agenda. The TUC and local unions work with the Skills for Life Strategy in the following way:

The BSA and/or brokers identify workplaces who are interested in basic skills programmes for sections of their workforce. It's usually front line workers who are targeted, as literacy is considered the problem of low paid workers. Or a company might approach a college. The local union organiser, the local college basic skills co-ordinator and the company's human resource manager or trainer meet to discuss options. Many practitioners new to the work still offer off the shelf (non-customised) programmes which are aimed at a particular level of accreditation but which serve little useful purpose to the employer or the worker. Employers have often commented to me that "They [further education providers and practitioners] don't understand our issues".

Employer and Learner Buy-in

Not surprisingly, perhaps, employer buy-in is a key issue in the UK. The government continues to try a number of strategies to create and build employer interest:

- The Employer pledge has been developed as part of the National Strategy to reduce the substantial number of adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills. As major employers, The Department for Education and Skills, the Department for Work and Pensions and Customs and Excise have pledged to encourage their own staff to improve their basic skills..
- Brokerage schemes, where individuals (usually with a business background) promote workplace basic skills to business, on behalf of the BSA.

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- “Train to Gain” is a new initiative which offers advice on business needs, matches training needs with training providers, and ensures that training is delivered to match employer needs.
- Awards are given to practitioners and providers who have who have made an outstanding contribution to the quality of learning in particular contexts, including making a positive impact on workplace basic skills.
- \$130m has just been voted to be distributed to employers to cover release time for workers engaged in literacy programmes.

None of these approaches have yet yielded the desired involvement of employers. Perhaps the DfES could learn something from the carrot and stick tax incentive programme developed in Quebec, whereby employers devote 1% of their income to literacy training – or if they fail to do so, that 1% is paid into a funding pool for workplace literacy development.

Another issue for the UK government is getting learner buy-in. The *Get On* Campaign, focusing on learners’ deficits, was first promoted through a wave of television and radio advertising in which individuals in the community and at work who struggle with literacy. Learners are portrayed as carrying ugly ‘gremlins’ that they need to get rid of by engaging in programmes of learning.

New Zealand

Before the Strategy

In New Zealand, interest in workplace literacy began as an extension of community literacy initiatives. In 1990 the Adult Learning and Reading Association (ARLA) sought funding from the government to establish a workplace initiative. One-off funding was granted for a project in workplace literacy, and Workbase New Zealand was established as an arm of ARLA, to pilot a small number of programmes in Auckland. During the early 1990s community literacy projects, or ‘schemes’ in other parts of New Zealand established by ARLA, were also being approached by local companies for assistance.

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Private providers and polytechnics were establishing a base in this work. Programmes were paid for by companies, because no dedicated government funding was available. Workbase became the leading NGO in the field, establishing itself as the centre for workplace literacy, distributing government funding and advising on projects developed by other providers.

In 1992, the Industry Training Act established the Industry Training Federation and Industry Training Organisations, who were charged with developing vocational qualifications for entry onto the NZ Qualifications Framework. Some ITOs became aware that language, literacy and numeracy issues were impacting on workers' ability to access and complete vocational qualifications (see, for instance, Holland 1999), and Workbase began to work with ITOs to explore and map the literacy components of their qualifications.

Research, Professional Development and Practice

Between 1991 and 2001, slow progress was made in *workplace* literacy provision, research and professional development. Most workplace projects were carried out by Workbase. ARLA became Literacy Aotearoa, a bi-cultural organisation with a Freirean theoretical base to its work. It was concerned with building English literacy for Maori, as well as Maori literacy. Literacy Aotearoa funds around 70 local community agencies, or 'schemes, throughout New Zealand, some of which have delivered workplace programmes. A number of smaller private providers operate, mainly in the larger centres.

Research that was available was of a quantitative, promotional type – there was no exploratory research into workplace literacy practice in New Zealand. No accredited professional development existed, although some Literacy Aotearoa practitioners were accredited by the Open College Network (UK) after completing a Network "Breaking Down Barriers" Basic Skills Practitioners' certificate. It was also possible for practitioners to complete higher level qualifications by distance through Australian universities.

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The Strategy

Largely through the tireless efforts of Workbase, the NZ Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy *More Than Words* was developed and launched in 2001. The strategy focuses on the need for improved professional development, increased provision, and improved quality of provision. The strategy was rolled out during a time of change in New Zealand's tertiary education sector. Skill New Zealand, the government agency responsible for pre-employment education, became the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in 2002, with responsibility for funding education and training in public and private tertiary institutions. Perhaps because of the historical role of the TEC, workplace literacy provision is considered as part of wider *workforce* development, including literacy for those who are looking for work. Today a central focus for the development of language and literacy in New Zealand is the integration of competencies with vocational competencies, and with delivery methods which allow vocational trainers and literacy specialists to learn from each other.

Professional development

Since 2001 an adult literacy educator qualification for practitioners has been developed and entered onto the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Adult Educator programmes have been offered in a few tertiary institutions. Over the last two years, the NZ Ministry of Education has become more directly involved in (a) understanding effective practice in adult literacy provision and (b) in dissemination of research and practitioner knowledge through literacy practitioner professional development. In 2005 the Ministry established a Learning for Living project. Round one of this project is an exploratory project, focused on building up evidence of the best ways for teaching literacy, numeracy and language to adults, by looking at the operations of a diverse range of tertiary education providers. Looking at the operations of providers and the practitioners working in these organisations, is achieved through a series of professional development cluster meetings, facilitated by Ministry adult literacy developers. The clusters include literacy practitioners and tertiary education managers from a range of providers in a region. Alongside the cluster development, a Victoria University research

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project evaluates student progress (through interviews and testing) as a way of understanding the impact of the work carried out in clusters. Round two, beginning in July this year, will involve an expansion in the number and activity of clusters. The Learning for Living project is currently in the process of establishing a workplace literacy strand, where pilot clusters will be developed with selected industry sectors in one region. In line with the strategy's focus on integrating literacy with vocational standards on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, the Ministry is working with the Industry Training Federation and the Industry Training Organisations for each industry sector, in order to enable vocational tutors as well as literacy specialists to understand and deliver the literacy elements within vocational qualifications. The Ministry aims to offer professional development and explore alternative approaches.

Union Involvement

Unlike Canada and the UK, the NZCTU has so far had little direct involvement with the adult literacy strategy. It has, however, taken an interest in the concept of the Union Learning Representative as developed in the UK. In 2003 a bid for Tertiary Education funding was made to develop a ULR pilot which would address what were seen as issues in the UK model, specifically, that the ULRs did not include an organising agenda in basic skills support work, that ULRs could be non-members, and that learning was individually rather than collectively focused. The Tertiary Education Commission provided funding to the NZCTU for the pilot. The NZCTU has found that it has been extremely hard to engage employers in this venture. There have been no such indications that this is a problem for UK ULRs, but then that initiative was well funded, and release time for ULRs is legislated in that country.

Conclusion

I have discussed how workplace literacy has developed in each country, and what has been emphasised or ignored. In Australia, workplace language and literacy provision, supported by a national policy and a dedicated funding source, ensured the development of professional practice based on thorough research and robust theoretical

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debate. While critics have claimed that innovative practices have been eroded by new policy constraints, nevertheless early Australian theory and practice provides guidelines for the establishment and development of workplace language and literacy practice elsewhere. In the UK, the whole-of government strategy was based on a functional, deficit view of literacy from the outset, thereby constraining an already professionally and research- impoverished field. Nevertheless, lessons can be learned from this experience and from the whole-of-government approach and funding commitment made by the DfES, as well as from the development of union learning representatives to support workplace literacy.

In New Zealand, the comparatively late development of a strategy has meant that we have adopted some of the most recent approaches to workplace provision, including an exploration of literacy and vocational practitioner knowledge, and a focus on isolating discrete units of skill identified in workplace literacy and vocational practices, and mapping them against each other for teaching and accreditation purposes. This approach goes some way towards integrating literacy, but falls short of getting to grips with the findings of researchers such as Leslie Farrell and dozens of other international researchers (Gowen 1992; Darrah 1997; Hull 1996; Holland 2004; Belfiore et al 2005) who have explored the nuances of literacy as a social practice embedded in relationships and identities.

It seems to me that any new strategy developed to support workplace literacy needs to ensure that there is opportunity for rigorous research (including the opportunity to learn from research and practice elsewhere), robust debate, a professionally developed practitioner workforce in secure employment, and for a range of stakeholders to take part in strategy development, rather than simply in implementation.

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