Research informing policy and practice in foundation level workplace training programmes
This presentation

• Why literacy and numeracy in workplace training programmes
• What the evidence tells us at the individual and firm level
• How the evidence is used to inform policy and practice
Skills Highway – who are we?

- Established in 2008
- ‘Brand’ for workplace literacy and numeracy
- Skills Highway website
- Supports providers and employers
- Research and evaluation
- Funded by the Tertiary Education Commission and managed by the Industry Training Federation
Workplace LN Fund

- Two strands – provider-led and employer-led
- Funds
  - 25-40 hours learning
  - around 7000 employees a year
  - programmes delivered in workplaces in worktime and employees are paid
The research and evaluation programme

• To assess the extent to which the current approaches and policy settings are having an impact on individuals and their workplaces

• To provide an evidence base to inform ongoing policy development related to literacy and numeracy skills development in workplaces – including the development of digital skills

• To further explore the links between literacy and numeracy skills and workplace productivity

• To seek solutions to issues related to the demand for and sustainability of workplace literacy programmes.
Why the focus?
Skills and ethnicity

![Graph showing average scores over years for different literacy and numeracy categories: Total population literacy, Māori literacy, Pasifika literacy, Total population numeracy, Māori numeracy, and Pasifika numeracy. The scores show an increase from 1996 to 2014.]
Workplace LN Programmes

• These are not about “fixing” people

• They are about workforce development:
  • preparing people for future workforce and future jobs
    • Automation
    • Multicultural workforces
    • The aging population
    • The golden triangle
    • Changing the nature of education and training

From Education to Employment: Megatrends Report
http://www.infometrics.co.nz/product/megatrends-report/
What counts as evidence?

• What counts as evidence and for whom?
  • LN results as measured by the Assessment Tool or other tools
  • LN changes to employees’ practices – what they start doing, do more of and more easily at work, in their family and community lives
  • Changes in workplace behaviours and productivity
  • Return on investment

• What sort of evidence is “good enough”?
  • anecdotal
  • qualitative
  • quantitative

• Over what time period, short – longer term

• Is it evidence or proof that is required?
What we do: look back and look forward?

- Literature reviews
- Data analysis – to assess reach (ethnicity, region, industry)
- Document analysis – reports from employers on impact, challenges and sustainability
- Interviews with employers and learners – success stories
- Observations – classes, workplaces, celebrations
- Special projects – e.g., digital skills, dual provision, Māori and Pasifika employees
What the evidence tells us

- The Fund is reaching the right people

- It’s difficult to gauge the extent to which there has been literacy and numeracy gain

- Changes occur in the ways in which people operate at work, namely improved health and safety practices, including reporting, along with a willingness to speak up and engage in problem-solving.

- A considerable contribution to changes in the way people work comes about as a result of their growing sense of confidence and self-efficacy.

- Good examples of career pathway progression

- Getting hard evidence about the contribution to productivity and the ways in which sustainability can be achieved remains a challenge.
Research outputs

- Reports - full and summary
- Success stories e.g., Professionalising the security industry workforce
- Specialist topic research
- Videos
- Resources

Professionalising the security industry workforce

That uniformed minder, quietly keeping guard out front might be the first ‘security industry’ image that comes to mind, but there’s a lot more than meets the eye.
Informing policy

- Literature reviews – what’s happening in other countries
- Betting meeting learner and employers needs:
  - Flexible funding (from 40 hours to 25-80 hours)
  - Reduced the numbers required for a programme from 50-20
  - Dual provision - workplace literacy funding able to be accessed by Level 1 and 2 Industry trainees
  - Gathering evidence of the need to extend this to Level 3
  - Wider interpretation of funding conditions – financial literacy, digital, ESOL
Informing Practice: Digital Literacy

- Digital skills in the workplace = employees who can: Confidently and competently use digital technology in the workplace
- Employees have access to, and are willing motivated, and prepared and have the skills to use technology
- Digital skills are about practices / behaviours
- Developed a four level framework that describes practices in the workplace
Informing Practice: Hīnātore

Literacy is an empowerment tool, opening up new potential, new light. It is a glimpse at ‘possibility’ that can inspire new learning and new growth.
Informing Practice: Māori and Pasifika employees

- Co-funded by Ako Aotearoa and the Industry Training Federation
- What we know: Māori and Pasifika employees engage in workplace programmes
- What we don’t know: what causes them to re-engage with learning

- Methods: to find out what is happening in the ‘black box’ of the classroom:
  - Engaged Māori and Pasifika researchers
  - Observations by researchers (early, during and end of programmes)
  - Tutors as researchers – gathering evidence of impact of their practice
  - Interviews with employees and employers
  - Sense making workshop with learners

- Using social media
  - To engage tutors in a community of practice as teachers and researchers
  - Wanted to engage learners also – but this is not quite working yet
The challenges

• Measuring the return on investment
  • How to do this at the individual, firm and society level
  • What to measure and how to measure

• What we have been doing aligns with the frameworks outlined by Schueler, J, Stanwick, J & Loveder, P. (2017), A framework to better measure the return on investment from TVET, NCVER, Adelaide. https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/861308/A-framework-to-better-measure-the-return-on-investment-from-TVET.pdf

• Need to be able to continue to build a portfolio of evidence in this way.