

Workplace Educator Professional Development

LITERATURE REVIEW
&
FIELD INTERVIEW REPORT

by
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for the Ontario Literacy Coalition
September 2002



FORWARD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was conducted to provide background and an impetus for discussion about practitioner development in workplace education as Literacy and Basic Skills providers move forward to deliver LBS-like programs in the workplace in Ontario. As such, we researched good documents from the international workplace literacy community and talked to practitioners from the field. Thanks to the following individuals for their assistance in this project:

Mary Ellen Belfiore	Educator, Toronto, Ontario
John Antonellis	Commonwealth Corporation, Boston, Massachusetts
Judith Bond	Workplace Training and Services Inc., Toronto, Ontario
Chris Holland	Education Consultant, Auckland, New Zealand
Paul Jurmo	Consortium for Worker Education, New York, New York
Lynette Plett	Education Consultant, Toronto, Ontario
Margerit Roger	UFCW Training Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Nancy Steel	Bow Valley College, Calgary, Alberta
Jane Tuer	Project Read, Kitchener, Ontario

Thanks to the Advisory Committee for the Ontario Literacy Coalition's Workplace Literacy Projects *Raising the Profile of Workplace Literacy* and *Workplace Literacy Training* for their review and comments on this document. The members are:

Suzanne Benoit	Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation
Kimberly Brooks	Dofasco
Cindy Davidson	QUILL Network
Dee Goforth	Educational Consultant
Florence Guy	Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Brigid Hayes	National Literacy Secretariat
Nancy Jackson	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
Sandy Johnston	OLC Learners' Council
Sande Minke	Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Mona Katawne	Human Resources Consulting and Outsourcing
Ellen Paterson	Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
Karen Rockwell	G.O.L.D.
Jane Tuer	Project Read Literacy Network
Cheryl Wilson	G.O.L.D.

This research is part of OLC's project *Workplace Literacy Training*. We acknowledge the financial support of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the National Literacy Secretariat for this project.

Thanks to Saroja Coelho for editing this document and to The Right Type for design and layout.

Any views implied in this research paper were intended to be a reflection of the various opinions and principles held in surveyed documents and by workplace literacy practitioners in and beyond Ontario, and are not intended to reflect the views of the Ministry or Government of Ontario.

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September 2002

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Workplace Educator Professional Development

Literature Review/Interviews

Introduction

Professional development is an integral part of workplace education service delivery strategies in Canada, the United States, and internationally. It serves to build capacity in a field where there are often limited numbers of practitioners available, and it serves to raise skill and knowledge levels of those practitioners already in the field.

Defining the Context

In Ontario, professional development has had a significant role to play in a field marked by change over its short history. With the exception of Workforce/Workplace Employment Basic Skills (W/WEBS), an integrated, province-wide program that included professional development, most professional development was delivered through local initiatives.¹

In reviewing documented workplace educator professional development practices and speaking with experts from the field, definite trends emerge. The professional development of workplace educators is supported through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Practitioner Training Strategy, the goal of which is to “develop an integrated practitioner training and

recognition approach that supports high quality delivery of the LBS program.”² As Ontario moves forward with its Workplace Literacy Strategy under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), much can be learned from past and present practices which are underway in other jurisdictions, as well as from the experience of those here in Ontario.

Methodology

Both a literature review and telephone interviews with key informants were conducted to document professional development programs in a number of jurisdictions. The focus was then narrowed to models selected based on one or more of the following criteria:

- 1 audience and purpose are similar to that of Ontario;
- 2 model is geared to a more experienced educator base, but stands out as one of exceptional quality and scope;
- 3 labour-sponsored programs.

Based on the above characteristics, the report draws on different aspects of the experiences and outcomes of several professional development models. They include:

- ▶ Breaking Down the Barriers. National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, United Kingdom (current).
- ▶ Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills; Introductory Module for Literacy Practitioners. Confederation Colleges, Ontario (1999).
- ▶ Workplace Education Professional Development Program. Commonwealth Corporation and the Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (2001).
- ▶ Making it Work in the Classroom. Nova Scotia Partners in Education, Nova Scotia (current).

- ▶ Making it Work In the Classroom. University of Manitoba (1999, 2000).
- ▶ Summer Literacy Institute. Literacy B.C., British Columbia (1994, 1996).

Purpose of Professional Development

There are two main purposes for embarking on a professional development initiative:

- 1 Professional development may serve to develop capacity within the field. This may be to address a shortage of educators in the area, as in the case of the Massachusetts professional development pilot program. Similarly, the professional development may be initiated to ensure that new entries to the field have a particular set of skills and knowledge before embarking upon program delivery.
- 2 The program may serve to provide ongoing support or specialized professional development to educators already working in the field of workplace education. This type of professional development is predominant in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and other jurisdictions that have a developed group of educators operating through a larger regional or provincial funding structure.

In Ontario, the purpose for offering professional development at this juncture relates to the first of the two scenarios described. Although workplace education has been a reality in Ontario for 20 years or more, the initiative by MTCU, to develop capacity for workplace education delivery through its literacy networks and delivery agencies, is new. Thus, any professional development efforts undertaken must assume that the purpose is to orient participants to the field of workplace education. Ongoing support will be considered after this original effort.

Audience for Professional Development

The content of the professional development program is determined in large part by the participant group: individuals' backgrounds, skill levels and knowledge of workplace practices. If the professional development is targeted to existing LBS networks and their educators, we can conclude with some certainty that the audience:

- ▶ will have a background in adult education, and specifically in literacy instruction;
- ▶ will be familiar with adult education principles and methodology, including assessment, instruction, and evaluation;
- ▶ may have little or no experience in workplace education delivery; and
- ▶ may have limited experience or familiarity with the contemporary workplace.

In some areas of the province, workplace education programs have been offered in substantial numbers over the last years, and a group of educators might clearly be identified as experienced with many aspects of workplace education set up and delivery. In most cases they are not connected with the literacy community, but rather offer services through colleges, ESL departments or as independent trainers. Their role in this new initiative is unclear; however, it is understood they will not comprise the target audience in this round of professional development.

Several professional development programs have a similar identified audience as that of Ontario: the Workplace Education Collaborative pilot in Massachusetts and Breaking Down the Barriers in UK are both targeted to adult educators with little or no experience in workplace education delivery. In her 1999 overview of professional development opportunities for workplace educators, Margerit Roger notes

that many of the professional development opportunities are to create delivery capacity, and are thus at an introductory level.⁴

Considerations in the Design of Professional Development

In most professional development models researched, a step which investigates the role of the workplace educator vis-a-vis skills, knowledge and abilities, and good practice is central to the creation of training that is meaningful and relevant to the target audience. In *Looking Back, Looking Forward*, Sue Folinsbee defines the role broadly, “the workplace educator can play a variety of roles including instructor, researcher, needs assessor, program developer, instructor trainer, mentor, educational advocate and more.”⁵

In Ontario, practitioner development has been based on a two-tiered model of coordinator and instructor. Our use of the term educator includes both roles, while instructor refers only to the teaching role. In fact, the role and responsibilities of workplace education instructors usually extend well beyond the classroom walls. As instructors, they are often required to liaise with workplace designates, attend meetings, develop assessment, curriculum and evaluation processes, and conduct program evaluations. And they are expected to do all this while staying current with workplace issues and trends and reflecting those in the classroom. The responsibilities may shift slightly depending on the workplace and on the delivery model, but it is clear that a workplace educator’s role is one that is complex and dynamic.

Experts from the field of workplace education consistently draw a sharp distinction between the role of adult educators generally, and those who deliver workplace programs. Terms such as ‘multi-faceted’, ‘flexible’, and ‘team player’ appear often. Fiona Frank describes the workplace educator as “somebody who can live comfortably in two worlds and

make the link between the two...bring lessons from education to business and be a political animal.”⁶ Paul Jurmo describes the instructor’s requisite ability to consider both the central client and all the various stakeholders, and just how “complex it is to serve all well.”⁷ The Massachusetts pilot report includes a substantial list of competencies documented in their training development process.⁸

Another related step in the design process includes the identification of workplace educator skills, knowledge and abilities, which may be developed as part of a dialogue with the field, or through a process of investigation of those already documented.⁹ A recent effort (2001) to document the tasks carried out by workplace educators was undertaken through a DACUM process.¹⁰ These tasks, arrived at through the work of a committee of experienced workplace educators, could serve as one starting point for developing educator competencies. The DACUM also captures the skills and abilities that cannot be addressed in introductory professional development, but can serve as signposts on the path to further professional development.

Principles of good practice emerge frequently as both a topic of professional development and a step in the process of course development. Mary Ellen Belfiore writes that the principles can be used for, among other things, “establishing standards; ensuring consistency; and providing a principled foundation for further development.”¹¹ In many cases, the professional development itself does not provide a list of such principles; rather, the principles have served to underpin the philosophy and determine the approach any professional development will take.

Experts from the field suggest that much hinges on an understanding of the complexities of the role. Indeed

through careful analysis, participants can come to understand how one's role as an educator in the workplace is mitigated by the participation of many others in the learning process, from the human resources manager to the floor supervisor to the shop steward. There is some consensus from experts that coming away from an introductory professional development course with a clear vision of one's role as a educator can mean the difference between success and failure in the workplace.

Program Content

In many of the professional development programs researched, the process of determining program content is arrived at through a similar process of conducting field research and documenting workplace educators' skills and knowledge. The process is similar to conducting a workplace needs analysis before developing the curriculum. Not surprising, then, is the finding that there is considerable overlap in the content addressed by the various programs. With the exception of professional development programs designed for newcomers to the adult education field (e.g. BEST and other peer-instructional models) the majority of introductory professional development programs focus on familiarizing participants with 'the workplace'. This can range from an overview of the contemporary workplace, through to a detailed analysis of organizational culture, manufacturing processes, etc.

The following is a partial listing of content areas frequently addressed in professional development. The ways in which the topics are defined, and the specific content they address, vary from program to program. The headings below capture the topics broadly.

Principles and Philosophical Underpinnings

- ▶ Principles of adult education
- ▶ Principles of good practice

The Workplace

- ▶ Analyzing the labour market
- ▶ Need for workplace education
- ▶ Understanding the workplace
- ▶ Differences between workplace and Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs
- ▶ Delivery models
- ▶ History of workplace programming in the region
- ▶ Overview of current workplace programs in the region
- ▶ Working with unions

Program Set-Up

- ▶ Contacting the employer
- ▶ Setting up the steering committee
- ▶ Organizational needs assessment
- ▶ Individual needs assessment
- ▶ Job task analysis
- ▶ Basic skills analysis
- ▶ Writing the needs assessment report
- ▶ Writing the contract
- ▶ Developing a training plan

Curriculum Development and Instruction

- ▶ Instructor responsibilities
- ▶ Planning the program
- ▶ Program implementation
- ▶ Using workplace materials
- ▶ Instruction in the workplace
- ▶ Participant evaluation
- ▶ Program evaluation

Priority Content Areas

Experts in the field who were interviewed in the course of this research reiterate the focus on ‘workplace’ rather than curriculum and instruction. When asked generally what content they considered appropriate in professional development, interviewees’ answers tended to include comprehensive lists of topic areas covering both workplace and programming issues. However, when asked to prioritize content areas for a shorter-term professional development with a participant group of adult educators, interviewees invariably shifted their focus to workplace issues, usually to the exclusion of any programming content.

The following are a series of responses to the question “What is the priority for any workplace educator introductory professional development?”

- ▶ Margerit Roger, Program Developer at UFCW Training Centre in Winnipeg, describes her professional development experiences with a similar group of educators: “The most critical experience to come out of this type of training is the paradigm shift that results from understanding the difference between community-based learning and workplace learning.”¹²
- ▶ Lynette Plett, who recently taught two summer institutes on workplace education, echoes Roger’s comments. She considers it a priority to help participants draw on their own background as educators and to think how their experiences might look different in a workplace context.¹³
- ▶ When asked to pare down the long list she had generated on topics for workplace professional development, Judith Bond, an experienced workplace educator and trainer, suggests:
 - focus on the workplace
 - define the workplace
 - examine one’s role as an instructor

- think about the logistics of teaching in a workplace;
- examine the organizational culture
- find out who the learner is
- work in a team

“All you can do is give the core practices because every workplace is different. What you want is that participants come away knowing how to observe critically and recognize patterns they have been introduced to in the workplace educator professional development,” she adds.¹⁴

- ▶ Nancy Steel, a workplace educator and trainer of trainers in Alberta, sees labour market research, which she interprets as “being familiar with the economic and labour market issues that are contextual to the company, its union and union members”, as critical to introductory professional development. She perceives it as critical for three reasons:
 - 1 It helps the educator to better understand the work environment, the drivers, and to better analyze ESNA [Essential Skills Needs Assessment] findings later.
 - 2 It helps the educator to better develop a rationale for why an ESNA and possible training is a valuable investment.
 - 3 Economic and labour market conditions are constantly shifting and so being aware of sources of information will allow you to keep abreast of changes that influence the clients with whom educators work.¹⁵

Chris Holland, one of the creators of the UK’s Breaking Down Barriers training, suggests that, although the emphasis on workplace content should remain, there are questions to consider about how one positions a professional development philosophically. In response to the question, ‘What is a strength of Breaking Down Barriers?’, Holland states “its connection to critical and socio-cultural research and theory,

whereas other training in the UK can be very prescriptive, with little or no reference to anything other than marketing research.”¹⁶ Indeed, experienced trainers seem to advocate for a look at all the complexities of workplace education, including some of the philosophies which underpin it.

Confederation College designed a distance education model which was composed of five modules and aimed at literacy practitioners with little or no workplace experience. The first three of the five modules familiarized participants with the workplace and explored the role of the workplace educator. In fact, only portions of the remaining two modules address programming issues such as curriculum development and instruction, with the majority of time dedicated to assessing the impact of the workplace on programming. Background reading, discussion topics and an assignment were included in each of the five sessions. Activities included reflective exercises, initial research on a given topic, investigation of a specific program, or videotape viewings. Discussion questions were provided to guide the participants when they spoke with their instructor via telephone. Thus, all programming issues in this course are seen through the lens of the workplace, with the reader inferring that more generic approaches to programming were considered unnecessary for this participant group.

In *Breaking Down Barriers*, the course content affords a good deal of time to discerning the differences between workplace and generic basic skills programming.¹⁷ By framing the discussion this way, participants are encouraged to compare and contrast all aspects of workplace education, from general concepts and organizational culture to student background and expectations with their previous experiences in other adult programs.

Finally, John Antonellis, who was involved in the creation of the pilot training in Massachusetts, cautions against trying to include too much content in an introductory professional

development. In the Massachusetts experience many of the trainees suffered from “information overload”. If he were to run the program again, he states he would scale down both the amount of information and the scope.¹⁸

Labour-Based Approaches

The labour (union) perspective is one which can be addressed through defined topic areas, or it can be woven throughout the professional development by considering how the various aspects of workplace education look from a labour point of view. In the former approach, professional development courses usually include one topic area, often entitled something like ‘Unions in the Workplace’. The topic serves as a catch-all to address everything from union structures to how to include labour in the planning and implementation of an education program. Labour-sponsored organizations prefer an approach where the union perspective is woven through all aspects of the professional development, including course content. The goal of this approach is to provide participants with a strong understanding of all the ways labour can be an equal player in workplace education. In *Learning for Our Lives*, the labour point of view is described as one that “... makes sure that access to training is equitable. [...] It looks to integrate literacy training into other aspects of workplace education. [...] A labour approach promotes union values of democracy, citizenship, justice and empowerment.”¹⁹

The Ontario Federation of Labour’s BEST program is one example of workplace education built upon a labour model. The model used a peer tutoring approach, selecting union members from within a workplace who often had no adult education background but were familiar with the workplace culture. Participants attended a two-week residential training course in order to prepare for their role as literacy tutors. The teaching approach is described as “learner-centred,

participatory and experiential with an emphasis on self-discovery... The program is a blend of adult education theory and practice aimed at building participants' self esteem and confidence."²⁰ Course content covered a wide range of literacy topics, as well as a segment on labour education. In addition to the initial two-week training, a three-day follow-up course was provided for experienced tutors. The employer covered training course fees for both initial and refresher courses.

Delivery Models

A consistent theme in considering a professional development model is the model's ability to reflect the diversity of its participants' backgrounds and experiences. A wide range of delivery models for professional development exists. At the introductory level, there are three models used regularly:

- ▶ the institute: full days, one to two weeks in length
- ▶ workshops: 3 hour sessions, up to 10 weeks in length
- ▶ short-term intensive: full days, 2 or 3 days in length

Separating introductory professional development from a more detailed examination of workplace education programming and practices seems an effective division for many of the trainers interviewed. Indeed, there is some consensus that a model which tries to fit everything into a week-long session, for example, is one that may frustrate new workplace educators. Lynette Plett, who taught a 1-week workplace institute, states she would not repeat that training model for those new to the field. "The one-week format didn't allow for enough reflection — I think participants were on information overload."²¹

The Breaking Down Barriers (BDB) training addressed this issue by dividing the original training into two segments. Chris Holland explains:

*The main weakness is that the programme is very short (3 days) and when that was all there was, it wasn't enough support for new tutors [instructors]. Now we have an advanced level online training (BDB2) and a post-graduate Workplace Literacy Module, online also. So we are able to stress that BDB1 is only an introductory programme.*²²

This two-level approach allows participants to take the information learned in the first level of professional development into the workplace, practice it and come back to follow-up professional development ready to explore issues on a deeper level.

Antonellis agrees with this point. Based on experiences with the Massachusetts pilot model, their refinement of the model will include expanded built-in opportunities for all participants (not just a sample as was the case during the piloting of the project) to apply new knowledge and practice new skills in the workplace. He sees the benefits of such an approach as a workplace educator who not only knows the issues but also is able to apply those within a workplace.

One of our long-term goals is to build enough infrastructure in the system here to include a real work-based learning component for all participants. It requires aligning participants with a workplace from the onset of the training. Seminar courses would be expanded and spaced far enough apart for the participant to complete that aspect of the project. The end result would be a participant that had conducted the WNA [Workplace Needs Assessment], and designed the curriculum and assessment tools for a particular organization. The employer would have a

trained (and mentored) workplace education professional that knew the culture of their organization. From a training perspective, learning is directly applied and minimally bi-directional. Participants learn from the seminars, try it out, bring back their experiences, problems, questions, and learn from each other.²³

Flexibility in Models

Distance education models are infrequent. One exception uncovered during the course of this research was the model developed through Confederation College.²⁴ The report on this model does not include participant evaluation results, nor does it include a reflection by the facilitator on strengths and weaknesses of the distance education model. Further investigation of this model may be useful in the future.

Participants of a workplace educator forum (Winnipeg, 1999) were asked to consider models which could be used to offer professional development. Out of their discussions four potential professional development models were identified:

- 1 Harmonized training
- 2 Standards-based training
- 3 Training through networking
- 4 Training smorgasbord²⁵

While a more detailed look at each of the above models may be worthwhile, the harmonized model addresses issues of flexibility and accommodation, two characteristics of any training which will likely be important to Ontario educators. Harmonized training is described as a coordinated set of professional development opportunities offered at a variety of levels for educators with varying degrees of experience and skills; the model is described in more detail later in this report.

Participant preparation, whereby participants are asked to do prescribed reading in advance of the start of professional development, is built into many of the programs. This is seen as an effective way to familiarize those new to the field with some of the issues involved in workplace education, and allow the trainer to delve more deeply into issues as soon as the course begins. Trainers agree that this preparation allows for a more profound level of discussion early in the professional development process, and may help trainers avoid spending significant amounts of time addressing the rudimentary aspects of workplace education. Once professional development begins, several models encourage ongoing discussions amongst participants and trainers on pre-determined topics via email correspondence and telephone communications.²⁶

Assignments given to participants in the Canadian professional development models researched tended to be in the form of reflection papers and journal writing. Breaking Down Barriers participants wishing to be assessed for the Certificate in Workplace Basic Skills Training must produce a portfolio of eight assignments, both individual and group-based, which address topics similar to those in the professional development course.²⁷ The Massachusetts pilot initially intended to include assignments for those participants wishing to earn Professional Development Points; however, seminar leaders did not end up providing assignments and instead points were awarded based on the participants' attendance of a minimum of 10 seminar hours and either the completion of the post-assessment form or the work-based learning assignment.²⁸

Portability

Delivery model portability is considered a strength in at least one professional development model researched. Chris Holland sees one of Breaking Down Barriers' strengths as its capacity to be used and adapted to a variety of audiences:

The training is very portable and able to be adjusted to local workplace (e.g. high/low employment, small or large enterprises) and tutor circumstances (e.g. in New Zealand one programme was taught on a Maori Marae [meeting place]).

When the Ontario field is ready to consider professional development beyond the introductory level, some accommodation for regional differences may be appropriate. At that point, it may be useful to consider portability of a professional development model, including some portions of any professional development content which could be shaped to reflect the local community and its particular needs.

Accreditation/Certification

The issues surrounding certification and accreditation are complex, and in many ways seem too far down the road for Ontario workplace educators to consider at this juncture. However, the Massachusetts pilot makes some compelling arguments for confronting the issues early in the planning stages. Indeed, they revised their earlier position that any accreditation or certification process would be unfeasible for a variety of reasons, and instead determined to review a certification process in the mid- to long-term.²⁹ Recognizing that certification and accreditation are two distinct processes, what they do share is a foundation which requires that any professional development meet defined expectations and relate to established criteria.

Accreditation — the process by which a course of study may be officially recognized by an educational institution — is available in some places for education/professional development. The University of Winnipeg ran two summer institutes providing a half credit in workplace education in a degree-granting program through that university; Breaking Down Barriers offers accreditation through the Open

College of the North West. Certification can be achieved through participation and completion of assignments and exercises.³⁰ The Massachusetts pilot provided certificates to participants who attended all nine of their seminars, and awarded Professional Development Points to those meeting established requirements (see above). In addition, interested participants also received job placement assistance from the Workplace Education Collaborative. There may well be other models offering certification that this research process could not investigate in detail, including the distance education training course offered to literacy educators through Confederation College.

While some examples of accreditation exist, and many programs distribute certificates upon course completion to acknowledge participants' attendance, formalized certification is rare.³¹ Nova Scotia Partners in Education has a certification process in place, which they began with field research in 1998. The results of a province-wide educator survey, as well as recommendations and follow-up from the survey, were published in Shannon Kelly's report *Determining the Road Ahead*. In reviewing survey results, Kelly observes that instructors "agreed that the development of a certification program would benefit them by increasing their learning opportunities, providing them with credentials and moving workplace education to the status of a recognized profession."³²

A United States certification program is offered through James Madison University in Virginia, which offers a Workforce Development Certificate of Completion for each course completed. Participants can also receive certification in three specific areas: Program Developer; Curriculum Designer; and Instructor. Courses are currently offered on a range of topics, including Introduction to Workforce Education; Marketing Workforce Education Programs; Planning and Design; Organizational Assessment; Curriculum Development; Instruction; and Program Evaluation.³³

Sustainability and Follow-Up

Built-in sustainability is an issue in workplace educator professional development. In her overview of workplace educator professional development models, Roger points to a pattern wherein many professional development opportunities are offered on a one-time or as-needed basis.³⁴ Many professional development programs have been offered, but little exists in the way of a professional development “path” which allows the individual to see where they are headed once they start. One exception to this scenario exists in jurisdictions like the province of Nova Scotia, where professional development is centralized and offered at an introductory level with subsequent workshops available for more experienced educators.

The limited number of such comprehensive models does not appear to arise from a perceived lack of need. Indeed, much of the literature reviewed points to the value of a type of model that would support individuals right along their career path. In their report on the 1999 Workplace Education Practitioners’ Forum in Winnipeg, Roger and Nichol describe a harmonized training approach that many workplace educators at the forum rated favourably. It is described as “a sequence of training steps that would allow practitioners to approach training from a differential skill basis. Participants new to the field could address issues at an introductory level, experienced practitioners could focus on specialization or more advanced levels of training.”³⁵ The Massachusetts team concluded, based on their own research of professional development programs, that “those [programs] that used a work-based learning component, provided subsequent mentoring support, and included a capacity building or train-the-trainer component appeared most promising.”³⁶

Mentoring, the process whereby a participant is observed in their role as educator and provided with guidance and

feedback from an experienced workplace educator formed part of several professional development initiatives. The 1997 Literacy BC Summer Institute followed up their one-week intensive program with an optional four-month mentored component for those who completed the Workplace Education course.³⁷ The Massachusetts pilot matched five interested participants with a mentor. In this instance, participants and mentors met to establish and refine the desired goal for completion, established a mentoring plan together, and submitted a final report that included an evaluation of the mentoring process and accomplishments. The pair could choose which area of workplace education to focus on, and their choices ranged from conducting focus groups to needs analyses.³⁸

Finally, the use of technology has not been fully explored with regard to sustaining contact and increasing learning opportunities within the field. In *Looking Back, Looking Forward*, Folinsbee observes that workplace educators have many technology-based connections at their disposal which “pave the way for all sorts of possibilities for collaboration and idea/information sharing in the future.”³⁹ To date, any comprehensive, organized effort to connect workplace educators via technology has not come to fruition.

Emerging Themes

Holistic Approach

Being able to consider the larger issues surrounding workplace education — and perhaps in particular some of the ethical and philosophical issues — seems paramount to creating high quality workplace education that responds to community needs. While other provinces have had opportunities to discuss and build expertise over time, many Ontario educators may be thinking through these larger questions for the first time. Although they certainly could be addressed in a limited fashion through an introductory professional development, discussions of this nature may

need to be carried forward as well. Such discussions might include addressing issues such as ‘Who is the workplace education program for?’ and ‘What is the nature of learner-centred programming in the workplace?’

A review of the literature reveals a consensus in the view that professional development should be considered more holistically than other types of teacher training may be.

*Staff training and development for Workplace Education is more than training teachers for their roles. It is about nurturing the growth of workplace educators who are knowledgeable in the wide range of issues. It takes a holistic view of the workplace environment and the roles of the people in it.*⁴⁰

Understand the Workplace

There is a strong acknowledgement from documentation on professional development efforts and from conversations with field experts, that the workplace is complex and dynamic. Ideally, professional development efforts should address the differences in approaches and perspectives on workplace learning, including labour’s perspective, short-term versus long-term programming, curriculum tied directly to workplace, life-skills oriented curriculum and so on. Given the changing nature of workplaces, participants will not be well served if they come away from the professional development feeling like they have all the answers. Instead they will be better prepared and more likely to encounter success if they come away knowing how to ask the right questions.

Workplace tours give an initial glance at the workplace. They were suggested by many of the field experts interviewed, and are part of some of the professional development programs researched. Tours are seen to be an effective way for those new to the workplace to really understand what they are getting into. It was noted several times that many adult

educators have no experience in a manufacturing or service setting, and talking about it doesn't give them the true picture.⁴¹

Expert opinion and research findings point to the need to focus on workplace issues and on participants' exploration of their role as educators within the workplace for educators new to workplace programming. The ways in which different professional development programs get this message across varies, but the central theme allows for participants to understand the differences between workplace programming and other adult education programming and to consider how their role as educator changes to reflect those differences.

Consider Groundwork Already Done

There is a history of professional development initiatives that should be considered when looking at building future opportunities. Folinsbee outlines the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST program and the W/WEBS Trainer course, and points to common elements and strengths of various professional development programs.⁴² Workplace educator competencies have been researched and documented in a number of bodies of work (DACUM Winnipeg and the recent Massachusetts pilot are just two examples). A more detailed investigation of the work is in order, but should the information contained in those documents be considered credible and relevant to the Ontario context, those competencies could be incorporated, in whole or in part, into the planning.

Professional Development in Stages

Upon initial reflection on this type of professional development initiative, it is easy to think, "*Participants need to know everything! Give them information on the workplace, needs assessment, curriculum development, etc., etc.*" This seems to be a common trap, as many of the field experts interviewed had constructed introductory professional development for workplace educators trying to accomplish the same goals. It would seem that this approach is not only overly ambitious, but it may serve to undermine what useful

content is conveyed. By providing too much information all at once, participants may be unable to process it all and consequently may not retain very much of anything. There seems to be no use rushing the training or condensing the information to fit in one professional development intervention. Below are several suggestions on possible programming models for introductory professional development.

The Massachusetts pilot model consisted of three triads, that is, three groups of three professional development sessions. This allowed participants to gain workplace experience in the time periods between sessions, and presumably to raise the level of critical discussion as time passed. This model addresses some of the reservations expressed by trainers who had delivered professional development at an introductory level in a more intensive format (one week institutes, for example). These trainers felt that the compressed timelines and considerable amount of information didn't allow for enough participant reflection and assimilation of new knowledge and skills.

Once an introductory level professional development has been provided, some accommodation in professional development content may be advisable. A flexible model, which allows for workplace educators to participate in the training they feel they need, may be useful to consider.⁴³

A mentored component or practicum merits further investigation. Its potential benefits include the opportunity for the participant to apply new knowledge and skills within a workplace while receiving feedback from an experienced workplace educator. Mentoring could focus on workplace education in its broadest applications or it could be used to develop expertise in a focussed area of programming, e.g. ONA, participant evaluation.

Keep it Grounded

Stories from the floor were suggested as an effective way to convey the complexities of workplace education. Case studies and anecdotes to illustrate common scenarios are some examples of this approach. These stories also served to inject some life and humour into what may be a content-heavy, intense professional development experience for participants.

Consider the Long-Term

The Massachusetts pilot model seems a very good example of a training approach that is well considered, and includes long-term thinking in its professional development strategy. The project received minimal initial funding and while their outcomes far exceeded their funder's expectations, it was only the first step in a long-term plan to increase the capacity of Massachusetts to provide professional development for workplace educators. This long-term thinking offers several benefits:

- 1 It validates and professionalizes the field. This is an important consideration in adult education where funds often do not exist for anything but "running classes". This may be of particular importance in the case of workplace education, which has had a low profile in Ontario during the last several years.
- 2 It allows trainers and instructors to consider what their options are with regard to professional development and career development.
- 3 It acknowledges that there are many areas of expertise in workplace education. This can allow an individual to develop a range of skills with the goal of being a generalist, or alternatively, to build a particular area of expertise.

Neither accreditation nor certification processes are requirements of a professional development strategy; there may, in fact, be many reasons not to implement such systems. However, the careful planning of any professional development process with a view to larger issues of workplace training, including workplace educator competencies, may

dovetail into any future decisions to implement either a certification or accreditation process.

Other Reflections

It seems useful to apply the learning strategies outlined in Maurice Taylor's *Transfer of Learning* to the training strategies of any professional development model. Among the strategies he outlines to increase transfer among participants, are the following:

- ▶ provide follow-up assistance to learners
- ▶ link learners with peers
- ▶ use progress evaluation results in future program planning
- ▶ provide refresher sessions
- ▶ recognize learner completion⁴⁴

It makes sense for any professional development effort to incorporate and model strategies which assist participants to learn better and transfer that learning to the workplace. Coincidentally, the strategies listed above are also suggested practices that flow from research of and discussions with experienced workplace educators in the field.

References

1. W/WEBS ended in 1997. Since that time, workplace education programming (not professional development) has continued to be delivered through a range of service providers, in most cases on a full cost-recovery basis. Providers include boards of education, colleges and independent trainers. In some cases, workplace education programs continue to operate according to a model initiated under a previous funding or delivery structure, as in the case of BEST, the Ontario Federation of Labour's Building Education and Skills for Tomorrow (formerly Basic Education and Skills Training) program. Presently, there are a handful of workplace education programs still being delivered through the BEST model, but without any of the supports previously administered through that initiative.
2. Practitioner Training Strategy, Literacy Development Unit, Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, August 13, 2001.
3. The Commonwealth Corporation and the Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages developed and ran the professional development program. The Workplace Education Collaborative of the Metro South/West Regional Employment Board in Boston funded the project.
4. Roger, vi.
5. Folinsbee (2000), 5.
6. Fiona Frank, cited in Folinsbee (2000), 7-9.
7. Paul Jurmo, cited in Folinsbee (2000), 9-10.
8. Massachusetts Workplace Education Collaborative, 29-32.
9. The Workplace Education Collaborative conducted telephone interviews, and focus groups, distributed surveys and performed a literature review in an attempt to answer the questions: 'What should a workplace practitioner know?' and 'How and where can a workplace practitioner develop the necessary knowledge and skills?' (partial list of questions) Competencies were then listed and submitted back to the field for feedback. Broad areas of competence were used to underpin the professional development and are included in the Final Report, 22-24.

10. “The DACUM chart [the term is an abbreviation of ‘Developing a Curriculum’] is a concrete description of what people need to know and do to perform their jobs. It can be used as the basis for course or program development to identify individuals’ strengths or weaknesses, or to aid professional development for groups of workplace educators.” Millar, 6.
11. Mary Ellen Belfiore, cited in Folinsbee, (2000), 27.
12. Telephone communication January 28, 2002.
13. Telephone communication January 25, 2002.
14. Interview, January 26, 2002.
15. Electronic mail communication, January 22, 2002.
16. Electronic mail communication, January 21, 2002. Glynda Hull describes the socio-cultural approach as follows: “...in order to understand literacy at work, one must situate one’s study of literacy not only within the immediate work environment, but also within the larger cultural, social and historical milieu. 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 organized and how that organization affects who is required, allowed, expected to read and write what and why...”,7.
17. Frank & Holland, 3-5.
18. Electronic mail communication, January 21, 2002.
19. Canadian Labour Congress, 13.
20. Roger, 45.
21. Telephone communication January 25, 2002.
22. Electronic mail communication January 21, 2002.
23. Electronic mail communication, January 24, 2002.
24. Bloom, 1.
25. Roger & Nichol, 11-12.

26. John Antonellis, Electronic mail communication, January 24, 2002.
27. Frank & Holland, 56-57.
28. John Antonellis, Electronic mail communication, February 5, 2002.
29. Workplace Education Collaborative Final report, 42.
30. Frank & Holland, 54.
31. Many professional development programs distribute certificates to participants; however, the awarding of certificates is based upon attendance and assignment completion alone and is not tied to an evaluation framework. Roger (1999) lists professional development courses individually as of year of publication, with an entry denoted when certificates were issued.
32. Kelly, 15.
33. The James Harrison University website at: <http://wdc.jmu.edu> provides details on their certification program.
34. Roger, vii.
35. Roger and Nichol, 26.
36. Workplace Education Collaborative, 8.
37. The Mentored Practicum component was developed by Sue Folinsbee and Mary Thompson. See bibliography.
38. John Antonellis, Electronic mail communication, February 4, 2002.
39. Folinsbee (2000), 22.
40. Mentoring Project, Massachusetts, 1993. Report not paginated.
41. Margerit Roger says of the experience, "They [participants] immediately store the image of how different it is from anything they've imagined or talked about in the training." Telephone communication, January 28, 2002.
42. Folinsbee (1998).
43. See p. 9 for the smorgasbord approach.
44. Taylor, 37.

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