Workplace Education Activities in Saskatchewan: An Overview

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Prepared by:
V. Carpenter
D. Ortmann

WORKPLACE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

Regina Public Library's Business Literacy Project
Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science & Technology
Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board
Saskatchewan Literacy Network
Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council
Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Workplace education has not had a strong history in the province of Saskatchewan. Although the first workplace education project was implemented as early as 1975, services as such, did not really begin until 1989. And though available since that year, workplace education has been provided in a somewhat ad hoc fashion.

In May, 1995, a group of stakeholders established a Workplace Education Consortium with a mandate to develop a province wide strategy for delivery of Workplace Education 'WE' information, and possible communication and support mechanisms for increasing the awareness of and accessibility to workplace education.

The first task set out by the Consortium was to prepare an overview of present workplace education activities in the province, and to identify and document the issues and concerns, as well as, successes and obstacles in this field, as perceived by its practitioners.

To implement this project, it was necessary to carry out an exploratory survey of workplace or work-related educational services, and an assessment of need. Further work was then done to determine the degree of interest in workplace education. An attempt was made to locate and contact all agencies or organizations in the province of Saskatchewan that have a connection to 'WE' or have 'WE' as their mandate.

Thirty (30) organizations and agencies were identified province wide. (See Appendix I - list of all organizations). One of the thirty organizations - Souris Valley campus of the Southeast Regional College did not have a literacy or Workplace Education coordinator and was, therefore, not included in the survey. Out of the twenty nine (29) eventually contacted - fifteen (15) were colleges or institutes, five (5) were community/grassroots organizations such as Circle Project, Lloydminster Friendship Centre, four (4) were networking or coordinated bodies, two (2) were libraries, one (1) - a government agency, and one (1) was a provincial French adult education organization, two (2) were library Learning Centres and one (1) an educational consulting firm.

The organizations were grouped according to their locations or areas they served, into seven (7) geographic regions, in order to search for possible patterns which may be due to geography (see Table below). However, as the research progressed, with the exception of the Northern region, no significant, discernible patterns were found. The final summary of findings thus does not provide break downs for individual regions.

TABLE

REGION	NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS
Regina	6
Saskatoon	4
Southwest	3
Northwest	3
Provincial	4

Northeast   4
Northern   5

PROCESS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first step after identifying all relevant organizations, was to prepare a list of all points needing to be addressed and, based on the nature and amount of information required, select an appropriate research instrument. The final list consisted of about fifty **(50) questions. As such,it was too extensive to lend itself well to a mail out questionnaire as was originally intended.**

The research approach, selected as the most fruitful and expedient for the purposes of this project, was unstructured interviewing, with the use of an interview guide. It was deemed, that this approach would yield the richest data, and could flush out information a questionnaire could not, and, possibly uncover areas for further research. At the same time, personal interviewing would serve as a networking mechanism.

The list of information to be collected was revised and used as a basis for the interview guide. The questions were organized into the following seven (7) sections:

1. Extent and types of workplace education activities provided province wide
2. Instructional methods, educational materials and resources
3. Need, interest in, and demand for 'WE' programs by business, unions and individuals
4. Unions and workplace education
5. Benefits of workplace education, assessment and follow up
6. Workplace education challenges, concerns and obstacles
7. Present interest in and use of workplace education services
8. Networking, communication and coordination

Prior to conducting the actual interviews, each organization was contacted in order to arrange a convenient interview time. All organizations were informed about the objectives of the project and received information on the Consortium.

The interviews were carried out between July and October of 1995. Given the number and geographical dispersion of the identified organizations, it was not feasible to conduct interviews in person with all agencies. Sixteen (16) were conducted on location in person and thirteen (13) by phone. Each interview covered approximately 50 various points and lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to 4 hours.

The most time consuming part of this project was the processing and preparation of the collected data for analysis. All twenty nine (29) interviews were recorded manually. Each interview document had to be carefully reviewed and 'cleaned' (ambiguous responses had to be checked for correctness and consistency with other responses, etc.) and entered into 29 separate files in the computer. Many questions necessitated the development of response categories. The responses to each question were then collated and entered into 53 individual files. The response files had to be reorganized into more closely related topic sections to create a more logical sequence. During this process, a number of questions that were similar were combined, and some were eliminated.

In reading the Summary of Findings it is important to keep in mind that the organizations interviewed often did not keep detailed records. The respondents relied heavily on their experience and recollection. The data and information presented in this document is, therefore, to a great degree, based on the general knowledge and personal

views of the workplace education practitioners, rather than accurate statistical data.

N.B.

You may notice in some cases percentages are calculated using a total of twenty nine (29) agencies, in other instances they are calculated on the basis of a total of twenty six (26) agencies. This seeming discrepancy was due to the fact that three (3) of the twenty nine (29) agencies interviewed were not programming bodies. Some of the questions did not apply to them, and were, therefore, not included in the calculations.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Q - 1. Do you offer workplace education programs?

Yes 18
No 8
N/A 3

Of the twenty nine (29) agencies contacted, eighteen (18) gave affirmative responses; eight (8) said no, but four (4) of them stated they do have the ability to deliver programs. Three (3) agencies did not have programming in their mandate and, therefore, the question was not applicable to them. To summarize, 69% of the organizations with programming capacity and/or mandate do presently offer some type of 'WE' programming, and 31% do not. While these statistics reflect the presence of programming activity, they do not provide data on the number and types of programs offered by each organization.

It should be noted that 93% of organizations in the Northern, Northeast and Northwest regions are offering some type of workplace or upgrading programs. The northern area of the province is generally regarded as the region with the lowest educational levels, so it follows that workplace education activities would be very high.

This encouragingly high statistic may be somewhat diminished by the unique situation of the northern region. Because of land claim agreements with the First Nations, the companies operating there must hire a large proportion of Northerners. Thus the high level of workplace education activity does not, necessarily, reflect the interest or commitment on the part of the companies, but rather, a necessity imposed on them by circumstances.

When asked about Workplace Education, those interviewed were not given a definition of what constitutes a workplace education ('WE') program; the interpretation of the question was left up to each individual respondent. It was interesting to see the extent to which 'WE' program providers varied in what they viewed as workplace education. The types of programs considered 'WE' ranged from something as specific as welding or driver training, to computer training, general upgrading and basic literacy skills.

In one case, the agency provided some "upgrading programs" and "job shadowing" but did not consider this 'WE' programming. Literacy and ESL were also viewed in a variety of ways. Some considered them to be 'WE' activities while others did not; yet another agency tried to estimate the breakdown of individuals enrolled in literacy or ESL programs based on whether they were taking them because of work concerns or other reasons. In calculating final totals, upgrading, job shadowing and ESL programs, unless indicated otherwise, were counted as 'WE' or 'WE' related activities.

Based on the types of responses given, it became evident there is a need to formulate generally agreed upon operational definition of 'WE' programs, and to distinguish between these and specific job training. Without a common, operational definition,

accurate quantitative analysis cannot be provided.

Q - 2. Where do you deliver programs - at your location, worksite, or both?

Own location	5
Worksite	8
Both	12
Other	1

One agency, representing 4%, provides programs in places other the indicated above. 19% of all organizations offer programs at their location, and 31% at worksite exclusively. The remaining majority 46% offers programs at both the worksite and their own location.

One of the agencies presently operating only at their own location could offer programs on site if requested. Similarly, another agency that works on site only, could provide programs at their location. This means, more than half (54%) of all programming agencies have the ability to deliver 'WE' programs at the worksite or, their own location.

Q - 3. Do you administer the General Education Diploma (GED) or provide GED preparatory work?

Yes (administer or provide GED or GED preparatory work) 1 5
No (have ability to assist with GED work) 1 1

58% of the twenty six (26) programming bodies administer GED or carry out preparatory GED work. Of the 11% that responded negatively, three (3) organizations said they could meet this need. The remaining eight (8) did not give an indication of their capabilities. This means at least 70% of all agencies have the ability to provide GED programs.

Q - 4. Do you, or can you provide distance workplace education ? How often are these kinds of programs requested?

Yes	4
No	22
Could	5

15% of those interviewed gave a positive response, while 85% said no. Five of the agencies (23%) that gave a negative responses said they could provide distance education. The accuracy of this data is somewhat questionable. It was evident from some of the answers given - "we try to offer programs within driving distance" that the concept of distance education may not have been understood clearly.

Q - 5. Do you offer English as a Second Language (ESL) programs?

Yes   18
No   8

An ESL program is either a full ESL instruction, or a component of a work-related or literacy programs. ESL is most often provided for new Canadians and also for aboriginal clients. Programs are generally designed to meet the specific needs and levels of learners.

69% of all agencies are presently engaged in ESL programming, while 31% are not. Two (2) of those not offering ESL presently stated they have the capacity to do so, and two (2) gave lack of funding and cutbacks as reasons for discontinuing ESL. This brings the total of agencies with ESL programming capacity to at least 85%.

Q - 6. What percentage of your workplace education ('WE') programs are ESL oriented ?

The majority of respondents found it difficult to assess the percentage of their ESL oriented 'WE' programs. The programmers do not routinely ask each individual for his/her reason for participating in an ESL course, thus records of this nature are not kept. While some may enroll in an ESL program for purely personal growth reasons, in the case of new Canadians, it may be safe to assume, the majority of them are doing it for present or future work related reasons. This again, suggests a need for a uniform definition of 'WE' programs.

In the organizations that did provide data, the percentage of ESL programming related to workplace education ranged from 50 to 100%.

Q - 7. Have you been involved in providing cooperative programs (i.e., programs which involve employees from a number of different businesses, businesses within the same industry or, within the same region) ?

Yes   6
No   20

A very low number of agencies have been involved with this type of model. Only 23% of the agencies said yes; 77% said no. 15% of those that had not tried this type of programming - (three agencies), said they liked the idea and intended to pursue it in the future. The cooperative programs implemented were in the mining and oil service sector, in the health sector (hospitals, nursing homes), and with Native Bands, related to computers and carpentry.

It is surprising in the present time of financial cut backs and constraints more organizations are not using this method. It is a very cost-effective way to program and it would be a great selling point when approaching business.

Q - 8. Do you charge a fee for your 'WE' services?

Yes   10 (34%)

No   16 (66%)

Only 1/3 of the respondents (34%), indicated they charged a fee; the remaining 66% did not. As in a some of the other areas previously, there appeared to be a certain ambiguity about fees: "yes and no", "depends" were some of the responses given. Only three (3) of those who said they charged for programs indicated set fees. One had a very nominal fee of $1.13 per instruction hour. Based on information gathered, even in cases where a fee is charged, it is often waved, or paid for, or subsidized by the requesting company, or agencies such as Bands, New Careers etc.

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Q - 9. What method of instruction do you use? (One to One/Peer Tutoring, Small Group/Classroom)

Small classroom/group method	10
One-to-one/peer tutoring	6
Both of the above	10

38.5% of agencies provide instruction in small group/classroom settings. The same percentage - 38.5 use both - peer/one to one tutoring and small group/classroom approaches. Only 23% of the agencies use one to one / peer tutoring exclusively.

Q - 10. Do you offer computer aided 'WE' programs? If yes, please indicate type of programs.

Yes	20 (77%)
No	6 (23%)

More than 3/4 of all organizations use some type of computer aided programs. PALS Lab was the most widely spread, mentioned twelve (12) times, followed by PLATO with three (3) mentions.

Success Maker, CAP, and Path Finders were mentioned once each, along with a variety of software based on need or sometimes instructor's preference. A number of respondents commented on the under utilization of PALS labs, due to lack of, or discontinuation of funding and subsequent unavailability of instructors.

Q - 11. What types of educational materials or curriculum do you use ?

There were no discernible patterns in the types of materials used. LAUBLACH, ESL, GED materials and materials from companies for which a particular program is developed were the ones mentioned most often - three (3) times each. Even when specific materials were named, all providers said they used a combination of resources. Where computer assisted learning is available, they use the materials provided. Frequently the agencies develop their own materials and there is almost always a need to adapt what they have.

Q - 12. Where do you get information on educational models and tools?

Without exception, none of the 'WE' providers have specific, regular sources for their instructional materials and educational models and techniques. They speak of "haphazard" acquisition of materials, of "getting them from where they can". Most use public or college libraries, learning centres, magazines, catalogues, publishers lists. Sometimes new materials or teaching models are discovered at conferences. At times, the search extends to other provinces or even to the USA.

Most frequently mentioned sources:

        Other literacy practitioners 9x
        SLN   6x
        NLS   3x

Other information sources included: Frontier College, Pathfinders, SIAST, ACFC, FORA, ACCESS Network and INTERNET.

Although this type of method of locating materials and information is unsystematic and time consuming, it is understandable, as 'WE' programs are specific to each location and business, and in that sense, every program or learner group is unique.

Q - 13. Have you developed and/or produced any materials, e.g., program curriculum, handbooks, brochures ?

        Yes (quite a few)   15
        Yes (some)   3
        No   11

The majority of programming agencies have been developing many of their own materials. More than half of agencies (52%) indicated they produced several resources each, ranging from manuals, guides videos, to handbooks, modules and brochures. Another three (10%), develop worksheets or adapt and customize existing materials. Eleven agencies (38%), said they had not developed any resources previously, or at least not in the past two years.

The responses indicate that almost 2/3 of all agencies (62%) are involved in developing or customizing instructional and learning resources for their programs.

Q - 14. What types of methods of instruction have been most successful in your experience? (Success may relate to type of industry, size of company, or any other common factors you may think of)

There was an even split between those who mentioned one to one tutoring and those who mentioned small group instruction. However, a number of agencies in each of the above two categories use only one method; . therefore, the responses given by them are not an indication of which method was more successful, but rather, which method worked successfully on their program.

Small group instruction is, of course, more cost and time effective, while one to one peer tutoring is highly individualized, and might be considered the better of the two. On the other hand, some learners feel uncomfortable with their peer tutor knowing about their problem, and prefer a group setting instead.

The majority of workplace educators commented that there is "no best way"; it depends on the individual's needs, the particular nature of the training, and available resources.

Q - 15. What types of 'WE' methods of instruction have been the least successful and why?

When asked about least successful teaching methods, the educators, much more readily (than in Q- 14)) viewed group instruction as less effective as it is less individualized.

However, the most negative view was that of the traditional classroom student/teacher set up, which intimidates the adult learners and causes them great discomfort.

It was also mentioned (without explanation). that off site instruction tends to be less successful than when given at worksite.

> **SECTION III. NEEDS INTEREST IN, AND DEMAND FOR WORKPLACE EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY BUSINESS, UNION AND INDIVIDUALS.**

Q - 16. Have you identified any educational needs/trends which apply specifically to a certain population sector, region, industry or occupation?

Most of the organizations surveyed voiced a general need for basic literacy skills - reading, writing, comprehension, problem solving and basic math; often in combination with ESL.

Hospitality and service sectors (motels, hotels, restaurants, nursing homes etc.) were the sectors mentioned most frequently (6 times), as ones with the greatest need for basic literacy and ESL skills.

In northern regions, forestry and mining are the main industries, and therefore, the sectors with the greatest need for 'WE'.

Organizations in areas with large native population (North and Northeast), or those having native clients as target groups, identified as the greatest problems the general low educational levels (grade 9 and below) in these regions, and a general lack of basic skills. As well, it was pointed out, the population in these regions has a large percentage of learning disabilities, social problems and drug and alcohol abuse; which are further, serious obstacles to learning.

Other sectors mentioned were: small business, trades, manufacturing, farmers and rural employers, janitorial firms and firefighters.

A number of programmers expressed an overall concern, not specific to any region or population, about the future of the workforce. They felt, schools are producing graduates with insufficient reading, writing and comprehension skills: "students are not learning anything", the emerging workforce will be a "non literate workforce".

Three agencies, one each in Saskatoon, in Southwest and in Northeast regions, mentioned a need for changing learner/worker attitudes. They have observed a "lack of work ethic" and general lack "of motivation and taking pride in doing a good job".

Q -17. What specific businesses, you are aware of, would benefit from a 'WE' program?

The following companies were named:

> Canadiyas Men's Apparel
> City of Moose Jaw
> City of Saskatoon
> Delysle Foods
> Eaton's
> Flexicoil
> Indian and Metis Centres

Inland Grain Terminals
John Deer
Kramer Tractor
Moose Jaw Asphalt
Mystic Management
Northern Steel
Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan
Ramada Hotel
Saskatchewan Department of
Highways
SaskPower
Sweeprite Implements
United Oil Seed
Weyerhaeuser
Wheat Pool

Q - 18. What companies have asked for information about workplace education ('WE') but have not yet implemented programs or, have decided against them?

Generally 'WE' agencies do not keep track of requests for information or record whether these resulted in programs or not.

A few agencies recalled the names of some of the companies that have requested information about 'WE' programs:

Central Canada Potash
City of Saskatoon
Indian and Metis Centre
Kindersley Oil Patch
Pasqua Hospital
Saskatchewan Forest
Products
Steel Pipe Manufacturing
Superior Propane

The most extensive list of companies was given by Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) - WEST Program:

Canada Post
City of Moose Jaw
City of Yorkton
Department of Highways
Heath Districts (all)
Imperial 400 Motel, Yorkton
Nirvana Pioneer Village,
Melfort
Potash Mines
Prince Albert Inn
Ramada Hotels, Saskatoon

and Regina
Regina Lutheran Home
SaskEnergy
SaskPower
SaskTel
SaskWater
Sasko Park, Tisdale

Q - 19. What do you think are the main reasons why businesses do not pursue or decline to implement 'WE' programs?

The responses to this question were somewhat sketchy and did not lend themselves to clear categories. The 'WE' providers felt that businesses generally did not see 'WE' as a "burning issue", that they did not recognize it as a need: "do not see the correlation between low literacy levels and low productivity". Consequently, there is a lack of support for such endeavors on behalf of the management, and an unwillingness to invest money for any training.

'WE' providers felt financial costs and lack of support from unions and/or management were the main reasons for not implementing programs.

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Q - 20. For which businesses have you delivered workplace education ('WE') programs?

A number of agencies considered their client list confidential and would not divulge specific names of companies.

Companies named:

Cameco
CBC
City of Regina
City of Saskatoon
Delta Bessborough Hotel
Health Centres
Hotel Saskatchewan
Husky
Imperial 400
IPSCO
Kenaston
Kindersley Oil Patch
Leader Post
Moose Jaw Thundercreek
Health District
Peak Manufacturing
PrintWest
Rail City Industries
Regina Inn
Regina Public Library
Royal University Hospital
SGI
Sask. Power
Saskatchewan Wheat Pool
SaskEnergy
Saskatchewan Environment
Saskatchewan Forest
Products Corporation
Saskatchewan Property
Management

Corporation

STC
Saskatoon Chemicals
Saskatoon Inn

Saskferco
7 Oaks
Superior Propane
Union Hospital
Western Trucking
Corporation

Q - 21. Of the businesses you have worked with, who initiated contact (you, the business, the union)?

This information was not available or applicable in nine (9) of the twenty six (26 cases). The remaining organizations reported the following:

'WE' provider initiated   6
Business initiated   16

In a number of instances there was a combination, i.e., the client approached the organization, but the organization also approached some businesses. In addition, individuals approach agencies on their own, and, as already mentioned earlier, this is not being recorded separately.

A few respondents remarked they do not have time to approach potential clients.

Q - 22, What are some of the reasons businesses/unions give for needing 'WE' programs?

Basic literacy skills   15
ESL   4
New technology   4

The most common reasons, when given, were the need for basic literacy skills, mentioned fifteen (15) times and ESL four (4) times. New technology, namely computers, were also mentioned four (4) times.

Three (3) 'WE' providers mentioned that some companies began to require certificates or technical diplomas for trades which did not require them before, such as carpentry, or that some employers threaten firing if the employee is incapable of reading and writing.

Q - 23. How many workplace education ('WE') programs have been requested by clients for skills upgrading due to technological change?

The data on the number of actual programs was not available. Twelve (12) organizations indicated requests for programs due to technological change. Although the majority of those approached for programs did not specify the particular technological change, more than half of them mentioned computers as the main reason.

As one of the respondents observed, the programs requested due to technological change are not tied as much to the use of the new technology itself, as they are tied to basic literacy skills. Generally, individuals do not have great difficulty in using the computer or any other new equipment, if taught by being shown, however, they are unable to read and

comprehend manuals, instructions, etc.

Q - 24. Do organizations who have implemented workplace education ('WE') programs in the past feei that they have an ongoing need for 'WE'.

Yes	10
Don't know, N/A	16

Only 38% of agencies felt that some companies saw an ongoing need for workplace education, but would not implement programs without external funding or, unless, the programs were free.

Q - 25. Have you implemented programs continuously at any worksite? Please specify. (This may be the same program implemented more than once, programswhich are in a series, or simply several different programs focusing on several different areas)

Yes	13
No	13

Exactly half (50%) of the interviewed agencies have implemented ongoing programs with the same businesses. Some of them were as brief as two sessions, and some programs went on or have been going on for several years.

Some of the business which have or had ongoing programs were: Regina Inn, Imperial 400, Hotel Saskatchewan, Weyerhaeuser, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, SaskEnergy, Rail City Industries.

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Q - 26. Are there particular unions that have a stronger commitment or interest in 'WE'?

The majority of respondents had no experience in working with unions, and therefore, offered few opinions on the above question.

Input was received from only five (5) agencies. Two (2) respondents mentioned SFL only because they heard about, or were familiar with, the WEST program. RWDSU and BC Steel Union were mentioned by one (1) agency. The fourth agency mentioned the union involved with HUSKY as very supportive, and the fifth respondent named SGEU, SEIU, CUPE, and OPEIU as unions with large memberships that can afford to pressure management into trying 'WE' projects.

Q - 27. Do you find that 'WE' programs are easier to implement in unionized environments?

Based on lack of knowledge of and experience in working with the unions, the respondents were generally unsure or did not know whether it was easier to implement programs in unionized companies.

One (1) respondent found working with the union "somewhat difficult at first", one (1) very easy. Three (3) felt it should be easier as the unions are there to represent the interests of the workers, and possibly, because unionized businesses are generally larger and therefore have more money to spend on 'WE'.

Q - 28. What benefits are gained from 'WE' programs by employers ?

Twelve (12) of the respondents expressed their views on the benefits of 'WE' to the employer (see below). The remainder offered no opinion, or said they have not done a follow up. It is unclear to what degree the list of benefits below represents formal or informal input from employers or, to what degree these are the benefits to the employer as perceived by the 'WE' providers.

- increased skills - more qualified employee
- employee is more confident, takes pride in work
- better quality of work (fewer mistakes)
- higher productivity
- employee more willing to take risks and try new challenges
- higher work morale
- more confident employees become better team players
- improvement in communication
- better, more productive workers
- money is saved in the long term

Q - 29. What benefits are gained from workplace education ('WE') programs by employees?

Only one of the organizations has done a follow up which, at the time of the interview, was not yet complete. The conclusions are based mostly on anecdotal sources and observation.

- reading, writing and comprehension skills
- higher self-esteem, confidence
- opportunities for promotions or other jobs
- they become more comfortable with asking questions
- improvement in job performance

Q - 30. What difficulties do you have in assessing the success or benefits received from workplace education ('WE') programs?

Depending on the type of the agency or institution offering the training, some measurement of the learner's progress may take place. Those using more traditional classroom models may administer tests and exams to measure skill acquisition. In such cases the assessment is easy as it measures, immediate, concrete achievements.

With the exception of one agency, presently completing a program assessment, 'WE' providers do not have built in evaluation or follow up systems in their programs.

Some 'WE' providers do not use any type of measurement (especially in one-to-one tutoring situations), others use only a pass or fail measurement. Sometimes the programs are evaluated by the instructors, other times, by the students. Generally the agencies find follow up difficult and do not keep track of students after the program.

In addition to gaining specific skills, learners gain many "soft" benefits which are difficult to measure. Increase in self-confidence and self-worth, personality changes, pride and a sense of accomplishment are a few examples of "soft" benefits. Many of these evolve over a period of time and have, therefore, long term effects, which makes an evaluation even more difficult. The indicators of success are hard to define.

At the present time, there are no systems set up for follow up over a period of time, or, for obtaining input from employers. Present assessment are mostly intuitive, or based on personal and anecdotal information.

Q - 31. What difficulties do employers have in assessing the success or benefits received from workplace education ('WE') programs?

The employers usually do not carry out an assessment of workplace education programs and do not provide the 'WE' educators with any input or feedback. In the view of the educators, the employers find it difficult to place a "bottom line" monetary value, especially on the 'soft' benefits which tend to manifest themselves over a period of time. As well, program and training evaluations require certain skills and techniques which the employers may not have.

Q - 32. What difficulties do employees have in assessing the success or benefits from 'WE' programs?

The majority of responses to this question were: "I don't know", "no follow up was done". Only the most obvious indicators of success were pointed out - passing GED exams and acquiring the ability to read and write.

Generally, those interviewed felt, that in the case of 'WE' programs, self-evaluation is much easier and more accurate than when carried out by the employer or the program provider, especially in the assessment of the "soft" benefits - personality, self-confidence changes. The individual would be much more aware of the total impact the program had on him or her.

Q - 33. When thinking about the successful workplace education ('WE') programs you have been involved with, what were the common factors that contributed to their success?

The most important characteristic of a successful 'WE' program was, by far, the support and involvement of the employer, often demonstrated by initiating the 'WE' program. It was singled out by more than half (54%) of the respondents. The second, in the order of frequency of mention was the availability of funding, and third, the attitude and motivation of the learner and absence of personal or family problems in his/her life.

It is important to note that the last two characteristics received only four (4) and three (3) mentions respectively, trailing far behind the fourteen (14) mentions received by employer support and involvement.

One respondent commented that in order to ensure success, it is important to offer the program at the worksite and during work time.

Q - 34. Which areas present especially difficult challenges to workplace education ('WE')? (particular educational areas, geographic regions or particular business sectors)

While some respondents felt there was a need in all sectors, three (3) agencies viewed reaching small business as a particular challenge. Difficulty in allowing employees time off work, due to a small workforce, and lack of money available for training, are typical of this sector.

Manufacturing industry, trades, hospitals, non-unionized businesses, transient labour, mining and forestry were the sectors mentioned previously as those in great need of workplace education.

Particular educational and skill needs identified were: basic literacy skills, work ethic /attitude changes and computer skills. The high demand for computer skills was footnoted as questionable. Apparently, many people wanting to acquire this skill do not own or have access to computer, and for their work does not require computer related skills.

Q - 35. What concerns are most often voiced by employers regarding 'WE' programs?

The actual cost of the program and the cost in time off work for the employee were the most frequently (8x) cited concerns regarding 'WE' programs.

According to service providers, the employers often feel uncomfortable about approaching individuals and suggesting to them to they participate in a 'WE' program. Some employers may also fear losing employees to better jobs once they acquired more skills.

Q - 36. What concerns are most often voiced by employees regarding 'WE' programs?

Employees in need of basic literacy skills generally fear embarrassment, and are afraid that admitting their lack of skills and taking a training course will negatively affect their job. At other times, they are not sure of how to convince the employer of the need for such a course.

If training is offered outside of workplace and outside of work time, finding the extra **time** can also be a concern. Personal problems and pressures will often interfere with learning.

Q - 37. In your opinion, what are the obstacles prohibiting the advancement of workplace education ('WE') programs?

The most frequently mentioned obstacle, given by ten (10) 'WE' providers, was lack of awareness of the need for Workplace Education by the employers. Lack of funding was cited six times (6x) as the second largest problem, often attributed to the economic

difficulties faced by many companies. Fiscal restraints and downsizing means that companies cannot afford to give employees time off for training. At the same time, the high unemployment rate means the companies can 'pick and chose' better qualified workers.

The employers are not solely to blame for the slow advancement of 'WE' programs. In many instances the employees themselves lack interest or motivation. Often, people with low literacy skills are very good in hiding this problem. Embarrassment and difficulty in maintaining confidentiality, especially in smaller communities, were some other/additional deterrents mentioned, as well as wide spread social problems and substance abuse prevalent in the Northern regions.

Q - 38. Have you experienced an increase or decrease in inquiries about 'WE' programs from the business community, or has it remained about the same over the past 12 months ?

About same	16
Increase	6
Decrease	4
N/A	3

62% of agencies reported no changes in the number of inquiries about 'WE', and 15% of them reported a decrease. Only 23% experienced a slight increase.

It should be noted that one of the agencies reporting an increase in inquiries was a consulting business. In the opinion of this firm, the economic climate has been improving and companies are becoming more willing to spend money on training.

Q - 39. Have you experienced an increase or decrease in implementation of 'WE' programs or has it remained about the same over the last 12 months?

About the same	12
Increase	5
Decrease	5
N/A	7

The data collected indicates no changes in the number of programs implemented over the past twelve months. Twelve (12) agencies reported a steady level of programming activity. Five (5) agencies marked an increase in program implementation and, the exactly same number - five (5) reported a decrease.

Q - 40. Do you think there are particular business sectors or industries with a greater interest in or understanding of workplace education ('WE')?

The responses received were somewhat vague and could not be quantified or arranged into categories.

Hospitality sector which employs many individuals, such as new Canadians who have very obvious English language difficulties, was specified twice (2x) as a sector that seems to be interested and is relatively easy to approach.

The oil and mining sectors which have to hire Northerners because of land agreements, were also included, along with forestry. While these sectors were specified as those with a possibly "greater interest in or understanding" of 'WE', it is important not to jump to conclusions, and to question whether necessity indeed leads to interest and

understanding.

Q - 41. In your opinion, what are the particular sectors or regions that need special contact or attention in order to increase their level of awareness and understanding of 'WE' programs ?

all sectors	6
hospitality	5
trades	3
manufacturing	2
north	2
small bus	2
agriculture	1
hospitals	1

The general sentiment of 'WE' agencies was that awareness needs to be increased "all over". As seen in the list above, the sectors mentioned are very much the same as found in responses to similar questions throughout the document.

Q - 42. What types of promotion have you been using?

Based on the information received, individual agencies do not spend much time or effort on promoting their workplace education services and resources. Most often used reasons are lack of funds and time, as well as, lack of visible effectiveness of the methods tried.

Over the years, 'WE' providers have used a great variety of promotional approaches and materials -radio, newspapers, TV, posters, brochures, flyers, special events, presentations, videos, to name a few.

Ten (10) of the agencies rely heavily on promotion by "word of mouth", and for four (4) of them this is the only communication method used.

Q - 43. Do you have any suggestions on how best to increase the awareness and understanding of workplace education in the business and industrial sectors?

This question received the most extensive input, abounding by wealth of creative ideas. There was an overwhelming consensus on the need for direct, face to face contact with business management, and for creating close partnerships with this sector.

70% of all respondents believe that the most effective way to promote workplace education is to create a strong message about the impact of 'WE' on the 'bottom line' and long term cost benefits. This must be communicated directly to the business sector.

Use of various business organization and associations such as the Chamber of Commerce to promote 'WE' were suggested as additional inroads. Advertising in the workplace through posters, presentations and use of company and business newsletters were further suggestions.

A conference on 'WE' was also seen as a potentially effective awareness raising

instrument as well as a source of new ideas. One respondent felt it would be useful to carry out a survey of the business sector regionally. A 1-800 number was yet another idea. Three agencies felt that having a coordinating body (Consortium?) to organize a more concerted effort, perhaps a campaign using prominent personalities would be more effective and cost efficient.

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Q - 44. With which organizations and agencies related to workplace education are you familiar, or have contact?

ABC Canada
ABE teachers
Action for Literacy Interest Group
Calgary Literacy Centre
Canadian Federation of Independent Business
Canadian Library Association
Chamber of Commerce
Department of Immigration
Economic Development groups
Internet
Literacy Coordinators Meetings
Literacy Program Committee (family literacy)
Manpower
Moose Jaw Multicultural council
National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)
Open Door Society
Parkland Regional College
Pathfinders at the University
Prince Albert Literacy Network
Prince Albert Multicultural Council
Provincial Government
READ
Regina Literacy Association
Regina Open Door Society
Regina Public Library Learning Centre
SABIA
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment
Saskatchewan Literacy Foundation
Saskatchewan Literacy Network
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment
Saskatchewan Literacy Foundation
Saskatchewan Literacy Network
Saskatoon Literacy Coalition
Saskatoon Open Door Society
Saskatoon Public Library
SIAST
World Literacy of Canada (newsletters)
Workplace Education Consortium

In addition there are also informal meetings of literacy practitioners and various committees.

Q - 45. How many of these do you keep in touch with (refer to Q-44.) ?

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Q - 46. What other organization, groups, programs, etc. already exist in the province that are related in any way to 'WE' (e.g., Future Skills, SFL West program)?

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Q - 47. What do you see are the benefits of networking?

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Q - 48. Do you have any ideas on how to develop a more effective network?

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APPENDIX I

List of organizations interviewed

Regina Area

Circle Project, 625 Elphinstone Street, Regina, Saskatchewan
Contact: Jackie Wacase 347-7515

Regina Literacy Association, c/o LeaderPost, 1964 Park Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3G4
Contact: Wayne Kuss 565-8240 Fax: 565-7484

Regina Open Door Society, 1836 Broad Street, Regina, Saskatchewan
Contact: Keith Karasin 352-3500

Regina Public Library Business Literacy Project,
210-2505 1lth Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3Z5
Contact: Donna Hudson 777-6013 Fax: 777-6100

Regina Public Library - The Learning Centre, 2311 12th Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 3Z5
Contact: Gail Douglas-Brehm Margaret Dodson
777-6016/777-6067 Fax: 352-5550

SIAST - Wascana Institute, 2441 Wallace Street, Regina, Saskatchewan
Contact: Pat Hoffman 787-1676 Fax: 787-5104

Saskatoon Region

READ Saskatoon, P.O. Box 7888, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S4P 3Z5
Contact: Sylvia Vicq 652-5448 Fax: 652-4205

SIAST - Kelsey Institute P.O. Box 1520, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7K 3R5
Contact: Rod Goertzen 933-8378 Fax: 933-6490

Saskatoon Open Door Society, 311 4th Avenue North
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 2L8
Contact: Michael Hanna 653-4464 Fax: 653-4404

Saskatoon Public Library, 311 23rd Street East,
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Contact: Susan Emson 975-7558

Southwest Region

Cypress Hills Regional College, 129 - 2nd Avenue, N.E.
Swift Current, Saskatchewan S9H 2C6
Contact: Adeline Steinley 773-1531 Fax: 773-2384

Future Skills, 129 - 2nd Avenue, N.E., Swift Current, Saskatchewan
S9H 2C6
Contact: Duane Rose
778-5458 Fax: 773-2384

SIAST - Palliser Institute, P.O. Box 1420, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan
S6H 4R4
Contact: Joyce Stryker 694-3434 Fax: 694-3425

Southeast Region

Southeast Regional College, Souris Valley Campus, Box 880
Weybum, Saskatchewan S4H 2L I
Contact: At time of survey, a Literacy Coordinator was not employed by
Southeast Regional College

Northeast Region

Carlton Trail Regional College, P.O. Box 720, Humboldt, Saskatchewan
SOK 2A0
Contact: Lee Meyer 682-2623 Fax: 682-3101

Cumberland Regional College, Box 967, Tisdale, Saskatchewan
SOE 1TO

Contact: Grant Wilson 873-2525 Fax: 873-4450

Parkland Regional College, 72 Melrose Avenue,
Yorkton, Saskatchewan S3N 1Z2
Contact: Roshan Hemani 783-6566 Fax: 786-7866

Prairie West Regional College, Box 1001, Warman, Saskatchewan
SOK 4SO
Contact: Carolyne Poletz 242-5377 Fax: 242-8662

Northern Region

Lokken Associates Training Consultants
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
Contact:Tim Steele
763-8558

**Northlands Regional College, Beauval and
Buffalo Narrows Region**
P.O. Box 89, Beauval, Saskatchewan S0M 0J0
Contact: Alan Lockland 235-4346 Fax: 235-4346

Northlands Regional College, Creighton Region, Box 400
Creighton, Saskatchewan SOP 0A0
Contact: Penny Warniuk 688-3474 Fax: 688-7710

Northlands Regional College, LaRonge Region, P.O. Box 509
LaRonge, Saskatchewan SOJ 1LO
Contact: Hugh Munro 425-4334 Fax: 425-2696

SIAST - Woodland Institute, P.O. Box 3003
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, S6V 6GI
Contact:John Foster
953-5346 Fax: 953-7099

Northwest Region

Lakeland Regional College, Bag 6600, 2602 - 59th Avenue
Lloydminster, Alberta S9A IZ3
Contact: Tamara Topolnisky 403-871-5702 Fax: 875-5136

LloydminsterNativeFriendshipCenter, 5010 41st Street
Lloydminster, Alberta
Contact: Donna Friesen 403-875-6558

Northwest Regional College, 521 - 100th Street NorthNorth Battleford,
Saskatchewan S9A OZ9
Contact:Mary Mittila

937-5142 Fax: 445-1575

Provincial Organizations

Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, WEST Program
103 - 2709 12th Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4T 1J3
Contact: Ron Torgerson/Pam Birkbeek 924-8574/924-8575 Fax: 525-8960

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies,
Suite 100, 103 A Packham Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Contact: Sharon Chicoose 373-4777

Saskatchewan Literacy Network, P.O. Box 1520
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7K 3R5
Contact: Nayda Veeman/Shirley Silburt 653-7368 Fax: 933-6490

Service fransakois
d'education des adultes, SAC 20
Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan, SOH IXO
Contact : Catherine Darvault, 648-3129 Fax: 648-2295

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APPENDIX II

Provincial organizations, groups and programs related to workplace education

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Interview Questions

SECTION I. EXTENT AND TYPES OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION ('WE') ACTIVITIES PROVIDED PROVINCE WIDE.

1. Do you offer workplace education programs?
2. *Where do you deliver programs - at your location, worksite, or both?*
3. *Do you administer GED or provide GED preparatory work?*
4. *Do you, or can you provide distance workplace education? How often are these kinds of programs requested?*
5. *Do you offer ESL programs?*
6. *What percentage of your workplace education ('WE') programs are ESL oriented?*
7. *Have you been involved in providing cooperative ('WE') programs (i.e., programs which involve employees from a number of different businesses, businesses within the same industry or, within the same region)?*
8. *Do you charge a fee for your workplace education ('WE') services?*

SECTION II. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS, EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES USED.

9. *What method of instruction do you use? One to One / Peer Tutoring, Small Group / Classroom)*
10. *Do you offer computer aided 'WE' programs? If yes, please indicate type of program.*
11. *What types of educational materials or curriculum do you use?*
12. *Where do you get information on educational models and tools?*
13. *Have you developed and / or produced any materials, e.g., program curriculum, handbooks, brochures?*
14. *What types of methods of instruction been most successful in your experience? (Success may relate to type of industry, size of company, or any other common factors you may think of).*
15. *What type of 'WE' methods of instructions have been the least successful and why?*

SECTION III. NEED, INTEREST IN, AND DEMAND FOR WORKPLACE EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY BUSINESS, UNIONS AND INDIVIDUALS.

16. *Have you identified any educational needs / trends which apply specifically to a certain population sector, region, industry or occupation?*
17. *What specific businesses, you are aware of, would benefit from workplace education ('WE') program?*
18. *What companies have asked for information about workplace education ('WE') but have not yet implemented programs or, have decided against them?*
19. *What do you think are the main reasons why businesses do not pursue or decline to implement 'WE' programs?*
20. *For which businesses have you delivered workplace education ('WE') programs?*
21. *Of the businesses you have worked with, who initiated contact (you, he business, the union) ?*

44.	*What are some of the reasons businesses / unions give for needing 'WE' programs?*
45.	*How many workplace education ('WE) programs have been requested by clients for skills upgrading due to technological change?*
46.	*Do organizations who have implemented work-place education('WE') programs in the past feel that they have an ongoing need for 'WE'?*
47.	*Have you implemented programs continuously at any worksite? Please specify. (This may be the same program implemented more than once, programs which are in a series, or simply several different programs focusing on several different areas)*

SECTION IV, UNIONS AND WORKPLACE EDUCATION

48.	*Are there particular unions that have a stronger commitment or interest in workplace education ('WE') ?*
49.	*Do you find that 'WE' programs are easier- to implement in unionized environments?*

SECTION V. BENEFITS OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION, ASSESSMENT AND FOLLOW UP.

28. *What benefits are gained from 'WE' programs by employers ?*
29. *What benefits are gained from workplace education ('WE)* programs by employees ?
30. *What difficulties do you have in assessing the success or benefits received from workplace education ('WE') programs?*
31. *What difficulties do employers have in assessing the success or benefits received from workplace education ('WE') programs?*
32. *What difficulties do employees have in assessing the success or benefits from 'WE' programs?*
33. *When thinking about the successful workplace education ('WE')programs you have been involved with, what were the common factors that contributed to their success?*

SECTION VI. WORKPLACE EDUCATION CHALLENGES, CONCERNS AND OBSTACLES.

34. *Which areas present especially difficult challenges toworkplace education ('WE')?(particular educational areas,geographic regions or particular business sectors)*
35. *What concerns are most often voiced by employers regarding 'WE' programs?*
36. *What concerns are most often voiced by employees regarding 'WE' programs?*
37. *In your opinion, what are the obstacles prohibiting theadvancement and / or implementation of workplace education ('WE')programs?*

SECTION VII. PRESENT INTEREST IN AND USE OF 'WE' PROGRAMS.

38. *Have you experienced an increase or decrease in inquiries about 'WE' programs from the business community, or has it remained about the same over the past 12 months ?*
39. *Have you experienced an increase or decrease in implementation of 'WE' programs or has it remained about the same over the last 12 months?*
40. *Do you think there are particular business sectors or industrieswith a greater interest in or understanding of workplace education ('WE')?*
41. *In your opinion, what are the particular sectors or regions that need special contact or attention in order to increase their level of awareness and understanding of 'WE' programs?*
42. *What types of promotion have you been using?*
43. *Do you have any suggestions on how best to increase the awareness level and understanding of workplace education in the business and industrial sectors?*

SECTION VIII. NETWORKING, COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION.

44. *With which organization and agencies related to 'WE' are you familiar of have contact?*
45. *How many of these do you keep in touch with ?(refer to Q-44.)*
46. *What other organization, groups, programs, etc. already exist inthe province that*

690' *What do you see are the benefits of networking ?*

6: 0' *Do you have any ideas on how to develop a more effective network?*

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