

## **Appendix A: Declaration**

### **Name of candidate:**

This Dissertation entitled Adult Literacy Provision in New Zealand Private Training Establishments is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Masters in Education.

### **CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION**

I confirm that:

- This Dissertation represents my own work.
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number:

Candidate Signature *Belinda Jane Dolan*      Date: 20 February 2010

Student number: 1254563

# Adult Literacy Provision within New Zealand Private Training Establishments

By

Belinda-Jane Dolan

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Degree of Masters in Education.

Unitec Institute of Technology Auckland

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research was to investigate the current adult literacy provision taking place within New Zealand Private Tertiary Establishments. The first objective was to identify a baseline on the type and amount of literacy provision taking place. Secondly, this research examined the teaching experience and academic background of educators delivering literacy subjects within PTE's. The final objective was to document findings from current practice as a means of developing future capacity. A qualitative research methodology was adopted and encompassed a questionnaire method of data collection.

The findings suggest that training and developing for literacy educators at these providers, along with appropriate resourcing may be acting as barriers to achieving success. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that the pre-screening of adult learners may need examining in greater detail to assess whether or not its effectiveness could be improved. The findings from this research highlighted that whilst there is evidence to suggest that literacy education and training for educators is taking place within PTE's, improvements still need to occur. The research indicated some educators had the required skills and abilities but it was found that the majority of participants needed additional support to develop their literacy teaching skills.

In conclusion, the study indicated that professional development and training for educators delivering literacy subjects within New Zealand PTEs is an area for development. The recommendations are that more needs to be done to support educators in order to provide support for adult learners to develop their literacy levels and enable them to participate within a 'knowledge based' society. There is a strong case for the development of further research into a systematic professional development and literacy teacher training for these types of providers.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	
Overview	Page 1
Research context and Rationale	Page 3
Research problem	Page 8
Research question and aims	Page 10
Conclusion and chapter overviews	Page 10
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	
Introduction	Page 12
Charting the advancement of the adult literacy problem, provision and policy	Page 12
Adult literacy problem	Page 12
Factors affecting literacy	Page 16
Adult Literacy policies and strategies	Page 18
Overview of Private Training Establishments and provision	Page 20
Targeted PTE research	Page 22
Participation rates	Page 23
The importance and impacts of literacy provision	Page 26
Economic impact of low literacy within the workforce	Page 26
Health implications of low literacy	Page 29
Developments and types of adult literacy	Page 31
Literacy educators	Page 35
Developing educators	Page 36
Conclusion	Page 40

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

Introduction	Page 41
Qualitative methodology	Page 41
Data collection method	Page 43
Questionnaires	Page 44
Pilot questionnaire	Page 47
Questionnaire distribution	Page 48
Sampling	Page 49
Questionnaire data analysis	Page 50
Validity and reliability	Page 51
Ethical issues	Page 51
Research design limitations	Page 53
Conclusion	Page 54

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

Introduction	Page 55
Questionnaire results	Page 55
Conclusion	Page 84

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

Introduction	Page 85
Current literacy provision	Page 85
Pre-screening	Page 85
Embedded provision	Page 87
Training for embedded provision	Page 89
Educators	Page 89
Providing support for literacy educators	Page 89
Educators teaching qualifications and experience	Page 91
Qualification level of adult literacy teaching educators	Page 92
General academic qualifications	Page 92
Literacy teaching qualifications	Page 94
Teaching experience	Page 96
Developing research and provision for the future	Page 98
Conclusion	Page 98

## **Chapter Six: Recommendations, Suggestions and Improvements**

Introduction	Page 100
Recommendations for future practice	Page 100
Suggestions for future research	Page 103
Strengths and limitations	Page 105
Final Conclusion	Page 108

<b>References</b>	Pages 109-127
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### **Appendix A**

Online questionnaire	Page 128
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### **Appendix B**

Invitations to participate	Page 129
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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number of educators who taught 'other' subjects within New Zealand PTE's.	Page 64
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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Interrelatedness of data collection and the question aims.	Page 45
Figure 2: Participant gender distributions within PTE's	Page 56
Figure 3: Distribution of participant working hours.	Page 58
Figure 4: Comparison of participant working hours by gender	Page 58
Figure 5: Number of hours literacy subjects taught per week in NZ PTEs	Page 60
Figure 6: Percentages of participants teaching one or more subject areas.	Page 62
Figure 7: Comparisons of the number of educators teaching over four subject areas.	Page 63
Figure 8: Participant number of years teaching experience across four teaching disciplines.	Page 66
Figure 9: Literacy teaching qualification status of educators	Page 68
Figure 10: Type of literacy qualification held by participants	Page 69
Figure 11: Comparisons of literacy teaching qualification status by gender	Page 70
Figure 12: Level of academic qualifications held by participants	Page 72
Figure 13: Percentage of PTE's pre-screening learners for literacy difficulties	Page 74
Figure 14: Level of programmes where literacy is taught upon	Page 76
Figure 15: Types of literacy teaching methods within PTE's	Page 77
Figure 16: Challenges faced by educators teaching literacy in PTE's	Page 80

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- ALL – Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2006)
- IAL – International Adult Literacy Survey (1996)
- ITP – Industry Training Provider
- LLN – Literacy, language and numeracy
- MOE – Ministry of Education
- NQF - National Qualifications Framework
- NRDC – National Research and Development Council
- NZAPEP – New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers
- NZQA - New Zealand Qualifications Authority
- PTE - Private Training Establishment
- TE - Tertiary Education
- TEC - Tertiary Education Commission
- TEO - Tertiary Education Organisation
- TEOC – Tertiary Education Organisation Component
- TES - Tertiary Education Strategy



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to introduce the research topic: Adult Literacy Provision within New Zealand Private Training Establishments (PTEs), providing an overview of the topic of adult literacy provision and its significance within a New Zealand Tertiary Education context.

This chapter will consider further the research question “What adult literacy provision is currently taking place within New Zealand Private Training Establishments?” and will examine the three main aims of this research. The first aim is to identify the current provision of literacy education that takes place within PTEs. The second aim is to examine the background of educators teaching literacy within PTEs. The final aim of the research is to use the findings from current literacy practice as a means of developing future capacity. The final aim seeks to examine the challenges experienced by educators to identify areas of strength or weaknesses in current literacy delivery in order to look at where future practice may support development. Finally, this chapter includes a discussion of the research problem and questions in addition to an overview of each of the six chapters that form this dissertation.

A starting point for this research is to provide an understanding of adult literacy. A useful definition of literacy from one of New Zealand adult literacy providers Literacy Aotearoa who outline literacy as the “listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and critical thinking skills, interwoven with the knowledge of social and cultural practices that empowers people to contribute to and improve society” (Literacy Aotearoa, 2009). A further explanation provided by Lonsdale and McCurry (2004) defines literacy as involving a range of complex diverse skills and understandings.

Literacy may no longer be thought of as simply the ability to read and write as it incorporates many different skill areas and permeates many aspects of a person’s everyday life.

A more detailed explanation of literacy was offered by the Canadian Education Research Information System (CERIS) who suggested for an adult to function in society, skills are needed in a number of areas (CERIS, 1999). These six skill areas were:

- quantitative literacy;
- scientific literacy;
- technological literacy;
- cultural literacy;
- media literacy;
- computer literacy.

The definition by CERIS is more comprehensive and expands the borders of literacy to reflect that literacy is a complex subject with many facets. From reading e-mails to calculating a weekly shopping bill, using a cell phone to holding a conversation. This diversity of literacy is a consideration for providers seeking to deliver wide ranging literacy provision to learners and a topic for discussion within this dissertation.

Along with the numerous definitions relating to literacy, there is equally a variety in the different types of literacy provision offered throughout tertiary education providers. Frequently used terms to describe literacy provision include, but are not limited to: adult literacy, adult foundation education, adult language literacy and numeracy (McKenna & Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Currently, literacy provision across the tertiary education sector is delivered by a variety of methods including embedded literacy within vocational education programmes, stand-alone literacy courses and a combination of both embedded and stand-alone provision (Adult Literacy Basic Skills Unit, 1992).

For the purpose of this research project, adult literacy provision is taken to mean any form of support that is given to adult learners in such areas as reading, writing and communication.

This includes various types of provision such as 'stand-alone' literacy modules, provision that is embedded within another programme or a combination of the two. Due to the nature of this targeted study, the scope of this research did not extend to incorporate English as an additional language or numeracy.

### ***Research Context and Rationale***

This research evolved from my experiences within a variety of roles I have served both in New Zealand PTEs and overseas. These include roles as a principal, academic leader, subject specialist educator and literacy educator. It is within these roles that I have witnessed a number of significant changes in Government policy and experienced the challenges facing educators trying provide literacy support to learners.

These policy changes include the New Zealand Government drive to improve the literacy needs of the nation along with the developments in access to tertiary education. Tertiary education is defined in this research context as educational provision at the post secondary level (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009).

The focus of this research is to highlight current adult literacy provision, including the role and background of educators within PTEs. This is in order to examine how these types of providers are supporting learners with low literacy levels. These aims are coupled with the need to identify current provision as a means of developing future provision and targeted research within New Zealand PTEs.

PTEs are one of several different types of educational provider that make up the diverse tertiary education sector within New Zealand. Others tertiary providers include Universities, Polytechnics, Institutes of Technology, Wānanga (Maori tertiary institutions), Industry Training Organisations and Adult Community Education (Ministry of Education, 2006a).

Studies by the New Zealand Government indicate that over fifty percent of learners entering tertiary education do not have the prescribed level of skills required for entry into tertiary institutions. PTEs are one of a variety of tertiary providers that are faced with the challenge of supporting those who do not have the basic requirements needed for tertiary study. PTEs form part of the New Zealand tertiary education sector providing post secondary programmes to approximately 42,000 learners (Ministry of Education, 2009).

To date there is no precise data on the numbers of learners entering PTEs with literacy difficulties, which may be a combination of school leavers, young adults and older adults. Evidence provided by the Ministry of Education (2006b) highlights that 11% of school leavers each year have literacy difficulties. This 11% figure represents only young school leavers who may be entering tertiary study and does not take into consideration the older adults who account for a significant percentage of learners within PTEs. If these figures are correct, they represent a growing need for literacy provision for adults and a potential overburdening scenario not only for the providers but for educators delivering literacy training within these institutions.

To date, a comprehensive literature review of both international and national research databases. Emerald, EBSCO, Sage and ERIC indicated there has been no focused research on how PTEs contribute to the provision of adult literacy within New Zealand. Nor was there any targeted research available within the public domain detailing how educators deliver literacy training within these PTEs. The literature review did however reveal that PTEs have been involved in some studies which take into consideration wider tertiary provision of literacy but are not targeted PTE studies. This is significant because one of the key aims of this dissertation is to address this gap in the research by providing further investigation into the contribution PTEs make toward facilitating literacy provision to learners.

The context and significance of PTE provision within the New Zealand tertiary education sector is an important aspect within this research.

PTE providers are in a position to provide support to wide sectors of the population through their geographically and socio economically diverse provision. Research that explores the current level of provision may provide a baseline for future provision.

The provision of literacy education within PTEs is influenced by many factors such as the 'open market' and competitive nature of PTEs. Providers aim to compete with other public and private institutes by sustaining, and where appropriate, increasing learner numbers whilst still remaining profitable, this like many other private organisations is affected by the prevailing economic markets. This may not be an issue isolated to the New Zealand education system. For example the work of Fallows and Steven (2000) found links between educational provision and the economic climate within the United Kingdom education system. Comparable in many cases to the New Zealand education system the United Kingdom education system has been influenced by factors such as the open market and competition between providers.

This means that literacy provision may be a variable commodity influenced by such factors as the needs of the organisation, its learners, financial implications and Government policy. For example, changes in the economy and occupations in demand have inevitably impacted upon the type and level of tertiary provision (Ministry of Education, 2006b). Prior to the 2008 global economic downturn, a combined study by the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Social Development and the Department of Labour and Statistics (2003) reported that New Zealand was experiencing its lowest levels of unemployment in twenty years. This record low resulted in an acute skills shortage in some occupational areas (Ministry of Economic Development et al., 2003).

Education providers have a significant role to play in addressing these factors. They do this by contributing as part of the wider tertiary education to meet the needs of the country by being responsive to such changes in the economy including the provision of programmes to address acute skills shortages.

The evidence of previous economic and societal changes suggests there is the potential for these factors to affect tertiary participation and literacy provision both positively and negatively.

Increased competition between providers, reductions in funding and economic downturn could lead to learners being accepted onto programmes which may not be able to provide them with the adequate support they need. Furthermore, educational delivery for those with additional literacy difficulties could prove difficult to maintain as numbers fluctuate according to the prevailing financial and open market conditions.

The potential changes in provision along with factors such as the 'open access' policies which are discussed later, pose interesting ethical debates within tertiary education. Should providers be held accountable for accepting learners if they do not have the resources to provide for their needs? How much and what type of provision is to be given to learners? Additionally, should the New Zealand Governments continue their work to support PTEs or is there a need to develop provider capabilities further and reduce the dependence upon the Government? Alternatively, should PTE providers be doing more to support learners or is there a need to examine policy relating to the pre requisites for entry into tertiary study in order to reduce the amount of learners accessing programmes?

At this stage the aforementioned questions may not have an answer. What is becoming clear is that tertiary education is evolving and therefore provision to meet the evolving needs of the tertiary education sector needs be aligned to meet future developments. The New Zealand tertiary education system has advanced over recent years, what was once education for the elite, may now be considered as education for the masses (Olssen, 2002). The evolution of the education system may be due to a number of factors: one of which was the Government adoption of the 'open access' policy in the 1980s and the 'Learning for Life' reforms (Ministry of Education, 2006c).

This 'open access' policy allows adults aged over twenty years old, access to tertiary education programmes regardless of their educational experience or qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2004). The impacts of these changes in policy contributed to significant increases in tertiary education participation throughout the country.

In 2006 for example, 14% of the population were attending a tertiary institute. These figures represent an increase of 5% from the 9% participation rate in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 2007). The most recent figures reveal that the number of adults embarking upon tertiary education study within New Zealand increased significantly and in 2008 there were a total of 502,000 students enrolled in all types of tertiary providers (Ministry of Education, 2009). The increases in tertiary participation rates were mirrored within PTEs and by 2008 the number of tertiary learners enrolled in these institutes was approximately 20,000 (Ministry of Education, 2008a).

The move by the New Zealand Government to provide equitable tertiary provision for its citizens may be viewed as progressive by many (Olssen, 2002). Positively, this universal access provides tertiary education opportunities to those who otherwise may not have been able to participate in tertiary education. As a result, greater numbers of 'second chance' learners who may have been unsuccessful during their compulsory schooling years have been afforded new learning opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Conversely, this now means tertiary providers are responsible for supporting learners regardless of their academic ability or literacy levels (NZQA, 2006). The role of providing support for these learners within PTEs ultimately lies with the educators. The term 'educator' in the context of this research is used as a generic term to refer to any person considered to be a teacher, tutor or facilitator who delivers training to learners.

Whilst it could be argued that the educator's role demands a certain degree of flexibility.

It is conceivable that educators may be increasingly spending more of their time supporting learners' basic reading, writing, listening and oral communication skills as opposed to teaching specialist subjects they were employed to teach. The implication for such a shift in focus for educators will be discussed in subsequent chapters along with the adequacy of teaching resources and the teaching capabilities of trained and non literacy trained educators.

For the purpose of this research an literacy teaching qualification is deemed as a qualification listed as an adult literacy qualification or an overseas qualification on the NQF framework. The focus of which should involve the theory and practice of educating adults in literacy subjects. This did not include ESOL qualifications, adult teacher training courses or childhood literacy teaching.

### ***The Research Problem***

Adult literacy levels are a concern for both advanced and emerging nations. The problem of low literacy levels amongst adults in New Zealand became evident in the results from the International Adult Literacy Strategy [IALS] (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 1997) along with the more recent Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey [ALL] (Statistics Canada, 2007). The IALS was a large-scale international survey that was conducted in three phases in 1994, 1996 and 1998. It involved governments, national statistical agencies, and research institutions from twenty nations along with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2000c).

The IALS examined the literacy and numeracy proficiency levels across a nationally representative sample of adults within the domains of prose, documentary and quantitative literacy. Further discussion on these domains is contained within Chapter Two.

The issue of low literacy was identified in 1996 when the statistical data from the IALS revealed that at the time of the study, 530,000 New Zealand adults were reported as operating at literacy level one (Ministry of Education, 2005). A literacy score at level one was defined in this context as functional literacy below what was needed to function adequately within today's economic market (OECD, 2000c).

Additional evidence from the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) in 2006 highlighted literacy deficiencies amongst the New Zealand population. The ALL survey conducted ten years after the IALS built upon the 1996 IALS, and piloted the collection of data from participants in the areas of information communication technology and problem solving (Statistics Canada, 2006). The ALL survey revealed some improvements in literacy scores for New Zealand adults alongside indicating there was a need to examine how, as a nation, New Zealand was addressing the need to increase adult literacy levels (Statistics Canada, 2007).

The continuing problem of low literacy levels in New Zealand adults was exacerbated by the Tertiary Education Reforms which highlighted a "fragmented literacy sector" (Johnson, 2000, p.8). It suggested that the education sector including Government organisations were yet to align adult literacy provision with the current needs of the population.

A key policy statement in the New Zealand Ministry of Education Adult Literacy Strategy (2001) focused on a number of key areas in literacy provision which needed to be improved. One suggested area was to build adult literacy capacity throughout the country through an increase in training for educators as a means of increasing the professionalism of literacy educators (Ministry of Education, 2001a). The potential for capacity building and educator training is a theme throughout this research project and is discussed within subsequent chapters.

## ***Research Question***

“What adult literacy provision is currently taking place within New Zealand Private Training Establishments?”

## ***Research Aims***

This research has three main aims: firstly to examine the provision of literacy that takes place within PTEs, secondly, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the qualifications and teaching experiences of those currently employed to deliver adult literacy training.

Thirdly, the final aim is to fill a void in the current research by reviewing current practice within adult literacy areas in order to highlight its strengths and areas for future development.

## ***Chapter Overviews***

This dissertation is divided into six chapters which are as follows, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion and the final chapter recommendations, suggestion and improvements.

Chapter Two provides a substantial review of both current and previous literature pertaining to adult literacy. The concepts that underpin this study are reviewed and include discussion on the prevalence of low literacy levels amongst adults in New Zealand, a background on PTEs, literacy educators roles, types of literacy provision and the impact that low literacy has on adults and on the economy. The focus of this chapter is on establishing the background for this research project by using literature pertaining to the New Zealand tertiary education context.

Chapter three explains the selected methodological framework for this study. The research methodology incorporated within this study is defined and critiqued along with the pilot questionnaire, data collection, analysis methods and research design. Finally, chapter three details the ethical considerations of this project.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the research and provides these in relation to the initial aims of this research. This chapter provides graphical and narrative representation of the data collected in relation to the following areas: educators delivering adult literacy education, their teaching experience and qualifications, along with what educators viewed as their greatest challenge in delivering literacy within a PTE. Further discourse and analysis of these results is presented in concluding chapters, number five and six.

Chapter Five offers in-depth discussion and provides common themes that emerged from the data supported by relevant literature. These themes are ordered according to the aims of this research project.

Chapter Six summarises the findings and offers recommendations for future research and practice along with the strengths and limitations of this research. The final chapter offers conclusions based upon the data received during the study and provides discussion on how PTE providers and the Government may gain from this research in order to support future adult literacy practice within New Zealand PTEs.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Introduction***

This literature review sought to provide comprehensive discussion pertaining to the provision of adult literacy education within New Zealand and draws from International research to support this. The review was also provided to support the research question which was to establish current adult literacy provision taking within New Zealand Private Training Establishment. This chapter addresses six major themes in the literature these are:

1. An historical overview of the problem, provision and policy;
2. A review of the advancement of adult literacy policies and strategies;
3. An overview of tertiary PTEs and provision;
4. An insight into the importance and impacts of literacy provision;
5. An examination of the developments in adult literacy provision;
6. A discussion on the role and nature of educators delivering literacy subjects.

### ***Charting the Advancement of the Adult Literacy Problem, Provision and Policy.***

#### ***Adult Literacy Problem***

New Zealand is considered by some as a liberal country when compared with countries such as China, Korea and Russia (Kelsey, 1995). The country is relatively small in population and in 2006 it contained 4.1 million inhabitants (Statistics New Zealand, 2008). Although New Zealand's population is relatively small, it has advanced more quickly than most other developed countries in areas such as women's rights and health care provision and according to Sinclair (1985, p. 187) New Zealand was the "social laboratory of the world".

Despite its relatively small population, New Zealand is not immune to problems faced by many other countries. One of these problems is the low level of literacy ability amongst its adult population.

Historically, and prior to the publication of the IALS (IALS) in 1996, many developed countries in the OECD including New Zealand considered the majority of its inhabitants as literate (Watson, 1999). The acknowledgement that New Zealand had a problem with literacy emerged in the mid 1970s, and at the time research was limited and so provision to reduce the problem was slow (Cain & Benseman, 2005).

The issue that New Zealand's faced with low literacy levels amongst its adult population was finally brought to the fore by the IALS in 1996. The IALS was a survey administered by Statistics Canada in the 1990s and involved a total of twenty three countries in the OECD (Satherley, Lawes & Sok, 2008). The goal of the survey was to create literacy profiles that were comparable across national, linguistic and cultural boundaries and to examine the literacy levels of individuals from around the world (Statistics Canada, 2006).

The survey was designed to measure the literacy abilities in each of the three domain areas: prose, document literacy and numeracy. Prose literacy measured the participants' ability to read texts such as instructional manuals and newspapers. Document literacy measured non continuous texts such as application forms, charts and maps. Finally, numeracy skills were measured by assessing the ability to read and process numerical information such as calculations for the home or work. It is important to note that this research project involved investigation into literacy, therefore numeracy is not within the scope of this research.

Participants who took part in the IALS survey were given scores in the three domain areas which were calculated on a scale of zero to five hundred. Each score corresponded to one of five literacy levels, these levels ranged from one to five.

A level one score on the IALS indicates a very poor literacy skill level, a level five score is categorised as highly proficient skill level (OECD, 2000c).

In 1996, New Zealand participated in round two of the projects' three rounds along with four other countries (OECD, 1997). The results yielded from the IALS highlighted the levels of literacy for the New Zealand population was on a par with the results from countries such as Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. The results found that approximately one million New Zealand adults were measured as having literacy levels at level one or two. These scores showed that they did not have literacy levels that would allow them to actively participate within society (OECD, 1997).

Of those who participated in the New Zealand survey, 18% of participants scored level one, meaning that these participants were unable to read or write basic information in English (Culligan, Arnold, Sligo & Noble, 2005). Further analysis of the results showed areas of concern for New Zealand. It was revealed that 50% of those who participated had document literacy at the two lowest levels (level one and two). This meant that these participants could not read information such as application forms, bills or school reports.

Performance results for prose literacy were not much higher with 47% of participants at level one or two, meaning they were unable to read continuous texts such as manuals, books or letters. These figures suggested that a significant percentage of the New Zealand's' adult population did not possess the literacy skills necessary to complete everyday tasks (Cain et al, 2005).

Furthermore, the IALS indicated there was a substantial disparity in the results for two groups: Māori and Pacific peoples. When comparing the scores of these groups to those in the general population, Māori and Pacific people held the lowest levels of literacy (Ministry of Education, 2002). However, low literacy skills within New Zealand is not exclusive to these two particular groups.

The IALS was able to dispel myths that literacy was only a problem for certain groups by finding that low literacy levels were prevalent amongst a wide variety of participants including those from European descent and those with high level occupations (Ministry of Education 2005a).

Whilst offering these results the IALS has attracted numerous critiques, one of which was that the measured of literacy skills is only in English. It could be said that the testing criteria may disadvantage those respondents who hold English as an additional language (Culligan, Arnold, Sligo, & Noble, 2005). Additionally, Hamilton and Barton (2000) voiced three further criticisms of the survey. Firstly, that literacy was compartmentalised and as such only reported on a limited range of literacy tasks. Secondly, culture appeared to be largely ignored, instead participants were tested as an homogenous group as opposed to individuals with differing cultural identities. The final criticism of Hamilton and Barton (2000) was in relation to the test criteria. It was felt that some tasks conducted during the test were not representative of the way in which they used everyday literacy.

A further critique for the IALS came from Levine (1998) who identified the definition of literacy and the methods adopted by IALS were not consistent throughout the testing. An example of this is in the graphs that were used, the format used at the time and was not a common format in some of the countries involved such as Australia. Despite the critics, the IALS (1996) not only presented literacy findings it also had a significant impact on the understandings of literacy and its impact both economically and socially (McKenna & Fitzpatrick, 2004).

The problem of low literacy was not restricted to the findings of the IALS, the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) also revealed continuing problems. The ALL survey was designed as a follow-up to the IALS and differed only marginally from the earlier IALS in content and by the inclusion of a section measuring problem solving skills. The ALL was carried out between 2003 and 2009 and included a total of twelve countries throughout the OECD.

The New Zealand results from this survey revealed that there had been some overall improvement in literacy levels since the IALS. The results suggests there had been a 5% reduction in the number of adults with prose literacy at level one and a 7% reduction in those with documentary literacy at level one (Satherley, Lawes & Sok, 2008).

These results reflect that there have been improvements in the literacy levels of adults within New Zealand. It is believed that these increases may have been as a result of the 5% increase in the number of adults embarking upon courses in the tertiary sector between 1996 and 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2006b).

Conversely, the results for the ALL survey also indicated that although there has been a reduction in number of adults with the lowest levels of literacy, the numbers of participants achieving the highest literacy skill levels (four or five) have fallen by 4% (Satherley et al, 2008). In summary, despite the positive increases in the literacy levels between 1996 and 2006 the ALL survey revealed that a significant percentage of New Zealand adults still had problems with their literacy skills (Statistics Canada, 2007).

### ***Factors Affecting Low Literacy***

Several factors have been cited as potential reasons for the continued low literacy levels within New Zealand adults. One such reason was the lack of educational opportunities for those participants who took part in the survey and who were born in the 1930's. This lack of education provision may have led to increased numbers of adults leaving school at a young age with limited formal qualifications and literacy levels (Satherley et al, 2008). In 1996 for example, 34% of those fifteen years or older held no formal qualifications, this figure decreased to 25% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007). It could be argued that holding a formal qualification does not guarantee higher literacy skills (OECD,1997).

However, evidence from the ALL (2006) and IALS (1996) show that those with the lowest levels of literacy held the lowest academic qualifications (Statistics Canada, 2007).

A further cause of low literacy levels amongst adults may be as a result of learning disabilities. Learning difficulties may include but are not limited to dyslexia, which is a learning disorder affecting reading, writing and spelling (Reid Lyon, Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003). Dysgraphia is another example of learning difficulties described by the International Dyslexia Association (2008) as a neurological disorder that affects writing. Alternatively, difficulties with literacy development could be as a consequence of an auditory processing disorder which means a learner finds it difficult to multi task for example listening and writing at the same time (The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1996).

Within New Zealand for example there is now a law in place to protect those with learning difficulties (Ministry of Education, 2003). It states that everyone has a right to be educated, potentially meaning a greater number of learners with learning difficulties are able to enter the education system.

Learning difficulties may go undiagnosed for many years. Evidence gathered from the Learning Disability Association of America (LDA) found that for a significant number of those with learning disabilities, diagnosis does not occur until they are much older (LDA, 1996). There is debate within the literature surrounding learning problems and their diagnosis. Currently only licensed psychologists or psychiatrists using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) or the International Statistical Classifications of Diseases (World Health Organisation, 2009) can diagnose learning difficulties. Many adults who have learning difficulties, either diagnosed or not, may have difficulties mastering the literacy skills needed in order to be fully literate.

It has been established that many of those diagnosed with learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence (Gerber, Ginsberg & Reiff, 1992).

However, learning difficulties may impede their progression and mask their academic abilities. What this means for educators is that within the classroom environment what may appear as low levels of literacy may in fact be a symptom of a learning difficulties and a factor which may limit the learners' ability to be fluent, independently literate adults.

### ***Adult Literacy Policies and Strategies***

A further factor affecting low literacy is New Zealand's policies and strategies. Since the subsequent analysis and publication of the IALS results indicating New Zealand had significant problems with literacy, the New Zealand Government has dramatically increased its efforts to eradicate low literacy levels amongst its population (Benseman & Sutton, 2007b).

Initially, the Government invested in the development of research in the field to provide evidence to support the infrastructure of adult literacy provision. This research evidence was needed to build the capacity, to run projects aimed at targeting individuals with low literacy levels and to raise literacy levels amongst those adults to enable them to function adequately within society (Benseman & Sutton 2007a).

The research and development phase resulted in measures that included the development of the Adult Literacy Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2001). The New Zealand ALS had three broad aims, the first of which was to develop the capacity of literacy providers, secondly to improve the quality assurance of educational programmes and finally to increase adult literacy learning opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2001).

The ALS was launched by the Ministry of Education (2001) and proposed measures to improve the quality of provision of organisations delivering literacy education. Such measures included the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which aimed to provide standardisation and recognition for New Zealand literacy qualifications both nationally and internationally (Johnson, 2000).

Developing the capacity and quality of literacy provision was important in raising the standard of delivery both in education facilities and ultimately within the wider workforce. To achieve its aim the New Zealand Government chose a multi-agency approach. An example of this was the link between the National Qualifications Framework and the Industry Training Act (1992). This led the way for the development of the Industry Training Strategy (ITS, 2007), which has been viewed as a significant movement toward developing the literacy levels of New Zealand workforce and increasing its competitiveness, both internationally and nationally (Johnson, 2000).

Furthermore, continued advancements in provision brought about from the ALS resulted in the launch of the 'Learning for Living' project in 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2005). This Government initiative involved working with educators and managers from organisations such as Polytechnics, Wananga's and PTEs through a series of professional development workshops. These workshops provided resources and assessment tools for educators to use in the area of literacy and numeracy support.

The 'Learning for Living' project supported the aims of the ALS, in trying to bring about a change in the 'foundation skills' of New Zealand adults. The project involved developing the literacy and numeracy skills of the educators and administrators within various types of education organisations in order to increase awareness of the need to develop literacy and numeracy education. By developing the teaching workforce it was believed that these skills would ultimately be disseminated to learners in order to increase their skill levels (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The need to develop educators came from a call for a skilled teaching workforce in the ALS (MOE, 2001b), which resulted in significant training initiatives by the Ministry of Education such as the Adult Literacy Achievement Framework (ALAF), the Adult Literacy Quality Mark (ALQM) and the Adult Literacy Practitioners Association (ALPA). These initiatives subsequently led to the NZQA national certificate in adult literacy in 2004 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2004).

This, and other adult literacy qualifications are now offered by a number of tertiary providers, the focus of these programmes is on the practical and theoretical aspects of literacy teaching.

In order to provide this training, significant financial commitment was needed from the Government. Without the investment, it would be difficult to translate policy into actual provision. In 2008, the support came in the form of the New Zealand annual budget. This budget signaled the Government's intention to continue investment in projects to improve language literacy and numeracy provision over the next five year period (Ministry of Education, 2008b).

These improvement projects included the New Zealand Skills Strategy and the Literacy, Language and Numeracy Action Plan (Ministry of Education, 2008a). To date, significant investment has been made into literacy policy, research, development and provision, identifying that the Government remains aware that literacy is still an area for development (Ministry of Education, 2009). Despite the recent global economic down turn, the continuation of these investment strategies was mirrored in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2009-2012 which prioritised assisting adult learners to "gain the literacy, language and numeracy skills for higher level study or skilled employment" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.3)

### ***An Overview of PTEs and Literacy Provision***

The results from the IALS revealed that there were a number of ways in which learners with literacy difficulties could be reached (Ministry of Education, 2005). This was supported by the ALS which suggested one way forward for capacity building within adult literacy was through "targeted literacy provision" to learners already enrolled in programmes (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.10). This may be where PTEs' provision becomes integral to the capacity building process with New Zealand.

Evidence suggests that commercial providers such as PTEs were used most frequently by those wanting to access certificate and diploma programmes (LaRocque, 2005) for those with literacy levels of one and two (Ministry of Education, 2007 & 2008c). This is supported by the work of LaRocque (2005) who indicated that PTEs are enrolling significant number of learners with literacy levels that are below those that are needed to be successful in everyday life and within a programme of study.

In 2008, PTE enrolments were 20,821, an increase of 5.2% from the 2007 figures (Ministry of Education, 2008a). Although to date there is no conclusive evidence to identify how many of these learners have literacy support needs. It has been identified that capacity building needs to occur to benefit those learners already enrolled in tertiary programmes in addition to new learners who may have additional support needs (Ministry of Education 2001, 2005b).

If the reported levels of literacy in the ALL (2006) and IALS (1996) surveys were accurate the indication is that this may be problematic for PTEs. This is because PTEs are tasked with providing “specialised, flexible and responsive education programmes” (Ministry of Education, 2009 p,10). Despite the overall figure of 200,000 New Zealand adult learners requiring literacy support, Johnson (2000) seemed undeterred suggesting these levels are manageable for New Zealand. One of the aims of this research is to address this issue by examining current provision as a means of developing research and provision within PTEs to reduce the number of adults needing literacy support.

PTE providers form an integral part of the New Zealand tertiary education provision with approximately 700 providers delivering mainly sub-degree level programmes. These range from certificate through to masters level, although it should be noted that only a minority of providers deliver at degree and masters level (NZQA, 2008).

According to the Tertiary Education Strategy for 2007 to 2012, PTEs through its learners, add value to the country in several key areas such as the economy and societal aspects linked to learners integration into the

workforce. Moreover, the strategy highlighted the merits of these types of providers in delivering diverse educational opportunities to all sectors of the New Zealand population (Ministry of Education, 2007).

### ***Targeted PTE Research***

The New Zealand PTE sector is an important component of the tertiary education sector as it delivers some programmes that are not being offered at other types of tertiary institutes (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The PTE sector is believed to be responsive and flexible in its approach to educational provision. This may be due to its diversity, scale of operation and the location of the providers. The role of PTEs within the tertiary education sector has increased significantly (LaRocque, 2005). They now provide educational programmes in a multitude of diverse subject areas and levels such as business, media, sport along with various technical subjects including construction and forestry.

PTEs predominantly deliver sub degree level programmes, and in 2003 approximately 70% of enrolments at PTEs were in qualifications at levels 1-3 (LaRocque, 2005). Although a small percentage of providers are accredited to deliver degree and post graduate level courses such as a masters (NZQF, 2009) the majority deliver at introductory, certificate or diploma level.

Approximately 15% of those enrolled within tertiary education in New Zealand are studying across approximately 850 PTEs throughout the country, thus indicating that large percentage of tertiary learners within New Zealand are choosing to attend PTEs. (Ministry of Education, 2006b).

The Government recognised the increase in learner numbers and is reflected in the Tertiary Education Strategy (2007-2012). This strategy set out the Government priorities for the sector over the next five years and contained key priorities, one of which was to “improve the literacy, numeracy and language skills of New Zealanders” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p5).

PTE providers were highlighted as one of four types of tertiary providers charged with this task. A key element of this research project is that PTEs contribute to provide learning opportunities in the foundation learning area (Ministry of Education, 2007). This research project will examine how PTEs contribute to provision and what developments, if any could be made to those provisions.

Despite the acknowledgement by the government that PTEs provide support for learner, historically targeted research concerning these providers has been limited. Adult literacy research with the PTE sector is generally under researched. Considering the numbers of learners that attend PTEs there are few studies available in the public forum to reflect this.

The majority of research that exists tends to incorporate PTEs grouped alongside other types of tertiary providers such as industry training providers, polytechnics and universities. The limitation with this type of non targeted study is that provision, funding and structures vary greatly between these various types of providers. If generalisations are to be made regarding adult literacy provision within PTEs there is a need to identify and target research in order to adequately serve these types of providers and the learners within them.

### ***Participation Rates***

In order to examine provision, it is also necessary to identify factors that may be affecting literacy provision, one such suggestion is participation rates. Historically, participation rates within the New Zealand tertiary education has climbed steadily with the majority of sharp increases in enrolments coming from the universal access policies of the 1990s.

The 'open' or 'universal access' policy was thought to have led to higher participation rates amongst the population of New Zealand. The universal entry policy enables domestic students aged 20 or above to access tertiary education programmes throughout New Zealand (LaRocque, 2005).

What this policy has meant for learners is that those who may not have previous formal education, or who have not studied before are provided with education opportunities. This has created a dichotomy between access and provision. By providing opportunities for learners it has presented the challenge of catering for learners who may have limited literacy abilities.

Provision within PTEs has not only been influenced by the open access policy. Factors such as globalization have increased and diversified the labour market, this along with the economy have resulted in the increased participation within tertiary education (Harman, 1994). This increase in participation occurred because New Zealand, along with many other countries, went through an evolution where manual labour was replaced by expanding service based technologies.

Education is needed to train and maintain a workforce to be able to cope with these increased demands, thus resulting in the significant increase in adults attending tertiary institutes witnessed in the 1990s and early 2000's (Harman, 1994). The number of adults embarking upon tertiary education study has increased significantly. In 2006, 14% of the New Zealand population were entering tertiary education institutes. This figure increased 5% from the participation rate of 9% in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 2006b). In 2004 for example, there were 505,000 learners enrolled within tertiary education, 72% of which were studying qualifications at diploma or certificate level (Ministry of Education, 2006a).

Although, this figure reduced to 502,000 in 2008, the most significant decreases in enrolments was seen at Diploma levels five to seven and in short courses of less than one week (Ministry of Education, 2008a). The decline in enrolments at tertiary level were attributed to the introduction of restrictions to provider funding known as 'funding caps'. This along with a low unemployment rate more people were able to gain employment which lowered the numbers applying for tertiary level programmes (Ministry of Education, 2008c).

What this decline in learner numbers has meant for tertiary education is that participation rates for certificate level programmes declined in 2008. In 2005, 61% of the 230,000 domestic students were studying at certificate level, that figure reduced to 55% in 2008. For PTEs, level one to three certificate programmes are a core component of their business and one of the most common types of qualification they award (LaRocque, 2005).

Although the figures of learners enrolled within certificate programmes at PTEs decreased between 2005 and 2008, learners are still entering these institutes with low levels of literacy. It was estimated that in addition to adults with literacy difficulties up to 11% of school leavers are exiting the school system with little or no formal qualifications, contributing to the number of learners experiencing literacy difficulties within tertiary education today (Ministry of Education, 2006d).

If we are to consider that in 1996 the IALS revealed New Zealand had one million learners with literacy needs, only 17,000 of these actually received support, clearly indicating a deficit in provision (OECD, 1997). More recent data from the ALL survey reduced the figure of New Zealanders with the lowest level one scores, but those at level two remain significant at around 31% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Although this reduces the number of learners needing assistance, it does not eradicate the need for increased provision. The reduction in learner numbers raises a question regarding literacy provision within PTEs: If learner numbers are reducing in lower level programmes, is the provision of literacy support being reduced?

Because PTEs are aligned with the Government Tertiary Strategy they may be well placed to support the improvement in adult literacy skills, this study will provide greater in-depth analysis of how this may be carried out.

## ***The Importance and Impacts of Literacy Provision***

Literacy skills are not only required for entry into education programmes, they support individuals in work and future study over a number of years. Literacy skills are also important for adults to actively participate within a challenging and demanding society (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008a). The skills necessary for academic study are taken to include literacy skills such as reading, writing, communication and study skills (Williams & Wells, 1995).

A comparison of the figures from the New Zealand Government and Canterbury studies appears to indicate a disparity in the quoted number of learners entering tertiary education with the necessary academic skills such as literacy over the previous ten year period. This research project addresses these factors and provides evidence on the types of literacy support given to learners entering PTEs.

### ***Economic Impacts of Low Literacy Within the Workforce***

The effects that low literacy levels may have upon a country like New Zealand may be significant and wide spread, a fact which the New Zealand Government is aware of. To address this, one of the key Government priorities has been to sustain and develop economic growth. In order to achieve this priority the Government targeted investments into human capital as a way of encouraging the growth of the country (Clark, 2002). Although strong evidence points to a correlation between human capital investments and the economic growth within a country, it is not yet clear on the type of investment that yields the highest results (Johnston, 2004).

What is clear is that there is a need to examine ways of supporting current levels of provision. This support is needed in order to deal with any increased demand for literacy education which may arise as New Zealand aims to match the growth of the 'knowledge-economy' within the country's workforce (OECD, 2000a).

The New Zealand Skills Strategy Action Plan (Department of Labour, 2008) reiterated the importance of workforce skills and stated that low literacy levels amongst New Zealand adults was identified as a contributory factor to low productivity in the workplace. The New Zealand Skills action plan focused on key areas to increase literacy, language and numeracy skills of the workforce. There is alignment in the New Zealand Skills Strategy and the Tertiary Education Strategy priorities to raise literacy and numeracy levels within New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007).

This combined effort was necessary to achieve the goals of the Tertiary Education Strategy which attempted to build a society physically, economically and intellectually capable of coping in a constantly evolving and globalised economy (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Low literacy levels in adults have been shown to “contribute to error, wastage, poor health and safety outcomes and high levels of staff turn attrition in the workplace” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008a, p15). To support the need for increased provision, the Government included NZD\$168 million in their 2008 budget to provide funding for literacy and numeracy provision over a four-year period. PTE providers were highlighted as one type of tertiary provider who through a combined effort with other types of providers would support an increase in literacy provision (Ministry of Education, 2008a). The ability to increase provision and develop literacy capacity may create an opportunity to build New Zealand’s position in a global market place.

Despite the evidence from IALS and the ALL survey to suggest improvement, the high number of adults with literacy needs remains a problem for the country, suggesting that more may be done to improve the situation low level of literacy amongst New Zealand adults.

The majority of adults with literacy difficulties are employed with the workforce or currently looking for work. (Satherley et al, 2008). Whilst it is acknowledged that some of these learners needs may be being met by workplace literacy programmes such as those run by the not-for-profit organisation Workbase.

It should be noted that the scope of this project does not include data from educators working on these types of programmes and only focuses on data from PTE education providers and not within the workplace.

Within New Zealand, the individuals most likely to have literacy levels at one or below are those in manufacturing, agriculture, hunting and fishing. There are disproportionately high numbers of individuals within these industry areas when compared to the figures from professions such as business, social and communications (Satherley, et al 2008).

Industries such as fishing and agriculture are vital to our economy in New Zealand, and its ability to function in a global economy (Ministry of Education, 2007). Moreover, adult literacy skills are not only important for the economy but also critical for citizens to function in a learning society (Sen, 1992). According to the 'Business New Zealand Skills and Training Survey' carried out within New Zealand employers, literacy and numeracy were ranked in the top three skills that employers looked for in an employee (Industry Training Federation, 2007).

Previously, New Zealand had a 1% unemployment rate which meant that unskilled workers were in most cases able to find work (Cain & Benseman, 2005). However, in more recent times the once relatively stable workplace has become less certain. The impact of globalization has meant changes to the nature of New Zealand's workforce, a once relatively unskilled workforce has been transformed into one more readily equipped to compete with other countries (Cain & Benseman, 2005).

The change to the level of skills required within the workforce has meant that the level of literacy for employees has become increasingly salient to the employer needs. This was confirmed by a study carried out in 1993 by Moore & Benseman which involved 300 managers from companies throughout New Zealand. The results of the study found that 81% of human resource managers reiterated the increasing role that literacy has for the employee (Moore & Benseman, 1993).

Evidence also suggests that as a result of the development in technology demands are increasing on the employee to hold basic literacy skills (Miller, 1992). A shift toward a more advanced and technological workforce has meant computers, online communication tools along with the emergence of a global economy has resulted in a greater demand for higher levels of literacy amongst workers. These skills are considered vital in order to match the needs of 'knowledge-economy' jobs (OECD, 2000).

The importance of increasing literacy levels is a significant consideration for New Zealand and was supported by findings from the IALS (1996). The results from the IALS pointed out that those with the lowest proficiency level in literacy or at a level one were most likely to be unemployed or looking for work. Additionally, participants who fell into the level three category were most likely overall to be employed than those participants in the literacy levels and two categories (Culligan et al, 2005). What this result means is that those individuals with a lower level of literacy are less likely to be in paid employment within New Zealand. These findings represent a significant shift in the priorities of New Zealand employers meaning that employees now have to upgrade their skills in order to maintain their employed status.

### ***Health Impacts of Low Literacy***

The impacts of low literacy are far reaching the aforementioned economic and employment opportunities are only two examples of how low literacy levels may impact upon an adult's life. Further potential risk factors of low literacy may be the impact it has on a person's psychological and physiological wellbeing.

The consequences of restricted literacy abilities may impact upon many areas in a person's life including their physical health, social interaction, their employment status, mortality rate and may increasingly act as a predictor of a child's literacy levels (Johnston, 2004). Moreover, improved literacy is thought to be "associated with improved social integration and a society where everyone gets the opportunity to participate, contribute and share in the benefits of a knowledge economy" (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008a).

Aside from the aforementioned factors, low literacy may have impacts upon the health of a nation. Literacy is seen as important tool in the promotion of health, it allows key health messages to be conveyed to the public. It is understood that not all health messages are conveyed orally, the written word is still extensively used to carry health messages to a nation. Literacy skills therefore support the provision of vital health messages (Roberts & Fawcett, 1998).

An obvious example of this is that the majority of health information regarding vaccines, health screenings and preventative medicine such as guides to healthy living can be found in written format (Roberts & Fawcett, 1998). These messages occupy newspapers and magazine articles they are on posters and leaflets at doctors surgeries and on websites. Health promotion campaigns offer advice on the amount of fruit and vegetables to eat per day, how many glasses of water to consume and what to do if you become ill. It appears that the effectiveness of these schemes would depend upon the ability of the target audience to read and interpret the material adequately enough.

The same could be said for those who have pre-existing health problems. There is a plethora of vital health information contained within labels on medicines, Doctors reports and health charts. The repercussions if a person cannot read the dosage or the side effects of their medication could be potentially life threatening.

These examples highlight how the literacy ability of an adult permeates through many aspects of their life, from finding directions to the hospital, signing consent forms to simply knowing the best foods to eat to prevent illness (Kickbusch, 2001).

Further evidence suggests that literacy practices and skills are one of many factors that act as health barriers for those seeking a healthy lifestyle (Roberts & Fawcett, 1998). The National Population Health Survey (NPHS) which took place in Canada between 1994 and 2003 found that there was a correlation between the education level and health of the population.

The NPHS study also established that those with a higher level of education were shown to be in good to excellent health. This finding was in comparison to those with lower levels of educational achievement who were more likely to be in the poor health category (Roberts & Fawcett, 1998).

Being healthy and remaining so does not simply involve reading key information. It also involves the ability to comprehend information which may occasionally involve the ability to 'read between the lines' or interpret the meaning within a text. In order to do this, literacy levels are required to be at a level where adults can functionally and sufficiently complete everyday tasks with ease.

To ensure health related information is disseminated to prevent illness, a minimum level of literacy may be needed. Adults that are not exposed on a regular basis to health information and illness prevention literature may be at a disadvantage to those who are. From the evidence presented, it would appear that literacy supports many functions within society, one of which may be the health and wellbeing of individuals.

### ***Developments and Types of Adult Literacy Provision***

During the previous 40 years, there has been a steady increase in the emphasis that has been directed toward adult literacy topics within New Zealand.

Between 1999 and 2002, the New Zealand Government increased its funding for adult literacy projects by 100% (Cain & Benseman, 2005). Despite the increased focus on literacy research within schools, the workplace and within tertiary education it has been identified that there is a limited body of literature that identifies the types of literacy provision offered to adults within PTEs. What studies have been completed are discussed within this chapter.

Evidence points to several ways in which literacy subjects may be delivered to adults. The literacy provision found in PTEs may take a number of different formats such as embedded or stand-alone provision and varies significantly from provider to provider (Benseman, 2003).

It has been acknowledged that across the adult education sector literacy is delivered in a variety of ways. These methods include embedded literacy provision, stand-alone courses, e-learning and blended methods (Adult Literacy Basic Skills Unit, 1992).

Literacy provision within this research project is discussed in three main ways: as embedded, standalone delivery and finally as a method which combines both embedded and stand-alone provision within the classroom. Firstly, embedded methods integrate literacy skills with the teaching of vocational or career orientation subjects such as retail, design or business. The Department for Education and Skills in the United Kingdom defined embedded learning as: "...the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational and other skills" (DFES, 2006, p.12).

Embedded provision has been identified as a key priority for the Government in its Tertiary Education Strategy (2009) and continues to work with providers to embed literacy, language and numeracy into certificate level 1-3 programmes (Ministry of Education, 2009). Further support of this method came from Atkin, Rose and O'Grady, (2007) who suggested literacy skills should be thought of less as discrete skill and more of an integrated process with other subjects. Despite criticisms of embedded literacy within other programmes, this method has formed an essential part of New Zealand's literacy provision.

A study carried out by the National Research Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) in 2006 compared the success of embedded literacy versus stand-alone literacy provision within vocational education programmes in England. The study identified that amongst the 1,916 learners who participated in their study the highest retention and course completion rates were found amongst those learners who attended embedded literacy courses. The retention rates for those on the embedded courses were 16% higher than that of the non embedded courses.

Their study revealed that learners attending the embedded level two courses were 26% more likely to complete a course than their fellow learners non-embedded literacy courses (Casey et al, 2006). Furthermore, the work of Parsons and Bynner (1999) supports embedded literacy by explaining that many learners are unable to reach their full potential due to their LLN skills being much lower than their other subject areas such as tourism or sport.

A second method of literacy delivery is through stand-alone provision. This may be described as accredited or non accredited literacy courses that are not integrated within any other subject areas. An example of an accredited course is one constructed using the New Zealand Qualifications Authority unit standards such as communications or writing a report (NZQA, 2009). Stand-alone literacy provision may also include foundation education or English as a second language programme (McKenna & Fitzpatrick, 2004).

The work carried out by the National Centre for Vocational Research in Australia (NCVER, 2006) established that in 2004 within the Australian vocational education training sector, which is similar in many ways to the New Zealand PTE system there were almost 190,000 students enrolled in literacy and numeracy courses. The results of their research found that 60% of these enrolments were in 'stand-alone' literacy courses where no embedded provision was given. Stand-alone methods have been favoured by others for example Drummond, Nixon, and Wiltshire (1998) openly criticised embedded literacy provision commenting that embedding literacy into the curricula and implementing it within the classroom is problematic.

The final of the three literacy delivery methods examined within this research project is a combination of both stand-alone and embedded methods delivered within programmes. This method provides both integrated literacy skills within the curriculum in addition to providing individual literacy skills classes.

Current research suggests that the most effective models of literacy delivery may be situational and contextualised which includes various approaches that aim to engage learners in relevant delivery. Specific not only to their needs but to their situation (McKenna & Fitzpatrick, 2004). To date there are no mandated guidelines that direct PTE adult literacy provision (New Zealand Office of the Minister of Education & Walker, 2001). Individual providers decide what provisions are made. Instead, PTEs draw from nationally and international models to identify the most appropriate method of delivery.

In terms of an international comparison of the types of literacy provision, New Zealand is a distinctive nation with a substantial population of indigenous peoples and migrants from overseas (Cain & Benseman, 2005). Therefore, it may be unwise to assume that literacy provision delivered overseas in a demographically different environment would be appropriate for New Zealand's' adults.

### ***Literacy Educators***

Regardless of the methods of literacy training used, developing functional literacy skills within learners is a unique skill (O'Neill & Gish, 2001). In order to facilitate literacy learning at some point educators need to be involved to allow learners to be guided in the learning process.

The term 'educator' is used to encompass all of the terms that are used within tertiary education facilities such as 'tutor', 'trainer' and 'facilitator'. This research project is concerned with examining the roles of educators who deliver any form of literacy training either as part of another programme such as embedded within a vocational module, as a stand-alone literacy course or a combination of the two delivery methods.

The significance of the educator's role in providing literacy training was discussed by Benseman (2003), who said that "tutors are the cornerstones of the educational process and yet we still know very little about the people who teach in adult literacy programmes". (p.9).

Prior to this research project there was scant published information on PTEs educators working either as specific literacy educators or those teaching embedded literacy within a vocational or career focused subject. Johnson (2000) reaffirms this in her comments that precise number of educators within New Zealand is not known.

Educators roles within PTEs could be described as diverse and similar in many ways to other tertiary providers. Their role is significant in providing educational delivery to learners and often includes, but is not limited to, educating in a specific subject area and/or providing literacy support to learners with additional literacy needs. The diverse and significant role of literacy educators was highlighted in a study which examined the profiles, practices, pedagogies, and self-perceptions of adult literacy practitioners (Chandler, Tobias, Boyd, Cates, Shanahan & Solomon, 2008).

Their study featured significant demographic information on literacy educators and researchers within the Canterbury region of New Zealand. Although it was not a targeted PTE study it provided significant data on the background and experiences of educators teaching literacy within the Tertiary and ACE sector.

The Canterbury study highlighted gender disparities in the number of females teaching literacy and identified limited adult literacy teaching experiences amongst the participants. This study also reinforced the current gap in targeted PTE research.

The significance of research in identifying the academic background and experience of PTE educators may allow for the future provision of adult literacy training and professional development. It may identify the key academic and work experience of educators, which in turn, could support future recruitment, by identifying a minimum qualification needed for literacy educators.

Additionally, this research may also provide a greater understanding of the type of literacy provision educators are carrying out within their classrooms in order to support the future literacy educators. If providers have key data that allows them to identify the characteristics of educators this may allow them to identify challenges and areas of professional development ahead of time to allow providers to offer a balance of education and vocational provision for learners. This was reaffirmed by Johnson comments that “adult literacy research is lacking and much needed” (2000, p.83). This lack of research mentioned by Johnson became a focus of the Adult Literacy Strategy (2001), and remained an area for development in the latest Tertiary Education Strategy (2009) under the priority of strengthening research outcomes.

To date, a comprehensive review of New Zealand PTE educators found limited studies in this area. One such study by Chandler, et al (2008) examined the profiles, practices, pedagogies, and self-perceptions of adult literacy practitioners. Critically however their study only included a small number of PTE educators from the Christchurch area located in the South Island of New Zealand.

### ***Developing Educators***

It was Johnson (2000) that highlighted the need to develop a “cadre of well-trained literacy instructors who have access to ongoing professional development opportunities” (Johnson, 2000 pg.81). It was Skill New Zealand who then developed this further by suggesting enhancements in professional development for literacy educators is problematic due to the unpredictability of funding streams, lack of quality pay and low status of the role (Skills New Zealand, 2000). This was reiterated by Johnson (2000) who added that there continued to be a lack of full time adult literacy teaching roles. This lack of availability presents an obstacle to improving capacity in the literacy sector.

The Adult Literacy Strategy (2001) acknowledged the challenge in developing literacy educators and placed an emphasis on building literacy capacity through developing a skilled teaching workforce (Ministry of Education, 2008b,

p.13). The strategy called for several areas to be developed including teacher training, the retention of good literacy educators and the improvement of teaching resources. In order to do this, talented and committed literacy educators were needed to be in place along with “incentives to attract and retain quality teachers” (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.12).

Some of the areas for educator development have already been addressed with the launch of two qualifications in Adult Literacy accredited by the NZQA. These qualifications are the national certificate in adult literacy education (educator) and the national certificate in adult literacy education (vocational tutor/lecturer or workplace trainer). The introduction of these programmes has brought about the development of professional capacity within the sector by offering specific adult literacy teaching qualifications for the first time in New Zealand.

Other providers are now offering qualifications up to masters level in literacy such as the Auckland University of Technology (AUT, 2009). Significant changes in the landscape of literacy teaching are also planned for 2010 which will see a total of eight qualifications available for educators wishing to develop adult literacy teaching skills (Literacy and Numeracy for Adults, 2009).

Providing education for educators to develop their skills is important. However funding may be an issue for some educators wishing to access these courses. Although some educator grants remain for those wishing to qualify as literacy educators these are now limited. In 2010, funding for literacy educator courses will be directed to those providers who do not receive Student Achievement Component (SAC) funding for their qualifications (Literacy and Numeracy for Adults, 2009). This means that the availability of fully funded courses such as those provided by Literacy Aotearoa will be limited and in some cases educators may need to self fund their qualifications or ask for sponsorship from their employers.

The development in literacy training for educators has been slow within New Zealand. The limited formalised literacy teacher training led to Moore (2000) commenting that there was a lack of expertise within the area of adult literacy. A recent evolution in teacher training has meant that New Zealand has progressed from no formal adult literacy teaching qualifications being available prior to 2004 to the eight qualifications that will be available in 2010.

The advancement in the type and level of qualifications available for educators has supported literacy education and professional development in a number of ways. Firstly, it has taken adult literacy teaching from a model which provided only internal training and qualification that were not professionally recognised. Secondly, it has allowed for opportunities to reduce the reliance upon educators who had been trained in childhood literacy, those qualified overseas or those with no experience in teaching adult literacy.

Training literacy educators may not be the only challenge along the pathway to improving capacity within New Zealand. The importance of continued and appropriate training and development of educators was confirmed by Literacy Aotearoa (1999, p.8) who suggested that finding and retaining both qualified and experienced educators in either a paid or voluntary capacity is a challenge.

This view was supported by the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan 2008-2012 which stated many more educators need relevant qualifications in teaching literacy and numeracy along with access to sustained professional development (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008a). Unless there is credible data to identify the academic levels of current educators, improvement may be difficult. This study aims to provide a foundation for future targeted research in order to establish a baseline in which to develop capacity in the future.

Furthermore, an investigation that identifies literacy educators qualifications and experience may identify gaps in the educators training and allow for a clearer picture of who is currently delivering literacy training.

Also allowing for further discussion of the development of educators training and what may be needed in order to build the capacity for “a qualified teaching workforce” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008, p.13).

There is evidence from overseas that suggests some adult learners working towards national qualifications fail to fulfill their potential. This is thought to be because their competence and confidence in language and literacy does not match their skills in other areas (Parsons and Bynner, 1999). To achieve competency, learners need support from those qualified and experienced not only in their specialised subject areas such as early childhood education but also in literacy subjects.

For some educators devoting additional time to basic skills teaching may not be a problem, although as their role expands to involve literacy this may increase the demands upon their time. Additionally, there may be further demands placed upon educators time as teaching literacy requires a specific skills which some educators may not yet possess (O’Neill & Gish, 2001).

Some PTE educators who were originally employed for specific subject areas and not as literacy educators may increasingly find themselves working with learners on tasks that involve academic writing skills, communications or study skills. To do this, training and support may be needed in order to build educators specific literacy teaching skills to a high level as proposed by the Adult Literacy Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2001). This was supported by Benseman (2003) who suggested that in order to develop the field of adult literacy, considerable effort was needed to increase skilled and committed practitioners.

This research project aimed to support this effort by examining in more detail the current level of education and experience of practitioners.

By examining the current education and experience of literacy educators this may allow for a greater understanding of the type of person in these roles. Besides which this additional knowledge may highlight potential areas for professional development (Benseman, Sutton & Lander, 2005).

It was Wells (2004) who commented that the effects of poor quality provision can be far reaching and fatal for the learners. “The motivation of adults with poor basic skills is fragile, if they drop out because of poor teaching they often won’t bother to drop in again” (Wells, 2004, p.11).

Wells makes an important observation in regards to teaching adult learners, suggesting that these are learners who may have been unsuccessful in the traditional education system once before. They may have been failed by the system, not been provided with opportunities or have opted out of main stream education. This highlights the importance of quality provision for those learners who decide to return to study either voluntarily or through Government run initiatives.

Whilst examining overseas research is useful in providing a background to literacy educators if we are to gain a greater understanding of the literacy provision within New Zealand (Morton, McGuire & Baynham, 2006). There is a need to consider the distinctive nature of literacy provision within this country and specifically within PTE providers.

### ***Conclusion***

In summary, this chapter has provided a review of national and international adult literacy literature. The major themes that were found within the literature were discussed in relation to the problem of adult literacy and its origins. This included a discussion charting the advancement of adult literacy policy and strategies within New Zealand. An overview was provided discussing the significance of PTEs provision within the tertiary education sector along with an overview of the role of those educators delivering literacy within these institutes. Moreover this chapter has provided literature on the types of literacy provision and the importance of literacy provision for adults.

The next chapter presents an overview and critique of the methodology, data collection methods and data analysis employed within this study in relation to the research aims.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### ***Introduction***

This chapter details and justifies the qualitative methodological approach utilised within this research project and includes discussion on the questionnaire method of data collection. A critique of the data analysis outlines that although the research is qualitative, consideration is given to the dimension of quantitative analysis incorporated within this study. Finally, this chapter provides in-depth consideration of the ethical principles that are embedded throughout this study.

### ***Qualitative Methodology***

The qualitative methodology chosen allowed for the richness and depth of explorations required for this project (Myers, 2000). Qualitative research design is defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.34). The qualitative methodology utilised within this study is located within the 'interpretivist' research paradigm and seen by Davidson and Tolich, (1999) as research that "reflects the quality of something" (p.19).

Qualitative research is viewed as "a reaction against the dominant quantitative methods" (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003, p.xi). Moreover, Bamberger (2000), suggests that qualitative research is a more effective 'tool' in which research may explore experiences. The chosen methodology forms a foundation in which this dissertation was built upon and provides a framework to understand and explore literacy teaching from the point of view of those involved in delivering the subject (Schwandt, 2000).

It was Bryman (2004) suggestion that research design should form a "structure that guides the execution of a research method and the analysis of the subsequent data" (p.27).

The primary focus of this study was on exploring literacy provision to provide an insight into current provision as opposed to testing an hypothesis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Qualitative methodology allows information to be gathered which is exploratory in nature in order to facilitate a better understanding of literacy provision in PTEs, this along with discovering the opinion of educators delivering literacy topics (Zikmund, 1997). Additional support for a qualitative methodology comes from the work of Bamberger (2000) who offers a number of qualitative research strengths. These include the ability to explore in more detail what is to be evaluated, lower operating costs, flexibility in the design and implementation phase of research and finally increased validity when compared to quantitative methods of research.

On the contrary, there are criticisms of this methodology to be considered. Bryman (2004) contends that the qualitative approach is heavily reliant upon the subjective views of the researcher. Within the context of this research project, subjectivity was minimal, and arose only from the final question which asked for educators opinions on the barriers to their teaching. Unlike quantitative research methods, the reliability of the results were not assessed by statistical correlations. Despite statistical correlations not being present within purely qualitative research, the reliability of this method may still be assured through the internal consistency and stability of the data (Schram, 2001).

On careful consideration it was believed that in order to gain data that was both rich and personal a qualitative methodology was needed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Once the research methodology had been selected, it was then necessary to provide details of the type of method used to collect this data.

### ***Data Collection Method***

In order to collect the data for this project a questionnaire method was considered most appropriately aligned to the aims of the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). A number of other possible data collection methods including focus groups and interviews were carefully analysed for their suitability. This was to ensure what Wellington (2000) describes as a structured data collection method was incorporated within the research. The aforementioned data collection methods were not selected due to the geographical location of the participants and researcher. This along with the cost and time involved in conducting research whilst in a different country than the research participants was a significant factor in the selection of an appropriate data collection method.

The data collection method involved using an online questionnaire (Appendix A) which was chosen in order to collect detailed and personal data on adult literacy provision from a large sample of PTEs (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Within the scope of this type of research project, the questionnaire method was considered a positive attribute as it allowed for the relative ease in streamlining of responses (Wilson & McLean, 1994). This also allowed for the data to be structured and convenient to analyse (Wilson & McLean, 1994).

The research aims and question lent themselves to an online questionnaire approach due to the large sample size and ability of the questionnaire to be administered without the need for the presence of the researcher (Wilson & McLean, 1994). The merits of e-mail surveys over postal surveys are extolled by Sheehan and McMillan (1999) who suggest that in terms of the speed of response and the costs involved, e-mail surveys are more efficient.

Some of the challenges associated with this method of data collection are in the impersonal approach of questionnaire, largely leaving the researcher unable to clarify questions that the participant may have. This is in comparison to a more personal approach which may occur with methods such focus groups or interviews (Fowler, 2001).

Likewise, the online survey method is criticised by Beebe, Harrison, Park, McRae and Evans (2006) who offer that non electronic versions of questionnaires elicit a greater number of responses than web based online surveys. On balance, the merits of the chosen data collection method outweighed the potential challenges associated with it.

### ***Questionnaires***

The online questionnaire method involved using the web based survey 'SurveyMonkey'. The questionnaire consisted of eleven multi-choice (multiple response) and dichotomous (two response) questions organised into two short sections. Multi-choice questions were designed to limit participants choice of answers, to prevent a multitude of possible responses, reduce ambiguity and limit the subsequent data analysis needed. In the case of multi-choice questions, these were strategically incorporated to ensure that participants were able to choose from a number of answer choices in order to gain their opinions without restricting their choice of answers (Brace, 2004).

In order to achieve reliability with this method of data collection Brace (2004) proposed that three factors are important: firstly to be familiar with the questions, secondly, to ensure that the objectives are known, and thirdly, that information pertaining to the relevance of the research is known ahead of time. To facilitate this, the introduction section of questionnaire for this research project clearly explained the intent of the research at an early stage to increase the response rates in order to increase reliability (Dillman, 2000).

The design allowed a logical transition through the questions in order to make easier for educators to respond.

Less complex and demographic questions were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire, with the open ended, opinion based question placed at the end. This was to ensure that this question did not skew responses to preceding questions and to ensure the ongoing participation of educators (Oppenheim, 1992).

To increase the usability of the questionnaire it was designed in two sections. The first section contained seven questions and gathered demographic data on the educational qualifications and experience of participants'. The second section contained four questions, primarily to gather data pertaining to the educators literacy teaching experience.

The type of information sought within this research project focused on gaining foundation knowledge on a previously unexplored area of research. It aimed to collect information from participants in three distinct areas. The first area was demographic information relating to the gender, experience in teaching and qualifications of participants. The second area involved assembling data relating to the behaviour of participants, questions were designed to elicit information on what subjects and level the participants taught and how their teaching hours are divided between literacy and other subjects. The third area was to compile information relating to the attitude of participants toward what they believed was their biggest challenge as an educator teaching literacy.

The collection of data and the interrelatedness of questions in relation to the aims of the research have been expressed diagrammatically in figure one on the following page.

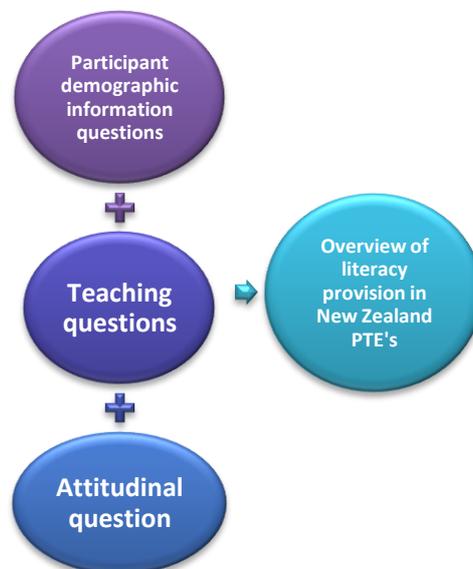


Figure 1. Interrelatedness of data collection and the question aims

The design of the questionnaire involved using two types of question, open ended and partially close-ended questions. The distinction between closed-ended and partially closed-ended questions is that the latter involves more flexibility in the answer. An example of this is through the use of the 'other' option which adds a degree of flexibility to closed ended questions and provides participants with the opportunity to add information that may not be captured by the research instrument. This can be seen in question two which asked participants to confirm their current working hours. Participants were given three options: the first was part time, the second full time and the final choice was 'other'. The use of the other option aimed to capture data from educators that did not have fixed hours or may be contractors with a limited number of hours.

The use of partially and closed ended questions within this research project also allowed for a detailed comparison of data across the sample (Oppenheim, 1992). A challenge with partially closed ended questions is the potential complexity of analysis, in particular for data entered by participants within the 'other' sections. However, the intricacy and potential volume of data collected from this type of question was in line with the research aims and considered necessary to gather more in-depth information on PTE educators. To counteract any possible issues with analysing data coding was used. The structure of the questionnaire allowed for the relative ease in the coding and analysis stage of answers (Wilson & McLean, 1994).

A criticism of close-ended questionnaire design is that poorly constructed questions may limit the information being sought by the researcher (Oppenheim, 1992). To avoid this, the questions used within this research project consisted mainly of partially close-ended questions. Additionally, the use of 'other' option allowed for a less prescriptive data collection tool.

The second type of question used in this survey was open-ended. The option to use an open-ended question was to allow participants to provide their own opinions and to elicit a wide variety of responses on the subject.

Thus allowing a less prescriptive approach without leading to excessive data analysis (Oppenheim, 1992).

Whilst there are criticisms of the questionnaire method in regard to its limited opportunity to ask questions and probe participant answers, the benefits of this method outweigh the disadvantages. In order to limit potential ambiguities for this study a pilot questionnaire is to be carried out.

### ***Pilot Questionnaire***

To limit the source of errors in the questionnaire a pilot questionnaire was incorporated within this research. The research design and questionnaire were peer reviewed by Unitec supervisors and a pilot questionnaire was sent to five contacts from five different PTE providers prior to its release to research participants'. Those participants who took part in the pilot were not included within the final study to ensure that feedback from the pilot questionnaire was unbiased.

The merits of piloting studies prior to their distribution to participants is brought to the fore by Iraossi (2006) who comments that a pilot study allows others to evaluate the questionnaire ensuring that it is comprehensive along with being easy to follow and understand. Furthermore, Morrison (1993) characterises the virtues of a pilot questionnaire as a necessary function to ensure validity, reliability and practicability amongst research surveys.

The pilot study addressed the following questions:

- Was the wording of the questionnaire clear and easy to understand?
- Did each question provide answers that match the aims of the project?
- Did the questionnaire take long to complete in order to create a balance between politeness and brevity (Oppenheim, 1992, p.122)?
- Were respondents able to interpret the questions accurately?

- Was the questionnaire clear, concise and easy to use online?
- Were the questions answered properly (Verma & Mallick, 1999)?

The results from the pilot study established that some participants answered no to several of the questions above. As a result the final survey was updated to ensure that all the questions were answered in the affirmative before being distributed.

### ***Questionnaire Distribution***

The questionnaire distribution took place on the 2nd October 2009 via an e-mail invitation. All participants were informed that the research project would close on the 23rd of October, 2009.

The 'invitation to participate' (Appendix B) was e-mailed to the directors or managers of each of the 738 PTEs within New Zealand. It contained a link to the online questionnaire and directed PTE directors/managers to distribute the invitations to the appropriate members of their teaching faculty in accordance with the participation criteria. The participation criteria stated that research participants had to be involved in any form of paid literacy teaching employment within a New Zealand PTE. There were no limitations of the number of hours or the methods by which literacy was taught.

The participation criteria remained broad to ensure maximum participation of all types of educators providing literacy provision within PTEs. In addition, the criteria allowed for additional information to support the current low volume of information available within the public forum which investigates educators teaching literacy within PTEs.

To avoid ambiguity and to clarify what is considered 'an educator' for the purpose of this study, each of the directors or managers receive the criteria for participant inclusion in the study within their invitation.

The distribution of the questionnaire to all New Zealand PTES was made possible through associations with the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers (NZAPEP).

This method of distribution was chosen for three reasons: the first reason was to create a large sample size to encourage a large uptake of interest in the study. By directly targeting the directors or managers of the PTEs rather than to each educator, the aim was to create a strategy of enhanced ownership and responsibility from both the participants and leaders.

The second reason for distribution through NZAPEP was to ensure that all directors or managers were informed of the research and to create awareness amongst both academic and non academic staff as a means of creating a transparent research process. The final reason was for expediency, NZAPEP had the most up to date database of registered PTEs within New Zealand.

### ***Sampling***

The target population for this research project included adult educators who taught any form of literacy subjects either embedded, stand-alone or a combination of both. The criteria for participation in this study was that educators were employed part-time, full-time or in any other capacity at any New Zealand PTE. To ensure this happened both the initial letter sent to directors and the introduction section of the questionnaire clearly indicated the prerequisites for participation.

The participants were selected using purposive or non-probability sampling technique (Schofield, 1996). This method of sampling was identified as the most appropriate for this study and purposefully limited the number of participants. This was to ensure that only those who had expertise in the area of being researched are included. The decision to include all PTEs was chosen due to the lack of available data on current number of educators deliver literacy training within PTEs. The inclusion all PTEs increased but did not guarantee the possibility of a higher return rate.

Moreover, due to the geographical location of participants this method facilitated the collection of data from a relatively large sample size located throughout the North and South Island of New Zealand (Tuckman, 1972).

As a result this method was chosen above techniques such as interviewing and focus groups. However, the inclusion of other methods within future research is discussed within Chapter Six.

### ***Questionnaire Data Analysis***

The data analysis within this project dealt with results which have a degree of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The merits of this type of analysis is offered in the work of Kuhn (1961);

“When measurement the parts from theory, it is likely to yield mere numbers, and their very neutrality makes them particularly sterile as a source of remedial suggestions.

But numbers register the departure from theory with an authority and finesse that no qualitative technique can duplicate, and that departure is often enough to start a search (p. 180).”

Both Microsoft Excel software and SurveyMonkey online facility were utilised in the data analysis of this project. In order to address both issues of reliability and validity in the data collection and analysis, the results were meticulously cross checked against the original questionnaires received.

The data from the questionnaires was coded into two levels: initial coding and focused coding using the Excel spreadsheet software. Coding is seen as an interpretive technique that allows data to be effectively organised into units of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This method of coding then allowed for the management and manipulation of the data into groups or themes and a review of data for consistencies or discrepancies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The qualitative and quantitative data was then analysed and summarised in narrative and graphs throughout the results section of the dissertation.

### ***Validity and Reliability***

Validity is another area where qualitative studies are critiqued. To ensure validity within research, it has been suggested that triangulating data may ensure that results are interpreted correctly. Careful analysis has been given to both the reliability and validity of the project to ensure that the research design chosen for this project was “fit for purpose” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.78). Although this study adopts a qualitative approach, numeric data was used to describe the functionalities of the role of the adult educators.

### ***Ethical Issues***

The characteristics of good research proposed by Gay and Airasian (2000) are that the research topic should be; interesting, researchable, significant and manageable, these four areas have been significantly addressed throughout this research project. This research study strictly adhered to the guidelines set down in the Unitec Ethics Policy and Guidelines for the Researcher (Unitec Research Ethics Committee, 2009) as detailed in the seven areas below:

#### ***Informed and Voluntary Consent***

Within this research study, the risk to participants was minimal, however informed voluntary consent was built into the introduction section of the questionnaire before participants embarked upon the research. The informed consent stated “by answering this questionnaire you are consenting to participating in this research study” (Appendix A).

#### ***Respect for Rights and Preservation of Anonymity***

Research participants may have felt that the data being collected was sensitive in nature as it related to their work environment.

Informed consent has been deemed necessary for this study to allow participants to choose whether or not they wish to participate in the research, thus allowing research participants to understand what the study involves (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). No individuals' or providers' names have been gathered and all results have been housed in locked files and encrypted data files. Data was securely stored upon the completion of the study.

### ***Minimisation of Harm***

This study has been designed to minimize the risk to participants by protecting them from harm (Alderson, 2004).

Online questionnaires were completed and did not involve any verbal or physical contact with participants. The research did not breach New Zealand Law statutes, regulations or treaties as set down by the Unitec Ethics Committee (UREC) policies and procedures (2009).

### ***Cultural and Social Sensitivity***

This research included educators from various socio-cultural backgrounds. The research questions have been designed to be inclusive of all socio-cultural backgrounds. Questions were optional throughout the questionnaire and participants had the option to opt out at any stage of the research process. All participants were given the right to choose whether to participate in the study and those who elected to were offered a copy of the summary research report at the end of the study. An e-mail address was provided to all participants who had questions prior to or after completing the research project.

### ***Limitation of Deception***

This section was not applicable for this research project.

### ***Respect for Intellectual and Cultural Property Ownership***

Participants were invited to be informed on the progression of the research via a short summary report upon the completion of the project. The invitation (Appendix B) and questionnaire (Appendix A) provided to participants at the beginning of the research reinforced anonymity and reaffirmed the participants' abilities to be informed of the findings of this study.

### ***Avoidance of a Conflict in Interest***

This study formed a component of a masters degree in education and not attached to any organisation or PTE, thus ensuring that there was no conflict of interest. Additionally, all participants were e-mailed via the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers (NZAPEP). Therefore, no requests for participant names or their organisations were made unless participants provided their details voluntarily. To ensure complete anonymity, the online questionnaire tool facility to record internet provider (IP) addresses was disabled and no IP addresses were recorded.

### ***Research Design Limitations***

A number of research design limitations have been minimised by the completion of a pilot questionnaire. The pilot questionnaire completed prior to the beginning of the research exposed areas of limitations and allowed for the development of the questionnaire to clarify ambiguities. A comprehensive critique of the research design limitations can be found in Chapter Five.

### ***Conclusion***

In summary this chapter has provided a rationale for the research design and qualitative methodological approach used within this research. This includes a critique of the online data collection methods. Finally, the chapter has provided important consideration of the ethical principles that were adopted throughout this study.

The next chapter presents the findings that were collected during this research project and provides an analyses of the key findings.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### ***Introduction***

This chapter presents the findings from data that was collected using the online questionnaire, a copy of which is located in Appendix A. Findings are presented here as a summary and discussed in more detail within Chapter Five.

The findings were in relation to the research question which sought to identify current adult literacy provision taking place within New Zealand PTEs. These findings were in support of the three core aims of this research. The aims were: firstly to identify what literacy provision was taking place within PTEs. Secondly, to gain further insight into the qualifications and experience of those participants delivering adult literacy training and thirdly, to support and inform literacy research and practice in the future.

### ***Questionnaire Response Rates***

A total of 79 participants responded to a request to participate in this project. Should each of the PTEs have responded, potential participant numbers may have exceeded 738. Of the 79 who participated, 70 completed the questionnaire in full, the remaining nine participants all completed the first section of the questionnaire only. This low response rate was anticipated and may have been due to the large sample size initially contacted for inclusion within this study (Hamilton, 2003).

### ***Questionnaire Results***

#### **Question 1: Gender**

*“Please select your gender”*

Question one aimed to identify the distribution rates of male and female participants within PTEs in order to provide baseline data on the gender of those delivering literacy subjects. Participants were asked to select their gender from one of two answers, either 'female' or 'male'.

## **Results**

The gender distribution for participants within this sample was 71.8% female and 28.2% male, with one respondent opting not to provide an answer. The findings from this research reflected that a significant percentage of educators who participated within this research were female. These results were in keeping with the current body of literature on the gender of participants.

The results for males were higher than expected and may be attributed to the vocational nature of some topics taught within PTEs. The tendency is in some, but not all cases, for male educators to teach vocational subjects such as automotive, plumbing and carpentry. This point is made not to stereotype vocational subjects by indicating a male teaching contingent, but to highlight where the trends in teaching gender currently lie. The results of question one are represented in figure two below which visually demonstrates a disparity in the gender of educators within PTEs.

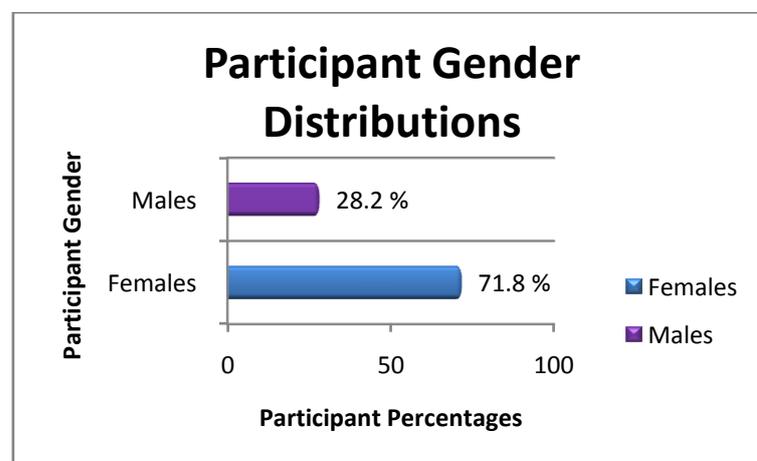


Figure 2: Participant gender distributions within PTEs

## **Question 2: Employment hours**

“Please confirm your current working hours at your Private Training Establishment (PTE)”.

Question two sought to establish the nature of employment for those participants’ surveyed.

For this question, participants were asked to select one of three options that reflected their current working hours. These working hours mirrored the classifications determined by the New Zealand Department of Labour (2009). The first answer option was ‘full time’ and classified as thirty or more hours. The second option was ‘part time’, classified as thirty hours or below. The final option was ‘other’, this answer choice was provided to capture data from consultants or from educators who did not have fixed hours.

This question was designed in conjunction with questions three, nine and ten to identify what percentage of participants’ working week was actually spent providing literacy support to learners. The comparative analysis of this data is discussed in more detail within Chapter Five.

### ***Results***

The results for this question revealed that 84.8% of participants were employed on a full-time basis with 12.7% of participants indicating they were part time educators. For those participants who indicated their working hours falling within the ‘other’ category, one commented that they worked on “circa 3 week project blocks”. The remaining respondent indicated they trained PTE tutors in embedded literacy and did not give an indication of the hours they were actually employed for. These results are reflected in figure three on the following page.



Figure 3: Distribution of participant working hours

Further findings came from examining the data in relation to questions one and two. This compared the working hours of males and females to examine gender distribution in each group. Taking into consideration the number and gender distribution of participants, the results showed that females occupied the majority of part time roles. Signaling, amongst those surveyed, males were more likely to be employed in a full time capacity within PTEs. These results were displayed in figure four below.

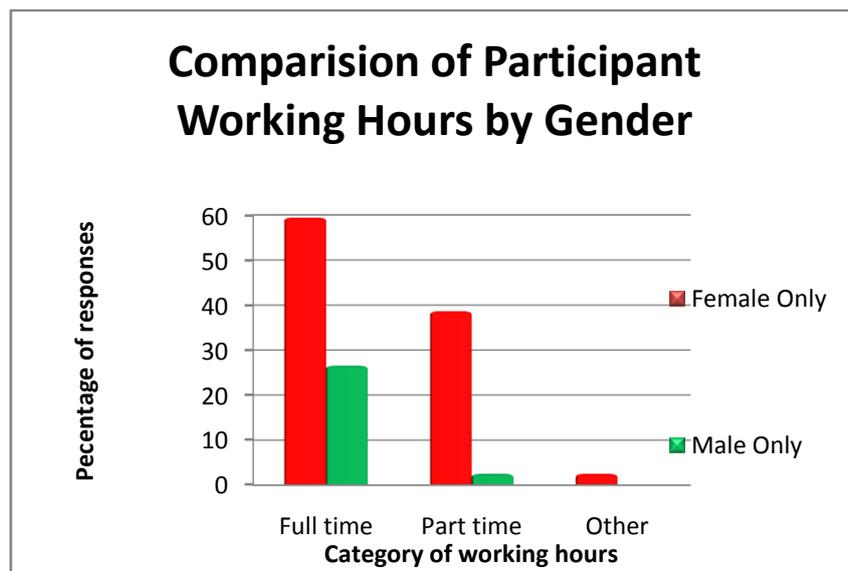


Figure 4: Comparison of participant working hours by gender

### **Question 3: Literacy teaching hours**

*“How many hours per week do you teach literacy subjects (embedded literacy or stand-alone literacy subjects)?”*

The role of question three was to ascertain the number of hours in a working week that participants dedicated to teaching literacy subjects taking into consideration whether they were employed in a part-time or full-time capacity. Due to the broad nature of potential answers that could have been given, the answer choices were strictly limited to five. Participants were provided with five possible answers and were invited to select only one. The five answers were:

1. below ten hours;
2. ten to fifteen hours;
3. fifteen to twenty hours;
4. twenty to twenty five hours;
5. above twenty five hours.

### ***Results***

The results reflected that the majority of both full-time and part-time participants (46.8%) taught literacy subjects below ten hours per week. The second most frequently taught number of literacy hours was between 10 and 15 per week, this result accounted for 25.3% of full-time and part-time research participants. 12.7% of full-time participants delivered literacy topics between twenty and twenty five hours per week. 8.9% of full-time and part-time participants delivered literacy support between fifteen to twenty hours per week. Finally, it was found that 6.3% of participants employed in a full-time capacity stated they provided literacy support to learners for more than twenty five hours per week. These results are reflected in figure five on the following page.

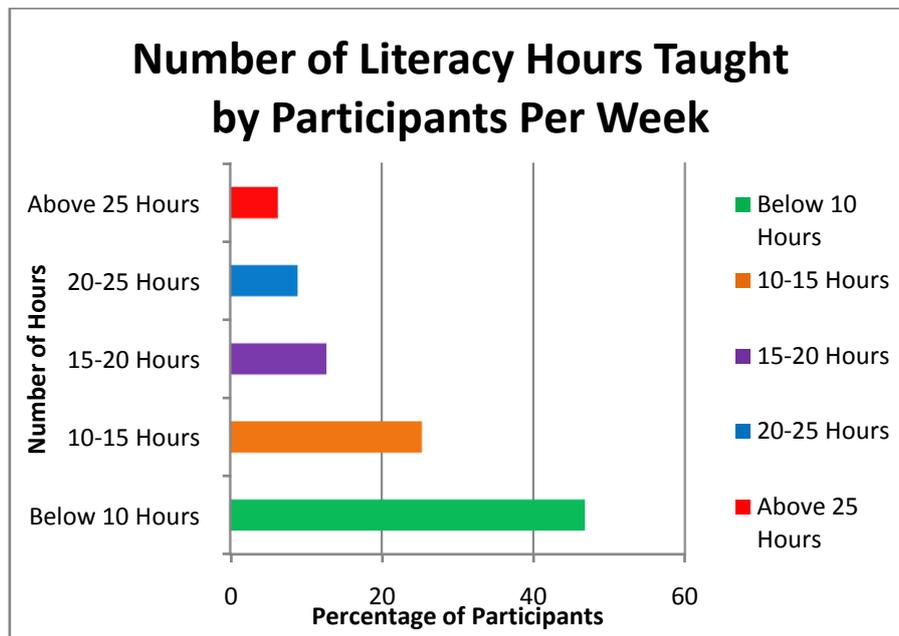


Figure 5: Number of literacy hours taught per week in New Zealand PTEs

The findings for this question were expected to show that as the number of literacy teaching hours increased the number of participants delivering those hours would fall. Although this was the case in majority of instances, a result of interest was in relation to the numbers of participants who indicated they taught literacy subjects between twenty to twenty five hours per week. This percentage was higher than anticipated and indicated literacy is increasingly becoming a part of a PTE educators role.

#### Question 4: Subjects taught

*“Please highlight all of the subject areas you teach in your current role as an educator.”*

Question four aimed to identify all of the subject areas that participants taught. This was in order to identify the number of subjects and where possible examine the diversity of their teaching role. Additionally, by providing a multiple choice question it was possible to ascertain what percentage of participants considered literacy to be part of their additional teaching responsibilities.

The answers choices were as follows:

1. Literacy;
2. Numeracy;
3. ESOL;
4. All of the above (meaning literacy, numeracy and ESOL);
5. Other.

Participants were given the option of choosing multiple answers to this question in order to highlight all of the areas in which they taught. The five answer options provided to participants served as a basic list of teaching subjects in order to initiate the questioning process, it was not meant to be an exhaustive list of subject areas. Due to the number of subject areas taught within PTEs, participants were invited through the use of the 'other' option to provide what they considered their specialist teaching areas such as sport or Te Reo Maori. Each of the subject areas indicated by participants was counted as an individual response and grouped accordingly.

### ***Results***

The results demonstrated that the majority of participants had a diverse teaching role, with 79.7% of research participants indicating they taught in either two to three different subject areas. It was established that 3.8% of participants taught one subject with the remainder of participants teaching either four, five or six subjects. Figure six on the following page illustrates a comparison between the percentage of participants who taught between one and six subject areas.

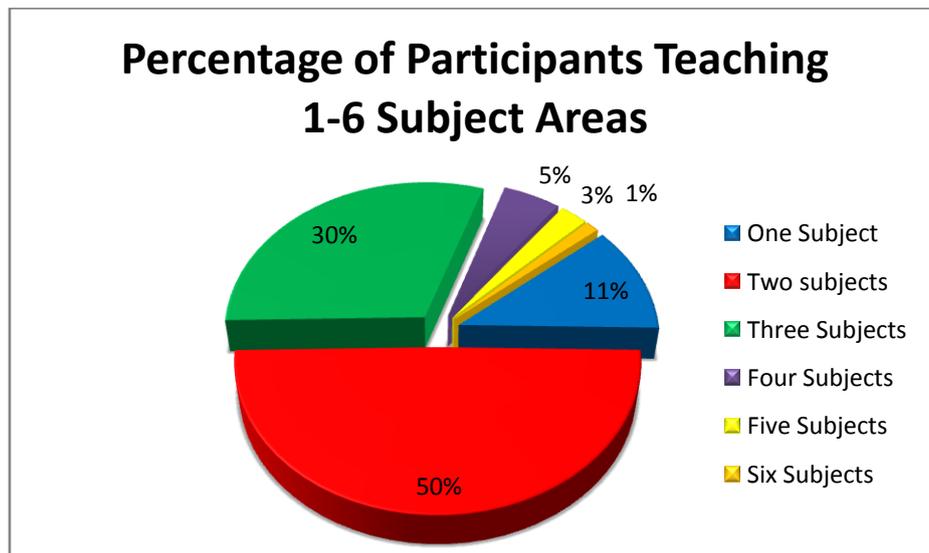


Figure 6: Percentages of participants teaching one or more subject areas

It had been expected that the number of participants delivering only literacy subjects for example as a purely literacy educator would be higher. The results indicated that only 3.8% of participants indicated that their role was solely to teach literacy subjects. This result revealed that literacy education was increasingly being taught in conjunction with other subjects.

An additional sub analysis was included to show a comparison in the number of participants teaching in four comparatively different categories, these categories were:

1. the numbers of participants who taught literacy as a subject on its own;
2. those who taught literacy and numeracy;
3. those who taught literacy, numeracy and ESOL;
4. those who taught another subject in addition to literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

Analysis found those who taught literacy most commonly taught numeracy as an additional subject. Thus signaling that amongst participants, almost half stated their role as an educator involved teaching literacy and numeracy only. It was not anticipated that such a high number of educators roles would involve numeracy teaching.

Furthermore, the results revealed that 24.1% of all surveyed participants identified themselves as teaching literacy, numeracy and ESOL, this result demonstrated that a quarter of participants taught in three different but interrelated subject areas. Figure seven below reflects that within this study, the majority of participants' roles focused on teaching literacy and numeracy subjects.

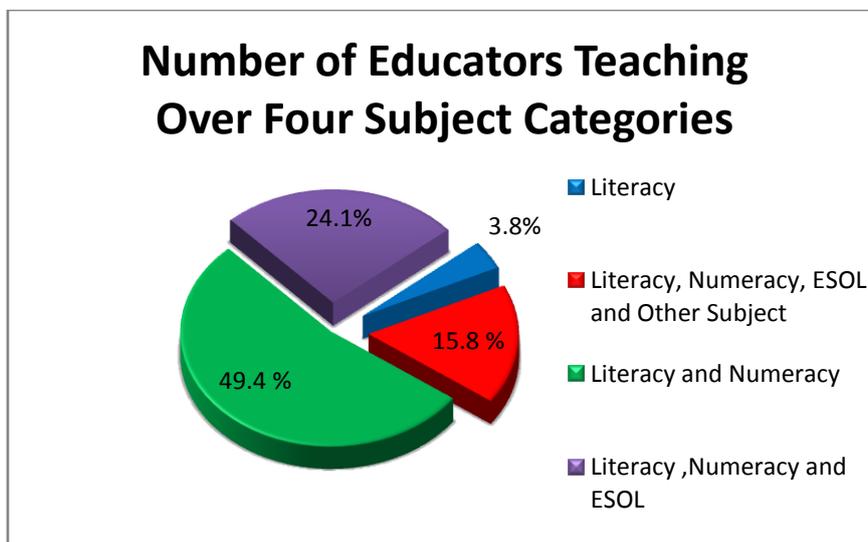


Figure 7: Comparison of the number of educators teaching over four subject areas

Significantly, within these findings, a further 15.8% of those who taught literacy, numeracy and ESOL also taught another subject. This is important because when these results are collated and analysed against later findings they reveal a significant expansion in the role of the PTE educator.

Finally, the results indicated that 36.7% of participants chose to select the 'other' category, identifying they taught in subjects other than literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Their responses were subdivided into thirteen sub-groups to allow the reporting within each teaching area.

The thirteen sub groups were as follows:

1. agriculture ;
2. automotive;
3. business /computing;
4. health care;
5. literacy teacher training;
6. social studies;
7. soft skills or foundation subjects (communication, self esteem, life/work skills;
8. sports;
9. te Reo Maori;
10. retail;
11. tourism;
12. technical studies;
13. visual arts.

The results from the coding process are displayed diagrammatically within Table One below. This table shows that in addition to delivering literacy topics over one third of educators also taught in a diverse range of other subject areas.

Table 1: Number of educators who taught ‘other’ subjects within New Zealand PTEs

Foundation/ Soft Skills	Business & Computing	Literacy Teacher Training	Social Studies	Visual Arts	Sports	Health Care	Retail	Te Reo Maori	Agriculture	Automotive	Tourism	Technical Studies
11	6	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1

The results of this table are used to support later discussion which focuses on the diversity of educators roles.

### Question 5: Teaching experience

“Please select the number of years you have been teaching in each of the following”

Question five examined the total years of teaching experience participants held.

This was in order to collate data on the number of years educators had taught across various disciplines and age groups. Participants were asked to indicate all of their teaching experience using a multiple choice question.

The answer choices were as follows:

1. 'all subjects/all ages', this aimed to detail the total number of years experience across all subjects and all ages;
2. 'teaching adult literacy subjects', this was to identify the number of years experience of specifically teaching adult literacy subjects;
3. 'teaching adults in any subject area' sought to establish the number of participants who had adult teaching experience in any subject area;
4. 'teaching children in any subject area' and was used to chart the experience of those who may have been primary or secondary teachers originally and had subsequently moved to teaching adults.

The number of years experience they held in the above four areas was then sub divided into four different categories:

1. 0-3 years;
2. 3-6 years;
3. 6-10 years;
4. 10 years +.

It is important to note that this question was not completed correctly by all participants. This may have been due to a number of factors such as a lack of understanding of the question or the limited teaching experience held by some educators. The results from this question were collated and analysed using the data available and presented in figure eight on the following page.

### ***Results***

The results as expected demonstrated a wide variety of teaching experiences amongst participants, ranging from zero to over ten years.

The majority of participants indicated that they held over ten years teaching experience across all disciplines and ages.

A significant finding within the research came from examining the length of adult literacy teaching experience amongst participants. The results obtained from the previous question four established that that all participants were delivering literacy subjects, yet almost half of participants (45.5%) held below three years teaching experience. This was significantly lower than anticipated and additional analysis of the results found that 31% of research participants stated they held experience teaching children but not adults. These results are focused on in more detail within Chapters Five and Six. A comparison in the number of years teaching experience across all four teaching disciplines is presented below in figure eight.

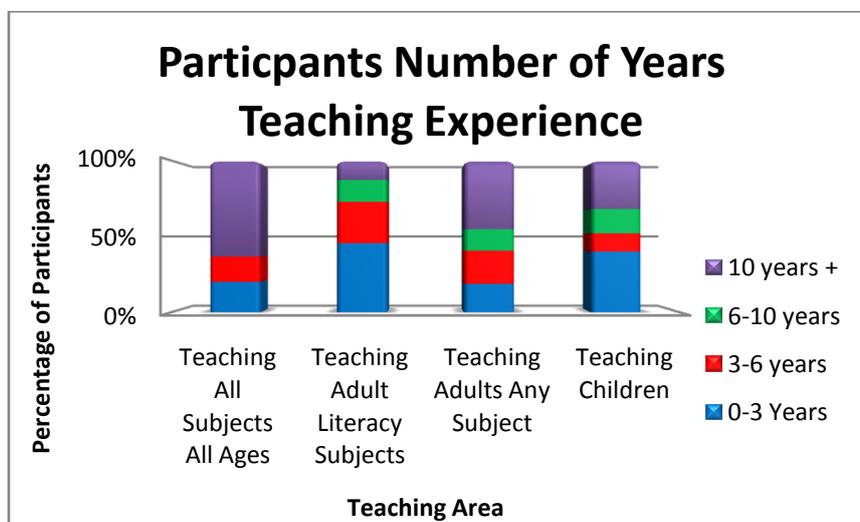


Figure 8: Participants number of years teaching experience across four teaching disciplines

### Question 6: Literacy teaching qualification

“Do you hold a Literacy teaching qualification?”

Question six’s goal was to identify how many participants were delivering literacy education with PTEs with or without a formal literacy teaching qualification. Additionally, it was to ascertain the most commonly held literacy teacher training qualification.

This question was used to gather data in three distinct areas, the first was to provide a benchmark for the number of participants holding an adult literacy teaching qualification and currently working within PTEs. The second was to identify the type of literacy qualification that these participants held. Finally, the third area was to examine the numbers of participants without literacy qualifications to see whether or not they were willing to complete a literacy teaching qualification. Prior to this study, data pertaining to these three areas had not been available.

In relation to whether or not educators held a literacy teaching qualification, participants were asked to select one of four of the following answer choices:

1. no;
2. currently completing one;
3. would like to complete one;
4. yes.

An expansion of this question was that the 'yes' value then asked participants to detail the type of literacy qualification they held.

### ***Results***

The results reflected that 34.2% of participants providing literacy support to adult learners held a literacy qualification. Although the majority of participants (65.8%) either did not hold a literacy teaching qualification, were in the process of completing one or had expressed an interest in completing one. The results of these findings are represented in figure nine on the following page.

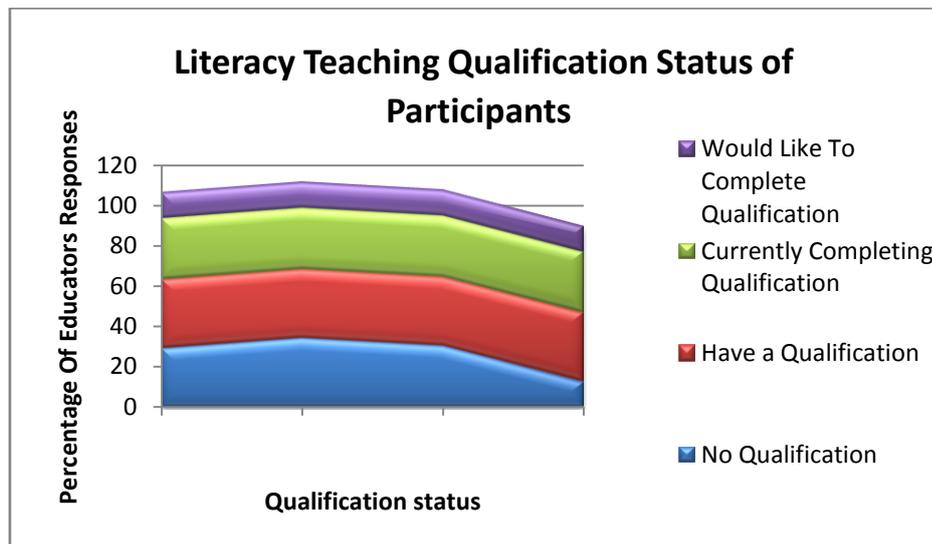


Figure 9: Literacy teaching qualification status of participants

When combining the results of those who held a literacy teaching qualification with the figures for those currently completing one, the data revealed a potentially higher rate of qualified staff than was evident in the initial analysis. This is significant because should the participants currently completing a literacy qualification do so successfully, it would mean 64.6% of surveyed participants would hold a literacy teaching qualification. This result has further implications in terms of capacity building for the future and forms part of discussions within Chapters Five and Six.

The results showed that 34.2% of participants held an adult literacy qualification, with the national certificate and the certificate in adult literacy being the most widely held literacy teacher training qualification. The types of literacy qualifications held by participants are presented in figure ten on the following page.

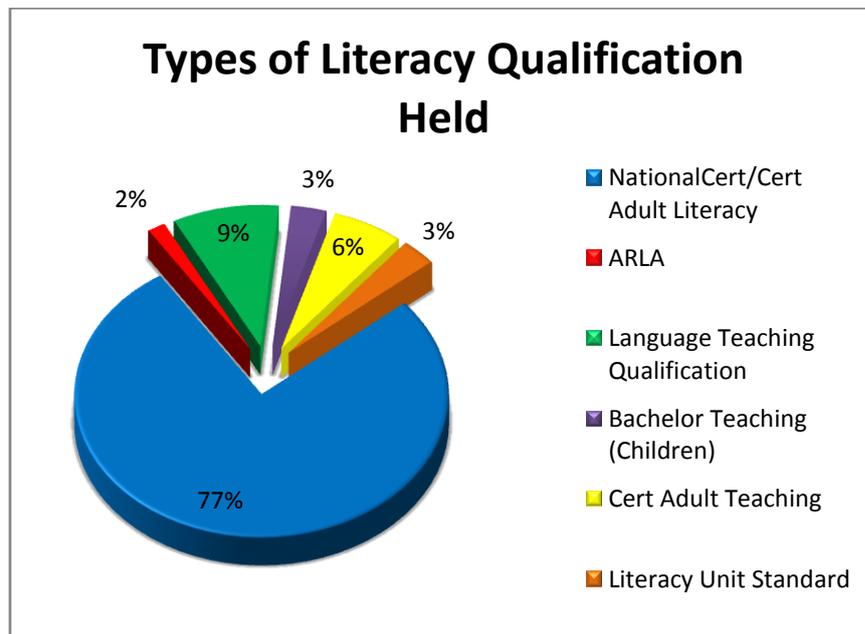


Figure 10: Type of literacy qualification held by participants

Furthermore, the analysis of this question revealed an anomaly within the results. On careful analysis of the results it was found 37% of participants who indicated they held a specific literacy qualification in fact held a number of non literacy teaching qualifications such as a general adult teaching, children's teaching or English language teaching qualification. The question was implicit in that it asked whether participants held a literacy teaching qualification.

However the discrepancy in the results may have been due to a lack of understanding as to what constitutes a literacy teaching qualification. It is important to understand the distinction in these different types of qualification. Although components of adult literacy teaching may be embedded within other courses such as adult teacher training, the main focus of these courses is not on providing targeted adult literacy modules such as those found within the national certificate in literacy educator training courses.

A further finding of note was in relation to the gender of those holding literacy teaching qualifications. The results from this study indicated that 13% of male participants held a teaching qualification this was in contrast to 34 % of women who indicated they held a literacy qualification. These results are presented in figure eleven on the following page.

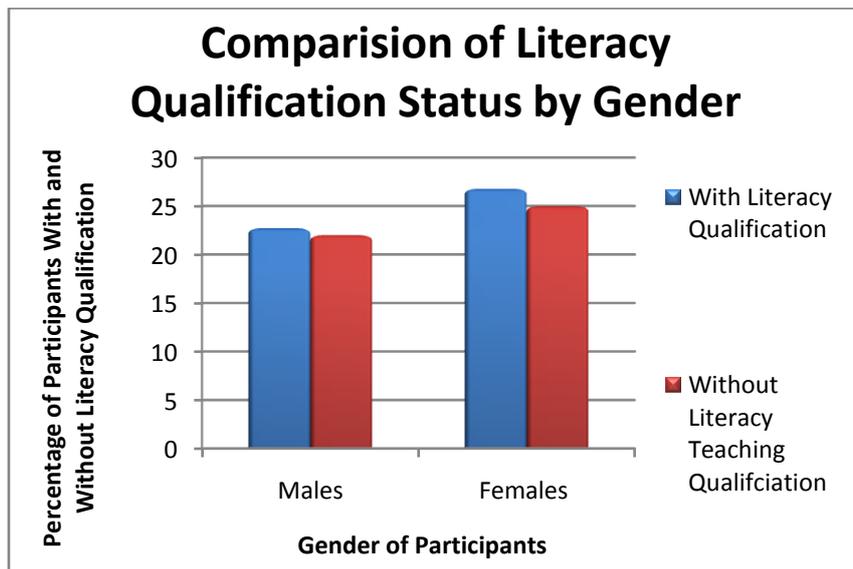


Figure 11: Comparison of literacy teaching qualifications status by gender

The results comparing literacy qualifications by gender were as expected and in keeping with the data from personal correspondence with Literacy Aotearoa who confirmed that most of the graduates from their literacy programmes were female.

Finally, this finding highlighted a high rate of male and female participants did not hold a literacy teaching qualification or were not in the process of completing a qualification. What this meant was that 27.8% of participants teaching literacy in PTEs did not wish to complete a specific literacy qualification.

Additionally, when comparing the gender of those who wished to gain a qualification all male participants expressed an interest or were already completing a qualification. This finding indicated that within this research, male participants were more likely to want to complete a literacy teaching qualification.

**Question 7: Qualifications held by educators**

“Please select all the qualifications that you hold”

Question seven aimed to gather information on the level of academic qualifications held by participants and asked educators to select all of the qualifications they held from a choice of eight answers. Seven of these choices corresponded to levels of qualification, the eighth answer was an 'other' category. The seven qualification levels were:

1. certificate;
2. diploma;
3. degree;
4. post graduate certificate;
5. post graduate diploma;
6. masters;
7. doctorate (PhD/EdD).

Finally, the last of the eight answers was a category entitled 'other'. This category was incorporated to capture data from those holding industry specific qualifications such as accounting or for those participants who may have been in the process of completing a qualification.

### ***Results***

The results revealed the most commonly held qualification was at degree level. A total of 43% of participants held a bachelors degree. No participants held a qualification at doctorate level. In total 8% of participants held a qualification at certificate level and 4% held a diploma. A combined total of 29% held either a post graduate certificate/diploma and 11% of participants held a masters degree.

The results indicated a total of 5% of participants that held none of the formal qualifications listed with one respondent stating that they held "*no qualifications currently working on an adult teaching certificate.*"

The results for question seven are expressed diagrammatically in figure twelve below.

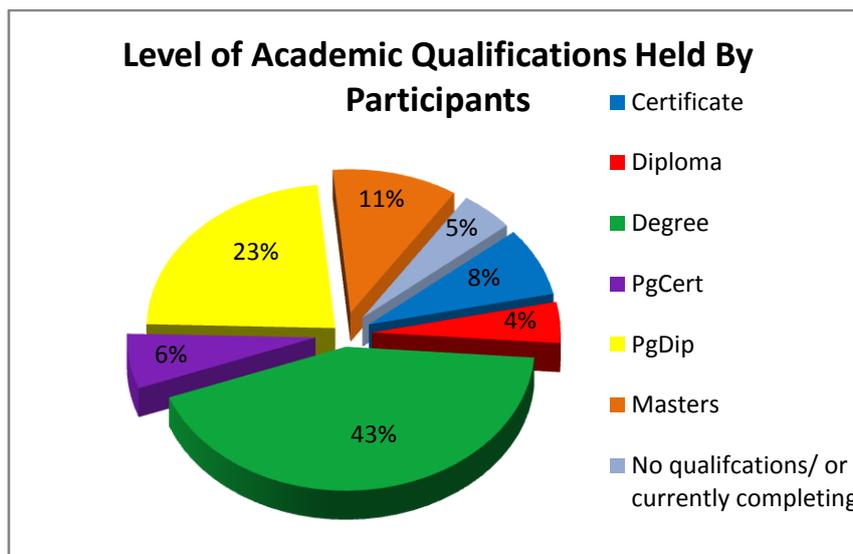


Figure 12: Level of academic qualifications held by participants

An important finding within this question was that 17% of participants held qualifications at diploma level and below on the National Qualifications Framework, with 57% indicating they did not hold a degree and 5% holding no formal academic qualification. These points are being considered in more detail within Chapter Five and Six.

### ***Section 2: Questions in relation to participants teaching***

Section two of the questionnaire contained four questions which focused on the type of literacy provision within the PTE and was aligned with aim number one of the research project which was to identify current literacy provision within PTEs. The four questions in section two related to the following areas: literacy screening for learners, the level of the programmes taught the type of literacy provision and the biggest challenge faced by participants teaching literacy subjects at PTEs.

The fourth question was optional and requested participants' details in order to receive a summary report at the conclusion of this research.

This question was included to increase feedback to participants and to ensure participants were included. This question also aimed for data to be gathered to enable the dissemination of findings at the conclusion of the project.

### **Question 8: Screening for literacy difficulties**

“Are the learners at your PTE screened for any potential literacy needs before joining or during induction?”

Question eight focused on using a multiple choice question to establish whether literacy provision at PTE providers included pre-screening learners for literacy difficulties. The results of this question were used in conjunction with question eleven to examine whether there was a correlation between the challenges faced by participants teaching literacy and whether or not screening for literacy difficulties may be connected.

Participants were invited to select one of three possible answers in relation to whether or not learners are screened. These were ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘other’. The ‘other’ category was incorporated to encompass providers that did not have a formalised screening process in place.

### ***Results***

The results found that 84.8% of those surveyed stated their organisation pre-screened learners for literacy difficulties prior to enrolment or during induction. The remaining 11% did not screen learners and 4.2% regarded themselves as in the ‘other’ category.

Further analysis of the ‘other’ category revealed participants stated that their provider “sometimes screened” or that it was “dependent upon the provider...” One participant commented that screening was dealt with in the following way, “*at interview stage they are evaluated and referred to a literacy organisation if necessary*”.

There was a widespread prevalence of literacy screening throughout New Zealand PTEs indicating a significant percentage of PTEs completing screening for their learners. The results of this question were higher than had been anticipated and are represented in figure thirteen below and discussed further in question eleven and with Chapter Five.

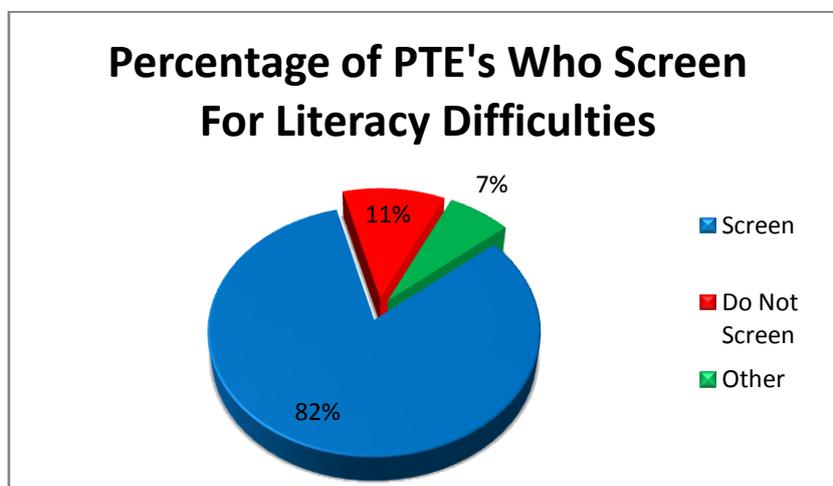


Figure 13: Percentage of PTEs pre-screening for literacy difficulties

It is also important to note that the scope of this research did not include the type of literacy assessment or the protocol used. There may be variations in the quality and provision of screening between different PTEs. Although literacy screening was not the focus of this research the results of this question were significant and developed further within in Chapter Six.

### **Question 9: Teaching level**

“Please indicate the level of programme that you currently teach literacy subjects on”.

Question nine was concerned with identifying the level of programmes that participants taught literacy upon as a means of identifying the current level at which literacy delivery is taking place.

Participants were asked to choose all of the courses in which they taught literacy subjects.

The four answers were as follows:

1. introductory;
2. certificate;
3. diploma;
4. other.

Owing to the diversity of provision, including national, local and overseas qualifications taught at PTEs, only four answers were given as possible options. The 'other' answer choice aimed to collect data from other levels of courses such as bachelors and masters along with short courses where literacy may be taught. The list of qualifications given were aligned to the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework (NZQA, 2004).

### ***Results***

The results for this study found that over half of participants (53.76%) indicated the majority of their literacy teaching was at certificate level. Certificate level was classified as programmes offered at levels 1-3 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. According to the answers provided, literacy provision was next most commonly taught on introductory or foundation level programmes with 35.48% of participants signaling they taught literacy at this level. Introductory level was taken to include short courses or provision not defined as a level on the NQF framework. Literacy provision at diploma level accounted for 7.53% of participants, with 3.23% of participants indicating they provided literacy support at bachelor degree level.

In relation to the 'other' category, the data analysis revealed that in fact the majority of responses for this category could be categorised into: introductory, certificate or diploma, with only a small percentage at degree level.

Finally, within this research sample no literacy provision was taught beyond bachelor degree level. The breakdown of literacy provision by qualification level was represented in figure fourteen on the following page.

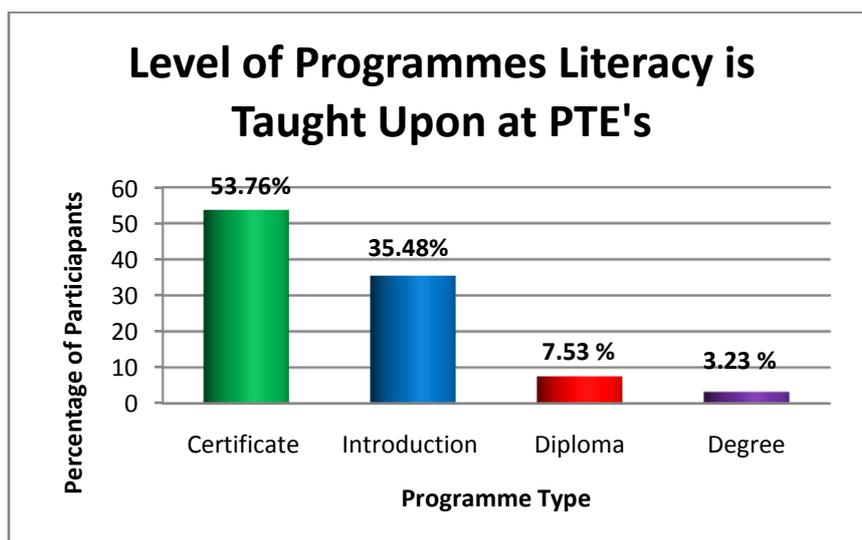


Figure 14: Level of programmes where literacy is taught upon

Furthermore, the results revealed that on average 45% the participants taught literacy on multiple levels with 34 % of those surveyed teaching literacy on one level of programme only. This result indicated that although literacy is taught at higher levels the majority of provision within PTEs is currently taking place at certificate or introductory level.

#### Question 10: Types of literacy teaching

“How is the majority of your time spent teaching literacy topics?”

Question ten examined the type of literacy provision which was taking place within New Zealand PTEs by analysing how participants spent their time delivering literacy topics. Participants were asked to choose from one of three answers to indicate how they taught literacy subjects. These were ‘mostly embedded within another subject areas’, ‘mostly on its own as a standalone literacy class’ and the final possible answer was ‘other’.

The ‘other’ category was incorporated within this question to ensure that providers who sub contracted literacy support to another organisation were included, and for those providers who deliver a mixture of both embedded and stand-alone provision.

Currently there is a large body of research in the area of adult literacy advocating the use of embedded and contextualised literacy methods. This question sought to identify whether this was being translated into actual teaching experiences for learners within PTEs.

### **Results**

The results highlighted that over three quarters of participants (77.1%) stated that embedding literacy formed the majority of the time they spent teaching literacy. It was found that 12.9% of research participants stated they delivered literacy in isolation as a 'standalone' subject. From the responses marked as 'other' 10.0% of participant responses followed similar themes, with most identifying that their provision was a combination of both embedded and stand-alone delivery.

For those surveyed, only one participant explained that their learners' literacy needs were met via another organisation. The results of which can be seen in figure fifteen below.

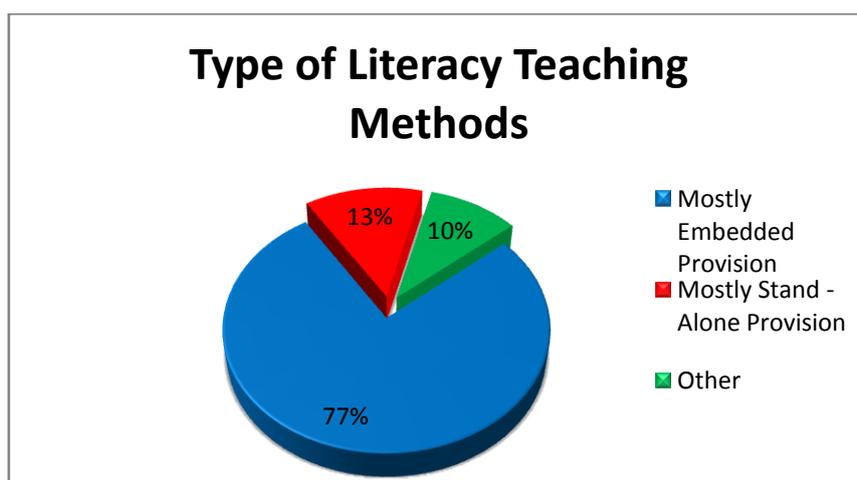


Figure 15: Types of literacy teaching methods within PTEs

When comparing the responses of both male and females it was found that there was an equal distribution in the amount of males and females delivering both embedded and standalone literacy provision. No gender differences in provision were evident from the results that were analysed.

Further analysis was completed on those with and without literacy qualifications to discover whether holding literacy qualifications predisposes participants to deliver literacy subjects either embedded or standalone. The results found that for those who held a specific adult literacy qualification, for example the national certificate in adult literacy (educator), only two taught stand-alone literacy subjects while the majority of the participants (87%) taught embedded literacy.

The results from all participants showed the majority of their literacy provision was embedded. The results of this project appear to indicate that there appears to be no connection between whether a participant holds a literacy teaching qualification and the method in which they deliver literacy provision.

#### **Question 11: Challenges faced by participants**

“What is the biggest challenge you face as an educator teaching literacy at a PTE?”

Question eleven included the use of an open ended question to gain participant opinions on what they believed was their biggest challenge as an educator teaching literacy. This question was used to develop a clearer understanding of the individual challenges faced by participants teaching literacy within PTEs.

Participants were asked to provide a single challenge, however many cited two or three challenges they faced as an educator. The highest recorded challenges cited by participants was six, each of their responses were recorded individually. Due to the numerous responses that were provided, the challenges were post coded into five categories to provide clarity for the reader.

The five coding categories were:

1. Teaching;
2. Diversity of learner needs;
3. Time restraints;
4. Learner perception and attributes;
5. Funding.

The main categories were then divided into sub categories. The replies were summarised in figure sixteen. This diagram format aimed to show the relationship between many of the barriers which were expressed by participants.

### ***Results***

The responses were grouped sequentially into five categories according to their significance level. The results relating to the challenges faced by participants have been detailed in figure sixteen on the following page along with more in-depth analysis outlining the opinions of participants surveyed.



Figure 16: Challenges faced by educators teaching subjects within PTEs

The figure above is a graphical representation of the teaching challenges educators face. The diagram represents these challenges as potential barriers to teaching.

The first most commonly cited challenge faced by participants was the diversity of their learner needs and was cited by 33.33 % of participants. This category included teaching to varied and diverse groups of learners within the classroom.

One participant responded that their biggest challenge was “*considering the spread of the abilities and meeting the support requirements*”.

The challenges also included the delivery to learners with very low level of literacy and was commented on by one responded who wrote “*the students can’t read and write to complete their units*”.

Another respondent reported that a challenge was *“the lack of literacy in students who have completed secondary school, both in numeracy and in English”*. The challenge of coping with low level learners entering these facilitates was echoed in the response from a participant who wrote the challenges they found most demanding were:

*The lack of very basic literacy and numeracy knowledge that adults come to us with. At times, we have experienced adults with literacy and numeracy levels of between 5 and 6 year olds. The most basic skills such as understanding the enrolment form is difficult for some.*

The second most significant challenge cited by participants (31.25%) related to the teaching and resourcing of adult literacy subjects. The results from this category raised several important and emerging issues within professional development provision, specific teaching resources and adequate participants resourcing which form a significant aspect of recommendations for the future within Chapter Six.

Resourcing issues were identified as the lack of availability of appropriate and sufficient adult literacy teaching material. Specific and contextual adult resources were deemed as important for one respondent who wrote a challenge for them was the *“lack of resources aimed at adults”*.

Limited development and provision for staff teaching literacy subjects were discussion points for one participant who acknowledged their biggest challenge was *“resources, and PD time (professional development)”*.

The area of awareness and understanding of literacy needs by key staff was highlighted within this category, with one respondent commenting that a barrier for them was *“getting management to understand the importance of literacy and to not use me as an additional tutor”*.

The third most significantly discussed category related to learner attributes such as motivation, confidence, engagement and perceptions of literacy education. It was found that 15.64% of participants noted that the challenges they faced as educators related to the attributes of learners.

A quote from a participant indicated that motivation was a problem stating that, "trying to get them motivated to learn and stay motivated is a very big challenge." This was reinforced by comments from another participant who stated challenges for them lay in the *"trainee attendance and trainee readiness to receive literacy support"*.

Motivation was also included under the wider heading of behaviour management and was acknowledged as a significant challenge for some participants and one participant remarking that *"behaviour management is huge for these individuals"*.

Attitude was a theme expressed by several participants and was shared in the statement that *"attitudinally some of these learners have a big problem"*.

Further responses indicated that individual learners' perception of the importance of literacy education was a significant factor for them. They commented that *"I often find that the students' perception is more of a barrier, they do not want to move away from the topic they are studying"*. This theme was continued by participants who found that a lack of comprehension of the subject matter was a barrier for them commenting *"learners really do not understand what it [literacy] means and how easy it is"*.

The fourth category cited by research participants as a challenge included time for class planning including the time taken to embed literacy within specific lessons. In total 13.54% of participant responses fell within this category. Participants provided various responses within this category stating challenges lay in the *"lack of time within the course"*.

This was echoed in the response by another participant who identified their challenge was related to the length of time needed to embed material into classes. Their comments involved *“having time, literacy needs to be embedded into other subjects, and for that to happen and for students to understand takes a long time”*.

Along the same lines, further discussion came from another respondent who commented that challenges arose from *“the extra time needed to teach LLN alongside (or embedded) with courses that have a time frame (i.e. 6 months to do a national certificate and LLN”*. Time was also cited as an issue not just for staff but for learners too, one participant raised the point that *“too little time to reinforce the topics so that they are ‘embedded’ into the students so [sic] that they are confident in their newly acquired knowledge”*.

The final category was related to financial challenges. This included budgetary restraints placed upon programmes, staffing hours and staff salaries. It was found that 6.25% of participants felt that financial restrictions appear to be a challenge for them. This was demonstrated in the comments by one respondent who cited their challenge was in *“dealing with TEC and funding issues”*. A further response came from a participant who cited their challenge was the

*Lack of TEC funding, not having enough along with the foundation pool shutting down from the end of 2009 has and will not help these individuals to attain even the basic of skills to gain a job in their future.*

Lack of targeted funding was cited by one participant in their comments that *“funding is a problem the lack of targeted funding slows things down”*.

Funding for targeted groups was also an area of concern for another participant who stated that:

*Government funding precludes extending the time that some people need for help. Next year I have to reach a specific numeric target of learners but this means I can't keep some people on the course as long as is actually necessary to meet their literacy needs.*

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has provided an analysis of the results collected from the questionnaire by presenting the trends in data that have been highlighted from the research study. The themes that have emerged from these results will be discussed in further detail with Chapters Five and Six.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter builds upon the data presented within Chapter Four and provides a critical analysis and consideration of important themes in response to the research question “What adult literacy provision is currently taking place within New Zealand Private Training Establishments?” Drawing from current literature, the key findings are explored and where literature was available it is used to substantiate the findings.

Firstly, discussion will focus on the current literacy provision currently taking place within these establishments, secondly, the key finding on educators delivering adult literacy training are explored. Finally, discussion will briefly focus on how the findings may develop provision and research in the area of adult literacy provision within PTEs. More detailed analysis of this final point is then presented within Chapter Six.

### ***1. Current Literacy Provision***

#### ***Pre- Screening***

The first theme of this research focuses on current provision and indicates that amongst the institutes that took part in this research, the majority provide literacy screening for their learners. This is an important finding and reveals that learners literacy needs are being identified before or shortly after they begin studying within PTEs.

Providing literacy screening in principle could provide educators with background knowledge of their learners needs in order to identify learners with additional support needs. Research supports the use of standardised literacy screening Imel (1990) indicated that this type of testing is simple to administer and allows larger groups of learners to be tested simultaneously.

An important factor for consideration is that this scope of this research project did not examine the type or effectiveness of the pre-screening tool used by these training providers. Nor did it examine the methods by which the data is disseminated to educators or whether educators incorporate the results into their teaching and learning. Although, what the results reveal is that this study highlighted that a significant percentage of PTES pre-screen learners for potential literacy difficulties early in their studies. Further research may attempt to understand the reason behind the decision for most PTES to screen and may also examine the screening tools and its effectiveness.

It was detailed in Chapter Four that over 80% of PTEs stated their learners are screened for literacy difficulties, therefore depending upon the screening tool used, the majority of educators should know in advance the literacy level and needs of their learners. Despite pre-screening taking place in the majority of PTES the results established that half of the research participants stated the largest challenge they faced as an educator was dealing with the diversity in the level of learners' needs and abilities. Pre-screening may be one way of providing prior knowledge to educators in order to supporting them in dealing with the diversity level of learners.

Effective pre-screening may provide benefits for stakeholders within PTEs, a solution that was reinforced in the directives from the Adult Literacy Strategy (Ministry of Education 2001). The ALS detailed the need for appropriate diagnostic and assessment tools in order to provide feedback for learners and educators and as a means of quality assurance for providers. Pre-screening may provide educators with prior knowledge of the diverse needs of their group in order for them to plan and prepare lessons accordingly.

It would appear from the results within the context of the PTEs studied that pre-screening may not eliminate the challenges faced by educators. It is revealing that despite learners being pre screened to assess their literacy needs it appears that for some educators screening may not be supporting their practice or vice versa.

What this means in relation to the finding of this research is that the appropriate use of an initial screening tool along with timely and appropriate dissemination of findings may support but not eliminate the challenges educators face when dealing with a diverse group of learners with varying literacy needs.

### ***Embedded Provision***

Evidence from this research project indicated educators primary method for delivering literacy subjects to adult learners was through embedding literacy within other subject areas. A significant percentage of PTEs who participated in this study provide embedded literacy as part of specialist subject areas as opposed to the 'stand-alone' or non integrated literacy modules.

Significantly, this research provided data that revealed in excess of three quarters of educators provided embedded literacy training. In terms of actual teaching time, half of participants teach embedded literacy below ten hours per week. This is a key finding because it shows half of educators surveyed are committed to providing a quarter of their time teaching to literacy subjects. This is despite the fact that they are not employed as literacy teachers and most did not hold an adult literacy teaching qualification. Further analysis on this point forms part of later discussions within this chapter.

When considering the findings of this research project in relation to previous research findings in this area there is significant literature to support embedded methods of adult literacy provision. Research supports embedded literacy methods as a means of exploring the motivations and interests of learners and to capture those who may not be motivated to learn literacy skills as stand-alone provision (Roberts et al, 2005). The findings from this research project amplify previous work by the Ministry of Education (2008b, p.33).

The work of the Ministry of Education (2008b) found that a significant percentage of vocational education programmes such as those found within PTEs include embedded literacy within their vocational programmes.

Support for embedding literacy has been provided by the New Zealand Government who recommended embedding literacy within vocational subjects as a more effective method of teaching literacy (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009). Other proponents of this method are the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the United Kingdom. Their work considered embedding literacy within a vocational context as an important aspect of teaching and learning as it enabled learners to gain skills in both literacy and vocational areas simultaneously (LSC, 2007).

Developing embedded literacy skills amongst learners is consistently identified as a key priority for New Zealand. In the new Tertiary Education Strategy (TEC, 2009) the Government encouraged the development of literacy support in PTEs by introducing literacy strengthening guidelines.

These guidelines offered a theoretical framework for evidence based understanding of literacy provision and emphasised the importance of embedded literacy as a more effective way of delivering literacy to adult learners (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009). Embedding literacy and language skills into other subjects supports the philosophy that such provision allows learners to gain "...confidence, competence and motivation necessary for them to succeed in qualifications, in life and in work" (Department for Education & Skills, 2003 p.16).

Furthermore, the Tertiary Education Commission emphasised the importance of an integrated method of teaching literacy, proposing that embedded literacy should be "recognised and implemented as the norm not the exception" (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009, p.3).

Although research indicates 'embedded literacy' as a preferred method, it should be noted that in order to provide high quality integrated provision there are significant components to this provision that need to be considered.

## ***Training for Embedded Literacy Provision***

Providing embedded literacy poses certain challenges for educators and for administrators managing and developing programmes. The first of these challenges includes creating a fundamental awareness of the principles of embedded literacy. The second challenge is in providing effective training and development opportunities for educators to guide them on how to embed literacy within programmes such as construction or care work.

Moreover, literacy teaching involves an important set of skills, the acquisition of the skills needed to embed literacy may not be a simple process (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009). The findings from this research project reflected that more could be done for educators who require support in the acquisition and development of these important literacy teaching skills.

This finding was supported by the TEC guidelines who commented on the need for training and developing of staff (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009). Additionally, Mackay et al. (2006) found that a 'one size fits all' approach to educators development was not appropriate. Suggesting that professional development should include opportunities for educators to share their teaching experiences with peers. This point is reaffirmed in later discussions in the recommendation for future practice.

## ***2. Educators***

### ***Providing Support for Literacy Educators***

The second theme of this research relates to the educators teaching literacy. This research found that the majority of educators identified two main areas of their teaching which presented a challenge to them. The first was their skills and abilities in dealing with diverse groups of learners and the second was the design and integration of appropriate resource material into lessons.

These findings suggested that trying to balance the needs of learners on a diverse spectrum of literacy ability along with the requirements of the vocational or professional course was challenging for educators. Their comments reflected that that some did not yet have the teaching skills or abilities to formulate or embed literacy resources into their diverse classrooms.

Firstly, discussion will surround educators who found dealing with learner diversity as a major challenge. The nature of literacy learning programmes is that they, like other programmes, have numerous variables that present challenges for educators. One of these variables includes the diversity of learners and programmes (Benseman, Sutton & Lander, 2005b). The diversity in the level of learners and the interrelated factors of embedding literacy within vocational programmes was highlighted by Benseman, Sutton and Lander (2005b). They described dealing with learner diversity as “plate spinning” (pg.7). This term was used to describe where the educator, in a bid to be all things to all learners’, moves from learner to learner to interact and support.

Providing support for educators dealing with the challenges of ‘learner diversity’ was a theme in recent research from the National Research and Development Council (Roberts et al, 2005). The Council commented that embedded provision should focus on learner-centred approaches and involve collaboration between literacy and vocational educators. In order to accomplish this collaborative and integrated practice it was suggested that there needs to be an emphasis placed on providing learners with authentic and contextual learning experiences (Speck, 1996). These experiences should encompass literacy skills in order for learners to draw from their existing knowledge or experiences to achieve their goal (Scribner, 1997).

The second part of this discussion will focus on the design and integration of appropriate resource material for adults into lessons.

The findings from this research project reveal that a significant percentage of educators were not trained or had limited skills and experience in literacy teaching techniques. Although half of participants indicated they had over ten years of adult teaching experience many of these experienced adult educators indicated teaching challenges linked to specific literacy teacher training skills. This comments provided by some educators indicated that although they may be experienced in teaching other subject areas, a lack of literacy teaching experience may be impeding their ability to design and integrate specific adult literacy teaching material into their delivery.

### ***Educators Teaching Qualifications and Experience***

The findings of this research reflect that educators either by choice or through guidance from their providers primarily delivered embedded provision within their PTEs. One could ask how this is occurring and to what level literacy teaching is being carried out given that that 66% of educators surveyed revealed they did not hold a literacy teaching qualification. Compounding this issue was the limited amount of adult literacy experience held by most educators.

From the results it would appear that both qualified and unqualified educators had similar challenges. A literacy teaching qualification may provide a foundation for educators, however there may be a need for more systematic literacy professional development courses, workshops, or mentoring in order to develop and refresh skills over time.

There has been a progressive move toward developing these professional training opportunities for educators.

In 2007, New Zealand introduced a qualification for tertiary educators involved in embedding literacy teaching into specialist subject areas. Development in this area is occurring and unlike in other countries, teacher training and professional development is not mandated by the New Zealand Government (OECD, 2008).

In Belgium for example, it has been compulsory since 1995 for educators delivering basic skills training to hold appropriate teacher training qualifications (OECD, 2008). The United Kingdom is similar in that all new language literacy and numeracy (LLN) teachers entering the field have to hold a specific LLN qualification along with a teacher training qualification.

Although an educators qualifications and experience does not guarantee effective literacy teaching experiences for learners. Qualifications and experience may provide educators with the teaching 'tools' in order to enhance the learning experience. These 'tools' may come in the form of actual literacy teaching skills, methods of embedded literacy into another subject or the skills required to design effective adult literacy material. These points are presented as recommendations for future development within the Chapter Six.

### ***Qualification Level of Adult Literacy Educators***

These discussion points in relation to qualifications have been sub divided into two sections: the first section relates to findings from the general academic qualification, the second section relates to discussion and findings related to the educators literacy and/or teaching qualifications.

#### ***General Academic Qualifications***

The results demonstrated that for those surveyed, the majority held qualifications from certificate through to masters level, with almost half of educators holding a bachelors degree.

Worthy of note was that 5% of educators held no formal education or teaching qualifications. It was not anticipated that educators in an academic teaching role would not hold formal educational qualifications. These results are in contrast to a study by McGuirk (2001) who established that within Australia a large percentage of teachers held a certificate in workplace assessment or a post graduation qualification.

A suggestion offered for this finding is that the nature of some subject disciplines may mean that formal qualifications are not available. An example of this is within aviation industry, where a pilot's license does not fall within the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Therefore experienced pilots may be brought into teach an aviation programme without formal teaching or education qualifications such as a bachelors degree.

Currently, the New Zealand Government regulates the tertiary education system under the Education Act (1989) and provides regulatory funding and monitoring of tertiary facilities (Ministry of Education, 2008a).The Education Act does not specify the academic qualification levels required to be a tertiary educator.

A further possible explanation for the level of academic qualifications held by educators may be a result of the freedom that is afforded to individual PTEs to formulate their own charter. A charter allows PTEs and not the Government to establish the minimum requirement for academic qualifications of their academic staff.

Although holding an academic qualification may not be the only measurement of a person's ability to be an educator, it is considered an important measure along with work experience and other attributes in ensuring quality educational provision. The importance of an educator's qualification level and experience may be a predictor of learner performance.

For example, research carried out by Darling-Hammond (2000) concluded that factors such as a learners' socio economic background can be overcome by educators who possess the skills and abilities to be well prepared in their delivery. Although Darling-Hammonds study does not pertain specifically to a teacher training qualification what it does highlight is that the preparation skills taught within a teacher training programme may support learner performance.

Providing access to teaching training qualifications and professional development was the subject of earlier discussions in relation to the actual provision of literacy within PTEs. However this finding goes somewhat further by suggesting a need to establish a baseline for educator literacy qualifications. Examining international research may be useful, within the United Kingdom for example their Government regulates the field of tertiary teaching. A recent report indicated that by 2010 all educators within the post 16 tertiary education sector will be fully qualified (OECD,2008).

The results from this research project show that there are areas for development in the level of qualifications held by some educators. If we are to compare the figures from this research project to those from countries with comparable education systems like the United Kingdom or Australia, it may give rise to future consideration for the increased regulation and minimum qualifications needed to teach literacy within New Zealand PTEs.

### ***Literacy Teaching Qualification***

The results highlighted that almost three quarters of participants did not hold an adult literacy teaching qualification. However, an encouraging sign for the future is that the results reveal a significant percentage of educators are either studying toward a literacy teaching qualification or would like to complete one in the future. Although there is no guarantee that the participants within this study will complete their qualification, should they do so, the number of trained adult literacy educators within PTEs will increase considerably.

Increasing the level of educators qualifications was considered an area to be developed (Benseman, Sutton & Lander, 2005a). This is in order to ensure that the New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy goals are met (TEC, 2009). If the Government is to achieve the goals of the Adult Literacy Strategy (Ministry of Education & Walker, 2001) there is a need to increase support and provision for educators to develop their academic qualifications. The ALS also called for a highly skilled teaching workforce to deliver appropriate literacy provision to a growing number of New Zealanders needing support. (Ministry of Education, 2008b).

The strategy went onto state that adult literacy teacher training qualifications will be required for all types of adult literacy educators whether they are in a paid part-time or full-time capacity or working as volunteers. The results from this research project show that there is still some way to go to achieve this goal.

Further analysis of those holding a literacy qualification found that less males held a qualification. This figure was lower than expected, however, when examining data from private correspondence with Literacy Aotearoa their completion statistics showed a significant gender imbalance in the number of males entering and qualifying from their literacy teacher training programmes.

These results are consistent with the 'act of teaching' report by the Ministry of Education (Benseman, Sutton and Lander, 2004) which found that most of the teachers in their observational study held "no specific literacy, numeracy or language qualifications or even qualifications relating to adults" (p.3). Until recently, educators who taught literacy subjects had little pre-service training available to them. Many educators had to rely on acquiring their skills as part of professional development and through their teaching experiences (OECD, 2008).

The low numbers of educators holding specific adult literacy teaching qualifications may be due to a number of reasons. Firstly, as McKenna and Fitzpatrick (2004) noted, literacy was previously a relatively minor subject area with a limited amount of training and pathways. This was reiterated by Benseman, Sutton and Lander (2005) who found in their observation study of language literacy and numeracy teachers that there was a lack of career structure for literacy teachers compared to other teaching disciplines.

A second potential reason for the lack of educators qualified in literacy teaching could be due to the previously limited awareness of the problem of low adult literacy.

Until the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1996, New Zealand still reported that the majority of its inhabitants were literate (Watson, 1999).

As a consequence New Zealand's ability to progress provision and release funding was slow (Cain & Benseman, 2005). This slow acknowledgement resulted in a limited number of literacy teacher training qualifications. It was only in 2006 that the Adult Literacy Educator Qualification was first introduced and in 2007 specific vocation and workplace trainer qualifications' became available (OECD, 2008).

New Zealand may once have been slow to acknowledge the need for literacy training, more recently though concerted efforts have been placed into developing literacy, language and numeracy projects within the country. A recent example is the Tertiary Education Commissions literacy and numeracy professional development project run in conjunction with the Waikato University. Amongst its aims, the project seeks to provide training to educators throughout New Zealand (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009).

Finally what the results of this section signify is that there is a gap in the number of educators holding a literacy qualification. Taking into consideration the results from this research project, it would also appear that professional development opportunities such as the Waikato University project may be needed to address the low number of educators teaching literacy subjects without a qualification. Consideration may also need to be given to enhancing the availability of literacy educator courses or professional development if New Zealand is to achieve the goals of the Tertiary Education Strategy and Adult Literacy Strategy. These areas are discussed as recommendations to enhance future provision within the final chapter.

### ***Teaching Experience***

A further theme emerging from the results came from asking participants about their number of years of teaching experience.

This, as expected led to a wide range of experiences across those surveyed. The most striking results were that half of literacy educators currently teaching adult literacy subjects did not have any adult literacy teaching experience.

What the results evidenced was that over half of participants fell into the three years and under category. The results of this research revealed significantly less literacy teaching experience than was anticipated. Although it is important to note that a significant percentage (65.8%) of participants had between three and ten years of general adult teaching experience. This is significant as it shows that a large percentage of educators did have knowledge of working with adults although not specific adult literacy teaching.

To date, there has been no data available which only targets the teaching experiences of PTEs literacy educators. The need to examine teaching experience is important and is one method of providing baseline information in order to develop educators. Building teaching experience is important, the Ministry of Education acknowledged this by commenting that if PTEs are to continue to play a “significant role in language literacy and numeracy provision” there should be provision to develop educators (Ministry of Education, 2008b, p.33). Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain (1998), reiterated this point by suggesting that developing educators would enable them increase learner achievement through well-prepared and planned provision.

The lack of specific adult literacy teaching experience may be offset by the provision of professional development and training. This is supported by the Adult Literacy Strategy who called for ways to increase the number of highly skilled and experienced educators, through such methods as targeted and ongoing professional development. Additionally the ALS stated that there were insufficient professionally qualified educators, a lack of adult teaching resources and a limited number of professional development opportunities. (Ministry of Education, 2001).

Professional development also emerged as a key theme in a study carried out on literacy teachers in the United States by Smith and Hofers (2003).

Their research found that the role of educator was a demanding one and that professional training was consider integral to the success of those involved in literacy teaching. The discussions surrounding a greater focus on targeted professional development may go some way to addressing these issues and some of the challenges noted by respondents and is offered for further discussion with the final chapter.

### ***3. Developing Research and Provision for the Future***

The third and final aim of this research project was to examine the development of literacy provision and research with New Zealand PTEs. These topics have been discussed in more detail within the following chapter and are offered as recommendation for future practice and suggestions for future research.

### ***Conclusion***

This research was motivated to provide a baseline for current literacy practice as a means of developing practice within this field. What is more this research project aimed to increase the amount of research pertaining to PTEs available in the public forum.

In summary, this research discussed three significant findings. The first finding was that PTEs are pre-screening as a means of identifying their learners' literacy needs. Prior to this study there was limited research on literacy pre-screening within New Zealand PTEs and reoccurs in Chapter Six as a recommendation for future practice.

The second finding highlights the primary method of providing literacy for adults within PTEs is through the use of embedded teaching methodologies. Although it is important to emphasise that this research did not examine the effectiveness of embedded literacy.

However, the analysis from this research provides useful guidelines, and evidence relevant to the area of embedded literacy provision. There is also an acknowledgement that there is still much more to be understood regarding the contribution that literacy screening and embedded literacy programmes provide. The development of further New Zealand based research would be needed in order to examine the merits of literacy screening and embedded provision.

The third finding reveals a need to examine the training and development needed to support educators providing literacy support to learners. There are educators providing literacy teaching in PTEs without a qualification or adult literacy teaching experience. There may be a need to provide a greater level of support for educators who are now finding that literacy is becoming an integral part of their teaching. The development of educators and further New Zealand based research on effective professional development for literacy educators is provided as an area for future research and development within the final chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter presents the recommendations and suggestions for improvement. These are divided into two distinct areas, the first sets of recommendations are in relation to the adult literacy practice. The second set of suggestions pertain to future research within the area of adult literacy provision. This chapter also examines the strengths and limitations of this research project and concludes with an overview and summary of the findings.

This research sought to examine the question “What adult literacy provision is currently taking place within New Zealand Private Training Establishments?” The project aimed to explore not only the types of literacy provision but also to understand the experiences of those teaching in an area where there was relatively little research available.

### ***Recommendations for Future Practice***

This study highlighted three recommendations for future practice. The first of the recommendations was concerned with increasing professional development and training opportunities for literacy educators. The second recommendation builds upon recommendation number one by suggesting a PTE literacy portal for educators. The final recommendation involves developing the use of literacy pre-screening tools. Individual discussion on each of these three recommendations is detailed below.

### ***Recommendation 1 - Professional development and teacher training***

A recommendation from the findings of this research is in regards to enhancing professional development and teacher training opportunities for those teaching literacy subjects within PTEs.

This is addition to increasing the importance placed on staff gaining literacy teaching qualifications and professional literacy development training as a means of ongoing training. To highlight this embedded literacy for example differs from discrete provision and requires specific skills sets and models of learning and teaching. In order to provide additional support to learners, an organisation requires adequate planning, preparation and resourcing which includes appropriately trained staff. Targeted professional development may have the effect of raising the morale of educators which in turn could have a positive effect on student learning (Kutner et al, 1997). It is recommended that support for educators needs to be targeted, sustained and systematic to ensure these effects are maintained.

Chapter Two detailed the significant progress that has been made within New Zealand in its ability to develop the capacity and increase provision within the tertiary sector, but more could be achieved. The Tertiary Education Strategy (2009) warned that there will be increased demands upon providers during 2010 due to the global economic instability and the subsequent recession that has emerged as a result of the downturn in the economy. These additional demands are likely result in increased learners' numbers as New Zealanders seek to increase the skills as a protection mechanism against future job loss.

The world has increasingly become a knowledge based society and as such both learners and educators need to be equipped with the skills in order to meet the evolving needs of society (Johnson, 2000).

Moreover, the importance of professional development and literacy specific qualifications should be emphasised as important to the long term literacy provision and educator retention to support the notion of a knowledge based and evolving society (Ministry of Education, 2001).

In order to achieve systematised and targeted literacy professional development investment will be needed from three parties. The first is through Government investment as a means of enabling providers to offer systemised professional development to their staff (Ministry of Education, 2001). The second investment would be both financially and in time from providers as a means of increasing the knowledge of their staff with the ultimate aim of developing learners. Finally, the last investment would be in the time and potential monetary investment needed from educators in order to invest in their future skills and career.

***Recommendation 2 – Literacy portal for PTE educators and learners.***

The second recommendation from this study relates to professional networking as a means of longer term professional development or support for both educators and learners. This recommendation is closely aligned to recommendation number one in that it aims to support systematic and long term development and support of educators by providing professional networking opportunities throughout New Zealand PTEs. The portal would act as a repository for resources such as screening tools, networking opportunity and links to pertinent information. Similar to the website called which contains many resources freely available for educators.

Currently there are several literacy sites available such as New Zealand Literacy Portal and the AceNet online community project. In personal correspondence with the AceNet project coordinator Terry Neal she explained that the ACE project sought to establish professional networking and resourcing opportunities aimed at adult and community education educators.

The proposed site would build upon these existing sites and aim to support both new and existing PTE educators along with providing targeted resources for PTE learners to self access.

***Recommendation 3– Develop the use of literacy pre-screening tools***

Pre-screening appears to be being utilised throughout the majority of PTEs however the findings infer that the use of pre-screening and the distribution of results may need to be examined in further detail. PTEs may need to examine the quality of their pre-screening test, the dissemination of the findings along with the monitoring and evaluation of these as part of their quality assurance programme to ensure that the pre-screening is accomplishing its key aims and informing educators.

***Suggestions for Future Research***

This research presents three suggestions for further research. the first is an expansion on the perceived challenges and experiences' of educators. The second relates to enhancing professional development research and finally the third recommendation relates to a feasibility study for a PTE learner and educator literacy portal.

***Suggestion 1 – Further research into the challenges faced by educators***

An expansion of this research project may include further investigation on the challenges faced by adult educators delivering literacy subjects within PTEs. This is in order to add to the body of knowledge and as a means of developing pro active solutions to challenges educators encounter throughout their teaching. The potential would be to create targeted research which incorporates educators opinion on how these challenges may be overcome. The proposed study may involve cross collaboration with ITP's, Wananga and other providers such as Adult and Community Education provision.

## ***Suggestions 2 - PTE literacy professional development research***

The data gathered from this research highlighted professional development and the training of literacy educators as an area for future research. Currently, a professional development project by Waikato University is taking place within the tertiary education sector on behalf of the Tertiary Education Commission. Further research may seek to evaluate the opinion of PTEs on the impact that Waikato literacy professional development project has had on teacher development. Further targeted research may explore the current levels of professional development specifically within PTEs and the impacts it has had on the challenges faced by educators.

### ***Suggestion 3 – Assessing the feasibility of a literacy portal***

Finally, the last recommendation for future research would be in the development of a feasibility study into whether a standalone learner literacy portal or additional component to an existing portal for may be possible. The aim this study would be to investigate whether a self access website for learners and educators regardless of their literacy ability would be feasible within New Zealand PTEs and would build upon the Adult Literacy portal by Literacy Aotearoa and other sites from around the world such as the BBC GCSE bite size (2009).

An initial level self assessment of learners' abilities could be incorporated within the site for learners to know where they are starting from and allow them to chart their progress. This site may incorporate the use of such literacy development and testing software as aerobics or LASS secondary adults these are either self-administered by the learners or can be overseen by an educator and are comprised of games that assess the learners in several key areas such as literacy, memory and phonics (Edtech, 2009).

This type of software is a commercial tool and rarely available as a self access resource for learners.

Due to the cost of this software there may be a number of learners who may not have access to such software, this site would aim to allow single users to utilise this type of software for personal use.

### ***Strengths and Limitations***

The research that has been presented provides a combination of both strengths and limitations, these are discussed in more detail below.

A strength area of the research was in the quality of responses provided by participants. Of the 79 educators who responded, 89% completed 100% of the questionnaire, the remaining 11% completed 50% of the survey. This may have in part been due to the design of the questionnaire and the successful inclusion of a pilot study completed prior to the questionnaire distribution.

Areas of limitation were identified during the pilot phase of the questionnaire, and the questionnaire was subsequently developed in order to reduce ambiguity. It was Moser and Kalton (1971) who wrote on the importance of clarity in surveys. They highlighted that when designing questionnaires the author should try to place themselves “in the position of the typical, or rather the least educated, respondent” (p. 320).

As a direct result of the pilot questionnaire a number of questions were streamlined. Additionally, emphasis was placed on the introduction section of the questionnaire in order to develop a clearer understanding of the research aims and objectives. The aim was to reduce the amount of ambiguity and increase the number of those completing the survey.

There was no data available on the reasons why participants chose not to respond. This data would only be available if follow ups had been completed to ask why those who did not participate chose not to complete the survey.

Given the time involved, gathering data on the reasons for non-completion of the questionnaire would not have been an effective use of time and did not support the aims of the project.

A limitation of this study was use of one data collection tool. If a more detailed research project were to be conducted in the future, a mixed method approach may be adopted to add depth to the research design by considering other research paradigms. This mixed methods approach would be used as one method of validating the data collected through a triangulation method. Triangulation was viewed as a method in which research data could be crossed checked using two or more sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

A strength and limitation of this research came from the distribution methods. The responses received were mainly in the first week of distribution. This was in part due to distribution of the questionnaire through the NZAPEP and their distribution of the questionnaire directly to the directors of the PTEs. However this also became a source of limitation as multiple follow ups were limited due to not wanting to overburden NZAPEP. As a result of the questionnaires being distributed through NZAPEP, only one follow up e-mail was sent through e-mail.

Multiple follow-ups have been seen to yield higher response rates than only one reminder (Heberlein & Baumgartner, 1978). The number of follow up reminders could have been increased, future research would involve a greater lead in time would allow for two or three follow ups to increase participation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 263). This was supported by research carried out by Heberlein and Baumgartner (1978) who suggested that providing numerous follow-ups to participants in surveys leads to higher response rates. Despite only using one follow up e-mail there was still 12% increase in participant responses.

A limitation of the study was the lower than anticipated response rate. It was anticipated that the response rate would be low and as a result questionnaires were sent to all types of PTEs regardless of the type or size.

The low response rate may have been due to a number of factors such as providers didn't meet the criteria for participation.

Furthermore, some individuals may not have wanted to receive unsolicited emails requesting their support in this project (Yun & Trumbo, 2006). Although, feedback subsequently received from participants revealed a high number of managers, owners and educators were keen to see more targeted research within PTEs in the future. Upon reflection, if this research were to be developed further, an e-mail database would be compiled to eliminate any potential intrusions that may occur through e-mailing surveys and to develop a sound research participant data base.

Had funding been available focus groups and interviews would have taken place throughout New Zealand. To achieve this, interviews and small focus groups with no more than eight participants would have completed in the main population areas of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch to complete. This would have allowed the use of triangulation to follow up and clarify the data collated from the questionnaires. Additionally, funding may have allowed incentives to be offered to participants such as a subscription to a literacy organisation.

A further strength and limitation of this project was the depth at which some topics were explored. A larger thesis would have allowed greater exploration of individual educators' experiences and views of the challenges and barriers to their provision of literacy education. The concise nature of this research meant that the aims were strictly monitored and followed throughout this project and as such this has led to a number of potential investigation areas for future research.

Considering the time involved and on careful reflection, the online questionnaire was very successful. The data yield from this method has allowed sufficient conclusions and recommendations for the future to be formulated. Subsequently, areas that were identified as future research suggestions are planned for more in-depth research at PhD level.

## ***Final Conclusion***

The discussion within this chapter has focused on current provision as a means of informing future practice and research in this area.

The aim of which has been to take the findings and critically identifying further developmental areas with adult literacy provision within PTEs.

The role held by educators role is a complex one and perhaps indicative of teaching not just within tertiary PTEs but within the tertiary teaching sector as a whole. The role of literacy education it appears is yet to be clearly defined and currently educators appear to be taking on a dual role as vocational and literacy educators. It would also appear that teaching literacy is becoming an integral part of an educator's role and some may argue that it always has been that way.

In summary, this research was the first targeted PTE study of its kind, the scope of this study and its originality came from a need to examine gaps in current research, to explore the background of educators teaching literacy and to build upon present research and provision in the field of tertiary literacy provision. It is believed that all three aims of this study have been examined and the findings provide a 'tip of the iceberg' discussion around the area of adult literacy provision within New Zealand PTEs. The results from this study showed the 'tip' of iceberg in terms of current provision with these institutes, further extensions of this study would seek to examine the 'iceberg' of literacy provision within PTEs in the future.

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# **APPENDIX A**

Online questionnaire

## **APPENDIX B**

Invitation to participate



01.10.09

Dear Private Training Establishment Owner/Manager,

As a former head of a New Zealand PTE, I am writing to request the support of two of your team members in research I am currently conducting as part of the Masters Degree in Education at Unitec, Auckland. It would involve two of your tutors/educators completing a five minute online survey questionnaire on the topic of adult literacy provision. This process will take minimal time but may yield vital results.

This research aims to examine literacy provision and literacy tutors/teachers (LLN) specifically within NZ PTE's. You may already be aware that there is currently a lack of targeted and specific research into this area within PTE's. This study aims to support the growth of research in PTE's and to highlight the valuable work they do for tertiary education provision within NZ.

In terms of support, my only request is that you forward this letter and survey link to two of your educators to enable them to complete the online anonymous survey via the link below. The two educators you choose **must** teach **any form of literacy subjects** in any capacity at your PTE. They can be employees that are subject specific tutors who teach literacy as an embedded part of their teaching role or specific literacy educators.

Confidentiality is of the upmost importance and is assured at all times, the names of individuals or PTE's are not requested and the results will not reveal individual or PTE provider names.

I wish to thank you in advance for your support with this important project. Should you have any further questions or wish to receive a summary report upon the completion of this research please do not hesitate to contact me.

The link below and this letter can now be forwarded to your two nominated employees for completion **before the deadline of the 23 October,2009.**

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Nky\\_2bfqrPB1zLBltyAlvGFA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Nky_2bfqrPB1zLBltyAlvGFA_3d_3d)

Kind Regards

Belinda Dolan-Roberts  
[belindajane@windowslive.com](mailto:belindajane@windowslive.com)

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER:1004.**

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 01.10.09 to 01.10.10. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 7248). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.