

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia



Report by Amanda McKay – 2007 Fellow

An investigation of strategies and programs that assist refugees and migrants into employment.

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Signed:

Amanda McKay

Dated:

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Introduction

Currently Australia accepts around 150,000 migrants per year and an additional 13,000 refugees. Approximately 25% of the migrants accepted are from the UK. There are numerous visa categories under which migrants and refugees are accepted into Australia and currently the main categories are skilled migrants, family migrants (including new spouses) business migrants and humanitarian refugees.

Because Australia is facing both skills and labour shortages, my plan was to explore strategies and programs in USA, Canada and the UK which aim to assist refugees and migrants into the workplace. I found the situations in each area I visited varied considerably from the Australian situation particularly in terms of migration categories, funding and entitlements for newcomers.

Refugees accepted into Australia are granted permanent residence prior to arrival which entitles them to government support (e.g. Centrelink benefits, Medicare, local rates for education etc). Migrants and refugees from most categories above whose language level is assessed as below “functional English” are also entitled to attend English classes under the Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) for a period of up to 510 hours of tuition or until they gain functional English. Other programs such as the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) funded by the federal Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) and programs funded by the states provide further training opportunities after completion of the AMEP entitlement.

In USA, Canada and the UK the situations are quite different. Each accepts varying numbers of refugees and migrants and has its own unique regulations regarding provision for refugees and migrants. Provisions also vary from state to state in USA and province to province in Canada while in the UK the numbers of people arriving with refugee status is very small compared to the large number of people who seek asylum. In addition the Scottish government makes certain provisions for asylum seekers which are not available to those living in other parts of the UK. The UK also has large numbers of “migrant workers” from other European Union member countries who live temporarily in the UK to work and save money.

I selected organisations to approach based on reports I had read about employment focused programs, recommendations by academics, researchers and practitioners who are highly regarded in the field of Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL), as well as through internet searches.

I chose to focus on programs and strategies (regardless of the clients’ status as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers) which demonstrated a high degree of success in

- getting the clients into the workplace
- assisting clients in maintaining employment
- providing opportunities for clients to progress - usually through further training or ongoing support

While my focus was on clients with lower levels of English and education who needed basic skills training rather than on professionals, I also observed some excellent programs for assisting professionals into jobs.

The comments in this report are based on observations of a small number of organisations in specific areas and the conclusions drawn are not intended to reflect the situation beyond this limited set of experiences.

Executive Summary

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Project description: An investigation of strategies and programs that assist refugees and migrants into employment. (USA, UK, Canada)

Highlights: Successful vocational training programs I observed at Center for Employment Training in San Jose, and at WorkSource Capital Career Centre in Portland, Oregon, address the needs of both trainees and employers by taking a case management approach with trainees, providing a range of supports to help them overcome their barriers to successful integration in the workplace, while at the same time working closely with employers who provide input to the curriculum and skills development and ultimately provide employment for the trainees.

Major Findings: Given Australia's skills and labour shortages, it is important for newly arrived refugees and migrants to gain sufficient English language levels and access vocational training programs to enable them to gain and maintain employment and be safe in the workplace. Social cohesion is also of particular concern. Key to social cohesion is the education and empowerment of children to reach their potential and participate on an equal footing with others in society. This is enhanced by the education and empowerment of their parents, particularly their mothers.

Key areas which need attention are

- engaging employers in the training of refugees and migrants to ensure that training is pertinent to industry needs and that employment outcomes are long lasting
- ensuring opportunities for lifelong learning for refugees and migrants
- reaching isolated women with low levels of literacy and education, and starting them on a staged pathway to understand and engage in their new environment
- ensuring opportunities for lifelong learning for refugees and migrants

Conclusions: How we work with and support our new and emerging communities over the next few years will have long-lasting repercussions. If we do not effectively support those communities we run the risk of creating a sector of our society which is unempowered, underproductive and disenfranchised. By empowering these individuals we empower their communities thereby enhancing social cohesion and ultimately avoiding larger societal problems in the future for generations to come. Investment in our newly arrived refugees and migrants will pay off many times over in terms of the engagement and integration of these new groups and in social cohesion for Australia.

Dissemination and Implementation: This report has been sent to the AMEP Review team in response to the AMEP Review Discussion Paper. Other dissemination includes

- professional development seminars for colleagues within TAFE SA
- formal presentations and a detailed report to state and federal government departments
- a presentation at the national AusTAFE Conference, Adelaide, October 2nd -5th, 2008
- a presentation at the national AMEP conference 2009

Fellowship Program

7th April – Washington, District of Columbia

- Carlos Rosario Charter School

8th April – Baltimore, Maryland

- University of Maryland

9th – 10th April – New York, New York

- Chinese American Planning Council

22nd – 24th April – San Francisco, California

- City College of San Francisco

28th – 30th April – San Jose, California

- Centre for Employment Training
- International Refugee Council

1st – 2nd May – Portland, Oregon

- WorkSource Capital Career Centre / Portland Community College
- Immigrant & Refugee Community Organisation

5th – 7th May – Seattle, Washington

- South Seattle Community College
- Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council
- WorkSource Renton

12th – 14th May – Vancouver, British Columbia

- MOSAIC
- Vancouver Community College

16th – 21st May – Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland

- Bridges Programmes
- New Roots Scotland
- Careers Scotland
- Anniesland College
- Stevenson College
- Scottish Government
- Oxfam
- Scottish Enterprise Glasgow
- Greater Glasgow and Clyde National Health Service

23rd – 29th May – London, England

- LORECA
- Hackney Refugee Forum & Turkish Teachers' Forum
- Employability Forum
- Waltham Forest College
- Refugees into Jobs
- Refugee Women's Association

Main Body

1. Overview - USA

Traditionally migrants to USA have predominantly settled in coastal states including New York, California, Oregon and Washington State.

The situation in USA varies from state to state due in part to the different groups of refugee and migrant clients in each state but more noticeably due to different funding available, as well as different eligibility and entitlement for clients.

1.1 FUNDING OF PROGRAMS

In general funding is variable and must be applied for annually. Notification comes very late and programs are expected to operate on short turn-around times. Many programs depend on funding from several different sources with different requirements and different funding periods. It is not uncommon for staffing positions to be funded from more than one source. This causes additional administrative workload and a lot of time is spent in applying for funds, developing partnerships, setting up and advertising short term programs, tracking students, measuring and reporting on outcomes (often different measures and reports for different funding bodies), and hiring and retrenching staff as funds are granted and end.

The result of the variability of funding causes instability of programs, instability in staffing, unpredictability of offerings and long waiting lists which affects both clients and staff. This makes it difficult for providers to plan ahead, maintain quality of staff, advertise programs and consolidate programs, and can result in disenchanted clients and staff. In a community college setting for example, typically there are few permanent teachers of English and numerous part time staff (especially compared to other departments in the college). The situation for permanent staff can be onerous if there are few staff members to share the workload expected of college faculty staff. In some ESOL programs there are as few as 4 or 5 permanent staff and up to 100 part time staff.

Federal funding

Federal funding is variable, is generally granted annually, and is not always available at a consistent rate each year. In some cases a full submission is not required each year but the announcement of continued funding is often last minute.

State funding

State funding may come through the community college system or through grants and will vary considerably from state to state. Generally it is more stable than federal funding.

Local funding

Some counties in the US are as populous as some Australian states. Counties in some states are responsible for education locally and have particular focus pertaining to the perceived needs of the area.

Other Funding Issues

In non-college based programs differences in entitlements for different categories of migrants and refugees means that many programs are offered for particular groups rather than on a needs basis and the pressure to find employment is regularly what determines the length of programs or

entitlement to programs. Generally these programs are “open entry - open exit” so have continuous enrolment and completion. This adds further pressure for students and particularly for staff who may have learners at a range of levels working in self-paced individualised modes on different aspects of the training.

1.2 CLIENTS

Categories

Clients in the US are treated quite differently in terms of their rights and the benefits provided to them depending on the state and /or county in which they reside and also the following criteria

- **Status:** refugees and migrants are treated differently. Refugees are generally given better resources and supports. Refugees from some countries receive benefits for longer than others. For example some Iraqis and Afghans are arriving under a special visa category designed to assist those who worked for or in close collaboration with the US forces based in Iraq and Afghanistan. These people receive different conditions from other refugees and are not entitled to any settlement help. Iraqis receive 8 months financial support and Afghans receive 6 months financial support.
- **Family status:** generally adults with young children receive considerably more welfare support than single adults.
- **Documentation:** Estimates of the number of undocumented migrants in USA varies between 8 and 20 million. Undocumented migrants are not entitled to work legally or to receive health care or adult education, however children are now entitled to schooling regardless of their status. Many organisations refuse to police the checking of documentation on behalf of the immigration department, do not ask to see documents and will provide support to anyone who seeks it – this includes many of the Community Colleges providing non-credit English classes. Most organisations which train migrants for employment or which place clients in jobs will not work with those who cannot produce documents. Some undocumented migrants access services by buying false documents.

By comparison with Australia, most financial support for new arrivals in the USA is quite limited and for this reason clients seek employment shortly after arriving in order to survive. Many become trapped in low level jobs with low pay and can't afford either the time or money for further training because they need to work very long hours (often in more than one job) in order to bring home a living wage.

Countries of Origin

The size of the Spanish speaking population is very significant in many states in USA. In California it represents 25% of the population and now outnumbers the African-American population there. As a result signs and information texts are regularly displayed in Spanish, many bilingual ESL programs are offered and many locally born US citizens speak some Spanish. In some areas students in high school can complete their high school qualification in Spanish. In City College of San Francisco newly arrived people with low levels of literacy in their first language who live within the Spanish speaking communities of the city are able to undertake Spanish literacy classes (this includes Mayan speakers from Yucatan). In some states the General Education Development (high school certificate) can be undertaken in Spanish.

Refugees with family members already residing in USA are called “anchored cases” and are housed initially with their family members and so generally settle in the same areas. This means that certain ethnic groups are clustered in some cities and are barely represented in others.

Refugees with no family members in USA are called “free cases” and are sent to live in cities where the cost of housing is comparatively low. For example currently only anchored cases are being resettled in San Jose because the cost of living (especially housing) is high, while many “free cases” are being resettled in Portland, Oregon where refugee support services provide a very important role in assisting newly arrived free cases to settle.

There are numerous refugees from Eastern Africa – Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia as well as Iran, Cuba and some from China. It was reported that some West Africans have resettled in the Eastern states. Burmese refugees are relatively new and about 5000 Iraqis who assisted the US as interpreters and drivers etc have been promised places but very few have actually been processed so far.

Unlike Australia, Sudanese and Afghani refugees appear not to have been accepted in any significant numbers, although some Afghans who assisted US troops are beginning to arrive.

Entitlements for Clients

There are considerable differences in entitlements for newcomers depending on their migration and / or welfare status. This means clients have different lengths of time that they are entitled to benefits / welfare and their need to work to support themselves varies accordingly. There are also variations from state to state.

1.3 ESL PROVISIONS

General

In some counties free English classes for adults are offered through the community college system while in others there is an adult English language program offered through the county’s education department and mostly held on school campuses. In both cases the offerings are called “non-credit” and generally are at the lower level, have a client group of mixed needs, do not place any or much emphasis on homework or assessment and have clients who are working part time, are homemakers or are retired.

Academic

“Credit” programs are offered through the community college system and have “final” assessments and grading. These grades provide credit which can count towards a 2 year Associate of Arts or Associate of Science and eventually towards a degree, however it was reported that while credit English programs were seen as a good way for clients to improve their academic pathways, generally credits gained were not often used towards a qualification. Credit programs are user-pay programs and costs vary (about \$1.14 per curriculum hour in San Francisco and \$365.00 per subject per term in Portland, Oregon). Some providers commented that few non-credit learners progress to or take up credit courses.

Note – At the TESOL Conference in New York I learnt that the US federal government is currently discussing ways to process some of the undocumented people living in USA to grant them migrant status based on their track record and their English language level. If this happens there will be a massive impact on English language provision as people seeking to improve their English in order to gain legal status flock to English classes.

Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL)

Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) is commonly used terminology for English support provided to learners undertaking vocational training. Generally it is delivered separately from the skills training by an ESL professional who relates the language learning to the vocabulary, terminology and context of the skills training.

1.4 WORKPLACE / VOCATIONAL TRAINING

All the colleges and training organisations I visited in USA have vocational training courses for migrants and refugees with English language support provided in some form. In some cases students self refer to the VESL class, while in other cases teachers assess learners and recommend attendance. Often the trainer and ESL teacher meet before or after class, or during lunch breaks to compare notes and plan ESL activities which are consistent with the training. The ESL teacher may go over the language of the text book used by the skills trainer to ensure understanding of terminology and concepts and often it is the ESL teacher who focuses on teaching appropriate communication strategies (soft skills) in different workplace contexts. In many cases the line between ESL teaching and teaching the theory of the skill area is blurred.

Vocational Training provided often has mixed classes of clients from non English speaking backgrounds and other clients from disadvantaged backgrounds. There has recently been considerable discussion about the poor educational levels achieved by school leavers in the US and it was reported that 80% of current school leavers (many of whom are second generation migrants) have literacy problems. Some training organisations reported an increase of this client group taking up vocational training.

In general the training is provided in skill areas where there is a demand for workers and this information is readily available from Department of Labor surveys and reports. In some cases local employers approach the training institution to provide training. Common skills training areas include Aged Care, Child Care, Medical Assistant, Culinary Arts and Nursing Aide.

Some training organisations work very closely with employers who assist with curriculum development, donate equipment, release staff to provide training, allow visits by groups of trainees, and at the conclusion of the training course provide opportunities for work experience placements (internships) or offer jobs to the trainees. Two organisations using this model are described in more detail in the Highlights section of this report.

1.5 WORK CONDITIONS

Safety

Health benefits are provided by employers for full time workers after they have been employed for a certain period. Workers employed for less than a certain number of hours are not entitled to health benefits and are therefore much more vulnerable. In Portland it was reported that employers are very careful about safety in the workplace because if a worker is injured they may be open to litigation and will also be required to pay a considerably higher insurance premium. When questioned, training organisations indicated that safety was not a problem for new workers of non-English speaking background and stated that OHS training was included in the curriculum. OHS training was generally the responsibility of the vocational trainer not the VESL teacher.

Minimum wage

A normal working week is 40 hours per week for most workers. The minimum wage in USA varies from state to state depending on the cost of living. In California it is currently \$8 per hour but in other states it is less. Many undocumented immigrants receive considerably less than this in the black economy. Agencies refer to a “living wage” (ie the minimum hourly rate to be able to survive) as around \$10 per hour, although in San Jose it is closer to \$13. Many migrant and refugee workers juggle two or more jobs for many more than 40 hours a week to be able to support their families. This often means they become trapped in low-level, low-paid jobs because they cannot afford the time or costs of gaining further training or English classes to improve their situation.

Entry level positions

Entry level (unskilled) positions are usually in the following areas (some rely on tips to make a decent living):

- Retail – some sales assistant and cashier but also shelf stacking
- Hotels - housekeeping, janitorial or custodial (i.e. cleaning) maintenance, porters, bellboys
- Hospitality –waiting, kitchen hand

2. Overview - British Columbia, Canada

My visit to Canada was brief and restricted to Vancouver, British Columbia, where I visited and observed classes at two of the main providers of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) programs: Vancouver Community College and MOSAIC (a not-for-profit community based organisation).

2.1 FUNDING OF PROGRAMS

Like the USA, funding of programs varies in Canada from province to province. Federal funding is usually managed by the provinces, some of which have large numbers of refugees and migrants and others have few. This means that a newly arrived refugee living in Alberta or Manitoba, for example, is entitled to unlimited number of hours of English language tuition while a newly arrived refugee living in Vancouver has a prescribed number of hours of English entitlement.

Funding for the English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) program is federal but distributed via the province and operates on a 3 year funding cycle.

ELSA Funding performance measures include

- Number of student contact hours
- Number of teacher contact hours
- Number of field trips, guest speakers, visits to community organisations

Progression rates are internally assessed but are **not** part of the government’s performance levels.

Funding tends to be annual and project-based. Colleges and institutes experience the insecurity of having annually approved funding which makes it difficult to undertake long-term planning and causes problems for the following reasons

- heavy workload in preparing submissions for funding
- heavy workload in reporting outcomes (not funded for reporting time)

- insecurity of staff when results of submissions are unknown
- insecurity of learners who cannot plan training pathways
- funding timelines which do not coincide with organisation timelines (e.g. funding beginning partway through a college semester) causes problems with staffing and placement of learners who might already be in another learning activity
- partnerships with immigrant settlement organisations are also vulnerable due to project-based annual funding

Two funding trends worth noting are

- Mainstream providers are beginning to compete for funds for migrant/refugee programs. This raises questions about the expertise required in the field of migrant education.
- Governments seem to be moving towards a model which provides funds to a large main provider to administer the programs via partnerships or sub contracts with smaller organisations which provide the services. The lead organisation takes responsibility for accountability and quality control and provides reports.

2.2 CLIENTS

Canada, like Australia, accepts and resettles a comparatively large number of refugees relative to the size of the population. (Approximately 220,000 migrants and an additional 35,000 refugees are accepted per year. The current population is 33.3 million.)

The largest client group is migrants who have arrived under a points system (which values educational and language level in either French or English). Skilled migrants must bring a sum of money into the country to support themselves and their families until they find employment.

The term “refugee” is used to refer to two different groups: “convention refugees” who are accepted as bona fide refugees and granted permanent status prior to arrival; and people who claim refugee status after arrival in the country. Processing of these claims can take a very long time. Training providers are not able to work with those awaiting processing of their claim for refugee status.

Currently major client groups in Vancouver include Chinese (approximately 60%), then Vietnamese, Farsi, Arabic and Spanish speakers. Refugees are arriving from Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam (from remote mountain areas), Afghanistan and Iraq.

A relatively new province-run program (Provincial Nominee Program) brings in skilled workers via employer sponsorship.

2.3 ESL PROVISION

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is funded through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and provides funding for childcare. English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) in British Columbia is provided through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services in British Columbia.

In British Columbia clients with low levels of English who are assessed as having literacy difficulties in their first language, are entitled to considerably more hours of English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) tuition than those assessed as having more English. Those assessed as having:

- low literacy levels in first language are entitled to 1300 hours of English
- level 1 – literate in first language but no English are entitled to 1100 hours
- level 2 –with some English are entitled to 800 hours
- level 3 –with intermediate level English are entitled to 400 hours (with a possible 200 hrs extension if the teacher feels it is required)

Learners generally have to find work quite quickly after arriving. They can attend classes in the day, afternoon or evening. Some teachers therefore do a split shift.

2.4 WORK CONDITIONS

Unemployment is currently around 3.8% but there is a much higher rate amongst youth. The minimum wage is around \$8 per hour for a 35-40 hour working week but most people need \$12 – \$14 per hour to survive.

Some trends

There are increasing numbers of people joining the ESL program who are in their late 40s and early 50s and have been in Vancouver for many years, working in low-level, physically demanding jobs. They say they need more English to help them gain positions which are less strenuous because their bodies can no longer cope with the physicality of their work. They also feel that they will not be able to afford to retire because they won't have enough money.

Socio-cultural competence is regarded as very important and I witnessed this in the classes I visited at Vancouver Community College in particular where much of the work done by ESL teachers in vocational training courses revolved around what is called soft skills or appropriate use of language and body language to suit the particular communication situation.

3. Overview - UK

In Scotland I visited Glasgow and Edinburgh which although very close geographically have quite different client groups. I then traveled to London where the situation was different again particularly in relation to provisions for asylum seekers.

In the last decade or so London has been inundated by asylum seekers (many from Northern Africa and the Middle East). More recently the UK has experienced an influx of EU migrants (mainly from Poland) who seek employment and better work conditions than available in their home countries. They are generally referred to as migrant workers or economic migrants and many stay for a few years then return to their home country.

In response to the need to house asylum seekers while their claims for refugee status were being processed, certain cities in the UK (e.g. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow) were targeted as having the capacity to absorb asylum seekers until their status was determined. These cities had been industrial hubs in the past but had experienced a downturn in population as a result of a reduction in the manufacturing sector. Housing therefore was cheap and readily available making these cities an obvious choice for locating asylum seekers outside London.

The UK has reserved powers over The Home Office, prisons, immigration, unemployment benefits, foreign policy, national security, taxation and the national economy for the whole of the UK. The Scottish Government has powers (for Scotland only) in the following areas: health,

education, transport, social welfare, the legal system, economic development, local government and local authority.

For these reasons people experience quite different provisions depending on where they live. For example Scotland has just introduced an aged pension for all regardless of income or assets. For asylum seekers these differences are very important.

Glasgow has a population of about 800,000 and approximately 100,000 are economically inactive. The people and the government are relatively open to newcomers. It was reported that the Scottish government believes that integration starts as soon as someone arrives and for this reason it has provided better supports for asylum seekers than those in England. Colleges in Scotland have the discretion to waive fees for asylum seekers so they can take up English classes (for an unlimited time) and part time vocational courses to a level as high as a national diploma which is equivalent to 2nd year university while in England asylum seekers cannot attend English classes. In the higher education sector in Scotland, asylum seekers have to pay international fees, however the new Scottish Government legislated that children of asylum seekers are to be treated the same as those of the indigenous people and so are entitled to free higher education. (This year in Glasgow there are 6 young asylum seeker women studying at university and interestingly they have chosen to study science.)

Aside from entitlement to ESOL classes, asylum seekers in Scotland are also permitted to undertake work experience placements. This assists them to maintain their work skills while waiting for their claim to be processed.

3.1 FUNDING OF PROGRAMS

Glasgow

In Glasgow funding for asylum seeker and refugee support programs has been available from the EU's European Social Fund and from the National Lottery Charity Fund. It is expected that EU funding will be directed towards projects in other EU member states in the future.

Funding for ESL programs in Scotland is provided by the government through Further Education funds to colleges. Each college decides the priorities for the clients in their area.

London

The London Development Agency funds around 800 projects for 2-3 years at a time, most with an employment focus. Between 30 and 50 of these projects have a specific migrant/refugee focus and service providers range from charities to corporations. Desired outcomes are development of skills and attainment of employment.

The Invest to Save budget is proactive strategy to save money and has been used to fund the up-skilling of refugee professionals which is considerably lower in cost than training someone from scratch.

3.2 CLIENTS

The largest groups of newly arrived people from non-English speaking backgrounds are asylum seekers and migrant workers. The focus in Glasgow is on asylum seekers (who are referred to as refugees once they have been granted leave to remain) while in Edinburgh many of the newly

arrived are migrant workers (predominantly from Poland). In England there are large numbers of both groups.

Refugees & Migrants

Migration to the UK generally tends to be family reunion and migration from other EU member states. The term “migrant worker” is commonly used to describe someone who is temporarily living in the UK to benefit from the work conditions offered there. Recently migrant workers have begun moving back to their home country as conditions there are improving.

There are very few new arrivals to Scotland who have been processed and granted refugee status prior to arriving in the country. (A small number of people from the Democratic Republic of Congo are in the process of settling in Lanarkshire.)

Asylum Seekers

The largest group of newcomers to Glasgow is asylum seekers. Once asylum seekers have been granted “leave to remain” they are referred to as refugees. Almost all the current refugees have arrived as asylum seekers and have been through the process of claiming asylum. Those who are not granted leave to remain then appeal the decision. Until recently the process of gaining refugee status has taken up to 5 years. Changes to processing have shortened the time for the most recent claimants and there is a backlog of older claimants who are currently being processed.

Current new arrivals are from Eritrea and North Korea and there are many others from northern Africa and the Middle East.

3.3 ESL PROVISION

Scotland

All migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland are entitled to the same ESOL provision, and once in a program learners can stay indefinitely. Because asylum seekers are not allowed to work, one of their only options has been to continue learning English. They have therefore tended to stay in programs a long time which has resulted in a clogging of the system – teachers are reluctant to move them out because there is little else for them to do.

The Scottish National ESOL Panel is looking into establishing some time limits for the provision of ESOL tuition and is considering the provision limits established in Australia and in British Columbia, Canada.

In Edinburgh the client group consists largely of migrant workers and there is a lot more focus on goal achievement and movement through the system. Likewise in London many of the people in ESOL classes are migrant workers.

ESOL practitioners often refer to courses as having content which is “citizenship” based. While this includes a little to do with rights and responsibilities it largely describes what in Australia is called “settlement” content (i.e. the inclusion of information aimed at assisting newcomers settle into and participate more readily in society).

Some Scottish & UK colleges mix resident clients and international students together in ESOL classes. This makes it very hard to meet the particular needs of the two groups, and means the course is necessarily focused more on general language development than on the language needed for the workplace or for settlement in a new country.

England

In England ESOL is offered via a curriculum called Skills for Life which was developed in 2001 to assist new arrivals settle in England. There has been no time limit for participation in government funded ESOL programs in the UK and migrant workers, who may only live in the UK for a relatively short time, have been entitled to the same provision as other migrants as long as they enrol in a Skills for Life program rather than an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program. Half of England's total ESOL provision is delivered in London, but growing numbers of EU migrant workers in rural areas are putting new strains on Skills for Life providers.

In England enrolments in ESOL courses trebled between 2000-01 and 2003-04 from 159,000 to 488,000 (coinciding with the accession of Poland to the EU). But while government funding has increased, from £170m in 2001-02 to £256m in 2003-04, it is falling behind demand. The government has recently changed priorities to focus on longer term residents with low literacy levels and will now charge fees for migrant workers.

3.4 WORKPLACE / VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Stevenson College in Edinburgh offers goal focused courses in English for work and training. Many learners are working and want better jobs, others want to undertake further training (as distinct from higher education). At higher levels of English some introductory units in vocational areas such as child care, hairdressing are offered. At the highest level learners undertake the computer drivers' licence and a work experience placement of 4 weeks. Job search skills are also covered and support is regularly provided by Careers Scotland, the national careers advisory service. Some clients are referred by Job Centre Plus, the national employment service.

Most clients I met at Stevenson college had been in Scotland around five years and were orally quite competent. Many had worked or were still working and recognised that to get a higher level position they needed both better writing skills and better ways to present themselves to employers in order to get jobs.

3.5 WORK CONDITIONS

The minimum wage is about £6 an hour. Unemployment benefit is more than this so there is little incentive to work in low level jobs.



The author at Australia House in London.

Highlights

While I gained useful ideas from all the organisations I visited, several stood out as particularly interesting. These were

- Center for Employment Training (San Jose, California)
- WorkSource CAPITAL Career Centre (Portland Community College, Oregon)
- Bridges Programmes (Glasgow, Scotland)
- City College of San Francisco (California)
- Vancouver Community College (British Columbia)
- Refugees into Jobs (London)

Center for Employment Training – San Jose

Background:

The Center for Employment Training (CET) began in 1967 and became an accredited provider 22 years ago. Because of its success, in the 1990's the Department of Labor gave CET \$7.5m to establish CET Programs throughout other states. Approx 44 centres were established. Currently there are 17 centres run under the CET banner and a further 11 which are modelled on CET but are run by other organisations. The CET model is also used in Chile where emphasis is on small business development.

CET's aim is to prepare workers for no less than a living wage. In California the minimum wage is \$8.00 per hour and a living wage is around \$10 per hour. Most CET clients who gain employment earn around \$10.30 per hour.

The Clients

Most of the current CET clients are not very newly arrived. While a large number are from non-English speaking backgrounds many are second generation migrants. Fewer of the current learners are in receipt of welfare or public assistance than previously. Generally they have some family support and many have attended some schooling in USA or have held entry-level jobs prior to joining CET. Students pay fees for the training, and most receive subsidies due to having low incomes. Students can also apply for loans and often pay loans back in installments.

This system of student loans and grants has provided considerable stability to CET over the last few years as it has meant the organisation has not been dependent on short term government grants, and has therefore been able to plan on a long term basis.

Learners often work, are on welfare or have family support. Some might be under pressure from family members or might be required to study whilst receiving benefits. A recent trend has been an increase in numbers of school leavers and parolees (who are obligated to undertake work related training as part of their parole conditions) attending classes. This has meant teachers sometimes deal with issues such as mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, lack of motivation and disruptive behaviours in classes.

CET does not work with undocumented migrants – it is not possible to get them into employment.

The CET Model

The current CET model has evolved over many years and is hands-on from the beginning. CET found that if too much emphasis was placed on English first the learners would not stay.

Training occurs 5 days per week for 6 hours per day, of which 1.5 hours is English for those who require language support. Currently 75% of CET's training is in service industries. CET offers training in 8 skill areas

- Accounting Clerk
- Automotive Specialist
- Electrician
- Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant
- Medical Assistant
- Medical Administration Assistant
- Culinary Arts
- Building

All are offered during the day except Electrical (evening only) and Medical Assistant which is offered day & evening. Most courses have a waiting list.

All the programs except the Electrical program have open entry and exit (continuous enrolment). This means that teachers work on a rolling curriculum for 50 weeks a year and there are constantly new trainees entering the programs and others preparing to leave.

Medical Assistant: This is delivered as six months intensive training with 1 month externship (work experience placement). There are 2 day classes and 1 evening class (which runs at half the hours of the day class but over 1 year rather than a semester). The day starts with a lecture in physiology, then trainees have time in the laboratory to develop hands-on skills in phlebotomy, blood pressure readings, sterilisation of equipment and other practical skills. Students undertake a one month placement in a hospital or clinic. Employment opportunities in this field are growing.



A medical assistant trainee at Centre for Employment Training takes blood from a building trainee.

Medical Administrative Assistant: This course includes scheduling, telephone techniques, record keeping and a 5 week unit in Medical Manager Software which is quite a complex system but gives a good grounding for other software. The software includes making appointments,

insurance information, adding a dependent etc. The course also includes role plays to practice communication skills in conflict resolution, handling panicked parents, and other difficult situations. Students undertake a work experience placement and many of the students gain employment at the end of the training.

Early Childhood Teacher's Assistant: There are 40 students in this program which is held in classrooms close to the childcare centre (run by St Juan Baptista). The students undertake two hours a day in placement in the child care centre. The children of the centre are children of CET students and children from the local community. CET has a partnership with San Jose Community College for Early Childhood Education Units which give credit for working in Child Care. CET also partners with University of California so the students can gain certificates in nutrition and budgeting. Emergency First Aid training is part of the course. The lecturer also ensures the learners participate in community service by providing child care for community events. She strongly believes in giving to the community and educating by modelling. Many students want to move into Day Care (Home Based Childcare) which is potentially lucrative because an owner/operator can accept numerous children, can employ staff and charge a reasonable amount for care.

Building: Originally this course aimed to train workers for construction sites. Currently the building industry in USA is experiencing a downturn and so the course now focuses more on building maintenance which is an area of growth. Trainees undertake plumbing, carpentry and cabinet making and train in a well equipped workshop where they construct complete rooms and fit out bathrooms from scratch.



Building trainees at Centre for Employment Training develop their carpentry skills.

Culinary Arts: learners in this course are from a broader age range and they also tend to be at a lower level of English. The students cook lunch for sale in the cafeteria. CET has recently fitted out a demonstration cooking classroom with big screen monitors so learners can watch the lecturer demonstrate certain techniques.

Future Courses

CET staff research the labour market carefully before establishing new training programs. Unless they are satisfied that the program will be viable in the long term (5-10 years of demand for workers) the program will not be established. Examples of skills training currently in development or planned for the future are

- A photographic equipment company wanting training for technicians to repair endoscopes. They will donate the equipment for training and have promised that 50 jobs will be available immediately the training is completed and ongoing jobs will be available into the future. Training was due to start in early May 2008.
- An office equipment company wanting training for office electronic equipment repair technicians (eg fax and photocopy machines)
- Biotechnology & Green technologies – solar panel installation, industrial waste, handling air pollution originating from China, and other technologies are under examination for feasibility
- A women's initiative involving training for 6 hrs per week to provide support to women who want to open their own business in areas such as accounting, child care, culinary arts, web design, social services. Participants will gain training and support in business planning and taking out loans, as well as coaching through the establishment of their businesses and for a few years after the training

Program structure: Generally the courses have 2 hours of lectures, 1.5 hours of VESL if required, and the rest (2.5 hours per day) is hands-on practical learning in a simulated work environment (including the use of time cards).

Competencies are tested at the end of each unit of learning. 70% is a minimum pass rate. Assessments are usually held on Fridays and within one classroom different learners will be undertaking a range of different assessment tasks on any one day.

The curriculum is developed by industry, the instructor and the internal CET Education Department before it goes through the Technical Advisory Committee. The curriculum is revised every 6 months to be upgraded in order to keep up with changes in regulations, needs of industry, new technologies etc.

Because CET is an accredited Western Association of Schools & Colleges (WASC) provider it can develop its own curriculum for short industry focused training without needing to go to any county, state or federal body for approval.

Skill areas in Medical Assistant, Medical Administration Assistant and Accounting require a higher language level than other skill areas. When they apply, students undertake a language and maths assessment to determine if their levels are high enough to succeed in the program and be able to attain employment. If the applicants' levels are not high enough they are directed to other skill areas.

CET has the lowest minimum requirements for entry into its courses and focuses on building the client's skills through quality training, VESL, provision of excellent pastoral care, carefully chosen work placements and strong job search support as clients reach the end of their training.

Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL)

VESL is offered to learners with limited English. This is determined at admission and in the first week by the skills instructor through reading, listening and oracy assessments which are given to the VESL instructor for marking.

The VESL instructors teach English through the context of the skill area. Classes are for groups of learners from same skill area at multilevels. There is no bi-lingual instruction and most VESL teachers speak only English. The core of the VESL course is workplace culture training including preparing for the workplace by working through various scenarios and practicing the

appropriate language to use as well as discussing cultural values at play and ways to ensure behaviour is appropriate to the situation.

Skills Training

Skills instruction is very hands-on. Instructors come from industry and need 5 years of experience in industry in order to work at CET. Instructors need to be able to motivate and inspire learners. CET tries to pay instructors commensurate with experience, skills & the level they would get in the workplace. The CET Education Department staff provide professional development for instructors in developing a syllabus, principles of adult learning, learning styles, cross cultural communication, developing lesson plans, assessing etc.

Job Search

Job search preparation is provided by the VESL instructor, skills instructors and job developers. The curriculum is divided between these three areas and includes resume development, how to look for a job, researching companies, matching resumes to job descriptions and dressing for an interview. The CET education department has developed a book of activities and lesson plans to support the job search curriculum. Occupational Health and Safety awareness is also the responsibility of both the VESL instructor and the skills instructor.

Trainees work with Job Developers (vocational counsellors) from the time they start on the course. An individual employment plan is drawn up for each student and the student is guided to work on the plan throughout the training. When students have completed all their competencies and 60% of the course (in time), they are considered job ready and receive more one to one attention from the Job Developers. This involves helping them to clarify goals, tailor their resumes, and cold canvassing as well as practicing job interview skills and discussing effective personal presentation.

The role of Job Developers

There are two Job Developers at CET who

- look for opportunities in industry
- find jobs
- counsel students
- are in charge of CET's Industry Boards
- seek donations and support
- track students to provide information to funding bodies

Unlike most organisations in the US which leave job preparation to the end of the program, at CET job preparation starts at the beginning of the program and includes

- a workshop for new learners explaining the Job Developer's role and the learner's role in the process
- research of employers the learner wants to work with – ongoing throughout the course
- networking with those employers
- drilling in being able to answer the top 20 questions asked by employers
- learners submitting resumes 60 – 90 days before they are due to complete the program (some companies take a very long time to go through the procedure of selecting new staff)
- use of the “applicant pool system” - rather than applying on the internet for an advertised vacancy, the learner writes a covering letter and submits a resume tailored to the company's requirements for consideration in the “applicant pool” and seeks to know how long the application will be kept – then notes this information for action at that time.

Results for this method of application are far better (if slower) than applying for advertised vacancies.

Communication

There is a meeting every week of the VESL teacher, skills instructor and job developer for each skill area, and sometimes counsellors and admissions staff if necessary. Each student is discussed and the student's Individual Employment Plan is discussed. This meeting is considered to be critical to the success of the program.

Student Support Services

Courses are advertised by staff attending events.

Pre-enrolment consists of

- Application
- 1 to 1 interview with the vocational instructor to discuss skills and workload involved, plan individual program and assess motivation
- Observation of class - applicants have 5 days to decide whether they want to undertake the training. Within that time they can change to another skill area or drop out without having to pay

CET has a partnership with Gardner, a mental health agency, which trains CET staff in handling different mental health issues.

CET offers clients a counselling program and referral to other agencies is also available. Childcare is subsidised by a variety of agencies.

Job Developers provide ongoing support for those students who have completed training by

- Calling new workers every week for 4 weeks then every month for 6 months after placement
- Providing continued assistance with job search and placement
- Provision of lifelong service in job search after placement

Some ex-students are now employers offering jobs.

Note: In the San Jose area young men of Hispanic background often have tattoos on their faces to mark their allegiance to a particular street gang. Many employers would not consider hiring an applicant with such a noticeable tattoo. CET offers removal of tattoos to learners to assist them in gaining and maintaining employment. This is done through a partnership with a group of volunteer dermatologists.

Why does CET stand out?

Overall CET has a higher placement rate, retention rate, graduation rate and earnings rate for students than other similar organisations. 87% of students who enroll in CET programs in San Jose graduate.

While continuous enrolment and exit and 50 weeks of rolling curriculum is very demanding for teachers, CET impressed me as a very dedicated organisation which has continued to respond to the changing needs of both its clients and its local employers. In particular I was impressed by its

- focus on the whole person with excellent support provided to ensure students succeed in achieving their goals
- hands-on, competency based curriculum
- close attention to Department of Labor and state Economic Development Department information in ascertaining the skill needs of local industries
- close relationship with employers to determine both the curriculum and the long term viability of the training
- long term view - aiming for 5-10 year cycles of viable skills training
- partnerships with other agencies which are crucially important
- inclusion of industry representatives on its Employer Advisory Boards
- use of simulation to establish a real workplace-like environment and reinforcing of workplace culture through sign-in cards, monitoring of attendance, punctuality, progress and probation periods
- flexibility in allowing students to ask for leave of absence for 30 days (extension of 90 days) in the case of health issues or other family or personal needs
- extra support - in a 900 hour program students can have an extra 400 hours to complete & be awarded the certificate if they need extra time
- early intervention strategies – a team approach is used to support each learner to help remove barriers to success in finding and keeping employment
- creative job search strategies through the crucial role of the Job Developer in assisting learners to set realistic employment goals and achieve them
- ongoing lifetime job search support

WorkSource CAPITAL Career Centre - Portland, Oregon

Background:

WorkSource CAPITAL Career Centre is part of Portland Community College and is housed in a one stop centre which is funded through a combination of federal and state grants to train and support migrants, refugees and others on low incomes entering or re-entering the workforce. Focus is on developing skills for the local area.

General Program

When non-English speaking background clients make contact with the centre the career specialists develop an employment plan and clients are tested and directed into Workplace ESOL (pre-vocational) for up to 6 months (continuous enrolment). If clients are at a very low level of English they are directed into a work simulation class. If the learner's level is high enough, or after a period in Workplace ESOL they are directed into one of the following

- a career pathway class (see below)
- the high-tech entry level class (see below)
- further ESOL
- General Educational Development (high school certification in English or Spanish)
- Truck driving school

Workplace ESOL classes are offered from level 0 (literacy) to 4. The language presented revolves around the workplace.

A **Work Simulation Class** has been developed for non-native speakers with very low levels of English and apart from ESOL includes

- Punching a time clock

- Alphabetical filing
- Basic computing
- Talking about jobs
- Photocopying

Career Pathways programs are offered for 4 months, 5 days a week for 5 hours a day and include

- Office skills & computing
- Healthcare training at higher levels – medical terminology, sterilisation of equipment with an internship (work experience placement) of 4-6 weeks
- Food services – training for cafeteria work in schools, corporate sector, hospitals etc
- Direct care worker training – provides a pathway that leads to further training for Clinical Nurse Assistant or Clinical Medical Assistant

High-Tech Entry Level Training Program

The high-tech entry level training course started when a large local employer needed staff and could see that the local rural workers had the work ethic they wanted but needed training. It is offered to applicants at an intermediate level of English. Funding comes from the County through Strategic Investment Funds.

The centre fosters strong partnerships with industry to develop curriculum, select trainees, and to provide input to the course through information sessions and some lecturing. As a result the course enjoys excellent outcomes with an 87% employment placement rate. Feedback from employers is very positive. Currently the centre has partnerships with four companies and this ensures viability of the course as recruitment demands vary between the companies. The centre often plans the timing of the course to coincide with expected recruiting cycles of the partner companies.

Fostering relationships

In order to attract employers to support the centre, staff ran a breakfast for potential employers with input from the HR managers of companies already in partnership attesting to the success of the program. Employers who sign up to the program agree to pay \$800 per trainee they employ and in return get to

- interview applicants for the course and select those they consider most appropriate to undertake the training
- have input into the course so that the training meets the needs of the company
- have first pick of the graduates to recruit

The Process

- the program is advertised
- orientation or information session – usually attended by approximately 200 applicants
- English & maths assessments and 1 to 1 screening is conducted to identify potential barriers to success (health, housing, settlement etc)
- support is provided for any identified problems and any applicants considered to be unsuitable are offered alternative training
- applicants attend a workshop on interview techniques
- industry representatives from sponsoring companies interview applicants – a panel of 4-5 interview approx 50 applicants for 15 minutes each and select those they feel will be most suited to the program (around 25) Unsuccessful applicants are offered other training or job search support.

Training includes

- reading blueprints & schematics
- maths for diagram reading, measurements
- computing
- safety
- soldering basics
- assembly skills
- company information delivered by company reps
- tours of companies
- job search skills – applications resume writing and interview skills

Recruitment of Trainees

In week 5 of the training the trainees complete company application forms to apply for positions. They then prepare for interviews and go through mock interviews. In week 7 company representatives interview them for positions.

At their graduation, trainees receive a statement describing the skills they have acquired. They also receive formal job offers (letters). Some may be offered more than one position, others might be offered none. The program coordinator then follows up to check which position they will take and to offer further support for those without work. Because the training is located within the WorkSource centre, post course support is readily available to trainees in their job search.

Support Services

Career Specialists are available to

- work 1 to 1 with clients
- develop an employment plan - plan of action for entry/return to work
- assess barriers to finding employment and refer to agencies to assist as necessary with housing, food, drug/alcohol issues (one stop concept)
- recommend and place in prevocational training ESL/computing or higher level training to refresh skills
- work with employers for direct placement

The Job Search Resource Centre which is open from 8.30 – 5pm, is available to anyone and is funded by both federal & state governments. It has

- computers for internet access to job vacancies
- staff to support applicants with advice checking resumes and applications
- volunteers to assist
- referral to Career Specialists for those in need of extra support
- daily print out of possible entry level jobs for clients to check

Why does WorkSource CAPITAL Career Center stand out?

The High-tech Entry Level Course is an example of excellent cooperation between a training provider and employers to successfully meet the needs of trainees and of employers. This is achieved through

- excellent relationships with partners, particularly local employers in developing curricula, selecting appropriate trainees, providing instructors, equipment and input to the course

- flexibility to respond to employers' needs in being able to pull together skill sets to suit employers
- responsiveness to employers' recruitment needs - being able to run programs to prepare trainees at the right time for recruitment
- agreement with employers for them to pay a fee at the point of recruitment of trainees
- ongoing support for trainees provided by the one stop centre both during and post training



A trainee at WorkSource CAPITAL Career Center practices his soldering skills.

City College of San Francisco

Background:

City College of San Francisco is one of the largest community colleges in the USA and operates out of several campuses located throughout the metropolitan area. Its programs are similar to those offered by TAFE in South Australia.

The number of ESL students is approximately 25,000 and many learners are from Spanish speaking or Chinese speaking backgrounds. There are two types of ESL Programs offered: credit programs (about 5000 students) and non-credit (about 20,000 students)

Credit program students pay for tuition (about \$1 per curriculum hour), are expected to complete homework and are assessed via “final” exams at the end of each 18 week semester. Non credit programs have no requirement for homework and are free to anyone who applies. Learners are assessed and placed in class by assessment officers via a series of tests – grammar, reading, listening – which have been developed in-house.

Workforce Programs – Vocational ESL (VESL)

City College of San Francisco offers many different ESL for Work programs which are sometimes delivered in partnership with other organisations and are funded through various sources. They include courses in

- Biotechnology
- Childcare

- Construction
- Customer service
- Food service
- Health work
- Janitors
- Office work
- Immigrant workers rights
- Social communication
- Practical English on the Job

Two programs that stood out were the Trade Adjustment Act Program and the VESL Office Training Program.

TAA – Trade Adjustment Act

This funding started when numerous garment workers were laid off and needed training in another field to regain employment. It is a joint program with the San Francisco Labor Council. An officer from the Labor Council comes to visit the class regularly with job possibilities. The program runs for 18 months and learners exit the program when they have gained employment.

The current class was established for workers who were retrenched from Monster, an electronic assembly company, and the learners, 95% of whom are from Chinese speaking backgrounds, are being retrained in culinary arts and custodial (i.e. janitor / cleaning) with ESL support. 150 people started the program and when I visited about 47 were still in the remaining few weeks of the program. Learners receive welfare payments for over 18 months while they undertake the training.

The ESL teacher runs a separate ESL class and focuses on both the general ESL needed for the workplace but also specifically on food related language. Towards the end of the course the teacher works more on the language for job search to give the learners the support they need to find work before the course ends. Many hotels now insist that people apply online (as a screening device) so learners are trained in this. Apparently hotels are now demanding higher levels of English than they did before.

VESL Office Training Program

This course is run at two campuses for learners with a minimum of intermediate level of English. The course provides training in

- reading job advertisements
- job applications
- resume writing
- covering letters
- telephoning
- formal letters
- filing
- internet based research
- oral presentations
- interview practice with outside interviewers
- computer skills (MS Word, Excel, Access, typing and keyboarding)
- workplace culture

Speaking and listening skills are further developed through the use of podcasts created by the lecturer which enable learners to hear models of appropriate language and to practise using these expressions. The podcasts are accessible via the internet and learners may repeat the exercises whenever, wherever and how often they choose. The podcasts are specifically designed for the learners in the course, emulate real office communication and emphasise idiom, office jargon and development of soft skills.



Lecturer Roland Trego with trainees in the VESL Office Training Program at City College of San Francisco.

Why does City College of San Francisco stand out?

City College of San Francisco ESOL program has a dedicated, enthusiastic and professional staff. While I was not able to observe a large number of the programs on offer by this huge college, I was very impressed with the programs I saw. Of particular interest were the placement test developed in house to handle the large numbers of applicants for ESOL courses and the effective development and use of podcasts by the Vocational Office Training Program lecturer.

Bridges Programmes - Glasgow

Background:

Bridges Programmes is a registered charity which was set up in 2003 originally to assist asylum seekers who were devolved to Glasgow from London. Funding is from various sources including the national lottery charity fund, and European Union funding.

Initially 70% of Bridges clients were asylum seekers and 80% were men mostly from the Middle East, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Now the situation has changed considerably and 60-70% of clients have been granted leave to remain (i.e. have been granted refugee status), 50% are women, and clients are mainly from central Africa & Algeria. A significant number are Russian scientists, most whom arrived via Israel.

Some clients are the victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution. Some unattached minors also arrive via Holland and make their way to Glasgow independently (Bridges staff know of about 110 but there may well be more). There are tales of children being kidnapped

from their country of origin, transported to Holland, being used to gain sympathetic treatment by government officials and then being dumped.

New groups to arrive include Burmese and Eritreans. The Sudanese who have arrived in small numbers in the past have been from Muslim / Arabic-speaking background.

Asylum seekers are forbidden to work in the UK and the original purpose of Bridges was to assist them maintain their job skills and develop work readiness whilst waiting for their claims to be processed. As a result the team forged good relationships with local employers and placed asylum seekers into work experience in their own fields of expertise. Bridges has also built up a group of dedicated mentors in a variety of skill areas who provide guidance to asylum seekers wanting to maintain their skills.

Activities have evolved to suit the emerging needs of the client groups. Recent changes to the processing of cases means that newly arrived asylum seekers are being processed faster and many family groups are being given “leave to remain” or granted refugee status – sometimes indefinitely and sometimes for 1, 3 or 5 years.

Now that more clients are refugees and are expected by the government to find work quickly, the program is more focussed on developing employability and Bridges offers work training, work placement and a women’s empowerment support group (to cater to the needs of the large numbers with low literacy levels). Links with the Open University have been established so that clients can undertake distance learning programs and gain higher level skills, confidence and credit points towards eventual qualifications.

The major activities of the organisation are

- placing skilled asylum seekers into workplaces and volunteer work in the same field they worked in previously
- assisting refugees find work in their fields
- arranging mentor support – recruiting, training and matching mentors to asylum seekers and refugees
- running work focused training programs often in partnership with other providers
- providing support and advice on a range of related issues (eg production of a best practice guide for those working with asylum seekers and refugees, providing significant input into the development of a training course for people working with these groups)

Programs

Bridges identifies needs in the asylum seeker and refugee population, seeks funding and partners to meet the needs of the identified group and delivers programs appropriate to those needs.

Currently programs offered include

Women’s Empowerment Programme which runs one day a week for six weeks or two days a week for three weeks. Childcare is provided and transport costs are covered. This program was established to assist refugee and asylum seeker women who don’t have very high levels of education or work experience, but are skilled in household management and want to participate more actively in the community through work or further study. Many of the women targeted are from Middle Eastern and African backgrounds. The women are encouraged to value the personal skills they have and are supported to develop assertiveness, set goals and overcome the barriers to achieving their goals. Some are assisted to move into Open University, and an Open

University counsellor attends Bridges one day a week to advise learners of possible courses and how to gain credit for those courses.

Equip for the Future runs full time for 5 weeks and prepares refugees for work. ESOL is embedded in the program which focuses on applications for jobs, preparation for interviews including mock interviews with feedback conducted by volunteer employers from relevant fields. The full time program is followed by work experience of 12 days (usually 2 days per week for 6 weeks).

16 Plus Youth Programme

The 16 Plus program is offered in partnership with Anniesland College and is held at the college campus. Bridges staff provide expertise in dealing with youth and preparing for work or vocational training, while Anniesland College provides ESOL expertise.

Originally set up to help unattached minors access work and training and to give them a better start to their adult life, this program is now open to any young people from non-English speaking background who are 16 years or older and who have not completed secondary schooling either in their country of origin or in Scotland. There is a large ESOL component to the program, a Life Skills Development Course, a mentoring program, including some employability support and regular one to one appointments with youth workers for career counselling and pathway planning.

Many of the learners are unaccompanied (sometimes as a result of horrific exploitation) and live in supported accommodation at the university. Some learners express goals of gaining employment in the short term but the majority aim to gain qualifications in some field before working. Much of the program is dedicated to assisting the clients set realistic goals, including being realistic about the level of English they need to be accepted into and to succeed in further study. Emphasis is on developing confidence and self esteem, establishing good working relationships with others and developing employability skills. Many opt to undertake work experience placements, and they can also choose to be linked with mentors currently working in their field of interest.

Whilst at Bridges I sat in on a staff meeting where individual learners' goals and progress towards achieving those goals was discussed. I also observed a workshop session run by Bridges staff on overcoming barriers and developing personal action plans, and viewed a video of the learners participating in mock interviews which had been recorded the previous week. I was impressed by the expertise and dedication of the Bridges staff and the energetic way in which they engaged the learners to participate actively in the workshop.

Why does Bridges Programmes stand out?

Bridges Programmes has a dedicated professional staff who

- are responsive, flexible and creative in establishing excellent programs for clients
- empower some of the most disempowered members of the community
- have developed a Best Practice Guide for organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees
- raise awareness of the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and involve others through lobbying, and participating in New Roots Scotland - a network of organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees
- establish effective partnerships with other organisations

Vancouver Community College - British Columbia

Background:

Vancouver Community College is a TAFE style college. Funding is from the provincial government except for the English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) funding which is federal but administered through the province. Having a different funding source causes confusion and some difficulties operating within the college system.

Programs:

ELSA is offered from level 1 to 4. In addition numerous vocational training courses with ESL support are provided.

Professional & Career English (PACE). These are fee paying programs with skills training combined with English language support. They include Culinary Arts, Bakery and Residential Care. Other than screening to demonstrate applicants have reached the required language level, there is no selection process and learners are accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. There is a waiting list of up to 2 courses (i.e. 2 years).

Certificate in Baking Arts. This runs for 12 months. Learners are at intermediate level and currently are mostly from Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds. The program consists of 2 hours of ESL per day and a full day (5 hours) of skills training. Towards the end of the program the ESL stops. Each day starts with ESL and baking theory from 10 am to 12 pm (this is taught by the ESL lecturer who works on the language used in the text book). From 11.30 – 12.00 the bakery instructor comes into the class, delivers some theory and answers questions the ESL teacher hasn't been able to answer. From 12.45 – 5.00 pm the learners work in the kitchen and bake with the bakery instructor. The teacher meets with the bakery lecturer every day to find out what she needs to focus on the following day.

The program has good employer support because VCC has a good reputation for training. Job outcomes for this course are 100% and a lot of jobs are gained through the 3 week work experience placement which the learners find for themselves at the end of the training. After successful completion of the course graduates can move into an apprenticeship for pastry cook.

Culinary Program. The culinary program is 10 months long. The learners start at 12.15pm with 2 hours of ESL. Then the chef and the ESL teacher meet for 30 minutes to discuss the program. The chef lectures and demonstrates from 2.45pm for one hour then the learners cook from 3.45 to 7pm. There are 2 practicums of 2 weeks each. Graduates generally find jobs in care facilities, hotels & restaurants.

The biggest barrier for the learners is understanding the chef and a lot of work in the ESL class is done on understanding and clarifying instructions.

Residential Care Course is 10 months and costs learners about \$3000. Learners must be at intermediate level and must maintain a 64% average in all subjects. About 40% of the learners come through the college's ELSA program. If applicants haven't completed Level 5 they must undertake an entry test.

The ESL teacher prepares learners for communicating with residents and colleagues and covers vocabulary for the other subjects, reading and study skills. Not much writing is required. The

skills trainers have nursing backgrounds and deliver Work Roles, Health and Healing, Interpersonal Communication, Personal Care Skills and Home Management subjects. There are 3 clinical placements and the skills trainers are on placement with the students at all times. The ESL teacher also visits the placements to respond to any language needs that arise.

The course is divided into levels

Level 1 goes for 4 months and includes 3 weeks placement in intermediate care

Level 2 is 4 months with 2 weeks placement in special needs

Level 3 is 2 months with 7 weeks placement in extended care except for 1 day a week with the ESL teacher doing job search training.

Job outcomes are good. The course is very popular because the pay rate for care workers is about \$25 per hour.

Hairstyling. This is a 1 year program for lower intermediate to upper advanced level learners. Once they have completed and passed the licensing exam they can work as hairstylists (hairdressers). Learners undertake a placement in the college's salon from the 2nd month and undertake three weeks of practicum in external salons.

Health Sciences Preparation Course. This program prepares learners at upper intermediate level for training in health sciences courses offered by the college including pharmacy assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, medical laboratory assistant and dental assistant. Learners are referred to the course when they have applied for the above courses and have failed to reach the required English level on the entry assessment test. On completion of the program, as long as they have successfully completed the other prerequisites of Maths and Biology, learners are guaranteed a place on the course of their choice and are placed on a waiting list.

There are 2 strands to the program

- Communication, which focuses strongly on body language and uses video to give learners feedback on their communication strategies. It includes contact assignments where learners have to approach a person they don't know well and ask if they can discuss a topic with them (eg Canada's Food Guide). They are given the ABC strategy – Approach, Bridge into the topic and Comment and are taught how to handle rebuffs. They then write a report which must pass on 2 counts – grammar and content.
- The reading, writing & listening strand focuses on study skills development including reading and notetaking from textbooks, articles etc and summarising both oral & written texts as well as reading and interpreting graphic texts. The learners undertake research projects – one to research the program they plan to study and the other health programs at VCC, and another project on a disease or disorder.

Why does Vancouver Community College stand out?

The vocational training programs I observed at Vancouver Community College struck me as very effective in developing employability skills to prepare learners for the workplace, particularly in developing appropriate communication skills using simulations to make the learning as real as possible. A highlight was the use of technology to video and analyse the communication strategies of the learners in the Health Science Preparation course.

Refugees into Jobs - London

Background:

Refugees into Jobs started in 1997 as a pilot program and is now firmly established. It serves 9 boroughs in West London and the main client groups are

- unskilled refugees with low levels of English and literacy problems
- semi skilled refugees with some work background
- professionals

Clients come from approximately 94 countries, mainly Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran, Eastern Europe, Balkans, Northern Africa, Burma, Congo, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Partnerships are very important to the success of Refugees into Jobs programs.

Programs

Refugee Women's Project. This project is funded by the London Development Agency and combines training to inform refugee women about the UK system with volunteer work through schools and children's services to understand more about the education system.

The process involves

- engagement of community groups to attract participants
- seeking women from the same community and language background to work as volunteer interpreters to work with the clients
- visiting the women in their homes to provide information
- encouraging participants to join other projects – usually in traditional women's areas (but also some non traditional areas)
- establishing partnerships with colleges to access training for participants

The organisation found that training in English around the context of an occupation meant the language learning was much more successful than providing general English classes. In addition it was felt that provision of childcare and travel payments were essential to the success of the project.

Refugee Men's Project. This project has funding for a year which allows for 2 courses per quarter and aims to assist refugees into jobs. The organisation identified that there was a demand for trained security guards so offers training which incorporates 4 full days of training through a private security training organisation with English language support. The training provider is also a recruitment agency and of the first class trained, 50% were immediately offered jobs through the agency. The remaining trainees joined the Refugees into Jobs job club which provides access to computers and ongoing support to maintain motivation and enthusiasm whilst applying for jobs.

Short courses in health and safety, first aid and food hygiene are built into projects offered by Refugees into Jobs.

Professional Project. This project is in its 4th year and is funded by Treasury and the Home Office. It involves

- retraining to get refugees back into professions (eg doctors, teachers and engineers)

- partnerships with colleges and universities - some special courses are negotiated while in other cases the refugees are slotted into existing courses
- work experience and volunteer work through a partnership with OLMEC, a charity organisation which brokers work experience placements
- personalised case management
- development of employability skills through focus on interpersonal skills, communication, cultural awareness and team skills

An example of training is a thirteen week waste water modelling course for six engineers in which the trainer helped in job search as well as providing the training.

In some instances refugees need a longer time frame to get back into the field, the goals are staged with the aim of getting them into a workplace to build skills and experience in the workplace setting. For example a doctor might be encouraged to accept a job as a phlebotomist in order to gain valuable experience in a hospital setting prior to seeking work as a doctor or a teacher might get work as school assistant, an engineer might first work as a technician.

The process for assisting a client is as follows

- an initial assessment is made and an action plan developed
- the client joins a Career Focus Program to create a CV and to practice application writing and interview techniques
- the client is assigned a mentor in the same field through Refugees into Jobs' partnership with Time Together – a mentorship program which assigns refugees to mentors working in the same industry

The case worker encourages the client to develop independence so that the client becomes active in the job search process and the case manager becomes a supporter rather than a driver.

Community Interpreter's Project. This project provides a qualification in interpreting through an 8 week training program for clients with good levels of English. Clients with professional qualifications have found they can utilise their knowledge of their profession in their work as an interpreter.

Doctors' self help support group

Qualified doctors seeking employment meet weekly with a local GP who volunteers his time. They read journals, discuss differences in practice, compare notes, practise using equipment, clarify vocabulary and practice communication skills. When clients get jobs they continue in the group to share their experience on the job and to continue to support other group members.

Invest to Save Project

One of the most innovative projects Refugees into Jobs has been involved with is one which is funded through the Invest to Save Budget in which refugee doctors are funded (ie their salary is paid) for a six month placement in hospitals after which they gain employment. This represents a great saving to the government because to train a doctor from scratch costs around £250,000 but to retrain a refugee doctor costs much less. This project is in its 4th year.

Relationships and Partnerships

Refugees into Jobs has established good relationships with Job Centre Plus (the national employment agency) in 6 boroughs (16 offices). The organisations now have mutual referral and there are Job Centre Plus representatives on the Refugees into Jobs steering committee.

Work experience placements are coordinated through **OLMEC** which was established in 2003 as a community investment foundation by Presentation, a social investment agency that also provides affordable housing and does community regeneration projects.

Refugees into Jobs uses **Time Together** to coordinate mentors to work with clients from professional backgrounds. Time Together was set up in 2002 in response to a government white paper that recommended the provision of mentoring schemes to help refugees integrate better in the UK. The scheme aimed to complement the well-established services already provided by refugee organisations and community groups. Since November 2002 it has recruited and matched over 1,500 refugees with volunteer mentors.

Why does Refugees into Jobs stand out?

Refugees into Jobs has a strong client focus and has developed excellent partnerships, particularly with the local government run job centres. It empowers clients by encouraging the development of self esteem and confidence through enabling them to gain the skills to assist themselves. Of particular note are the refugee women's project and the doctor's self help group.

Other findings

Whilst my focus was on programs to assist refugees and migrants into employment, particularly those with low-level English and few employment skills, I found several other examples of excellence in a range of areas and which are of interest and importance to the Australian community. These include:

The Asylum Positive Images Project and Network (Oxfam in Glasgow) which used a variety of approaches to improve the image of asylum seekers and refugees in the community including refugee week media awards for positive reporting, a video project in schools, poetry written by newcomers displayed publicly, and a drama production set in low income housing flats. For more information: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/generationwhy/issues/democracy/stories/asylum/>

The **WorkSource** concept (USA). This is a one stop approach to provide support and assistance for low income clients. Several organisations partner together and are co-located to provide a range of services under the umbrella branding of WorkSource. The client arriving at the WorkSource office is greeted and assessed then referred to the appropriate service within the office. Organisations involved share the costs of accommodation, overheads, administration and marketing. I saw these offices in operation at South Seattle Community College, WorkSource CAPITAL Career Centre (Portland) and Renton in Seattle.

Careers Scotland (Glasgow) is a government funded service. All upper secondary school learners are entitled to one to one career counselling with a Careers Scotland counsellor. Careers Scotland also runs a “Transitions” program for young asylum seekers and provides support to vocational ESOL programs such as the 16 Plus program delivered by Bridges Programmes and Anniesland College described above. I was particularly impressed with Careers Scotland “Activate” program which targets young people deemed at risk of dropping out of school and works with them both prior to leaving school and after dropping out. The clients are assigned a case manager who works with them to develop a realistic career plan, develop team skills, improve confidence, undertake charity work, and develop strategies for engaging with the community. For more information: <http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/home/home.asp>

Time Together UK. This is a specialist organisation which matches refugees and migrants who have overseas qualifications and experience, with mentors with experience in the same field. Providers of services and courses for this group can partner with Time Together to provide their clients with this valuable support from mentors. For more information: <http://www.timetogether.org.uk/>

OLMEC England provides work experience opportunities, through its Solid Foundations program, for disadvantaged groups who need local experience to assist them in gaining employment. 74% of clients who complete placements are successful in gaining employment. Refugee support agencies partner with OLMEC to find appropriate placements for their clients. For more information see: <http://www.olmec-ec.org.uk/projects/solid-foundations/>

Conclusions

WHAT AUSTRALIA IS DOING WELL

It was pleasing to realise that in some areas Australia is doing very well in its provision for refugees and migrants. In comparison with the language programs provided for new arrivals in Canada, UK and USA, Australia's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is effective because

- The funding cycle is sufficient for providers to plan programs and staffing over a reasonable length of time – one of the main complaints I heard was to do with short funding cycles which are inefficient because of the time required to apply for funds, set up programs, recruit staff, attract students, report outcomes and wind up programs
- Those clients eligible to undertake the program have the same entitlement regardless of where they live in Australia
- Clients in receipt of Centrelink Newstart Allowance who are undertaking AMEP classes are able to study while receiving the allowance which gives them the opportunity to focus on gaining the English and settlement assistance they need – new arrivals in most places I visited have no choice than to accept low paid unskilled jobs which often meant English classes were hard to access, learning was much slower, and they and their families were more likely to be locked into a poverty cycle
- Childcare is provided to clients which means women are able to access the AMEP – given the link between a mother's literacy level and her children's likelihood of performing well at school, this is crucial to Australia's social cohesion and to the social capital of our new communities
- The strong emphasis on settlement in the AMEP has contributed to clients developing good strategies to enable them to better participate in Australian society. This in turn assists the integration of newcomers and enhances social cohesion

In talking to representatives of the Scottish Government, Employability Forum (UK) and the London Development Agency it was evident that Australia is viewed as having good social cohesion, being effective in managing migration well and promoting a harmonious multicultural society. There are instances where The Home Office has emulated some of Australia's strategies including establishing a points system for skilled migrants. When I spoke of the importance placed in the AMEP classes on assisting newcomers with settlement, colleagues in the UK were very interested.

WHAT WE COULD DO BETTER

1. Hours of English tuition

Providers of the AMEP throughout Australia have long recognized that the allocation of up to 510 hours as is insufficient for many learners who have experienced extreme disadvantage through lack of education prior to arriving in Australia. While humanitarian refugees are entitled to a further allocation of 100 hours (400 hours if under 24 years of age) this is still insufficient to allow many clients to be able to actively participate in Australian society. Many of the current humanitarian refugees settling in Australia have very low levels of education and literacy and in some cases no education or literacy in their first language at all. Clearly a person who is highly educated in their first language and has lived in a westernized country all their life will be more likely to progress in their English language learning than someone from a country where they have been denied education and the right to work outside the home and for whom using a pencil for the first time – let alone a computer mouse - is a struggle.

In British Columbia, hours of English language tuition entitlement is tied to the level of English already achieved and to the client's level of literacy in their first language. This seems a much

fairer approach to the allocation of tuition hours. Currently the federal government is reviewing the Adult Migrant English Program in preparation for the next round of funding. I would urge that the review team investigates the system for determining entitlement to English language tuition used in British Columbia.

2. Entitlements and provisions

Overseas, entitlements and provisions for migrants and refugee clients vary from country to country and between provinces, states and counties in different countries. These can vary for individuals and groups depending on family situation, migration status and even ethnicity. Each country I visited has its own migration issues and people were keen to hear about how we manage our entitlements and provisions in Australia. Both the UK and US have many undocumented people entering each year and deal with these in different ways. Canada and Australia have similar migration policies, taking (per capita) many humanitarian refugees each year who are processed before arrival. Each of the areas I visited provided different entitlements in relation to English language tuition, permission to work and entitlement to undertake further training or higher education. This caused me to reflect on the entitlements and provisions for refugees and migrants in Australia.

Each refugee or migrant entering Australia brings with them a completely different set of experiences, skills and needs. Overall the provision of English language tuition in Australia via the Adult Migrant English Program is the same for any client who is eligible for the program (apart from additional hours for those affected by trauma).

Currently the AMEP is only available to those whose language levels are assessed as below “functional” or “basic” English or level 2 on the International Second Language Proficiency Rating. Once the client reaches “functional” or “basic” English s/he is no longer entitled to free tuition under the AMEP. This level of English is not considered to be high enough to participate in the workplace or in mainstream training.

Further, the English language level required for admission to many vocational training courses (completion of Certificate 4 level English) and the level required to succeed in these courses is considerably higher than the exit level of the AMEP (completion of Certificate in Spoken and Written English level 3). In South Australia within the TAFE system the level required for entry into most vocational courses has recently been raised in response to evidence that clients entering TAFE with language levels below this have been unable to successfully complete training. This means clients currently exiting the AMEP are unable to move into vocational training without additional English language tuition or considerable learning support.

Most of the highly successful training programs I observed overseas were designed for clients who already had an intermediate level of English and were ready to move into employment. Employers involved in selection of clients for these training programs were realistic about the language level required for the client both to benefit from the training and to succeed in the workplace. The entry level of English for these training programs was well above the basic level of English at which the AMEP provision currently cuts out. Clients with insufficient levels of English to succeed in the programs were generally placed into other programs with a focus on language development designed to prepare them for the higher level training.

There is much talk in Australia about the levels of literacy attained by our native born children and discussion on school retention and other strategies to improve literacy and education levels. Our newly arrived migrants and refugees however are provided with a language program which

cuts out before they have achieved levels adequate to participate in the workplace or in vocational training.

Migrants and refugees who enter Australia with some skills, experience and training are usually keen to utilise these skills and experience in Australia. Most need a bridging program or up-skilling before their qualifications or experience is fully recognised in Australia. If they are unable to attain the level of English required to enter training in TAFE through the AMEP they have little choice than to accept a job at a lower level than the skills they have already acquired and may find themselves unable to move beyond a low-paid, low-skill position. This is not only a waste of their skills and potential but is not conducive to social inclusion or cohesion.

I strongly urge the AMEP Review team to change the eligibility criteria for entry and exit of the AMEP to allow new arrivals to gain adequate English language skills to facilitate safe participation in the Australian workplace and in vocational training.

3. Moving beyond low-paid jobs

From my observations both in Australia and in USA, Canada and the UK, refugees and migrants who enter the workforce with low levels of English are highly likely to remain in low-paid, unskilled positions unless they are able to access additional English language tuition and further vocational training. This is largely because their pay rates are very low and they need to work long hours to earn a reasonable living. In turn it is difficult for them to find the time and financial resources to undertake further training.

Some organisations I visited were very aware of the needs of clients who had gained employment prior to reaching a reasonable level of English and had developed programs to assist these clients improve their positions in the workforce. Generally these programs were a combination of English language tuition and training tailored to meet the needs of a particular industry (e.g. training in a hotel setting to assist room attendants to attain the skills required to work in front of house, training in a hospital setting for cleaners to move into administration positions).

Some organisations reported concerns about a new trend for migrants and refugees who are long term residents and who are now returning to providers for language tuition. Many of these are returning to evening English classes. These established residents who have been in the workforce for up to thirty years are mostly in their 50s, have low levels of English and have been working in low-paid, physically demanding jobs. They are finding that they can no longer sustain working in these physically demanding jobs and are seeking to improve their English in order to move into jobs which are less physically demanding. Progress in acquiring language skills at this age is usually very slow. The likelihood of these people being able to gain sufficient levels of English to progress into new positions is questionable. They are potentially a burden to society if they become injured, have to give up their jobs, or are not able to transition into other jobs which are less physically demanding.

The Australian Federal Government needs to consider the needs of workers in low-paid, low-skill jobs in terms of providing them with the means to improve their positions through adequate English language tuition and training, and to consider the long term consequences of these workers as they age and are unable to cope with such physically demanding jobs.

A training voucher issued to all eligible refugees and migrants may provide a solution to both the above groups who need further English and training (ie people in low-paid physically demanding jobs, who need to continue to learn English, and those with skills who need up-skilling to enable them to utilise those skills).

The voucher would ensure clients were able to access appropriate language tuition and skills training by entitling them to training aligned to their needs and goals. For example a client who is non-literate in his/her first language could use the voucher predominantly for developing language skills prior to gaining employment. A client with basic language skills but vocational skills gained overseas could utilise the training voucher first for some language tuition and then for a bridging course with language support or, if their level was sufficiently high, for vocational training in a mainstream setting. Others with professional backgrounds could choose to use the voucher for higher level English language tuition to enable them to re-enter their profession. If the voucher were not restricted in terms of time, clients could also move into employment for a period and then utilise the voucher to access further training to gain a higher level position.

This system would ensure Australia's newly arrived refugees and migrants had a flexible provision of English language tuition and vocational training to participate effectively in the Australian workplace, reach their potential and utilise their skills thereby building the capacity of their communities and enhancing Australia's social cohesion.

In South Australia, the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Training administers South Australia Works funding which "brings together learning, training and employment services to ensure all South Australians have the opportunity to develop work skills and get a job". The current focus of SA Works is on Regional South Australia, Young People, Mature Aged People, Aboriginal People, Industry, Public Sector, Communities, and Skills Recognition.

While refugees and migrants are not precluded from participating in SA Works programs in regional SA or those aimed at youth or mature aged people, many refugees and migrants who need support in gaining work skills or in enhancing the skills they bring with them from overseas do not fit into these categories and need particular assistance with language and understanding workplace culture. Rather than ensuring they "have the opportunity to develop work skills and get a job" these people are excluded from funding which is designed to do just that.

4. Case Management approach

Everywhere I visited I saw examples of excellence whether in individual classrooms with individual teachers, whole programs or systems. Certain elements from some programs stood out for me because they appeared to be highly successful in meeting the needs of the client group as well as the needs of industry.

The programs which stood out had a very strong client-centred approach in meeting the needs of both the learners / trainees and employers in the targeted industries. This was achieved through understanding and matching the needs of both and resulted in excellent job placement rates for trainees into long term employment thereby satisfying both trainees and employers.

Successful programs had a focus on establishing a strong engagement with industry and particular employers in most or all of the following

- development of appropriate curricula
- providing input to the training programs through presentations visits to workplaces and provision of expert trainers
- involvement in selecting trainees for training courses
- provision of work experience placements (internships / externships)
- interviews of trainees at the end of training for placement in employment

Successful organisations recognised that each trainee brought their own individual skills and barriers to the training situation and that to really overcome barriers to participation in society whether through work, study or connecting with the broader community, the client needed to be viewed as a whole person. Clients were case managed and were encouraged to develop independence. Empowerment of the trainees was of ultimate benefit to employers because the workers they gained were much better prepared for the workplace, attitudinally and in their personal lives, and were much more stable as employees.

While programs were not exclusively for clients from non-English speaking backgrounds, generally large numbers of these clients were represented. Other targeted clients also came from disadvantaged groups in the community.

Trainees were carefully selected for their potential for success. Those who applied for training but were not considered suitable were provided with support to pursue other training options or other programs to prepare them prior to training. Support for trainees included one to one case management in

- development of an individual employment/career plan
- exploration of any barriers to success (often these were personal barriers such as housing, financial issues, health or family issues, which required referral to other services for support)
- monitoring of progress to ensure the learner was coping with the training provided
- training in how to present to potential employers and job search support including resumes, applications (both written and online), cold canvassing, presentation and interview skills

By the end of the training most clients had established good work habits (time keeping, taking responsibility for actions, good team skills, increased self awareness etc) and a common by-product was the noticeable improvement in trainees' confidence and self esteem.

As a result of this two pronged approach the programs enjoyed great success in achieving long term outcomes for both trainees and employers. This then enabled organisations to build their reputations which enhanced their standing in the community, industry groups and funding bodies for opportunities to develop and deliver further training.

To address some of the labour and skills shortages in Australia we need to develop a more responsive and flexible approach to training, especially within the TAFE system. Models like those used by Centre for Employment Training and WorkSource CAPITAL Career Centre described earlier in this report could be readily adopted. There may be similar models already operating in Australia which partner with employers to

- ensure training will develop the skills needed by the industry
- utilise employer input in the form of curriculum development, guest talks to trainees, membership on boards, provide excursions for trainees to workplaces, assist in selection of appropriate trainees, set up processes for recruitment ensuring trainees move directly into employment
- provide wholistic support to trainees through a case management approach

5. One Stop Approach

Another notable client-centred approach was the one stop approach used in the delivery of services. In the United States much of the funding for services for disadvantaged groups in the community is open to tender and services are provided by numerous organisations including non government agencies – both not-for-profit charities and for-profit agencies. Funding cycles are

generally short and so providers can change often. For users of these services it can be confusing and difficult to find the various organisations funded to meet their needs and very time consuming to travel to a range of service providers.

To address these issues for clients the US federal government established WorkSource throughout the United States where several service providers are co-located under the banner of WorkSource and work cooperatively to provide a seamless set of services for clients. The WorkSource office provides a centre where clients can seek advice, learn about and access services for their particular situation, undertake a training program, and gain other support they need. The service providers involved include housing organisations, career and work case management, work related training and services for families, war veterans, the aged etc. Service providers each contribute to rental of the premises, hiring of reception staff, and other infrastructure. Employees from the different organisations deliver the service, wearing WorkSource name badges and often clients are not aware of the name of the actual service provider serving them. One provider is designated as the lead provider and manages administration of the arrangements. Clearly the providers involved must cooperate and compromise in order for the arrangement to work. The advantages to the clients are evident and the advantages to service providers are also considerable: reduction in costs such as rent, other infrastructure and marketing.

6. Outreach programs for women in new and emerging communities

While many newly-arrived women attend AMEP English language classes, there are many others who do not and spend most of their time in the home isolated from the broader community and unaware of their study and work options. These women often do not take up their AMEP entitlement for English tuition and many are unaware of their options. This group is of particular concern because of their roles as mothers. Their lack of knowledge about the community and their lack of social engagement impacts on their ability to support their children and guide them in successful engagement in Australian society.

Organisations I visited in the UK had established programs to reach out to women from new and emerging communities who were isolated in their homes. The programs were staged carefully and one of the keys to reaching these women initially was through the use of longer term resident women from target language backgrounds who were recruited as volunteers. These volunteers assisted by visiting the women in their homes and establishing contact through their first language. The women were initially offered information, then opportunities for social networking, goal setting, local English classes and eventually training for work. The process was slow and complex but very rewarding for the clients who began to feel empowered to participate more actively in society. An additional benefit of this type of program is that through empowering and educating these isolated women, their children are also empowered as the mothers gain more knowledge of the systems and society in which they are living.

While AMEP providers are expected to reach women isolated in their homes, doing so is not only very time consuming and costly, but visits to potential clients' homes can also be unwelcome. Partnerships between AMEP providers and ethnic community groups need to be encouraged through funding for training and coordinating potential volunteers. In addition alternative realistic outcomes for this group need to be developed.

7. Attitudes of Australian employers (including government departments) to migrant and refugee workers

From my experience in Australia and my observations overseas, many Australian employers are hesitant to employ people from non English speaking backgrounds, provide opportunities for

them to undertake work experience placements or provide mentoring for newly-arrived professionals. This is possibly because Australia has experienced a lengthy period of relatively high unemployment and Australian employers could afford to ignore this group of potential workers. In the UK, providing work experience placements and mentoring of newly arrived professionals appear to be relatively well accepted as workplace practices.

While colleagues who work with newly arrived refugees and migrants overseas and in Australia agree that mentoring and work experience placements are extremely valuable in assisting clients to understand the context of the workplace, currently in Australia finding appropriate work experience placements and mentoring for newly arrived migrant and refugees is very difficult. The federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship sees work experience placements and mentoring as important strategies for assisting migrants and refugees into the workplace, and is likely to expect AMEP providers to arrange for most clients to undertake these strategies. However unless employers are encouraged to provide placements and agree to provide mentors, these strategies will stall.

The government of South Australia accepts large numbers of new arrivals into the state as a strategy for increasing the population. It is keen to attract and settle more skilled migrants to South Australia yet does not currently have a policy of providing these clients with work experience placements within its departments. When approached most departments refuse to accept clients on placement.

Government departments at federal, state and local level need to show leadership in providing placements and mentoring for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

In addition to government departments developing policies to support work experience placements and mentoring for newly arrived migrants and refugees, incentives to employers in the form of subsidies should also be considered for employers who employ migrants or refugees after their placement.

There is a need for employers to be educated about providing work experience placements and mentoring for this group. Advantages of these strategies for potential workers, the community, as well as industry are significant, and include

- utilization of other languages in the workplace (eg in front line with customers)
- utilization of skills gained from overseas
- better understanding of the culture of potential trade partners and overseas customers
- opportunities to “test out” potential employees
- the opportunity for staff to gain insights into different cultures and languages
- improved social cohesion
- empowerment of the trainee
- a sense of giving back to the community

I strongly urge governments at all levels to address the above issues relating to the placement and mentoring of newly arrived migrants and refugees.

There is also a need for funding of a centralised organisation to be established to arrange both work experience placements and mentoring opportunities for newly arrived refugees and migrants, similar to the roles played by OLMEC and Time Together in the UK.

Recommendations

The rationale for these recommendations is detailed in the Conclusions section of this report beginning on page 38. Each recommendation is linked to the same number in the conclusion section.

Hours of tuition

1. That the AMEP Review team considers the model for hours of entitlement used in British Columbia, Canada, and recommends the provision of additional hours of AMEP entitlement for learners who have experienced disrupted education.

Entitlements and provisions

2. That the federal department of Immigration and Citizenship raise the language level for AMEP eligibility to a more realistic level (i.e. level 3 on the International Second Language Proficiency Rating) to empower newly-arrived migrants and refugees to enter employment and/or vocational training thereby participating more quickly and effectively in Australian society.

Moving beyond low-paid jobs

3.1 That in addition to the AMEP provision, the federal government provides newly arrived refugees and migrants with a training voucher to be used in a number of flexible ways, over a period of time, according to the needs of the client, and with the guidance of career counsellors. Training options could be taken up after the completion of the AMEP as additional English language tuition, literacy and numeracy training, vocational training in combination with English language tuition, or short courses (such as forklift driving, first aid, food safety etc) bridging courses, and other work related training.

3.2 That the South Australian state government allocate funding within the SA Works program for training programs for migrant and refugee groups as a matter of urgency.

Case management approach

4. That a case management approach is adopted for AMEP clients and is funded adequately. Further that a case management approach is adopted by Registered Training Organisations in programs providing vocational training specifically for migrants and refugees.

One Stop approach

5. That the federal government consider setting up one stop centres for locating a range of services for people together in one site under a common banner.

Outreach programs for women in new and emerging communities

6. That the Department of Immigration and Citizenship addresses the needs of women from new and emerging communities who are isolated in their homes by funding partnerships between AMEP providers and community groups (particularly ethnic groups) to reach these women; and establishing a set of alternative outcomes for this group which may include making initial contact, provision of information kits (written and delivered orally in first language),

participation in community information and social events as well as attendance at English classes and achievement of language outcomes.

Attitudes of Australian employers (including government departments) to migrant and refugee workers

7.1 That the federal government develop an awareness campaign directed at employers emphasizing the positive benefits of employing multilingual staff and providing placements and mentoring for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

7.2 That the federal government consider incentives to industry to provide work experience placements and mentoring, possibly through a centralised agency. These incentives would include subsidies to employers who employ or offer traineeships to migrants and refugees after a work experience placement.

7.3 That federal and state government departments and local government bodies make work experience placements available to and provide mentors for newly arrived migrants and refugees as a matter of policy.

7.4 That the federal government establish a placement and mentoring service whereby job-focused clients can be matched with suitable employers for placements and with volunteers in their field of expertise or interest.

Australia's future social cohesion

8. That the federal and state governments focus on including refugees and migrants in policies on social inclusion, social cohesion, community capacity building and workforce development so that difficulties encountered now by new and emerging communities do not translate into bigger problems for Australian society in the future. This is urgent if we want to provide adequate and responsive support for these communities before they become severely disadvantaged.