

Effective workplace literacy programmes: what can research tell us?



John Benseman
Dept. of Education
Unitec Institute of Technology
Auckland, New Zealand

European Basic Skills Network
Madrid

May 23, 2013



Tena koutou katoa
E nga hau e wha
E nga iwi e tau nei
Tena koutou katoa
No Whanganui ahau
Ko Ruapehu te maunga
Ko Whanganui te awa
Ko St Paulii von Hamburg te waka
Ko Ngati Pakeha te iwi
Ko John Benseman toku ingoa
No reira, tena koutou
Tena koutou
Tena koutou katoa



My involvement in workplace literacy research

Lead Researcher, Upskilling Project,
Department of Labour, 2006-2010



Research and evaluation advisor, *Measures of Success* workplace literacy project in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, in association with Centre for Literacy, Montreal and funded through Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), 2008-2012

New Zealand policy contexts

Improving workplace productivity



Improving New Zealand adults' literacy and numeracy skills following the IALS (1996) and ALL (2006) surveys



Research on workplace LLN



1. Until a few years ago, very few quality research studies
Existing ones of limited value & based on self-report
2. Extensive literature reviews now available
3. Large-scale studies now available from New Zealand, UK and Canada

Upskilling



- ◉ Govt.-funded project 2007-2011
- ◉ Partnerships between employers/govt./providers
- ◉ Evaluation key component of project





15 companies

- Road construction (3)
- Meat industry (2)
- Health
- Wool processing
- Cleaning
- Transport
- Aged care
- Tourism
- Re-cycling
- Seafood processing
- Food manufacturing
- Engineering





The 18 courses:

- Content is contextualised on Needs Analysis of company
- Four are embedded courses
- 1:1, small groups, classes
- 24 – 100 hrs long (av. 45)

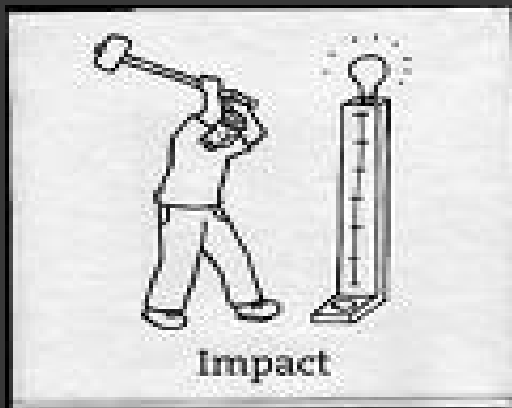
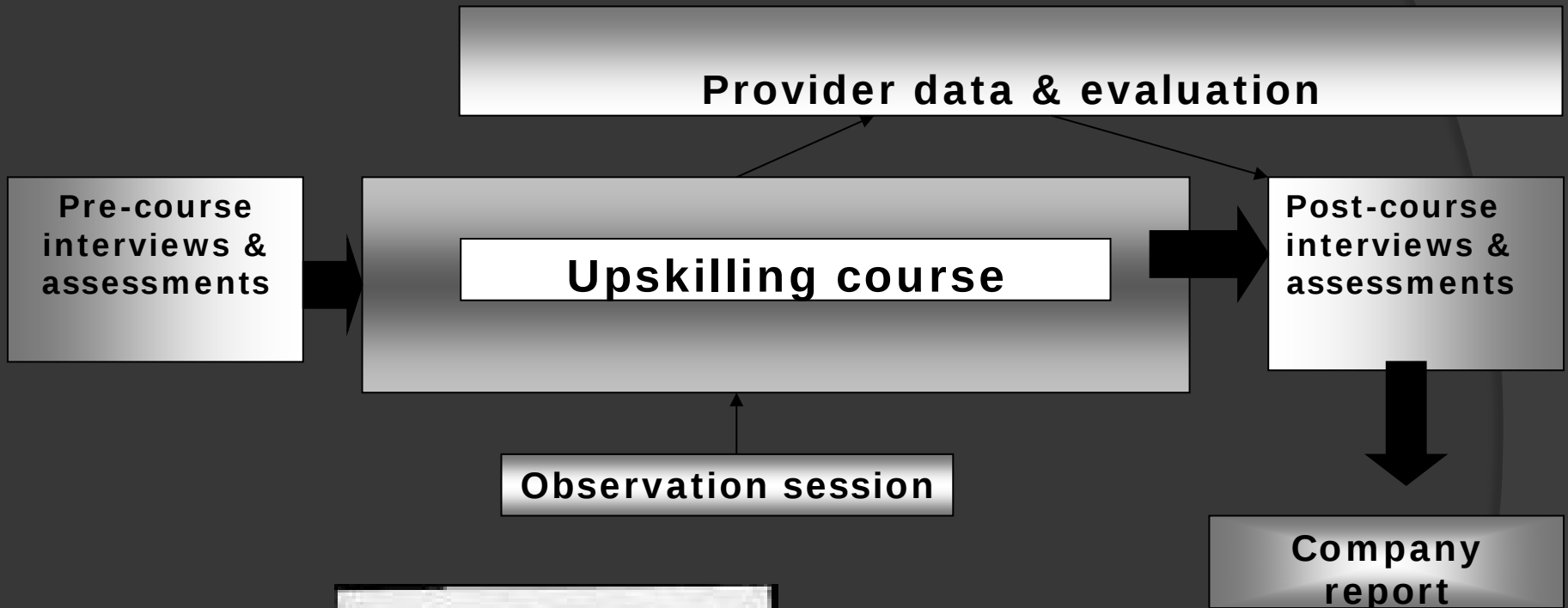
Teaching:

- 1-2 hours a week
- 2 days / break / 2 days
- 2 – 12 months duration

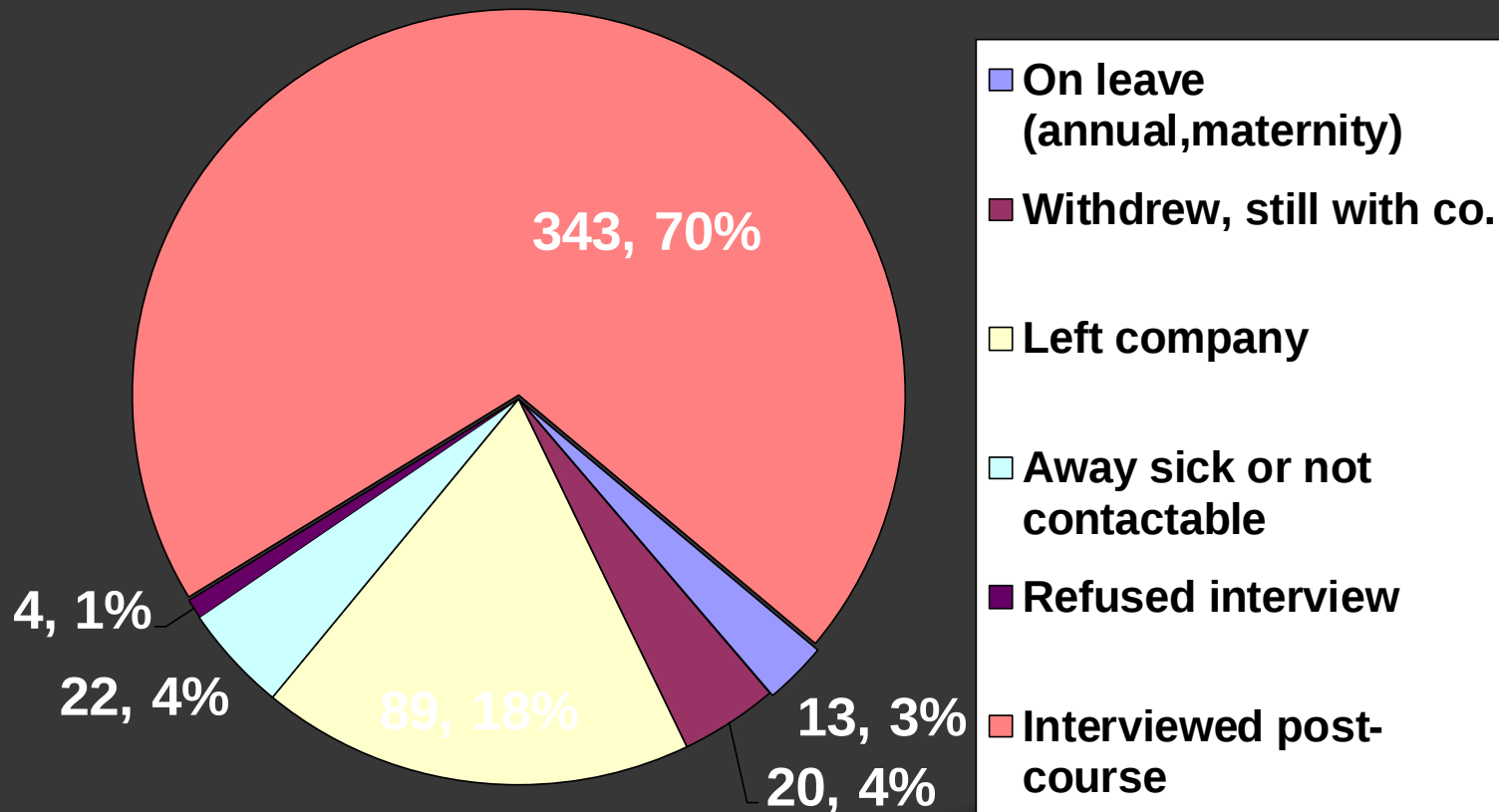
Teachers & providers:

- Varied experience in terms of LLN & workplace teaching





The participants



The course participants

- ❖ 59.7% male

- ❖ Average age 39.4 yrs.

- ❖ Average yrs. with company - 5.4

- ❖ Current job - 3.7 yrs.

- ❖ Most are current or potential supervisors

- ❖ 32.1% Māori

- ❖ 27.1% Pasifika

- ❖ 26.1% NZ European,

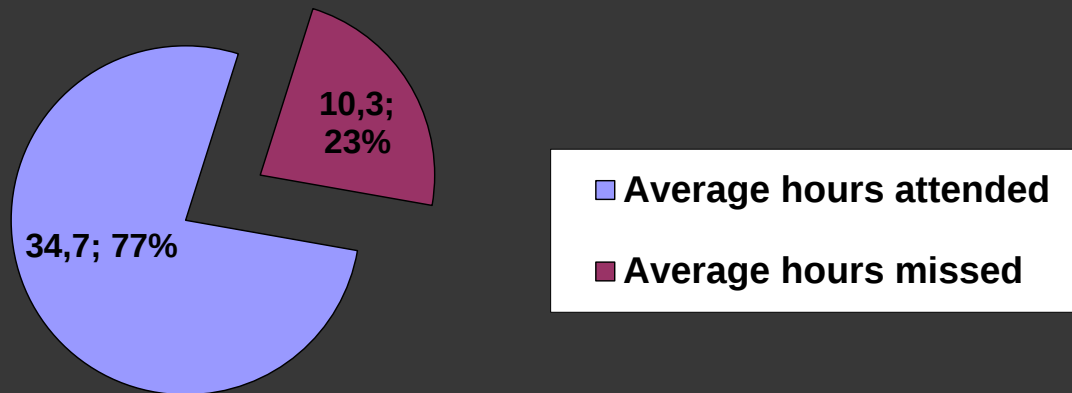
- ❖ 8.4% Asian

- ❖ 6.3% Other

- ❖ 39.5% ESOL



Course attendance



Course and tutor ratings

- Courses were rated positively (4.9 on 1-6 scale) by participants, especially for being 'different from school'
- Tutors were rated more positively (5.5 on 1-6 scale) by course participants



Reading scores



- ⦿ 279 - both pre– & post-course assessments
- ⦿ Average increase in scaled score: 29.4%
- ⦿ 44% went up an IALS/ALL level
 - 86 % increased their scaled scores
 - 4% stayed the same
 - 10% regressed

	E1	E2	E3	1	2	
E1	14	6	11	1	0	32
E2	0	3	20	6	0	29
E3	0	0	28	44	2	74
1	0	0	3	108	33	144
	14	9	62	159	35	279

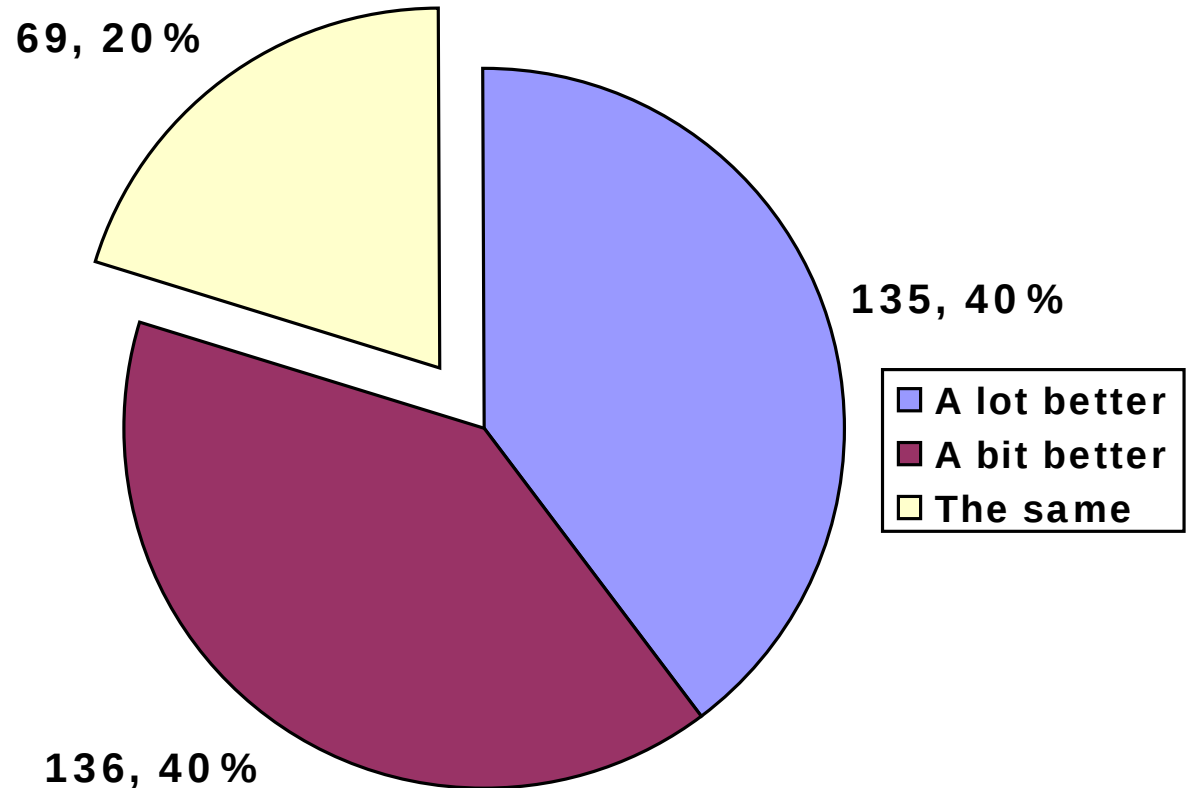


Impact on writing

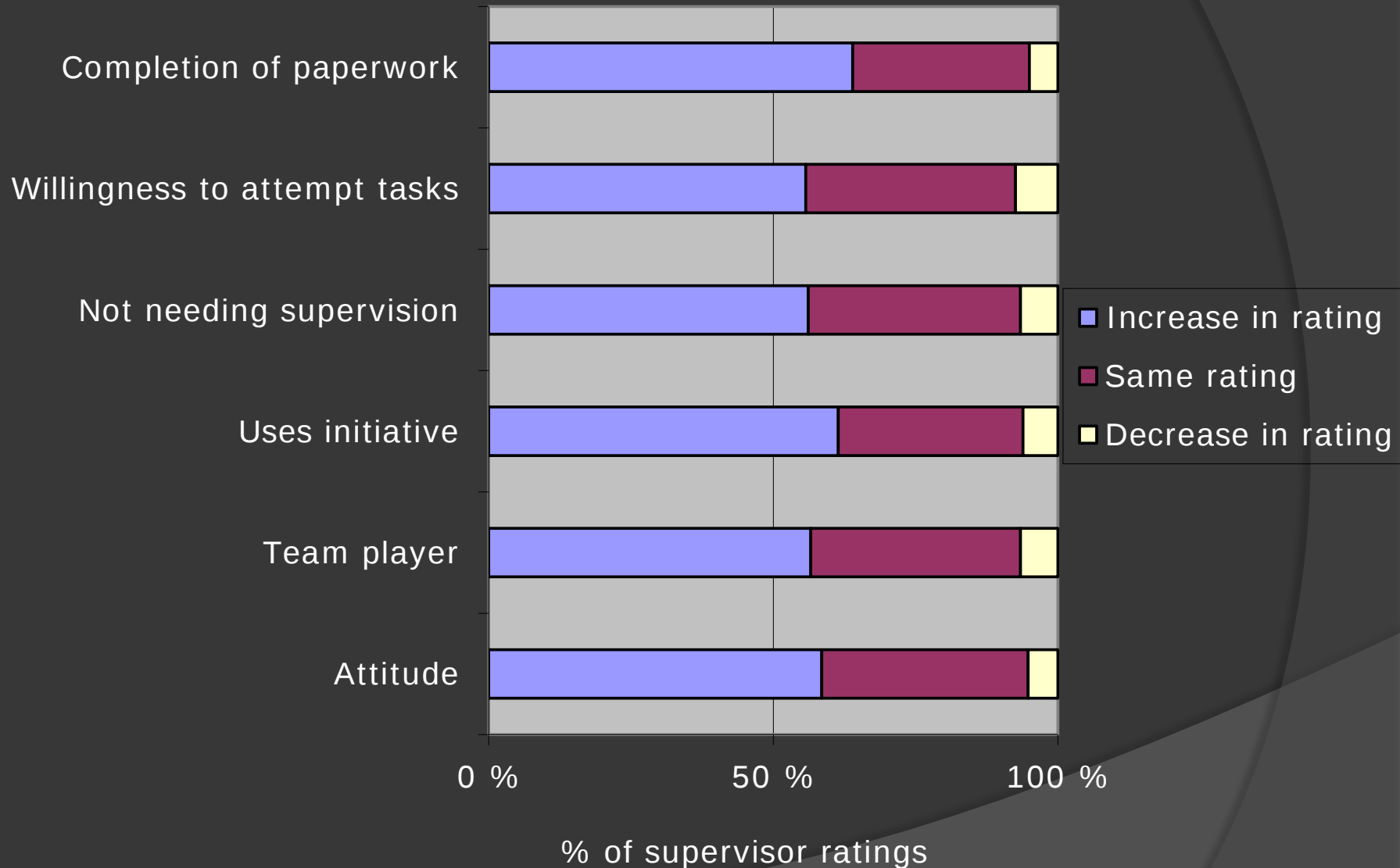
- Average increase in scaled score: 16.1%
- ↗ 66.1% increased their scaled scores
- ↗ 16.6% stayed the same
- ↗ 17.3% regressed



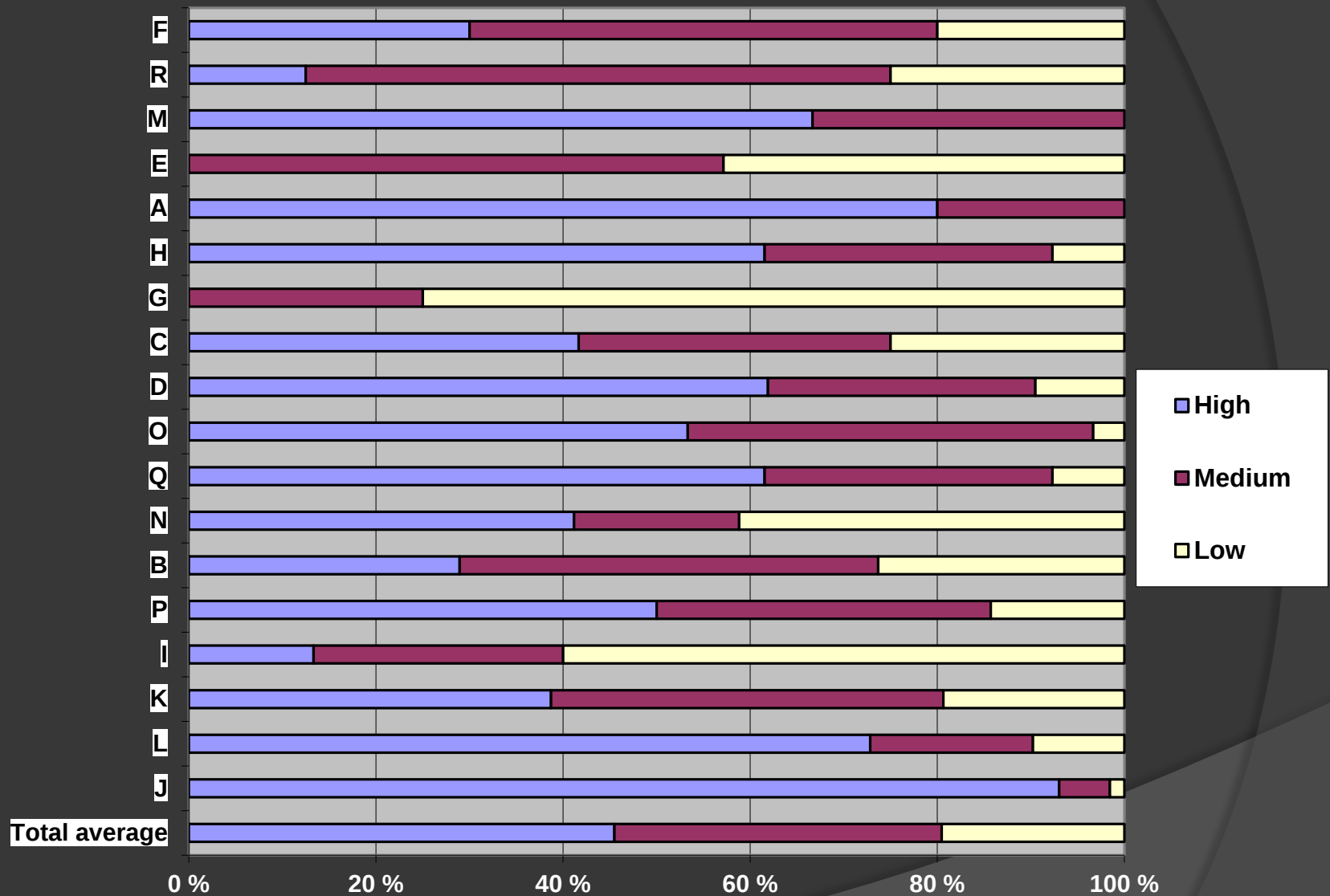
Participants' self-assessment of impact on job



Supervisors' ratings of participants



WORK IMPACT ACROSS COMPANIES



Upskilling in summary...

- ✓ Workplace LLN programmes recruit target groups
- ✓ Running successful programmes is challenging, but feasible
- ✓ Champions are needed at all levels of the company, incl. supervisors
- ✓ Participants improve their LLN skills and they transfer these skills into their jobs
- ✓ Tutors are variable in their impact on learners
- ✓ Programmes have an impact on how many participants carry out their jobs
- ✓ Impacts are variable across programmes



Identifying good practice: Why look at outliers?

- ◎ Brinkerhoff's *success case method* (Brinkerhoff, 2003, 2005)
- ◎ *Outliers* are the most fruitful source of data in understanding why some programmes and some don't

Identifying effective practice: methodology

- ◎ Four of the 18 courses were high impact & five as low impact
- ◎ Classifications were based on range of quantitative and qualitative variables
- ◎ High-impact courses:
 - high course and tutor ratings
 - high personal impact on participants
 - higher reading gains
 - participants more likely to report doing their jobs better (esp. in LLN-related tasks and oral communication)

High impact courses

- *The company*
- All key stakeholders clearly understood purpose and processes of course
- Managers at all levels demonstrated high levels of support for, and awareness of courses (actively, not just verbalised)
- Participants had relief workers or alternative arrangements to minimise intrusion
- Teaching spaces on-site, consistently available, removed from outside distractions
- LLN provision integrated into long-term training & company planning

High impact courses



- ***Providers/tutors***
- Providers supported tutors with professional support and strong planning and logistics
- Providers had high level of experience of running workplace LLN
- Tutors were experienced in LLN teaching and workplace programmes; had LLN-related qualifications
- Tutors had high levels of commitment, prepared to be flexible

High impact courses

- ⦿ ***Logistics***

- ⦿ Recruited participants closely matched the purpose of course & needs
- ⦿ Purpose and content explained clearly to participants
- ⦿ Tutors hit the ground running to ensure learner motivation and retention
- ⦿ Teaching content promised to learners was delivered
- ⦿ Clear and ongoing communications between providers, tutors and company personnel

High impact courses

- ⦿ ***The courses***
- ⦿ Run in work time
- ⦿ Teaching content closely related to companies' issues identified in learning needs analyses
- ⦿ Course content used company documentation and processes
- ⦿ Teaching content simultaneously related to company's needs and learners' specific learning needs/personal interests

High impact courses

- ① ***The learners***

- ② Participants with high motivation & sense of commitment
- ③ Consistent attendance at teaching sessions

Literature reviews

- Ananiadou, K., A. Jenkins, et al. (2003). The benefits to employers of raising workforce basic skills levels: a review of the literature. London, NRDC
- Gray, A. (2006). Upskilling through foundation skills - A literature review. Wellington: Department of Labour)
- Salomon, M. (2009). Workplace literacy and essential skills: what works and why? Montreal, The Centre for Literacy/Le Centre d'alphabetisation.

Workplace LLN evaluations

- ④ Department of Labour. (2010). *Upskilling Partnership Programme - evaluation report*. Wellington: Department of Labour.
- ④ Palameta, B., Gyarmati, D., Leckie, N., Kankesan, T., & Dowie, M. (in press). *Measures of success. Final report draft*. Toronto: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.
- ④ Wolf, A., & Evans, K. (2011). *Improving literacy at work*. Abingdon Oxon: Routledge.

Key policy questions re Workplace Literacy Programmes (WLPs)

1. Are WLPs feasible?
2. Are they sustainable?
3. How do we run WLPs effectively?
4. Do WLPs recruit non-traditional learners?
5. Are they economically realistic?
6. Do participants improve their literacy skills?
7. What other impacts do WLPs achieve?
8. Do participants improve their workplace practices?
9. Are the changes related to changes in literacy skills?
10. How significant is the potential contribution of WLPs?
[Will WLPs solve 'the literacy problem'?]

⦿ Questions?

⦿ Comments?



LOUNGE BAR

NO GANG AFFILIATED
COLOURS OR
PERSONS.

Right of admission
Reserved!

NO SOCKS, SLIPPERS,
WORKBOOTS,
GUMBOOTS, BARE FEET
OR PYJAMAS

STRICTLY NO

CONSUMPTION
OF ALCOHOL OUTSIDE
THESE PREMISES
PUBLIC BAR ALLOWS
THE ABOVE
FOOTWEAR