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**THE SKILLMAX PROGRAM  
AN EVALUATION**

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# ABSTRACT

The Skillmax Program was launched by the New South Wales State Government at the end of 1988 as a result of concern about the underutilisation of the skills of overseas qualified and experienced immigrants in the labour force. The program is administered by the NSW Adult Migrant English Service.

The aim of this study is to evaluate how well the Skillmax Program is achieving its aim of assisting non-English speaking background immigrants to maximise the use of their overseas experience and skills within the NSW labour market.

The main source of data for the evaluation was a questionnaire distributed to all students who had studied in the program from July, 1993 to June, 1994. Those in the final program intake surveyed had just completed courses, those in the first intake surveyed had completed courses nine months previously. The questionnaire was sent to 458 ex-students in August, 1994 and 217 questionnaires were returned. Additional data was obtained from a literature search, a survey distributed to Skillmax program staff and a focus group meeting of the Skillmax Program's teachers, educational and vocational counsellor and program manager.

Key research findings are:

- 71.9% of all respondents had found employment since enrolling in the Skillmax Program and 67.7% were still employed when the study was conducted;
- 84.9% of those respondents who had completed or partially completed courses ending from six to nine months before the study was conducted had found employment and 78.5% were still employed when the study was conducted;
- 66.7% of those respondents in employment had found employment at the same occupational level as in their countries of birth;
- 52% of all respondents were either unemployed (28.1%) or underemployed (23.9%);
- 85.9% of those respondents in employment considered that the Skillmax Program had contributed significantly to their success in finding employment.

The study compares the findings of the current study to those from a previous Skillmax Program evaluation concluded in 1992 (Mograby & Eddie, **The Skillmax Program Evaluation Report**, 1992). Employment outcomes of participants in the current study are significantly better than those in the previous study. The study argues that improvements in employment outcomes can primarily be attributed to program improvements made since the 1992 evaluation.

The study concludes that the Skillmax Program is achieving its aims. Recommendations for program improvement and future directions for the program are made.

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# CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	
1.1 Purpose of the Study	1
1.2 Context of the Study	2
1.3 Description of the Skillmax Program 1993/1994	4
<b>2. Research Design and Methodology</b>	
2.1 Nature of the Evaluation	6
2.2 Questions Guiding the Evaluation	7
2.3 Findings of Skillmax Program (1992)	9
2.4 Recommendations of 1992 Evaluation and Actions Taken	10
2.5 Research Hypotheses	18
2.6 Description of the Population	19
2.7 Research Tools	28
2.8 Procedure	31
<b>3. Data Description and Explanation</b>	
3.1 Employment Related Results	33
3.2 Study Related Results	55
3.3 Feedback on the Skillmax Program	58
3.4 Student Comments	61
3.5 Staff Comments	64
3.6 Additional Data Collected Via Telephone Conversations	66
3.7 Summary of Research Findings	68

<b>4.</b>	<b>Literature Review and Analysis</b>	
4.1	Learners in the AMEP, UNSWIL	73
4.2	The Professional Interlink Program	80
4.3	The Skillmax Program Evaluation Report	82
4.4	Summary and Conclusion	93
<b>5.</b>	<b>Discussion of Results</b>	
5.1	Introduction	96
5.2	Summary of Findings Supporting Hypothesis One	97
5.3	Summary of Findings Supporting Hypothesis Two	98
5.4	Summary of Findings Supporting Hypothesis Three	100
5.5	Findings Indicating Need for Program Improvement	102
5.6	Future Directions	104
<b>6.</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>107</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>112</b>
	<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1:	Skillmax Program Profiles	116
Appendix 2:	NSW AMES Learner Pathways Curriculum Framework	117
Appendix 3:	ACSWE - Competencies	118
Appendix 4:	Covering Letter & Questionnaire	119
Appendix 5:	Skillmax Program Evaluation 1992 - Recommendations & Action Plan	125
Appendix 6:	Skillmax Student Brochure	131
Appendix 7:	Skillmax Employer Brochure	133
Appendix 8:	Student Comments	135
Appendix 9:	Staff Comments	151

## LIST OF TABLES

2.6.1	Total student population and survey respondents by program type	20
2.6.2	Survey respondents by period of residence on enrolment in Skillmax	21
2.6.3	Total student population and survey respondents by gender	22
2.6.4	Total student population and survey respondents by age	23
2.6.5	Total student population and survey respondents by region of birth	24
2.6.6	Survey respondents by ASCO occupational group	25
2.6.7	Survey respondents by years of work experience before arriving in Australia	26
2.6.8	Survey respondents by period of unemployment on enrolment in Skillmax	27
3.1.1	Survey respondents by period elapsed since completing Skillmax by employment status	33
3.1.2	Survey respondents by period of unemployment on enrolment by employment success	35
3.1.3	Survey respondents period of unemployment by program type	37
3.1.4	Employed survey respondents by when employment found	38
3.1.5a	Survey respondents by ASCO occupational group by employment success	39
3.1.5b	Survey respondents by occupation by employment success	41
3.1.6a	Male survey respondents by ASCO occupational group by employment success	43
3.1.6b	Female survey respondents by ASCO occupational group by employment success	44
3.1.7	Survey respondents by region of birth by employment success	45
3.1.8	Survey respondents by age by employment success	46
3.1.9	Survey respondents by years of work experience overseas by employment success	47
3.1.10	Employed survey respondents by how work found	48
3.1.13	Survey respondents by jobs applied for by employment success	50
3.1.14	Survey respondents by interviews attended by employment success	51
3.1.15	Survey respondents by number of jobs held since enrolment in Skillmax	52
3.1.16	Unemployed survey respondents by perceived barriers to employment	53
3.1.17	Employed survey respondents by importance of Skillmax in finding employment	54
3.2.3	Survey respondents undertaking other courses by reasons for study by employment status	56
3.2.4	Survey respondents by skills needed by employment status	57
3.3.1	Survey respondents by source of information on Skillmax	58
3.3.2	Survey respondents by access to work experience by employment status	59

## ACRONYMS

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ACSWE</b>	Advanced Certificate in Spoken and Written English
<b>AMES</b>	Adult Migrant English Service
<b>AMIS</b>	Adult Migrant Information System
<b>APEC</b>	Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation
<b>ASCO</b>	Australian Standard Classification of Occupations
<b>ASLPR</b>	Australian Scale for Language Proficiency Rating
<b>CES</b>	Commonwealth Employment Service
<b>CULT</b>	Combined Universities Language Test
<b>DEET</b>	Department of Employment Education and Training
<b>DIEA</b>	Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
<b>DILGEA</b>	Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
<b>DIRETFE</b>	Department of Industrial Relations, Employment, Training and Further Education
<b>EWP</b>	English in the Workplace
<b>MEQB</b>	Migrant Employment and Qualifications Board
<b>NESB</b>	Non-English Speaking Background
<b>NSW AMES</b>	New South Wales Adult Migrant English Service
<b>OMA</b>	Office of Multicultural Affairs
<b>PES</b>	Professional Employment Service
<b>SMPO</b>	Specialist Migrant Placement Officer
<b>UNSWIL</b>	University of NSW, Institute of Languages