

High-quality traineeships: Identifying what works

Erica Smith

University of Ballarat

Paul Comyn

Smith-Comyn & Associates

Ros Brennan Kemmis

Charles Sturt University

Andy Smith

University of Ballarat





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Level 11, 33 King William Street, Adelaide SA 5000
PO Box 8288 Station Arcade, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia

ph +61 8 8230 8400 fax +61 8 8212 3436
email ncver@ncver.edu.au
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2191.html>>

About the research



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High-quality traineeships: Identifying what works

Erica Smith, University of Ballarat, Paul Comyn, Smith-Comyn & Associates,
Ros Brennan Kemmis, Charles Sturt University and Andy Smith, University of Ballarat

Introduced to Australia in the mid-1980s, traineeships have adapted the model of apprenticeships—combining work with on-the-job learning and formal training—to a wide range of occupations.

The aim of this research was not to evaluate or comment on the general value or suitability of Australian traineeships. The researchers set out to identify high-quality practices in traineeships through interviews with stakeholders involved in the traineeship system and through case studies in six industry areas—cleaning, child care, construction, retail, finance and insurance and meat processing.

The report suggests a number of policy measures that could improve both the practice and image of traineeships. As an ideal, the high-quality features set a target for which to aim. A good practice guide has been developed from the research to assist employers and the vocational education and training sector to meet this target.

High-quality traineeships were found to be those where:

- Trainees attain a sense of worth and occupational identity, and where a pathway to higher qualifications and career progression is provided.
- Employers obtain a competitive edge and are better able to attract and retain staff.
- The content of the training (as codified in training packages and the associated resources) is current and industry-relevant, and complemented by high-quality, current learning resources prepared by teachers and trainers with good industry knowledge. There is a focus on underpinning knowledge as well as skills.
- There is a well-designed and -delivered off-the-job component as well as on-the-job learning.
- The training provider has close and constructive engagement with the employer and with the trainee.
- There is a strong commitment on the part of the employer towards traineeships, including supportive supervisory staff and a suitable learning environment.
- Intermediaries, such as group training organisations, provide the information and support that employers and trainees need to sustain a good working relationship.

The authors assert that funding incentives are not the main driver for either initial or continued participation in traineeships. Many employers participate even when no subsidies are available because they are convinced of the benefits.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

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Executive summary

This project set out to identify the features of high-quality traineeships. Traineeships, like apprenticeships, involve a combination of on- and (usually) off-the-job training and have been available for a little over 20 years. Traineeships have had a ‘bad press’ in many quarters, partly due to a lack of understanding of their aim and structure and partly due to some problems with quality in their early years.

Trainees may be young or mature people, full-time or part-time workers, existing workers or new entrants, in trade, or more commonly, non-trade occupations, part of large-scale programs within major workplaces or engaged as the sole trainee in small businesses. Thus traineeships need to be flexible and contextualised, while remaining a high-quality training program. Around 200 000 Australians, drawn from a diverse population base, now commence traineeships each year. With such large numbers it is important that they receive high-quality training and support, and that the standard achieved by graduating trainees is commensurably high.

The research team undertook case studies of traineeships in six areas during 2007 and 2008: cleaning, child care, construction, retail, finance and insurance and meat processing. For each case study, site visits were made to two company examples, and additional interviews were carried out at national and industry levels. Interviews were also carried out, at a more general level, with 13 high-level stakeholders—senior officials in government, employer and employee peak bodies, and other major players in the traineeship system, such as Group Training Australia.

There was clear agreement among all stakeholders at all levels about what constitutes a high-quality traineeship: it involves good training delivery both on and off the job, a qualification that is respected by industry, high levels of current underpinning knowledge and skills, and pathways into higher-level jobs and qualifications. It provides appropriate support for disadvantaged learners.

The benefits of traineeships to industries and enterprises were found to include a larger and more mobile skills pool, improved productivity and quality of output, the assurance of consistent skill levels among workers, compliance with national and international industry standards, and safer working practices. These improvements were seen to increase the competitive edge of companies and Australia in the international marketplace.

For individuals, traineeships were found to improve the status of occupations by making explicit the knowledge and skills involved, through the award of a qualification. This formal recognition of the job role and the certification of the performance standards achieved by trainees offer the possibility of advancement, both within and outside the industry. More broadly, traineeships create more worthwhile jobs through multiskilling; for example, full-time jobs can be created from previously part-time jobs that utilised restricted skill sets. This in turn enhances the industry as a career choice.

The components of a high-quality traineeship were analysed using the following features of quality adapted from the Australian National Audit Office’s features of quality:

- ✧ *Inputs:* a high-quality traineeship involves the input of highly skilled and industry-specialised teachers and trainers who are well educated and familiar with relevant learning theories and practices. The traineeship is based on a current, well-planned and widely accepted training

package. Trainees are provided with high-quality, current learning resources prepared by teachers and trainers with good industry knowledge. Funding is available to help enterprises and registered training organisations meet the cost of providing the training; funding rules are well known. A traineeship exists within an industry or occupation with a strong sense of vocation, or is able to help to build such a sense.

- ✧ *Processes:* a high-quality traineeship involves some off-the-job training and the delivery of underpinning knowledge as well as skills. On- and off-the-job training are integrated. Mentors are provided on the job. An appropriate balance is found between customisation to the enterprise and a broader industry and educational viewpoint. Through retention of trainees high-quality traineeships show that mutual expectations are being met. Good service from the registered training organisation is an important contributory factor. Intermediary organisations provide correct and timely advice and help to support the trainees in ways within their remit.
- ✧ *Outputs:* graduates of a high-quality traineeship possess skills and knowledge valued across and beyond an industry. They move smoothly onto higher-level qualifications and can confidently expect to compete in career ladders.
- ✧ *Outcomes:* high-quality traineeships provide enterprises and industries with well-skilled staff, sometimes working with entrants who lack many skills that employers would prefer. They contribute to the rise of standards in an industry and to increased employer confidence in selecting staff and in expanding their businesses. Traineeships are viewed by employers as a way of attracting and retaining workers, both to their own companies and to an industry skill pool.
- ✧ *The influence of objectives and the allocation of resourcing for traineeships:* while traineeships were introduced primarily as a labour market program, high-quality traineeships emphasise skill formation, although these two objectives work in tandem with each other. The benefits of traineeships accrue to all parties and the costs are also borne to some extent by all parties.

Within the ‘traineeship life cycle’—the time from sign-up to completion—many factors contribute to quality. In a high-quality traineeship, all parties to the traineeship have similar and clearly articulated expectations. Intermediary bodies and offices of government departments are engaged with enterprises and trainees throughout the traineeship, and information from these bodies is readily and promptly available. Enterprises are committed to devoting staff time to making traineeships work and they ‘market’ them throughout their organisations; structures are set up within workplaces to support trainees, and work is organised to provide suitable learning experiences. Workplaces have good work practices (in relation to quality and to safety) to avoid a conflict between what is being learned and what is experienced in workplaces. Trainees get the chance to interact with a peer group, either within or external to the enterprise and they receive advice from different quarters about their options at the end of the traineeship.

Most important of all, however, is the quality of the teaching and learning that takes place within traineeships. The research showed that off-the-job training is a necessary component of high-quality traineeships. However, this need not take place away from the worksite. Registered training organisation staff need to be well qualified, both as trainers and in the industry area in which they are training. Learning materials should be of high quality, with due regard for underpinning knowledge, and with an appropriate degree of contextualisation to suit the needs of the enterprise and/or specific learner groups. Assessment is rigorous, and, while recognition of prior learning (RPL) is available, it is used conservatively. Learners are provided with extensive opportunities to practise the skills being learned in a range of contexts.

When the various individuals and organisations who participate in the traineeship life cycle adopt the features of high-quality traineeships described above, a context favourable to a high-quality traineeship is established—even where other factors are not particularly conducive to a successful outcome; for example, in geographically isolated areas.

To assist with the creation of favourable environments for traineeships, the research has suggested a number of new policy options worth consideration:

- ✧ *Marketing traineeships*: governments could conduct a marketing campaign for traineeships similar to that for apprenticeships. This would not only raise awareness of their availability but dispel any doubts about the value and quality of traineeships. Employer and employee peak bodies, skills councils, peak bodies for registered training organisations and state education systems all have a role to play and in many cases need education themselves about the nature and benefits of traineeships.
- ✧ *Support for traineeship quality improvement*: this could occur through more rigorous application of state training authority audit functions. It is also suggested that these bodies provide independent advice and assistance vis-à-vis traineeships. Registered training organisations would benefit from good practice examples of traineeship delivery. Employers should be mentored and otherwise encouraged to develop ‘traineeship management’ skills so that they provide better on-the-job training and support for trainees.
- ✧ *Training packages*: these should include better articulation pathways for both career progression and to higher-level qualifications. State training authorities should review the suitability of individual qualifications for traineeship delivery more rigorously.
- ✧ *Teaching and training qualifications*: governments and peak registered training organisation bodies should consider improving teaching and learning by requiring higher-level training qualifications for trainers and devoting more resources to high-quality learning resources, rather than relying on training package support materials.
- ✧ *Funding*: there may be a case for a traineeship funding model flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of traineeship environments. For example, it can be argued that an on-the-job traineeship in a rural or remote area where the typical learner has literacy problems should receive markedly different funding from an off-the-job traineeship in a metropolitan area. Traineeships specifically targeted to particular client groups are also more expensive to service and should receive greater amounts of funding.

Traineeships provide the opportunity for large numbers of workers to gain nationally recognised qualifications. They offer the possibility of both lateral and upward mobility in employment and they contribute to employers’ efforts to lift quality and productivity. The challenge is to make sure that all traineeships are of equally high quality. This research has suggested ways in which this can be done. A good practice guide—a set of specific tools to assist registered training organisations, employers and intermediary organisations—has been developed for this purpose.

Introduction

This project set out to identify the features of high-quality traineeships. The aim was not to evaluate or comment upon the general quality of Australian traineeships, but to use our research data to determine what factors contributed to high quality in this type of training, to enable these to be applied more generally. To this end a good practice has also been developed, which we hope will assist all those involved in traineeships—employers, the registered training organisation and the learner—to understand what constitutes a high-quality traineeship and their part in it.

About traineeships

Like apprenticeships, traineeships involve employment with an employer and delivery of a qualification by a training provider, often known as ‘contracted training’. Traineeships, established in Australia in 1985 as a result of the Committee of Enquiry into Labour Market Programs—the Kirby Report—were introduced to increase the reach of contracted training to a wider range of occupations and industries and to a broader range of learners (particularly women) and to improve the labour market prospects of young people. After a slow start, traineeships began to grow rapidly in numbers in the mid-1990s, so that of the 415 000 Australian Apprentices (apprentices and trainees) in 2006 (NCVER 2007), 245 000 were trainees, with a smaller number of 170 000 traditional apprentices.

While traineeships possess some features of traditional apprenticeships, such as the combination of off- and on-the-job training leading to a qualification and the availability of government subsidies to encourage growth, there have been many concerns and debates about traineeships (for example, Cully 2006; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee 2000; Schofield 2000), and traineeships are often seen as inferior to apprenticeships and possessing a number of disadvantages. These include a ‘thin curriculum’ (a lack of deep knowledge [Smith 2002]), inadequate off-the-job training (Misko, Patterson & Markotic 2001, pp.166–71), a lack of close attention to on-the-job development (Favero 2003), and a widespread belief that many employers and registered training organisations only take part in the system to access government funding (for example, Schofield 1999; Snell & Hart 2007).

Despite these criticisms, trainees now outnumber apprentices, and the initiative has given hundreds of thousands of Australians access to nationally recognised employment-based training. Traineeships have introduced structured training to a wide range of occupational areas and provide pathways into higher-level qualifications. They can provide valuable training that benefits both individuals and employers (for example, Smith et al. 2005). Many concerns identified by turn-of-the-century reports on traineeship problems have been addressed in subsequent VET policy developments, such as changes to incentives and subsidies, and the introduction of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

Apprenticeships may be held in higher regard than traineeships because they are in traditional trades, they are supported by cohesive trade unions and they have the weight of history and tradition behind them. Traineeships, on the other hand, tend to be in service sector occupations that more commonly have women than men working in them, are sometimes in emerging

industries, often have a large proportion of part-time and casual workers, and are weakly unionised (these generalisations of course have considerable exceptions). There is some evidence that traineeships are well regarded among some stakeholders, and young people have been shown to value them (Ferguson 2007). Employers have been shown to offer traineeship qualifications to attract labour, to use them to construct career paths, and to value qualifications gained through traineeships offered by previous employers (Smith et al. 2005). Traineeships, perhaps more than apprenticeships, have had a strong equity focus, one of their original aims being to improve training opportunities for women (Smith 2006) and they have been instrumental in improving Indigenous people's employment prospects (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2007).

A particular challenge in traineeships is that they are much more likely than apprenticeships to have their 'off the job training' delivered 'fully on the job' (Smith & Keating 2003, p.99). While in such cases a registered training organisation is still responsible for training and assessment, there have been concerns that training quality is low in these traineeships (Schofield 1999) because production pressures will often take precedence over the need for training. State training authorities have sometimes regulated this area, requiring 'real training' (that is, away from the workstation) to be delivered for a certain number of hours if user choice funding is to be received. However, in a competency-based system it has sometimes been difficult for people to find appropriate arguments against fully on-the-job traineeships as, in theory, competency-based training is not supposed to mandate delivery methods.

It is often a feature of discussions about traineeships that they have focused on administrative, economic and policy arrangements rather than pedagogical issues, although some relevant Australian research has addressed this issue. Harris et al. (1998) have provided a useful overview of apprentice learning which focused in particular on the way in which apprentices juggle learning undertaken in off-the-job and on-the-job environments. They argued that it was not necessary to align off- and on-the-job learning closely, as part of the role of being an apprentice was to evaluate what was being learned in different environments. Smith (2002) extended this discussion to traineeships.

Pedagogy in traineeships, as in the rest of the sector, might be assumed to have improved as a result of the introduction of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). The AQTF was introduced in 2001 in response to complaints about quality in VET. Strict standards were established to which registered training organisations were required to adhere. These included provisions about the qualifications of their staff, financial and administrative records, the provision of services for students, and regulations about training and assessment. Since then the AQTF has been revised twice; the 2007 version was less prescriptive than earlier versions and introduced fewer set standards. It also provides registered training organisations with the opportunity to apply for a higher quality status through 'excellence criteria' (Commonwealth of Australia 2007). However, as AQTF 2007 is still in the process of implementation, it is difficult to judge the extent to which it has had an impact on the quality of delivery in traineeships.

While the AQTF has been welcomed by the VET sector, there has not yet been a full-scale evaluation of its impact on quality and particularly on teaching and training. Moreover, running alongside broader concerns about quality there has been a debate about the ability of teachers and trainers to deliver high-quality outcomes, considering that the required qualification for VET teachers is only at certificate IV level—the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. While this in itself is a low-level qualification, it has also been argued that it does not meet agreed criteria of good teaching (Robertson 2008) and that it has been poorly delivered (Simons & Smith 2008)

It is clear that there is a huge demand for traineeships, although equally there is a great deal of unease about them. Historical factors go some way to explaining the antipathy of some stakeholders to traineeships, but there are also some real areas of concern that require improvement. Without improvements in quality across all traineeships their value may continue to be dismissed and this would be unfortunate—not least for people who possess traineeship qualifications.

About this research

As the traineeship system involves about a quarter of a million Australians at any one time, it is obviously important to achieve high-quality outcomes. A great deal of research and discussion on traineeships has addressed their practical arrangements, including their implementation. As noted, some studies have considered their shortcomings, while others have examined individual traineeship areas and uncovered examples of good practice, for example, in aged care (Booth et al. 2005). However, there has been no previous large-scale national research into what constitutes a high-quality traineeship. This study therefore set out to fill this substantial gap in the literature. The research questions were as follows:

- ✧ What can be described (by various stakeholders) as a high-quality traineeship?
- ✧ What organisational and pedagogical features contribute to a high-quality traineeship?
- ✧ What are the effects of variables such as employment practices, industry area, training package content and structure, industry traditions, social construction of the industry area?
- ✧ In what circumstances are quality features displayed?
- ✧ How far are the features replicable in other traineeships and how can this be done?

‘Quality’ is a widely used but seldom defined term. The project team’s initial concept of quality was derived from the Australian National Audit Office’s three features of quality: outputs, processes, outcomes, and included, as does the Audit Office definition, consideration of the desired objectives and available resources (in Schofield 2000, p.5). For the purposes of this research we found the need to add ‘inputs’ to this model. Most of the inputs are pre-existing conditions applying to all traineeships in an industry before a traineeship commences; the quality of teachers and trainers varies among training providers and enterprises but is to some extent determined by an industry-specific labour market.

These features and considerations can be operationalised for traineeships as follows:

Table 1 The meaning of measures of quality for traineeships

Quality component	Meaning in traineeships
Quality features	
Inputs	Qualifications and experience of teachers and trainers The availability of suitable training packages Appropriate levels of resourcing for training Levels of funding and incentives Sense of vocation attached to the industry
Outputs	Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees Pathways to higher qualifications
Processes	Pedagogy (on and off the job) Employer-trainee psychological contract ^(a) Interaction among users, providers, intermediary organisations and governments
Outcomes	The contribution of trainees to companies and to Australia’s stock of skills
Additional considerations	
Objectives	Determining key objectives of the traineeship system: labour market program or skill formation?
Resourcing	Who should pay for traineeship training as a national system, and who benefits?

Note: (a) The term ‘psychological contract’ is taken from the management literature and refers to the unspoken agreements between worker and management about appropriate behaviour and obligations on each side (Cullinane & Dundon 2006).

The meaning of measures of quality for traineeships shown in table 1 has a strong relationship with the quality standards and indicators used in the Australian Quality Training Framework. There are three standards in AQTF, with each having a number of more detailed elements. These are:

- ✧ The registered training organisation provides quality training and assessment across all of its operations.
- ✧ The registered training organisation adheres to principles of access and equity and maximises outcomes for its clients.
- ✧ Management systems are responsive to the needs of clients, staff and stakeholders, and the environment in which the registered training organisation operates.

Registered training organisations must meet these standards in order to deliver and assess nationally recognised training and issue nationally recognised qualifications, including those delivered through traineeships. Registered training organisations are also required to gather information on their performance against three quality indicators:

- ✧ employer satisfaction
- ✧ learner satisfaction
- ✧ competency completion rate (Commonwealth of Australia 2007).

However, while these quality standards and quality criteria offer a rigorous framework for quality assurance of registered training organisation operations, we consider that for this research the modified National Audit Office quality features discussed earlier will provide a more appropriate framework for this research, as they allow analysis of a broader range of the factors and organisations that impact on the quality of traineeships overall. The Australian Quality Training Framework applies to the operations of registered training organisations.

Research methods

The research was carried out in two major stages during 2007–08 as follows:

- Stage 1: interviews with 13 ‘high-level stakeholders’ who were senior officers in nine national-level bodies and institutions concerned with traineeships
- Stage 2: case studies in six industry areas: financial services, children’s services, asset management (cleaning), construction, retail and meat production. The case studies comprised stakeholder interviews and company examples, some of which were national companies. The site visits covered a mix of metropolitan, suburban and regional locations.

This report begins with a discussion on factors affecting the adoption of traineeships at an industry and enterprise level. The quality components of traineeships are then discussed and contain a summary of the results from the high-level stakeholder interviews and case studies. A chapter on the traineeship lifecycle is included; that is, what happens during the time an individual trainee commences, undertakes and completes a traineeship, before broader policy issues are examined.

A detailed account of the interviews with the high-level stakeholders is found in appendix 2 of the support document and includes the organisations represented and reasons for their inclusion in the research; the case studies are presented in full in appendix 4 of the support document.

Advantages and limitations of the methods

The research method, proceeding from high-level stakeholders to industry-level stakeholders, to company examples, provided much more variety and nuance than was initially envisaged and than would have occurred had the research proceeded straight to company case studies. A greater range of issues than expected was uncovered in the research.

It is considered that the range of company types was appropriate for the industry areas and overall provided a good range, from small enterprises to large national companies, although some limitations in the research can be identified. The choice of occupational areas, although it was carefully justified and validated by the reference group, inevitably affected the outcomes of the research. It is possible that some occupational areas could exhibit different characteristics. The qualifications studied were at certificate II and III level and therefore the findings may favour some characteristics associated with lower qualification levels. Qualitative methods by their nature limit the range of instances accessed, although in our view this is more than compensated by the suitability of qualitative research for the research questions. Access to companies proved more difficult than expected, meaning that first choices were sometimes not possible. However, the company examples each added materially to the data, often in quite unexpected ways.

A further point needs to be made which is not exactly a limitation but which is important to mention because of the controversy surrounding quality in traineeships. The project focused on identifying high-quality features in traineeships. It did not intend to prove anything either in relation to the general quality of traineeships or to argue that the data uncovered were either typical or atypical of the bulk of traineeships. The company examples were not chosen as ‘exemplars’ of good practice; however, we certainly did not seek out examples of bad practice either. The purpose of the project was to draw out those features which make up or could make up a high-quality traineeship. The underlying aim was, to use the German term, ‘melioristic’—to improve practice. It is hoped that by our clear identification of high-quality features, policy-makers and practitioners will have useful data to assist them in implementing procedures to lift the quality of traineeships generally.

Adoption of traineeships

Traineeships operate within a broad framework, predicated on government policy and the economic and social environment. During this research, enterprises and other stakeholders provided insight into the reasons why and how they engaged with the traineeship system and how they hoped that they, and others, would benefit from it. While the study did not posit a specific research question related to adoption, the reasons for and the nature of adoption in industries and enterprises are closely related to issues surrounding quality in traineeships. For example, if an industry has a strong tradition of training, pedagogical processes are likely to be of high quality, while an industry with a weak training tradition is likely to struggle until pedagogical processes are established. Furthermore, understanding the reasons why the traineeship path is adopted is likely to result in traineeships of a higher quality because all parties will have a clear picture of the context for a particular traineeship, the role of the various participants and the expectations that traineeships are expected to meet.

The research undertaken for this project identified three categories of adoption of traineeships according to the extent of their take-up. These categories apply at both industry and enterprise levels.¹

- ✧ *Ad hoc*: in this category, there is no systematic approach taken to the use of traineeships by the industry or the enterprise. At an enterprise level this might be manifested as the occasional employment of trainees in parts of the organisation but with no enterprise-level commitment to the implementation of traineeships. At the industry level, traineeships may be used in just a few companies, a feature of the construction industry.
- ✧ *Regularised*: in this category, enterprises and industries have developed an approach to traineeships that see their use in a limited number of specialised occupations.
- ✧ *Comprehensive*: in this category, traineeships have become the normal means of training people for many occupations in an industry or an enterprise. In some cases traineeships are an integral part of workforce planning and most new full-time employees in major occupational groups are automatically placed on traineeships, often at the same times as retaining market wages. A prime example of this use of traineeships is in the meat processing industry.

Adoption at an industry level

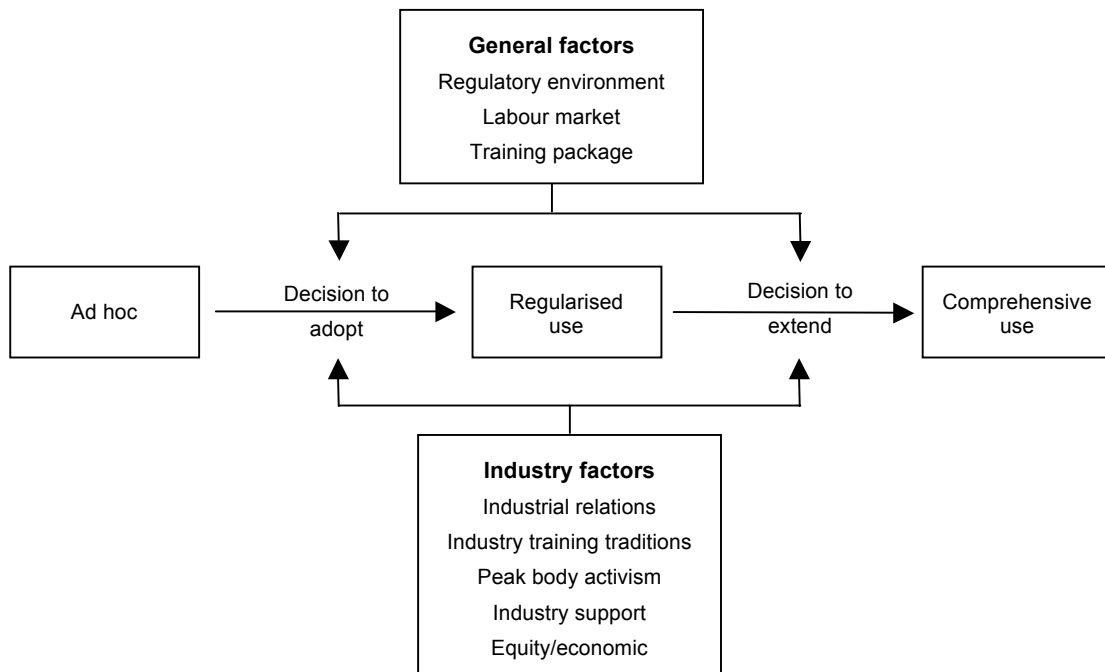
The movement of enterprises and industry sectors from the ad hoc towards the comprehensive category is influenced by a number of factors, internal and external. These are illustrated in the adoption model of traineeships at an industry level shown in figure 1.

¹ These categories of adoption bear a similarity to the model of adoption of nationally recognised training developed by Smith et al. (2005, p.50), which identified three stages of adoption of nationally recognised training, from engagement, through extension, to integration. This model of adoption of traineeships does not include the integration stage of the previous model because the integration stage refers to human resource practices outside the scope of the current study. This model extends the Smith et al. (2005) model by its inclusion of industry-level adoption.

At the industry level the position that an industry occupies in the model of adoption is affected by three general environmental (external) factors operating on the industry:

- ✧ *Regulatory environment:* in some industries, the adoption of traineeships is driven by regulatory requirements. Traineeships, with their structured and auditable approach, require that training meets regulations. An example of this is the finance and insurance industry, where the passing of the *Financial Services Reform Act (FSRA)* in 2004 provided the impetus for the industry to adopt the Certificate III in Finance and Insurance and higher qualifications for those giving financial advice to the public. In meat processing, national and international health regulations and legislative requirements are partially satisfied when staff enrol in traineeships.
- ✧ *Labour market:* the difficulty faced by employers in many industries in recruiting suitable staff leads industries to embrace and promote traineeships as a means of securing the supply of skills into the future. Traineeships assist because they are attractive to potential employees and provide structured training, enabling employers to be confident that workers will normally reach acceptable levels of performance. This factor was important in all the industries studied in this project, but most important in the asset maintenance (cleaning) and meat processing industries.
- ✧ *Career pathways and the training package:* in many instances adoption depends on how the qualifications in the training package articulate into a recognised career pathway in the industry. In finance and insurance, pathways lead from lower-level to higher-level financial advisor positions. In the meat industry clearly articulated pathways lead to higher qualifications, which are often supported financially by enterprises. The lack of proper articulation in construction on the other hand is a major impediment to the adoption of traineeships.

Figure 1 Adoption model of traineeships at the industry level



Influencing factors within the industry (internal) include:

- ✧ *Industrial relations:* the state of industrial relations, in particular the attitude of major unions in the sector towards traineeships, has a profound impact on their adoption in the industry. Thus, in the construction industry, opposition by unions to the perceived dilution of skilled trades through the use of traineeships has hindered the growth of traineeships in this sector.
- ✧ *Industry training traditions:* industries are shaped by historical and cultural factors and each has a tradition of training which predisposes employers in the sector to adopt certain forms of training,

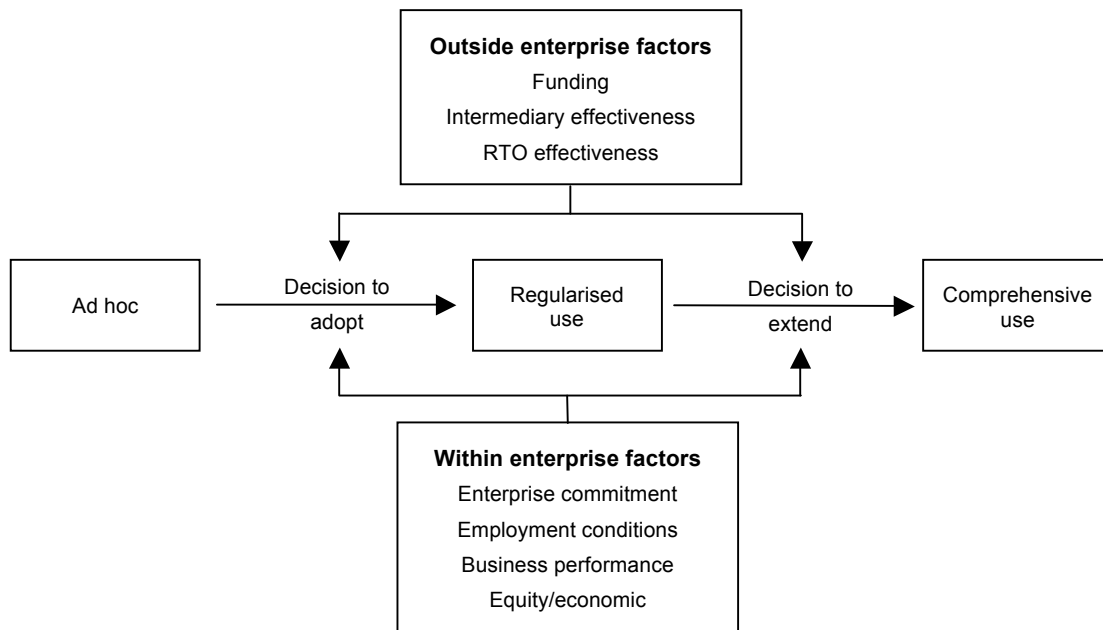
including traineeships. Often traineeships flourish in industries where there has not been a strong tradition of training for lower-level workers, for example, in the retail or meat industries.

- ❖ *Peak body activism*: in some industries, employer or employee peak bodies play a significant role in the spread of traineeship adoption.
- ❖ *Industry support*: some industries have taken steps to advance the adoption of traineeships through supportive financial arrangements. Thus, levies may be implemented and scholarships and bursaries offered for individual trainees.
- ❖ *Equity*: in some industries traineeships have been adopted to improve the employment prospects of equity groups. This altruistic motivation for the adoption of traineeships is often influenced by economic considerations that are centred on securing ‘pipelines’ of skilled staff into the industry. In general or industry-specific tight labour markets, the economic considerations lead to particular needs to attract equity groups. Some of the limited number of construction traineeships were targeted at equity groups such as young Aboriginal people.

Adoption of traineeships at an enterprise level

Below the level of the industry sector, there are more specific factors that influence the decision to adopt traineeships within individual enterprises. The model for enterprise adoption of traineeships is illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2 Adoption model of traineeship at the enterprise level



External factors operating on the enterprise are:

- ❖ *The availability of funding*: the previous study by Smith et al. (2005) found that the availability of funding from Commonwealth and/or state governments is important to enterprises in the first stage of engagement with nationally recognised training. The same is true for traineeships. The move from ad hoc to regularised use of traineeships is positively affected by funding, but the spread of traineeships to other occupations in the enterprise is more likely to be dependent on the experience of the enterprise with traineeships for specialised occupations than on funding in itself. Many enterprises use traineeships despite lack of funding.
- ❖ *Intermediary effectiveness and advocacy*: intermediary bodies such as Australian Apprenticeship Centres and Jobs Network providers can exert significant pressure on enterprises at an

individual level to adopt and extend their use of traineeships. The role of the Aboriginal Employment Service in one of the finance company examples exemplifies the effectiveness of an intermediary body.

- ✧ *Registered training organisation effectiveness and advocacy*: similarly, the more effective the registered training organisation is in working with the enterprise to support traineeships and in its delivery of training, the more likely the enterprise is to adopt and extend its use of traineeships.

Internal factors influencing the adoption of traineeships include:

- ✧ *Enterprise commitment*: the level of commitment from the enterprise, particularly at senior management levels, is critical to the adoption of traineeships and to the enterprise moving from ad hoc to comprehensive use of traineeships. This may be linked to the use of qualifications in broader human resource management policies.
- ✧ *Employment conditions*: traineeships are less likely to be used effectively, and enterprises less likely to move from ad hoc to comprehensive adoption, in situations where large numbers of staff are employed on a casual basis. In these contexts, enterprises may only give training that is immediately relevant to the job and may be less likely to fund the more general training found in a traineeship. However, there are many examples where traineeships are used for casual staff, for example, in asset maintenance (cleaning).
- ✧ *Business performance*: enterprises vary in their ability to sustain traineeships. Traineeships are expensive for enterprises to implement and manage properly. More profitable enterprises such as banks can commit more resources, regardless of the availability of government funding, than less profitable enterprises. The level of business performance therefore significantly affects the ability of the enterprise to move to more comprehensive use of traineeships.
- ✧ *Equity*: this factor also operates at the enterprise level. A good example from the case studies is provided by the bank case study, where the Indigenous traineeship performed an equity function and helped to establish a pipeline of talented young people for the enterprise.

The enterprise's internal factors will be influenced by the size of the enterprise, although the size of the enterprise is unlikely to change the nature of the factor, only its extent. For example, the adoption of traineeships will depend on enterprise commitment, regardless of enterprise size. However, in small businesses this is more likely to be expressed through the personal commitment of the owner/manager. In larger enterprises, commitment might be generated by managers at a number of levels.

A matrix for industry and enterprise adoption

Table 2 illustrates the way in which the factors operate at each stage of the model of traineeship adoption. It is important to note that it is not necessary for all factors to operate in order for an industry or an enterprise to move from one adoption category to the next.

Industries and enterprises, then, adopt traineeships to varying extents and in various ways. Their adoption needs to be seen to benefit the industry and enterprise and the workers in that industry and enterprise. External factors such as a poor-quality articulation path in the training package, difficulties with variations in regulation among jurisdictions, or industrial relations conflict may impact adversely on adoption. Enterprises need to make business decisions and these may involve not only expansion of traineeships but also withdrawal from or scaling-down of traineeships. For example, comprehensive use of traineeships may prove ineffective because it involves a greater commitment of resources than the productivity gains or recruitment benefits involved, and therefore companies may offer traineeships only to those workers with, for example, management potential. Importantly, business considerations are often mixed with goodwill towards workers and commitment to the long-term future of the industry, leading enterprises to persist with traineeships even when there is no clear business benefit.

Table 2 Factors influencing traineeship adoption at industry and enterprise level

	Ad hoc	Regularised	Comprehensive
External to the industry	No regulatory imperative	High regulatory imperative	High regulatory imperative
	Only localised labour market problems	Generalised labour market problems	Generalised labour market problems
Within the industry	No mapped career paths	More focus on career paths	Well-mapped career paths
	Adversarial industrial climate	More cooperative industrial climate	Cooperative industrial climate
	Training traditions that do not support traineeships	Training traditions that support traineeships	Training traditions that strongly support traineeships
	Low peak body activism	Higher peak body activism	High peak body activism
	Low industry support	Better industry support	High industry support
	Low concern for equity	Increased concern for equity	High concern for equity
External to the enterprise	Enterprise does not access funding	Enterprise effectively accesses funding	Funding less important to enterprise than benefits of traineeships
	Low intermediary body impact	Higher intermediary body impact	High intermediary body involvement
	Low registered training organisation impact	Higher registered training organisation impact	High registered training organisation involvement
Within the enterprise	Low enterprise commitment	High enterprise commitment	High enterprise commitment
	Less permanent employment conditions	More permanent employment conditions	More permanent employment conditions
	Low enterprise profitability	Higher enterprise profitability	Higher enterprise profitability
	Low concern for equity	Increased concern for equity	Significant enterprise concern for equity

Quality components of traineeships

Overview of high-level stakeholder interviews

To provide the perspective of those who deal with traineeships at a national and/or policy level, 13 individuals from nine key organisations were interviewed at an early stage of the project.

The interviewees revealed a deep knowledge of the traineeship system. In many cases their involvement with traineeships preceded their current role, and their understanding of traineeships and attitudes towards them had been formed by these previous experiences. Thus their current positions in policy roles were often, but not always, informed by on-the-ground experience. It was apparent that some interviewees had a deep commitment to traineeships, although a small number were quite negative about them. The high-level stakeholders were asked to comment on the following aspects of traineeships: the motivations of those involved in the traineeship (both trainees and employers); curriculum content, including the size and appropriateness of modules from training packages, the length of the traineeship and assessment; the roles of on-the-job and off-the-job learning; partnerships and collaboration, particularly those between the employer and the registered training organisation; and, finally, the learners themselves.

The features of high-quality traineeships

Eliciting the views of the stakeholder on what they believe constitutes quality in a traineeship was an important aspect of the stakeholder interviews. Table 3 interprets and summarises the interviewees' comments about the features of high-quality traineeships. In this table the comments have been divided between teaching and learning (pedagogical) features and organisational features; and by the body that has primary responsibility. These divisions are somewhat artificial as some features straddle types.

What could change to improve quality?

Interviewees also presented a range of ideas about how quality could be improved, which in some cases were contradictory. These ranged from suggestions about funding, to the role of intermediary bodies, such as group training organisations, to employers and how accountable they should be (for example, evidence of providing good-quality on-the-job training). Stakeholders emphasised that taking on a trainee is a substantial commitment which involves a great deal of work; a number suggested that state training authorities could be resourced to enable them to work more closely with employers and that processes be examined to give employers more real support and less paperwork. A number of suggestions advocated quite radical approaches to improving the quality of traineeships. These included:

- ✧ a reduction in the number of occupations that have traineeships attached to them
- ✧ a shifting of focus for traineeships to equity groups and older workers for traineeships
- ✧ funding made available for the training (in some occupations) without the associated apparatus of traineeships

- ✧ an alignment of the marketing of traineeships more closely to the likely labour market demand for different occupations, with more information made available to trainees.

Table 3 Features of high-quality traineeships as described by high-level stakeholders

Primary responsibility	Pedagogical	Organisational
RTO	Off-the-job training or (if not available) regular face-to-face contact with RTO staff A substantial up-front off-the-job training input Emphasis given to training rather than (or as well as) assessment Willingness and ability of RTOs to offer appropriate units of competency for the organisation and the learner High-quality learning materials Cautious use of RPL and of fast-tracking Structured training plans to manage trainees Motivated learners	A clear understanding of what is involved for all parties
Within enterprise	An assigned mentor and supervisor Training for mentors and supervisors Close supervision of trainees in the workplace	Enterprise commitment to training and one where the use of traineeships is supported by senior line managers Enterprise commitment to training beyond the immediate job role Highly skilled HR and training staff A large company Opportunity for trainees to move among different departments or tasks Enterprise commitment to retaining and developing staff rather than purchasing staff from the labour market
External to the registered training organisation and enterprise	Currency of training	A close relationship between the RTO, the enterprise and appropriate intermediary bodies Continuous networking among enterprises and among intermediary bodies A sufficient length of training contract (e.g., nine months or more) Pathways to higher-level qualifications and/or jobs

Note: RTO = registered training organisation.

Case studies

Using the components of ‘quality’ identified by the Australian National Audit Office, the case studies in the six industry areas chosen for detailed study are analysed in the following section. Table 1 in the first chapter of this report has explained how these components were amended and operationalised in a way that made them applicable to the research into the quality components in traineeships. The case studies are presented in full in appendix 4 of the support document. The industries represented in the case studies are:

- ✧ asset maintenance
- ✧ children’s services
- ✧ finance and insurance
- ✧ general construction
- ✧ meat processing
- ✧ retail.

Inputs

Teachers and trainers

The case studies showed that the quality of traineeships was very much dependent on the quality of the teaching and training staff working in these industries. Good teachers and trainers could compensate for other deficiencies among the inputs; for example, a training package that was not entirely suitable could be customised and delivered by an experienced and well-qualified teacher or trainer. Learning resources came alive when the teacher or trainer had the experience and expertise to transform these in ways that matched the needs of the particular group of trainees they were working with. A 'sense of vocation' could be consolidated and developed by a teacher or trainer who was aware of the crucial importance of this dimension of industry and personal identification. The cleaning industry case study exemplified many of these examples, with staff dedicated to the industry and determined to produce learning materials relevant to different environments.

Across the industries in this study teachers and trainers were working with trainees in a variety of configurations: face to face in block periods or through regular attendance at class, either at the registered training organisation premises or in hired or mobile premises; by flexible delivery, using print-based learning materials supplemented by telephone and/or email contact; on the job, either with occasional visits from a teacher or trainer, or with an enterprise registered training organisation trainer on site.

It is evident that many domains of knowledge and skill are required for teachers and trainers to operate confidently across such a range of teaching situations, and those who were well qualified and experienced could adapt learning materials, plan programs, deliver training and assess competence with an ability that went far beyond a superficial interpretation of the training package and its assessment requirements. They were aware of the diversity of their learner groups and the trainees' learning styles; they also had a deep understanding of assessment and were able to construct tasks that maintained the integrity of the training package, while allowing for some adjustment for the learner's circumstances. It is debatable whether such teacher skills and knowledge can be realised through the qualification currently required for teachers and trainers—the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Perhaps significantly, two teachers (both construction teachers) interviewed in the study, who displayed a great deal of expertise in their teaching, had university-level degrees or diplomas in education. They were able to discuss their practice in some detail and explain how they adapted their teaching for different learner needs. They were also aware of their limitations, sought advice and peer assistance, and were able to plan for improvement. The asset maintenance (cleaning) case study demonstrated the importance of an effective registered training organisation, in this instance, a regional TAFE institute which employs qualified training staff and enables those staff to continue their development and remain current with trends in the industry.

Trainees interviewed for this study articulated the attributes of good teaching and training. They applauded those who were respectful of their circumstances, literacy and numeracy levels and who adapted to meet their particular learning needs. Trainees and enterprise representatives were also able to identify situations where the teachers and trainers were not up to the required level, with a number of enterprises changing registered training organisations because of poor-quality teachers. There was an awareness that some teachers and trainers were not familiar with the industry whose package they were teaching. 'Generic' teachers who used the industry expertise of enterprise-based assessors did not seem to be what was required or what enterprises and trainees respected. The implication of this was that teachers and trainers needed qualifications and experience in the industry in which they taught, as well as high-level teaching qualifications.

Training package

All research participants felt that the currency, relevance and industry sensitivity of the respective training packages exerted a significant impact on quality. The weighting given to each of these

issues varied considerably by industry area. While the training packages in the six industry areas were generally considered to be appropriate for the learners, there were some differences in participant opinions. The degree of industry input into the training package and its revisions was generally seen to be a critical factor, and some comments suggested that there were a number of problems with particular training packages. For example, the Community Services Training Package included units that might be too prescriptive or that might create unrealistic expectations of trainees. Here, the flexibility and creativity of the registered training organisation was an important ameliorating influence.

Learning resources

High-quality resources were viewed as essential for a high-quality traineeship. This was particularly obvious where the traineeship was conducted fully on the job. The case studies identified difficulties in providing resources to support trainees who had low levels of language, literacy and numeracy or whose first language was not English. The cleaning industry addressed this problem by providing audiovisual aids and simulated working environments. In the meat industry extensive use was made of online learning resources that relied less on print and more on visual representations of the intended learning. High-quality resources were seen as those which were written in plain English, with appropriate illustrations, and were not formulaic or written in template form. This was particularly critical when assessment was involved and some participants felt that more investment in this area would contribute to overall quality.

The effectiveness of the resources and the extent to which they contribute to high-quality traineeships were believed by some respondents to be primarily the province of the registered training organisation. In other cases resources were produced industry-wide, as for the meat industry, and with national training package support materials. Quality was more likely to be guaranteed where there was a range of resources that were relevant, current, nationally applicable and reflected current legislation, as in the children's services industry.

It was also clear that resources needed to provide explicit links between the off-the-job and on-the-job components of the traineeship. Where this gap was too large, quality could be compromised. Materials that were out of date and no longer relevant to the industry area were seen as compromising quality. This was particularly evident in the financial services sites, where the highly specialised nature of the industry juxtaposed beside overly generic learning materials had produced a justifiable scepticism about the quality of the traineeships.

Funding and incentives

Funding was seen to be a significant issue in traineeships, particularly in areas such as cleaning, where the profit margins were quite low. In some industries, for example, the meat and finance industries, training for compliance and regulatory reasons was necessary, irrespective of the funding available; in these instances funding helped to develop the necessary infrastructure and improve quality. Inconsistencies in funding rules among the states and territories had the potential to compromise quality; for example, the absence or reduction of funding would reduce the ability of enterprises to provide effective on-the-job training or the ability of registered training organisations to undertake the desired number of site visits. Consistent policies and practices in traineeships across jurisdictions would contribute to higher levels of quality.

The lack of clear and accessible information about traineeships and their funding was also seen to be a major impediment, despite major efforts by many stakeholders. In the case of the meat industry, the industry's advisory council had largely assumed the role of providing this employer information. The other industries did not seem to have the advantage of such a body.

Because they impacted on the calibre of applicants and on retention, trainee wage levels were an important component of the overall quality of the traineeship. Wages varied markedly across the six industry areas examined in this study. In the meat industry entry-level wage rates were highly competitive with other industry areas, although in the children's services area wages were seen as a

barrier to high-quality outcomes, with entrants receiving low wages. Some respondents considered low wages to be tied to training wage provisions, but it should be noted that employers were able to choose to pay higher wages, and many did so, particularly where they found it hard to attract labour and/or where product pricing structures permitted it.

It is possible that a different funding formula would improve the quality of traineeships. If smaller employers who currently experience difficulties in providing the training needed received higher payments for trainees, then this may act as an incentive for them. Larger companies are able to reap the benefits of economies of scale that are simply unavailable to smaller enterprises.

Sense of vocation

Some industries have long-standing occupational identities, while others have weak identities; traineeships are valued particularly in undervalued industries. In two of the industry areas studied, meat processing and cleaning, traineeships have the potential to contribute a great deal to the sense of vocation of the participants. These two industry areas have suffered from poor public perceptions of their worth. This in turn has created a volatile labour force, where employment 'churning' is very common. The availability of traineeships could make a great difference to the individual value which workers ascribed to their work, their productivity, their safety, their self-efficacy and motivation.

A more strategic approach to the marketing of traineeships and their value could contribute to the creation of a more multiskilled workforce and attract better candidates to traineeship industries. The retail industry case study demonstrated that traineeships were reaching a mature stage, with a generation of traineeship-trained managers who appreciated the value of traineeships, similar to those industries where apprenticeships prevailed.

In the building and construction industry, however, the heavy weight of the apprenticeship system had unfortunately led to a deeply embedded set of suspicions about traineeships. The sense of vocation in this industry was firmly tied to apprenticeships and there was little support from the major trade union, as a union respondent put it, 'for bodgie traineeships that fragment the trades ... [Traineeships] will fill the industry up with a big group of semi-skilled people who are going to do damage.' With such perceptions firmly entrenched it was difficult to identify constructive ideas from some stakeholders that could contribute to improved quality in traineeships, as they remained in a frame of mind that wished traineeships away.

Processes

Pedagogy: On and off the job

Most of the informants agreed that an off-the-job component was necessary if quality in traineeships was to be guaranteed. The ideal model for delivery was believed to be a combination of both on- and off-job training, where the relative weightings given to each component was negotiated by employer, employee and registered training organisation. A combination enabled trainees to interact (ideally across different companies) and built group support and solidarity. Quality would be achieved when flexible approaches to delivery were adopted that focused not only on the acquisition of skills but also on the development of the underpinning knowledge that was necessary if trainees were to progress to higher-level qualifications: as one construction industry interviewee put it: 'The secret is understanding why you're doing what you're doing.' Underpinning knowledge was best taught in a non-disruptive and quiet atmosphere away from the normal workstation, with support from a trainer. In some instances the exigencies of production simply did not allow for meaningful training to occur and hence off-the-job training was needed.

The effectiveness of the off-the-job training component was to some extent influenced by the inclination and ability of employers to release trainees to undertake this learning. In industries and/or enterprises where the commitment to traineeships was very high, employers recognised the importance of this element of the training to the maintenance of quality. However, where profit

margins were low, or if the particular company was small, releasing staff was an expensive exercise that influenced profit margins. High-quality training was also achieved when the workplace could provide opportunities for integrating the trainee's learning and assessment with workplace practices. The use of the trainee's supervisor as the trainer/assessor enabled very close monitoring of trainee progress and established clear and strong links between underpinning knowledge and the application of skills in the workplace.

The cleaning industry in the asset maintenance case study provides an example of how both the on- and off-the-job components of the training are used effectively. In this instance, the off-the-job training was emphasised and was delivered up front in the traineeship life cycle, thus embedding the necessary underpinning knowledge before staff progressed to the job itself. One of the cleaning examples demonstrates how the on-the-job training is facilitated by an additional member of the cleaning team and by the establishment of a strong mentor relationship with another, experienced employee.

Quality was high when on-the-job training was monitored for currency of content and process. Good-quality resources, opportunities for practice, an acceptance of the likelihood of mistakes, and skilled and empathetic trainers and supervisors were seen to be vital to ensuring the quality of the learning experiences. The skills, knowledge and experience of the trainers, both on and off the job, were seen as critical to high-quality traineeships.

In some industry areas informants felt that traineeship quality could be assured when the traditional apprenticeship model was adopted and comprised substantial periods of off-the-job training and an assigned mentor on the job. There needed to be careful selection of mentors; they needed to be able to model good practice, as well as having the appropriate attributes for overseeing the trainee. The traditional apprenticeship model was applied to a traineeship in some areas of general construction, where apprenticeship processes were well understood.

In all cases and for all delivery modes, the need for learning support from both the employer/supervisor and the registered training organisation were seen as the central and underpinning component that determined quality. If programs were tailored or customised to support particular trainees, if appropriate program content was maintained and the relationship between off the job and the workplace activities was made explicit, then the respondents believed that quality would be guaranteed.

Employer–trainee psychological contract

In some industry areas there were clear expectations of the contribution of each of the parties to the traineeship—the employer, the employee and the registered training organisation. Clearly articulated expectations attracted and retained workers and provided a sound basis for trust between employer and worker. This was particularly so in the meat industry, where traineeships were deeply embedded and accepted as part of the conditions of employment. Several company respondents noted that that they had offered traineeships as part of their quest to become an 'employer of choice'.

A registered training organisation that advocated, explained and serviced the needs of the company and also the trainee contributed to the quality of the traineeship. Where the registered training organisation provided less than optimal service or where the employer did not provide appropriate support or training on the job, the trainee could become disgruntled. Poor experiences in the on-the-job component of the traineeship and from the registered training organisation, and unclear financial and operational information had a negative impact on the quality of the traineeship. Where a traineeship was a positive experience for a trainee, their commitment to the company and the industry was enhanced.

Intermediary interactions

Stakeholders agreed that interactions between employers and intermediary organisations involved in the traineeship system could contribute significantly to the level of quality in traineeships. Intermediaries such as group training organisations and apprenticeship centres were critical in disseminating information and safeguarding employers' interests, while also protecting employees from potential exploitation. The former were particularly important in maintaining and supporting the traineeship system. Since many 'employers are still not up to speed and traineeships fall over', as a respondent from the meat industry put it, a more proactive and supportive strategic direction could be adopted by some of the intermediaries and this would contribute to higher-quality levels. This was particularly important where trainees might have a disability or low levels of language, literacy and numeracy, or were from a non-English speaking background.

In some instances the lack of a nationally consistent approach and identified inefficiencies in state training authorities and Australian Apprenticeship Centres adversely influenced the quality of the traineeships. Many respondents felt that better and more efficient sign-up arrangements would contribute to the uptake and subsequently the quality of traineeships. Quality could also be improved if staff members in the various state departments of education or training were able to provide helpful advice and support with the operation of traineeships.

Retention during traineeship

The attrition rates of some traineeships were perceived to be high. In some instances this was due to the low wages offered, for instance, in children's services. In other cases, such as cleaning and meat processing, the attrition rates reflected the general volatility of the labour force, where high turnover of staff was the norm. However, it should be noted that one cleaning company had experienced no attrition since the introduction of its traineeship program. It was clear that frequent visits by representatives from the appropriate registered training organisation, who reinforced the relationships between theory and practice and dealt with employment, motivational or relationship issues, contributed to lower attrition rates as well as higher levels of quality. This was particularly the case where the traineeship was undertaken entirely on the job.

Group training organisations were important in maintaining the apprenticeship and traineeship system. Joint group training funding enabled group training organisations to place trainees and subsidise their placements. In the research the role of group training organisations in construction was well documented as was their support of equity initiatives such as the Indigenous traineeships in the bank company example and one of the cleaning examples.

Outputs

Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees

In the cleaning and meat processing industry areas, traineeships were seen as a way of enhancing the business position of the company. The ability to demonstrate that employees conformed to regulations, legislation and compliance regimes through traineeships was seen to be an important component of the company's quality processes. In most industries traineeship graduates were accepted by the industry. The qualifications were regarded as portable and the skills transferable.

Some reservations about the quality of traineeships were expressed; these largely related to registered training organisations that were perceived to 'push people through' at the expense of high-quality training outcomes. While no such instances were observed during this research, many respondents produced anecdotes to support this claim.

Pathways to higher qualifications

The availability of clear pathways to higher qualifications in the industry was regarded as an indicator of quality. In some industries these pathways were clearly articulated, promoted and supported. In others a disparity between certificate levels was seen as impediment to the smooth transition between levels of qualification. In the case of building and construction, for example, the Certificate II General Construction offered only partial pathways into higher qualifications. Nevertheless, some employers routinely used traineeships in this industry as a pathway to an apprenticed certificate III qualification.

A number of participants (for example, in children's services) commented on the lack of funding for diploma-level qualifications and suggested that quality could be improved if funding were made available for higher-level qualifications. In some industries however employers funded higher-level qualifications for their workers.

Career progression

The opportunities for career progression influenced to some extent the perceived quality and value of undertaking a traineeship. Career progression possibilities varied across the industries. Where the industry was highly distributed, as with cleaning, there were fewer opportunities for upward movement as managerial positions beyond the supervisory level were relatively scarce. In some industry areas, such as meat processing, career progression was regarded as a way of 'growing their own' staff for higher-level positions. Where traineeships were regarded by the organisation as part of overall strategic workforce planning, as with the financial services and meat processing studies, the quality of the training during traineeships was more likely to be assured, since the traineeship provided the foundation for subsequent skills and knowledge acquisition. Where the attainment of progressive certificate levels contributed to increased pay scales, participants felt that this encouraged career progression and legitimacy for training, reinforcing the need for funding for higher-level qualifications.

Outcomes

Skilled staff for businesses and industry

Severe staff shortages in some industry areas meant that the skills of potential employees were not always of the appropriate standard. Traineeships were regarded as a way of improving the overall skill levels of the new, and in some cases existing, workforce. Traineeships also contributed to the 'professionalisation' of the industry, as in the case of cleaning, meat processing and children's services. Traineeship employers were able to avoid spending time going through the basics with every new employee. Furthermore, traineeships could also be used to address vital issues such as health, hygiene and OH&S, thereby enhancing the quality of working life for the workforce. Through multiskilling, traineeships could create better jobs with greater variety and longer hours.

Staying in the industry

Employers generally regarded traineeships as an investment in their workforce and as a way to attract and retain staff, many employers believing that the skills learned during the traineeship were transferable to other employers or occupations and contributing to the self-confidence and self-efficacy of employees. Some organisations keen to retain trainees after the completion of their traineeship established career counselling and targeted employment strategies, consciously creating pathways to other parts of the organisation for trainees. This practice was regarded as contributing to both the quality of the traineeships and the overall workforce needs of the company. There was no evidence of employers terminating or wishing to terminate trainees at the end of the traineeship, although where traineeships were part of a labour market program there was no sense of 'failure' if participants left for other employment.

Additional considerations

The National Audit Office model includes additional considerations relating to objectives and resources, since a complete picture of quality must incorporate the achievement of appropriate objectives and also considerations of efficiency and appropriate allocation of resources in terms of costs and benefits. The section below discusses the case study findings in relation to these two issues of objectives and resources.

Objectives—are traineeships a labour market program or a strategy for skill formation?

The case studies did not provide a definitive answer to this question because for many the two were inextricably linked. Traineeships were introduced in the 1980s, partly as a form of labour market program in a time of high unemployment and with regard to particular disadvantaged groups. This research study was carried out during 2007–08 at a time when the labour market was extremely tight and when all employers complained of difficulties in finding suitable staff. The labour market program aspect of traineeships—helping people into work—thus operated in two ways. Firstly, the presence of traineeships meant that employers were able to work more effectively with groups and individuals who, in harder economic times, would not perhaps enter the labour market. These groups and individuals might, for example, have low literacy or low social skills, and traineeships enabled employers to take on disadvantaged applicants, confident that, after completing a traineeship, they would become productive workers. Examples identified in this research were the meat and the construction industries, where applicants were scarce and often of poor quality. Secondly, even in a period of record low unemployment, there were still some groups and individuals who found it difficult to access work independently. Traineeships operated by intermediary organisations assisted these people into work. An example from the case studies includes a church-sponsored charitable organisation which was both a group training organisation and a registered training organisation. This body worked with long-term unemployed people in cleaning (and other industries). Case studies which illustrated a more skills-focused approach included retail and child care. The examples with a greater focus on labour market factors also demonstrated a strong commitment to skill formation.

Resourcing—who should pay and who benefits?

Benefits from traineeships accrue to enterprises in terms of increased skill levels, motivated workforces and their increased attractiveness in the labour market ('an employer of choice'). Individual trainees realise benefits in terms of better job prospects and self-efficacy, while a registered training organisation receives funding for larger numbers of students. The nation as a whole benefits from increased skills levels and a large and active network of training providers. The case studies showed that costs were borne as follows:

- ✧ by enterprises, which provided employment to relatively unskilled people, time release for staff undergoing training, and considerable amounts of staff time for planning, organising, implementing and evaluating on-the-job training and the services provided by registered training organisations
- ✧ by individual trainees, who sometimes in their own time undertook the 'homework' associated with their studies and sometimes had to pay a small contribution towards registered training organisation enrolment
- ✧ by registered training organisations, which sometimes offered traineeships despite making no money or even a loss on such programs
- ✧ by the nation as a whole, through provision of employment subsidies, 'user choice' funding to registered training organisations, and provision of funding and infrastructure for intermediary bodies such as group training organisations and apprenticeship centres.

The case studies showed that there were varying degrees of understanding of the relative costs and benefits of the traineeship, as well as varying degrees of importance attached to the notion of costs and benefits to training. Enterprises tended to use traineeships for a variety of motives and, while costs and benefits were considered, often the desire to participate sprang from other motives.

Employers often acted against what seemed to be contrary to their interests economically. For example, a company in the cleaning case study not only enrolled its workers in traineeships despite receiving no funding, it also paid them to attend classes outside their normal working hours. For individuals, since traineeships were often attached to a job they would do anyway, there seemed to be little deliberate weighing-up of costs and benefits. Gratitude tended to be directed towards the employer, who provided the opportunity for a traineeship, rather than to the government which partly funded the opportunity.

The traineeship life cycle

The previous section has given an overview of the high-level stakeholder interviews and analysed the case study data using headings derived from the adapted National Audit Office definition of quality given in the introduction. A clear division emerged in the data gathered in the research between what happens in an individual traineeship and broader policy issues.

The term ‘traineeship lifecycle’ is used to refer to the processes that relate to individual trainees entering, undertaking and completing a traineeship and incorporates all the actors that engage with those trainees, including registered training organisations and the employing enterprises. In this chapter we further analyse quality in the traineeship life cycle, using data both from the case studies and from the stakeholder interviews. Policy issues are examined in the final chapter.

Analysis of the data indicated that a list of features that impact on the quality experienced in a traineeship lifecycle can be identified. The features may be considered against identifiable phases of a traineeship, namely:

- 1 recruitment; sign-up; induction
- 2 training delivery and assessment
- 3 support during the traineeship
- 4 completion and beyond.

While all are important, some features were shown in our research to impact more than others on quality. In our analysis of the data collected, the quality factors were assessed as having either a high, medium or low impact on the overall success of a traineeship. Low does not mean negligible impact; it means that the impact was lower than some of the other features. Table 4 indicates the quality features, organised by level of impact on the quality of the traineeship.

Some features appear at several phases but have different meanings at the different phases. For example, engagement of intermediaries with the trainee refers in phase 1 to the provision of appropriate information and counselling for a correct occupational choice, while in phase 3 it refers to frequent contact and what is often known as ‘pastoral care’ of trainees. Appendix 5 of the support document provides more information about the application of the quality components in the different phases of a traineeship.

Table 4 Quality features of traineeship, shown by level of impact^(a)

High impact	Medium impact	Low impact
Enterprise enthusiasm and commitment (1, 3)	Careful recruitment and selection of trainees (1)	Contact for trainees with peer cohort (2)
Clear expectations shared among parties (1, 3)	Opportunities for practising skills (2)	RPL available and of high quality (2)
RTO engaged with trainee (1, 2, 3, 4)	Quality of training package (3)	Skills transferable to other occupations and industries (2)
RTO engaged with enterprise (1, 3, 4)		Guidance materials available and utilised to assist people perform their role (3)
Intermediaries engaged with enterprise and trainee (1, 3, 4)		Pathways available to other qualifications (4)
Off-the-job training present and effective (2)		Graduated trainees attractive to other employers (4)
On-the-job training visible (i.e. separate from working) and effective (2)		
RTO and enterprise staff have relevant teaching/training qualifications (2)		
High-quality and freely available learning resources (2)		
Rigorous and relevant assessment methods (2)		
Good work practices in enterprise (2)		
Structures in place to support trainees at work (3)		
Staff in RTO and enterprise skilled in mentoring trainees and shaping work to allow for learning (3)		

Note: (a) Phases of traineeship shown in brackets after each feature.

As well as the features noted above, which are within the control of the local players (worksites, registered training organisations, trainees and local intermediary bodies), we identified four ‘quality resilience factors’ which impact on the quality of traineeships. While their presence or absence may not be the final determinants of quality in a traineeship, they have some effect. We call them quality-resilience factors because they test the commitment and stamina of the participants in producing a high-quality product. If these factors are oriented favourably in a given situation, a high-quality traineeship is more likely. If the reverse holds, then a high-quality traineeship may be achieved, but it is more difficult. The research uncovered examples of high-quality traineeships, despite the presence of adverse quality resilience factors.

The factors are listed below with some explanation for each.

- ✧ *The performance of government bodies and intermediaries:* for example, a state accreditation body may be responsive or unresponsive, or an apprenticeship centre may or may not provide accurate information.
- ✧ *The organisational structure/distribution of workers within an enterprise:* for example, a high level of concentration of trainees at one worksite makes economies of scale possible.
- ✧ *The availability of a choice of registered training organisation:* for example, in metropolitan areas there might be a wide choice, whereas in rural areas or industry ‘thin markets’, there may be very little choice of registered training organisation.
- ✧ *The availability of funding such as incentives and user choice options:* for example, funding may or may not be available for a particular qualification and/or group of workers.

Facilitators and inhibitors of quality features

A number of factors were identified that facilitate and inhibit the development of the quality features given in table 4. The facilitators and inhibitors were either directly observed in the case studies, reported by respondents within the case studies and interviews, or derived by the researchers from the data. The facilitators and inhibitors are listed in full in appendix 6 of the support document. The table given in this appendix focuses on facilitators (since in many cases inhibitors are the direct

converse of facilitators) and is ordered by level of impact, beginning with high-impact features. For example, in terms of the extent and effectiveness of off-the-job training, a high-impact facilitator might be the employer's commitment to time release for trainees, while a high-impact inhibitor might be workplace production pressures.

Characteristics of a model traineeship

In this section the quality impact factors and the facilitators and inhibitors are utilised to produce an overview of the characteristics of a model traineeship in the context of the four phases of the traineeship lifecycle. The summary differentiates between those characteristics which the research showed were necessary for a high-quality traineeship and those which are present ideally. Some factors specific to fully on-the-job traineeships and the off-the-job component are also mentioned. Two hypothetical trainee case histories were developed, one on the job and the other off the job, to illustrate the characteristics described below. These can be found at appendix 7 in the support document.

Phase 1: Recruitment; sign-up; induction

Necessarily

Prior to recruitment, the registered training organisation and intermediaries learn about the organisation's workplace and business issues and try to ensure that the traineeship adds value to the enterprise as well as to the individual. The registered training organisation works with the employer and the supervisor to select the qualification and units of competency for the traineeship, ensuring they are relevant to the enterprise and the future career intentions of the trainee. The qualification provides the potential for advancement to a higher qualification or pathways to other education and training options and is designed to develop occupational loyalty within the trainee.

Once the trainee has been selected, the registered training organisation and intermediaries meet with the employer, supervisor and trainee to establish a partnership and provide advice to the enterprise and the trainee. The employer and immediate supervisor demonstrate a strong commitment to the success of the traineeship; the employer clearly regards the traineeship as an investment in their workforce and as a way to attract and retain staff. The employer considers traineeships to be part of the organisation's overall workforce development strategy and is clear about the purpose of traineeships. The trainer, trainee and supervisor are in no doubt about the expected outcomes and processes to be delivered through the traineeship and each party's relevant responsibilities. All parties are aware of the frequency of contacts from the registered training organisation, the means of communication available (SMS, email, phone) and the dispute-resolution processes in place. The employer conducts an induction/orientation session for the new trainee or trainees.

In larger organisations, the human resource team develops comprehensive guidelines for the business units which take on trainees. This team ensures consistent treatment of trainees and safeguards the organisation's training standards. Where possible, a person is given responsibility for managing all trainees in the organisation.

Ideally

The registered training organisation and employer only recruit trainees who are clearly suited to the industry and have the ability to succeed in the program. Where younger applicants are taken on, the training organisation and employer involve parents in the recruitment phase to provide support and motivation during the life of the traineeship. The training organisation and employer brief parents on key program details, including their expectations of the trainee. The former also provides the trainee with a resource pack containing all learning materials and assessment tools, along with the administrative details and paperwork associated with the traineeship. Staff from state training agencies (separate from the audit functions) provide support and guidance to registered training organisations, employers and supervisors on best-practice traineeship delivery.

Phase 2: Training delivery and assessment

Necessarily

The registered training organisation and employer agree on a program that includes the mixture of on- and off-the-job training that will ensure the highest quality outcomes in the traineeship. The training organisation does not impose a single delivery model on the employer but offers a tailored delivery and assessment solution suited to each workplace. The training organisation uses recognition of prior learning (RPL) appropriately to encourage trainee engagement and articulation into further traineeship pathways. The training organisation uses RPL only when agreed with the employer and trainee and to expedite early completion only when agreed by all parties. The training organisation works with the employer to ensure that any in-house employer training is embedded in the traineeship and to provide opportunities for integrating the trainee's learning and assessment with workplace practices.

The employer ensures that time is set aside for training—on the job, in the workplace or off site. The employer makes sure that the trainee is given opportunities for practice, accepts the likelihood of mistakes and provides skilled and empathetic trainers and supervisors to encourage quality learning experiences. The employer ensures that all worksites operate according to good working practices and conditions, particularly in relation to OH&S, and that good practice is modelled in the workplace to provide a consistent message for the trainee. The employer ensures that the trainee is closely supported by mentors or buddies and that supervisors spend time with trainees to mentor and encourage their learning.

The aim of both the registered training organisation and employer is to utilise trainers with skills, knowledge and experience of a high standard. They aim for high-quality training that will extend the trainee's skills and encourage their attachment to the occupation, rather than focusing only on completion. Trainers are enthusiastic about the field of study and keep up with rapidly evolving technology and work practices. The training organisation uses high-quality and current learning materials with a strong emphasis on OH&S and relevant to the trainee's workplace. Both the training organisation and employer ensure that training and assessment materials are customised to the specific workplace activities rather than being generic work books. Materials are in plain English, with graphics where appropriate to the industry area and AQF level, and are adapted to suit trainees with particular language, literacy or numeracy needs. Assessment is as holistic as is compatible with rigour and relevant to the workplace, while avoiding over-customisation. Underpinning knowledge extending beyond the immediate workplace is delivered.

Where the traineeship is fully on the job, the employer and registered training organisation work together to deliver well-structured on-the-job training. The employer develops a clearly articulated on-the-job curriculum or program of activities that provides appropriate experiences and learning opportunities, allowing the trainee at least three hours per week away from the job during working hours to study the learning materials supplied by the training organisation and to carry out the assessment tasks. Training organisation staff scaffold the learner's use of work books and learning materials rather than just expecting them to complete written tasks. The content and processes used in on-the-job training are closely monitored by the training organisation staff to safeguard quality.

Where there is off-the-job training conducted at a registered training organisation, the trainers impart a coherent body of underpinning knowledge to trainees during off-the-job training and use authentic simulated environments to provide trainees with opportunities for practice. Trainers utilise a variety of delivery methods to cater for diverse learners, including the use of appropriately applied learning theory, well-scaffolded project work and group discussions, as well as lectures and anecdotes to maintain interest. Employers ensure that the release of trainees is a priority even during busy times.

Ideally

The registered training organisation offers flexible learning options to suit trainee and enterprise needs. The organisation facilitates literacy and numeracy support where necessary and liaises with other

intermediaries to ensure that equity groups have participated in pre-employment training. Employers rotate trainees among different departments or worksites (or with other employers, for example, through group training) to access the full range of experiences and opportunities for practice.

Phase 3: Support during the traineeship

Necessarily

Intermediaries develop good ongoing relations with employers and build trust with managers, supervisors and trainees. They provide accurate, current, and appropriate information. Registered training organisation staff undertake frequent visits to ensure that on-the-job trainees are satisfied with their learning and their daily work. During visits, training organisation staff reinforce the relationships between theory and practice and deal with any employment, motivational or relationship issues, or alert appropriate intermediary staff. For traineeships involving off-the-job training, training organisation staff contact employers regularly to discuss the trainee's progress and ensure that off-the-job training takes account of the type of workplace in which the trainee is located.

Employers and supervisors provide regular and ongoing feedback to trainees. The employer provides a dedicated mentor for the trainee. The mentor meets with the trainee regularly to check and ensure progress through the learning materials and the employer evaluates the mentoring relationship. The training organisation, supervisor and trainee participate in an ongoing review process to monitor issues and progress.

Ideally

Employers, supervisors and mentors use the clear and specific information and support materials provided by intermediaries, which outlines the key actions necessary to ensure quality. The employer and trainee enter into an explicit contract that covers the traineeship. The contract links the traineeship to career and salary progression in the industry, and the employer uses the agreement as a tool for attracting and retaining workers. The training organisation, employer and/or intermediary provide career counselling and pastoral care as appropriate to the trainee during the traineeship.

Phase 4: Completion and beyond

Necessarily

Both training organisation and intermediary staff work with the employer, supervisor and trainee in an effective and timely manner to ensure effective completion of the traineeship. They make sure that all assessment tasks are completed and that the trainee feels confident in each area covered. The parties participate in a comprehensive evaluation of the traineeship and review findings collectively to ensure continuous improvement purposes.

Ideally

The employer and training organisation work with the trainee to establish further education and training pathways. Training organisation staff arrange articulation into another traineeship or apprenticeship and/or enrolment into further education and training. Employers provide signposted pathways to more senior jobs in the enterprise and opportunities for the attainment of higher qualifications.

Policy implications

This chapter discusses the implications of the research project for policy. Policy stakeholders include employer and employee associations and peak bodies, skills councils, state training authorities and other government departments, peak bodies of ‘traineeship life cycle’ participants, and others involved with policy-making. They also include those in management positions in registered training organisations and enterprises, as these individuals create policy for their own organisations.

The aim of the project was to use our research data to identify high-quality features in traineeships, which could be applied more generally—not to evaluate or comment upon the general quality of Australian traineeships. This chapter focuses primarily on practical ways in which the high-quality features identified as a result of the research data can be applied and improved across the whole of the traineeship system.

What can be done at a policy level to improve the quality of traineeships?

The messages from the research were clear—and are equally applicable to apprenticeships. Those involved with the system were asking for consistency among jurisdictions in all traineeship processes, more transparency and more straightforward sign-up processes. They wanted a consistent set of processes from federal and state governments, particularly in relation to the length of traineeship contracts to ensure that graduates are fully skilled, as well as urgent attention to low-quality registered training organisations, perhaps involving increased monitoring of these organisations and/or the provision of advice. Other issues that emerged from the research included a need for registered training organisations to justify the qualifications and electives that were offered to employers. As Schofield (2000) has pointed out, intermediary bodies need a deep knowledge of the training system to be able to advise on such issues, and this knowledge may be lacking.

With regard to training packages, pathways to higher qualifications could be improved through speedier approval of new and revised training packages, and more willingness among the parties to compromise on entrenched positions. Having well-articulated pathways to higher-level qualifications, including consideration of appropriate AQF levels, is a crucial aspect of training package development.

Pedagogical processes: How policy could assist

The research indicated that good pedagogy was at the heart of a good traineeship and that there was room for improvement in pedagogical processes. Teaching and learning takes place in individual worksites and training rooms, and much of the quality depends on individual people. However, processes could be improved through more attention at the policy level to teaching and learning, both off and on the job. One suggestion from the research was the active encouragement—perhaps from registered training organisation peak bodies (public and private) and/or state training authorities—for the acquisition of higher-level educational qualifications for

training organisation trainers. Important also is the provision of appropriately qualified staff delivering traineeships, rather than having ‘generic’ trainers and assessors in this role.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) was mentioned by many participants. People generally felt that recognition of prior learning should be given conservatively because it was beneficial to undergo training and necessary to fill gaps that may have been left in previous training. It is possible that the poor practices that were hinted at in these responses could be improved by better training of teachers and trainers in recognition of prior learning assessment, including familiarising teachers with arguments for and against its implementation in particular circumstances.

Central funding for the development of high-quality learning resources, including textbooks and online materials, with some targeted to particular learner groups was raised as a factor likely to contribute to high-quality traineeships. There seemed to be a need to move beyond the typical ‘work books’ produced as part of training package support materials, to resources that provided a deeper engagement with a body of knowledge. Where traineeships have a labour market as well as skill-formation focus, extra resources are required to support some client groups.

Policy possibilities for the traineeship players

High-quality on-the-job training is a fundamental element of traineeships and implicit in the role of stakeholder groups such as industry peak bodies, skills councils and trade unions is a responsibility to maintain the quality of this component of traineeships. The role of the employer, particularly in relation to the workplace supervision of trainees and the need to provide a wide range of task experiences to match the qualification, was emphasised, although it was recognised that less experienced enterprises might struggle with their on-the-job obligations and may need additional assistance or professional development (for example, undertaking structured training such as that contained in the Training and Assessment Training Package unit TAADEL404A: Facilitate work-based learning).

Additional processes designed to safeguard quality in traineeships and which more tightly specify requirements for both off- and on-the-job training could be introduced. It may be argued that the quality of off-the-job training is largely assured by the AQTF, but the research indicated that this was not necessarily the case, with, in some instances, the need for more delivery of underpinning knowledge. Certainly, more sophisticated approaches are needed to the services provided by registered training organisations to on-the-job trainees. The research indicated examples where such services were extensive and professional, but also others where this was not always the case. Furthermore, there is little regulation of the on-the-job training provided by employers, compared with that which exists in other countries such as Germany, and as many employers of trainees are unfamiliar with contracted training there is a need to assist them in their obligations.

Employers should be encouraged to be ‘critical consumers’ of registered training organisation services, for example, requesting detailed information about delivery methods. Mentoring by experienced ‘traineeship employers’ would assist with this. Such mentoring could be brokered by employer associations, the Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association and similar bodies. Those employers with well-developed ‘traineeship management skills’ (Rowlands 2000) would probably be very willing to share their insights. Training programs in ‘traineeship management skills’ for employers could be developed by industry peak bodies, skills councils and trade unions.

Trainees also have obligations in the teaching and learning process, which are more difficult to enforce through policy, but which could be encouraged through registered training organisations, employers, Australian Apprenticeship Centres, unions and, where appropriate, through schools prior to employment. This is particularly true for fully on-the-job trainees, as individual motivation plays a large part in success in this mode of delivery. Trainees should be encouraged to seek learning support for literacy and other difficulties. A specific contact person, who can direct trainees to appropriate assistance, should be provided to all trainees as part of the training contract.

Outcomes for trainees

Analysis of data on economic rates of return on individual investment in vocational qualifications (Long & Shah 2008), although not targeted specifically at contracted training, indicates that traineeship returns are likely to be satisfactory. Long and Shah's research showed that returns were higher for part-time than for full-time learners, and for certificate III and above level than for lower-level qualifications; all trainees are part-time learners, and the majority of qualifications in traineeships are at certificate III level and above. Long and Shah's (2008) research also showed returns to be higher for those with school completion at Year 10 and below, which describes much of the cohort of those undertaking existing worker traineeships.

While these recent results are promising for traineeships, the notion of rate of economic return does not align well with the traineeship experience. Trainees undertake qualifications as part of a job rather than making a decision to invest in a qualification. Our research provided a qualitative approach and one not confined to economic returns as reflected in potential salary levels. The research uncovered examples of good pathways to higher-level qualifications and promotion opportunities, as well as examples of training deliberately given in skills that were transferable to other employers and occupations. However, there was room for improvement. Skills councils could consider devoting more resources to liaison with other skills councils and industry associations to improve pathways and transferability.

Importantly, as the cleaning case study indicated, even putting aside promotion and higher-level qualifications, traineeships could open the door to 'better jobs'—jobs that use a wider range of skills and are less casualised. Employer peak bodies, trade unions and skills councils could work together to produce examples for dissemination in relevant industries to show how this could be done on at least a cost-neutral basis.

Resourcing traineeships

Who should pay for traineeship training and who benefits? The research showed general agreement with the method of financing traineeships: through an employment incentive payable by the Commonwealth Government to the employers; 'user choice' funding payable by the state or territory to the selected registered training organisation; and Commonwealth Government-funded curriculum through training package development. A number of suggestions for minor adjustments were made that might improve quality: funding more heavily weighted towards completions and weighted differently for different levels of qualifications; incentive payments (federal and state) varied for geographical remoteness, high-cost industry areas and/or high-quality training; and small employers receiving more funding than large employers in recognition of their lack of established systems. A further suggestion was that state training authorities and the federal government might consider looking at arrangements that currently exclude some qualifications and some groups of workers (for example, existing workers) from employment incentives and/or user choice funding, as these seem to be creating particular hurdles for the participation of some industry areas. One participating organisation argued for the exclusion of a greater number of qualifications from traineeship eligibility to allow more funding for the remainder. Finally, consideration could be given to improved funding for group training organisations, in recognition of their important role in traineeship operations.

Addressing and redressing beliefs of low quality

As we highlighted in the introductory chapter, there have been some challenges associated with the implementation of traineeships and there are also perceptions that traineeships could be of a higher quality. We feel that in a report identifying the features of high-quality traineeships that it might be useful to address some of these issues in the context of the data we have collected for this research project. While the research found many areas where improvements could be made, on the whole participants undertook traineeships in the 'right spirit' (Misko, Patterson & Markotic 2001) and

there was nothing to indicate that deficiencies in pedagogical or administrative processes were more obvious than in any other area of the Australian VET or the broader educational system.

Beliefs about low quality: What the research tells us

In this section, beliefs about low quality are briefly addressed using data from the interviews and case studies.

- ✧ *Belief: funding is the driver of most participation in traineeships*: funding incentives, although important, were not the main driver for either initial or continued participation in traineeships. Properly managed traineeship programs were expensive, and funding assisted here. Many employers participated even when no subsidies were available because they were convinced of the benefits. There was little evidence to suggest that employers took advantage of the chance to pay the reduced training wage, with many companies in the study paying above-market rates to their trainees.
- ✧ *Belief: traineeships just provide public funding for training that would happen anyway*: there was no evidence in the study to show that traineeships provided an unwarranted shift of costs from the employer to the public purse. The systematic and broad-based nature of traineeship programs exceeded by far the combination of haphazard on-the-job training and assorted short courses, which were all that existed before traineeships were introduced in some of the industry areas in the study.
- ✧ *Belief: traineeships are (and should be) just a labour market program*: the research generally showed that traineeships were used by industries and enterprises as skill-development strategies and were not labour market programs, although in a few cases the primary focus was a labour market one—usually to assist disadvantaged groups such as young Aboriginal people and the long-term unemployed into work. The research showed that traineeships are in many instances performing a dual role and therefore adding double value to the economy.
- ✧ *Belief: the content of traineeship programs is low-level*: the research showed clearly that the traineeship programs studied contained a great deal of skill development and underpinning knowledge. As the development of qualifications in many of these industry areas is comparatively recent, the codification of the body of knowledge is less developed than in industry areas with longer-established qualifications and this is probably what has led to perceptions of lower levels.
- ✧ *Belief: employers do not wish to retain trainees after they have served their purpose in attracting employment subsidies*: the research showed the reverse—all of the employers involved wished to retain trainees after the completion of their traineeships; for many, traineeships were an recruitment tool.
- ✧ *Belief: assessment is just 'tick and flick'*: the research indicated that assessment practices could be improved, but there was no evidence that, in general, practices were of poorer quality than in other VET programs. Various forms of assessment were used both off and on the job, including project work and the use of simulated workstations.

What can be done to improve the image of traineeships?

The previous section addresses some of the misconceptions associated with traineeships; however, they may persist unless addressed in the public arena. Of course, as traineeships become more firmly established, negative perceptions are likely to diminish. Like any new initiative, as the pool of graduates from traineeship programs increases and the operation of traineeships becomes more standardised, their use is likely to increase, as will their quality.

The longer-term outcomes of traineeships are more difficult to predict and, indeed, to plan for. Greater confidence in the traineeship system may mean the development of better articulated pathways for career progression and retention in the traineeship industries. It is also possible that a reconceptualisation of work organisation and organisational structures could occur as a result of the extension of contracted training to a greater number of workers. It is difficult to plan for certainty in a climate where the value of traineeships is not always recognised.

Thus it is important to think about ways to promote the value of traineeships. Our research suggested some possible intervention points. Industry and popular acceptance of traineeship qualifications could be improved through stakeholder familiarisation with relevant qualifications, and a willingness of stakeholders to accept qualifications in industry areas previously without them. Another approach might be their active promotion through industry associations and peak bodies, and also to employers, highlighting the less tangible benefits to be gained from traineeships, as well as the rights and financial benefits accruing from them. Industry associations, peak bodies, trade unions and skills councils could be encouraged to argue for the inclusion of a traineeship qualification as a requirement for particular job levels and for advancement within an industry and/or an organisation.

Rather than a primary focus on traditional trades, federal and state government media campaigns could promote traineeship qualifications. A more sophisticated view of traineeship utilisation could be disseminated and the various levels of engagement defined and marketed. School careers teachers, and importantly other teachers who may consciously or unconsciously affect career choice, need to be further educated about the quality of traineeship qualifications. In the context of registered training organisations and state training systems, more detailed and open discussion between those dealing with apprenticeship qualifications and those dealing with traineeships would assist in promoting the value and role of traineeships.

Are high-quality features replicable across traineeship areas?

We end by considering the final research question, ‘How far are high-quality features replicable across traineeship areas?’ The analysis in this report has shown that there are many clearly identifiable features of high quality in traineeships and, while each feature has relevance to all industry and occupational areas, some have applicability in specific industry or occupational areas. For example, well-designed and -delivered off-the-job training may be more likely in some industry areas than others; good, well-organised work practices are more likely in large workplaces than small; some industry areas may have a more suitable and better designed training package to work with than others. The models of adoption of traineeships within industries and enterprises provide specific information about the effects of many of the outside influences which impact on quality features. In the end, the ‘quality resilience factors’ and other contextual issues are what the players have to work with and which must be accommodated.

The research suggested that, with commitment on the part of the various individuals and organisations involved, a high-quality traineeship can be a reality in most and perhaps all circumstances and industry areas. Adoption of some of the tools developed as part of this research will assist those individuals and organisations in their quest for a high-quality traineeship.

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Support document details

Additional information relating to this research is available in *High-quality traineeships: Identifying what works—Support document*. It can be accessed from NCVER's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2191.html>>.

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**National Centre for Vocational
Education Research Ltd**

Level 11, 33 King William Street
Adelaide SA 5000

PO Box 8288 Station Arcade
South Australia 5000

Phone +61 8 8230 8400

Fax +61 8 8212 3436

Email ncver@ncver.edu.au

www.ncver.edu.au



High-quality traineeships: Identifying what works— Support document

Erica Smith

UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT

Paul Comyn

SMITH-COMYN & ASSOCIATES

Ros Brennan Kemmis

CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY

Andy Smith

UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT

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Appendix 1 – Research methods

Background

Like apprenticeships, traineeships involve employment with an employer and delivery of a qualification by a training provider. This arrangement is often known as ‘contracted training’. It is now over 20 years since traineeships were established in Australia as a result of the Kirby report (Kirby, 1985). Traineeships were introduced to increase the reach of contracted training to a wider range of occupations and industries (Ray, 2001), and to a broader range of learners (particularly women), and to improve the labour market prospects of young people. Apprenticeships had been confined very much to manual occupations dominated by males (with the exception of hairdressing) and reflected the industry structure and the organised labour influences of the mid-twentieth century. After a slow start, traineeships began to grow rapidly in numbers in the mid-1990s so that of the 415,000 Australian Apprentices (apprentices and trainees) in 2006 (NCVER, 2007), 245,000 were trainees with a smaller number of 170,000 traditional apprentices. The relative proportion of commencing trainees is considerably higher than apprentices, as apprentices tend to be in training for three to four years compared to one to two years for trainees. Traineeships initially focused on entry-level qualifications; however, the days when traineeships were predominantly at Certificate II level have long passed; well over two-thirds of traineeships are now at Certificate III level or higher (NCVER, 2007a).

The curriculum for apprenticeship and traineeship qualifications alike consists of units of competency taken from the sets of competency standards in national Training Packages (Smith and Keating 2003). The units of competency set out required skills and underpinning knowledge, and offer advice (and sometimes prescription) on assessment. Each Training Package contains a number of qualifications relevant to the industry or occupational area. The Training Package offers no advice on delivery of the qualification and units, except by proxy through prescription of assessment site or method. In general, apprentices attend a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for one day a week or in block periods, for two or three years. Trainees may also attend an RTO in this way, but it is also common for trainees to be trained 100% on the job. However, even in the latter case the RTO must oversee the training and is responsible for the assessment and the award of the qualification. There is not usually any regulation associated with the on the job training provided by the employer, beyond a mandatory training plan required by State Training Authorities which provides a brief summary of employer responsibilities.

There are however a number of regulatory arrangements associated with traineeships, as with apprenticeships. Contracts of training must be signed by employers, by employees (and by parents where the employees are aged under 18) and by the RTO. The contracts are registered with the State or Territory Training Authority. Employment incentives are supplied by the federal government, and in certain cases also by State and Territory governments, on commencement and completion, and off-the-job training is funded by the State Training Authority through what is known as ‘user choice’ funding. State Training Authorities and the federal government alike maintain regional and local offices where staff work to promote traineeships (and apprenticeships) and, very importantly, to manage their quality. Complaints from trainees, and sometimes their parents are handled by local offices of State Training Authorities. In addition to these long-established processes, traineeships are now promoted through school education systems because

they can be commenced (and in some cases completed) on a part-time basis while students are still at school (e.g. Smith & Wilson, 2002).

Funding is an important issue for traineeships as it is with all other parts of the VET system and indeed the education system as a whole. While employment incentives and ‘user choice’ funding are available, they are not always available. Employment incentives may be limited depending on the previous qualifications gained by the trainee; ‘user choice’ funding may be limited in certain industries, for certain qualification levels, for workers who are not new to the company, and for certain types of RTOs (Smith & Keating, 2003: 98). ‘User choice’ regulations are made by States and Territories and there can be variations among States and Territories and from time to time. Incentives may also be increased particularly for equity groups such as indigenous trainees. Because of these variations, employers and trainees are generally advised to consult an Australian Apprenticeship Centre (see below) for advice. Employers receive an additional financial benefit since, as with apprentices, they are allowed to pay lower than the normal rate to compensate for time spent in training.

There are two sets of intermediary organisations that directly contribute to the traineeship (and apprenticeship) system and a number of others that make an indirect contribution. The two direct contributors are group training organisations (GTOs) formerly known as group training companies (GTCs) and Australian Apprenticeship Centres (AACs) formerly known as New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs). Group Training Organisations act as employers of apprentices and trainees, placing them with host companies and thereby relieving companies both of the risk of taking on trainees (or apprentices) for a lengthy period and of the paperwork associated with employing them (Buchanan & Evesson, 2004; Hill and Dalley-Tim 2008). Australian Apprenticeship Centres (AACs) are newer than GTOs and were set up in the mid-1990s to increase the number of people entering traineeships and apprenticeships (Smith, 2008a). AACs market traineeships and apprenticeships to potential employers and workers, manage the signing-up process, and make sure that appropriate employment and completion incentives are paid. They also make employers aware of special incentives that may be available for employing trainees and apprentices from disadvantaged groups, e.g. indigenous or disabled people. AACs are also expected to have a role in making sure that the employer-worker relationship proceeds smoothly and to report any problems to the appropriate authority, normally the local office of the State Training Authority.

As well as these agencies, other agencies have some role in promoting traineeships. RTOs have an interest in employers recruiting trainees, because they can then access user choice funding by providing the training for the trainees. Job network providers, who provide an employment brokerage service, often they place their clients in jobs that include a contract of training. As the labour market became increasingly tight in Australia it has been more and more common for unemployed people to require pre-employment training before entering a traineeship (Guenther, Falk & Arnott, 2008). Industry skills councils promote traineeships to industry because then there will be greater take-up of the Training Packages which they oversee. In some industry areas ISCs and their State or Territory counterparts have become heavily involved in school-based traineeships to try to improve the supply of labour to their industries (Brennan Kemmis, Smith & O’Meara, 2006). Thus there are many stakeholders involved in making traineeships succeed and holding a stake in their continued existence.

Research methods

The research was carried out in two major stages during 2007-8 as follows:

- ✧ Stage 1: Interviews with 13 ‘high-level stakeholders’ who were senior officers in nine national-level bodies and institutions concerned with traineeships (October-December 2007).
- ✧ Stage 2: Case studies in six industry areas, comprising stakeholder interviews and company examples (November 2007 to March 2008).

A small project reference group of major stakeholders was established, members of which met twice by teleconference during the project life and reviewed all reports produced. In addition, the final draft report was sent for validation and comment to a larger advisory group, comprising Industry Skills Council CEOs from the industry areas and the high-level stakeholders interviewed in Stage 1 of the research, and four apprenticeship researchers in the UK and Germany.

Qualitative methods were used in the research because we were attempting to find out ‘how’ and ‘why’ answers as well as ‘what’ answers (Yin, 1994). Since the variables of positive features of traineeships have not previously been identified in a systematic way, quantitative research would not be appropriate. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable to identify and account for different perspectives (Maxwell, 2002) which are of importance in traineeship research because of the large number of stakeholders. The groups chosen as participants in the research were the major players in the traineeship system: industry, training providers, trainees, employers, peak bodies representing employers and unions, and skills councils. In total, 126 individual participants were involved.

Stage 1: The list of senior stakeholders was drawn up in consultation with the project reference group and included a range of personnel from government (Federal and State), industry, trade unions and intermediary organisations. They represent the major national stakeholders in traineeships, although several interviewees wished it to be understood that the views that they offered were their own and not necessarily the official position of their organisations. The interview protocol was loose, to allow for a broad expression of views. The questions were as follows:

- ✧ What is your organisation’s role with respect to traineeships?
- ✧ What are your expectations of traineeships?
- ✧ What can be described as a high quality traineeship? (Perhaps you have an example you could discuss?)
- ✧ What features contribute to high quality traineeships?
- ✧ What are the effects of variables such as employment practices industry area, Training Package content and structure, industry traditions?
- ✧ How far are the features replicable in other traineeships and how can this be done?
- ✧ What is necessary, or what needs to change, to improve the quality of traineeships?

Interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes and were taped (with permission) and transcribed. Two interviews took place face to face and the remainder were undertaken by phone.

Stage 2: Six industry areas were proposed for case studies and were supported by the reference group as being appropriate: financial services, children’s services, asset maintenance (cleaning), construction, retail and meat processing (abattoirs). Selecting specific industry areas follows the example of Kodz et al (2000) in an overseas study in a similar area that likewise selected six occupations. The reason for choosing the particular industry areas was to provide a mix of features that had been identified, together with NCVER, as being important in possible effects on quality. These features were: high completion rates, high volume of participants, pathways to higher qualifications, presence of traditional apprenticeships, and impact of regulation, public regard, and occupational identity. See appendix 6 for the features as they apply to the each of the six industry areas.

Each industry case study comprised two phases. Phase A comprised interviews with a representative of the following stakeholder groups:

- ✧ Skills Council
- ✧ Employer association
- ✧ Employee association
- ✧ Manager responsible for curriculum in a particular industry area – TAFE

- ✧ Manager responsible for curriculum – private RTO
- ✧ Group Training Organisation specialising in the industry

In some cases there was a little variation, or alternatively additional people were interviewed following recommendations.

Phase B of Stage 2 comprised ‘company examples’ involving site visits to two companies in each industry area (12 altogether) and their partnering RTOs. We ensured that some of the companies were small or medium enterprises. All site visits to company examples were in the Eastern States for budgetary reasons. Within company examples the following interviews were sought:

- ✧ Interview with HR Manager or senior line manager with HR responsibility
- ✧ Interview with training manager or equivalent
- ✧ Interview with at least one supervisor with responsibility for trainees
- ✧ Interview with trainees (at least two, and up to ten in focus groups in larger companies)
- ✧ Interviews with ex-trainees still working at the site, if available
- ✧ Interviews with course co-ordinator and/or teacher from the relevant RTO(s)

In small companies and other non-standard instances such as GTOs there was variation from this pattern. Interviews and focus groups were from 30-90 minutes in length and in most cases the interviews were taped and transcribed, with permission. The interviews in Stage 2 utilised detailed protocols (see appendix 3) which were based on the conception of quality described in the Introduction and were also influenced by the data collected in Phase 1 (high-level stakeholder interviews).

Data analysis: The high-level stakeholder interviews were written up and analysed initially, forming a backdrop to the detailed fieldwork. The twelve company examples were written up individually; then the six traineeship case studies (which each included two company examples) were written up and circulated among the researchers. The case study reports can be found at appendix 4. The data were coded and analysed in a cross-case analysis (Stake, 1995) using data reduction and display techniques (Miles and Huberman, 1994), such as the use of tables to record emerging issues, to identify the major themes. To draw the diverse data together for theoretical models and policy lessons, we used Ritchie & Spencer’s ‘framework’ analysis approach (2002), which they devised specifically for qualitative data analysis for policy research. This framework approach considers four categories of questions:

- ✧ Contextual: identifying the form and nature of what exists;
- ✧ Diagnostic: examining the reasons for, or causes of, what exists;
- ✧ Evaluative: appraising the effectiveness of what exists;
- ✧ Strategic: identifying new theories, policies, plans and actions.

(Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p307)

This framework enabled the research team to explore all aspects of traineeships, including the reason for the features that we encountered, the quality features of what we found, and the possibilities for improvement. The initial descriptive analysis was through 'etic' issues (Stake, 1995, p20) - issues 'brought in from outside' - which were based on the quality components described in the introduction. We then went on to examine 'emic' issues – those arising from the participants' interests and responses (Stake, 1995, p20).

The process of reporting to the reference group, presenting initial findings to conferences of practitioners and researchers (in local, State and national events), and the larger advisory group whose comments were sought at the draft final report stage, assisted in constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the findings.

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Appendix 2 – Overview of high-level stakeholder interviews

High-level stakeholder interviews

To provide the perspective of those who deal with traineeships at a national and/or policy level, 13 individuals from nine key organisations were interviewed at an early stage of the project. In some cases more than one person from the organisation attended the interview; in other cases the individuals were accessed at different times. Table 1 lists the organisations and reasons for their inclusion in the research.

Table 1 Stakeholder organisations consulted

Organisation no.	Organisation	Reason for organisation's inclusion
1.	Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI)	ACCI is a peak body for business & industry associations, and for State chambers of commerce & industry (37 bodies)
2.	Australian Council of Trade Unions	The peak body for Australian trade unions
3.	Department of Education, Science & Training (now part of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations - DEEWR)	The two branches of DEST involved manage traineeships and the overall quality of VET delivery
4.	Department of Employment & Workplace Relations (now part of DEEWR)	The branch of DEWR involved is responsible for monitoring the demand for, and supply of, labour in particular occupations
5.	Enterprise RTO Association (ERTO A)	Some enterprise RTOs – enterprises with 'embedded RTOs' - are heavy users of traineeships and have a national voice through this association.
6.	Group Training Australia (GTA)	GTA is a network of 150 group training organisations (GTOs); GTOs are the direct employers of apprentices and trainees who are placed with host employers.
7.	National Association of Australian Apprenticeship Centres (AACs)	AACs 'sign-up' all apprentices and trainees in Australia. NAAAC is the peak body for AACs. It promotes the work of AACs and provides policy development, networking and representation to stakeholders.
8.	Office of Training and Tertiary Education, Dept of Innovation, Industry & Regional Development, Victoria	An example of a State Training Authority. STAs manage the apprenticeship system & the quality of VET delivery within their borders.
9.	Labour Hire Co (pseudonym)	A national labour hire corporation which also operates GTO and RTO functions. Included on the advice of another organisation.

In the discussion that follows, points made are referenced to the organisation's number in table 1.

Depth and antecedents of understanding

The interviewees revealed a deep knowledge of the traineeship system. In many cases their involvement with traineeships preceded their current role and their understanding of traineeships and attitudes towards them had been formed by these previous experiences. For example, the branch manager for apprenticeships at the then Department of Education, Science and Training had been previously located at a state industry training advisory board promoting traineeships. Thus their current positions in policy roles were often, but not always, informed by on-the-ground experience. It was apparent that some interviewees had a deep commitment to traineeships, although a small number were quite negative about them. One of the interviewees acknowledged that his somewhat jaundiced view was because in his role he only ever saw the problem examples. Other organisations considered traineeships to be a valid path among several that individuals might undertake.

The opinions and comments from the high-level stakeholders are summarised in the following points.

Motivation

Several interviewees mentioned that many people involved with traineeships had a great commitment to making them work, although there were still some employers who might ‘exploit the system’. In the end, the quality of the traineeship depended on the motivation of those involved, including the trainees themselves. Trainees might prefer a traineeship with good training and good relationships with the various parties to one that offered better pay. Employers and trainees alike needed to know what they hoped to get out of the traineeship. The presence of ‘VET evangelists’ was mentioned. An example was given of a chef who had a ‘Road to Damascus’ experience and decided to take a more proactive interest in his trainees.

The curriculum

The respondents generally felt that advent of training packages and the standardisation among states and providers was more likely to ensure high-quality traineeships; previous qualifications had often been of variable quality. Training package units of competency of a manageable size seemed to work well; large units were too open to interpretation and led to greater risk of low quality. Moreover, since people often change jobs, large units of competency created the risk of people leaving with incomplete units that could not be transferred. Registered training organisations should ensure that appropriate units of competency were offered to companies and to individual trainees within those companies, particularly when selecting electives. This relied on the company being very clear about what it wanted out of a traineeship. It also meant that training organisations needed to be committed to providing appropriate training rather than just what they had taught previously or that was inexpensive to provide. The qualification itself needed to be appropriate; while this may seem self-evident, one interviewee mentioned an registered training organisation that had provided people working in a factory with IT qualifications when no IT skills were used in the factory workers’ jobs apart from clocking-on. Training packages that provided pathways to higher-level qualifications through traineeships at lower levels were valuable. This was especially important as labour market outcomes were better for people with higher-level qualifications. Employment incentives were now available up to advanced diploma level.

The content of the relevant training package was important. The training package should provide for learning experiences that require a high level of ‘commitment and resourcing’; it was important that traineeship qualifications were at the right level on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Training should be relevant to current industry practice rather than reflect historical traditions of teaching the trade.

The length of the traineeship was considered to be important for a successful traineeship. One interviewee gave the example of aged care. While the qualification could be achieved in less than twelve months, he said that a year was necessary to experience the different types of work covered by the qualification (7). The use of Recognition of Prior Learning processes was a complex issue, and while RPL was important in fast-tracking qualifications it needed to be rigorous (6).

In the end though, as most interviewees commented, their formal curriculum was less important than the quality of the pedagogy and the motivation of the parties. 'Training will be very carefully managed, organised and supervised; feedback given; all those sorts of things that are really important' (8). There was a view that the traineeship should provide training and not just assessment (9). It seemed that some registered training organisations only provided assessment services. Training Packages that provided details of assessment context were likely to lead to higher quality (8). Assessment should be complex and knowledge-based rather than just 'tick and flick' (6).

Role of on-the-job learning

On-the-job learning was seen as a fundamental feature of traineeships. It was recognised by one interviewee that a deep commitment by the employer to on the job training was less likely in traineeships than in apprenticeships. But, as one interviewee put it, 'if the training is high quality then it's a successful traineeship'. In other words the pedagogical processes in the workplace were all-important. The role of the workplace supervisor was crucial (3). Particular care needed to be taken for part-time workers to ensure that they received equivalent levels of supervision and training to full-time staff (1).

If the traineeship was primarily on-the-job, it needed to be supported by regular contact with the registered training organisation. One interviewee maintained that a 'traineeship has 'little value' without contact from the registered training organisation at least once a month (9). Such contact should include a 'high degree of face-to-face involvement with supported learning resources in between visits'. Such resources could include on-line, workbook exercise, and ideas for 'something the trainee can do, learn or demonstrate' (9). The trainees needed to know very clearly what they were going to learn and what their responsibilities were in relation to the on-the-job learning (3). The best outcomes were achieved where employers were very strict about providing time away from the workstation for learning (3). Employers needed to provide rotation among departments to ensure all the necessary skills were being learned. An example was given of a quality retail program where trainees from different companies spent time in each others' workplaces (3).

Alignment of the Training Package competencies with work processes and with performance management systems, avoiding the need for a great deal of explicit instruction, was applauded by one interviewee (5). But another interviewee said clearly that 'there's a difference between training and induction; there's a difference between training and doing one's job' (8). A good traineeship would deliver skills that were broader than 'just training for their current employer' (2).

Role of off-the-job learning

Although most stakeholders maintained that in theory a 100% on-the-job traineeship could deliver good outcomes, in practice they seemed to believe that some off-the-job training was necessary. This need not be at the premises of an registered training organisation but could be off-the-job within an enterprise. It was the combination of on-and off-the-job training, as with apprenticeships, that provided the advantage of traineeships over training that was entirely work-based or entirely institution-based (6). The off-the-job program should be rigorous. There was some support for an initial 'block' period of training off-the-job (9) and for regular block periods where trainees were geographically isolated (3). High quality learning resources, for example on line resources, were very advantageous (5, 3), as were up-to-date-equipment at the registered training organisation premises and well-trained teachers with industry currency (2). The new excellence rating scheme for

registered training organisations that had been introduced in the AQTF 2007 arrangements might help employers select appropriate registered training organisations (1).

It was considered important that employers were aware of what was being undertaken in the off-the-job training (3, 2). Off-the job training could lead to new learning being brought back into the workplace by trainees (3). This was not only the case for newly employed trainees; existing workers could 'bring those skills back into tired workplaces' (3).

Partnerships and collaboration

Nearly all interviewees stressed the importance of close partnership between the employer and the registered training organisation (and the GTO where appropriate). Two interviewees also mentioned the learner as a partner (3, 2). The role of the monitoring bodies such as AACs and STAs was not mentioned by all, but some maintained it was important for field officers from those organisations to keep in close touch with the enterprise and the trainee. However it was also acknowledged that 'some employers say there's just ... too many players; there's always someone new walking through the door.' (7). Only AACs were officially allowed to advise on incentives and expectations and it was important that other organisations did not offer too much advice on such issues (7). In Victoria the STA tried to get involved in large-scale sign-ups with major employers (8). Where employers maintained close contact with the registered training organisation, there was often beneficial learning for managers and other staff within the enterprise, not just the trainees. An example was given of veterinary nurse training in Tasmania where the traineeship program offered by a particular registered training organisation set up networks which had a widespread influence across the industry (3). While such networks may be seen as 'by-products of the traineeship program they could equally be viewed as an attainable quality feature for many traineeship programs.

Feedback to governments through the various participating bodies was seen as important. AACs for example set up State meetings where AACs invited 3 and State Training Authority personnel; similar arrangements were in place for GTOs (3). In some cases collaboration between registered training organisations and employers extended to use of the employer's infrastructure for off-the-job training; an example was given of a transport company in Victoria (8).

Learners

All agreed that a high quality traineeship benefited both trainee and employer. It was felt by several respondents that a high quality traineeship should involve the worker being retained at the end of the traineeship period and not being returned to the labour market (2). Examples were given of major companies that used traineeships as developmental routes into management (8, 3). Pathways for people without prior qualifications were also important (6).

Some traineeships, particularly at Certificate II level, were eminently suitable for disadvantaged people such as the long-term unemployed, and employment services providers were encouraged to consider traineeships as a possible outcome for such clients (4). Shortage of labour in some occupations (such as cleaning and meat processing) meshed well with the existence of traineeships in those occupations (4). As unemployment was currently so low, these occupations might therefore be seen as particularly suited to people currently on unemployment and other benefits (4). More generally it was felt that traineeships allowed access to qualifications for people who would be unlikely to want to follow an institution-based pathway (3). They were also attractive compared with apprenticeships to some people who would not want to make a four-year commitment (1), and in these and other cases could provide a generalist introduction that could transfer to different occupations (1). School-based traineeships were particularly valuable in this respect (1).

In many cases traineeships were associated with the first full-time job for school-leavers or for people returning to the workforce; having 'a learning environment' associated with the job made starting (or re-starting) work less stressful as the trainees felt that people did not 'expect them to

know what to do from the first day' (3). Matching a traineeship to a learner was important; an example was given of horticultural traineeships which seemed attractive to early school-leavers but contained theoretical subjects such as botany which would be difficult for such learners (3). Thus, trainees needed to be able to examine the curriculum before signing-up.

Table 2 interprets and summarises the interviewees' comments about the features of high quality traineeships. In this table the comments have been divided between teaching and learning (pedagogical) features and organisational features; and by the body that has primary responsibility. These divisions are somewhat artificial as some features straddle types.

Table 2 Features of high quality traineeships: derived from stakeholder interviews

Primary responsibility	Pedagogical	Organisational
registered training organisation	<p>Off-the-job training or (if not available) regular face-to-face contact with registered training organisation staff</p> <p>A substantial up-front off-the-job training input</p> <p>Emphasis given to training rather than (or as well as) assessment</p> <p>Willingness and ability of registered training organisations to offer appropriate units of competency for the organisation and the learner</p> <p>High quality learning materials</p> <p>Cautious use of RPL and of fast-tracking</p> <p>Structured training plans to manage trainees</p> <p>Motivated learners</p>	<p>A clear understanding of what is involved for all parties</p>
Within enterprise	<p>An assigned mentor and supervisor</p> <p>Training for mentors and supervisors</p> <p>Close supervision of trainees in the workplace</p>	<p>Enterprise commitment to training and one where the use of traineeships is supported by senior line managers</p> <p>Enterprise commitment to training beyond the immediate job role</p> <p>Highly skilled HR and training staff</p> <p>A large company</p> <p>Opportunity for trainees to move among different departments or tasks</p> <p>Enterprise commitment to retaining and developing staff rather than purchasing staff from the labour market</p>
External to the registered training organisation and enterprise	<p>Currency of training</p>	<p>A close relationship among the registered training organisation, the enterprise and appropriate intermediary bodies</p> <p>Continuous networking among enterprises and among intermediary bodies</p> <p>A sufficient length of training contract (e.g. nine months or more)</p> <p>Pathways to higher level qualifications and/or jobs</p>

What could change to improve quality?

Interviewees presented a range of ideas about how quality could be improved, which in some cases were diametrically opposed to each other. Some of the suggestions related to funding. The level of

user choice funding was generally felt to be too low to provide proper training and support, particularly where trainees were widely dispersed. Arguments were mounted for the restoration of funding to industries which some States have chosen to exclude from user choice funding (e.g. retail and hospitality). One interviewee said that higher funding levels should be available for higher quality training. On the other hand, interviewees from one organisation suggested that traineeships provided public funding for training that would formerly simply have been on-the-job, and that therefore were not necessarily a wise use of taxpayer funds (6). Other suggestions including the uncoupling of funding from complete qualifications to become available for shorter training period, and the attachment of funding to the person not the employer so that a trainee could move to another employer, carrying with him or her the balance of the funding. This would be likely to improve completion rates. Training could be made free to trainees rather than requiring them to pay a small contribution to the registered training organisation as was generally required.

The role of intermediary bodies was mentioned by one interviewee. There was a need for better training for staff in intermediary bodies – not focussing only on marketing. There is a need for a commitment to quality which would follow with better training for these staff. Intermediary bodies should not ‘just give them (employers) a folder and say “It’s all in there”’ (8). Some suggestions for improvement related to the role of employers. It was suggested that employers should be more accountable for their employment incentives – ie that they should need to provide evidence that they have provided good quality on the job training. Employers need to be told that taking on a trainee is a substantial commitment that involves a lot of work. One interviewee said ‘it’s like the old apprentice master’. STAs could be resourced be able to work with employers more closely. Processes could be examined so that employers have less paperwork and more real support. ‘They (employers) think they’ve earned the four and a half thousand dollars just by filling out the paperwork’ (8). In other words, employer effort gets sidetracked into the regulatory side rather than into the employment and training side.

Some suggestions suggested quite a radical change in thinking about traineeships. These included

- ✧ A reduction in the number of occupations that have traineeships attached to them.
- ✧ A shifting of focus for traineeships to equity groups and older workers for traineeships.
- ✧ Funding could be made available for the training (in some occupations) without the associated apparatus of traineeships.
- ✧ An alignment of the marketing of traineeships more closely to the likely labour market demand for different occupations with more information made available to trainees.

Appendix 3 – About the case studies

Justification of industry areas for case studies

The mix of industry areas for the case studies included both ‘high’ and ‘low’ scores in relation to the features below (as identified in the other research and the researchers’ previous experience) and was also selected to avoid industry areas studied in detail in previous NCVET projects (e.g. aged care). We used the following matrix to identify the six areas. It needs to be noted that empirical research was not available to confirm all of the features; hence we have called them ‘perceived features’.

Table 3 Selected case studies by Skills Council and perceived traineeship features

Perceived features	Financial services	Children’s services	Retail	Meat processing (abattoirs)	Asset maintenance (cleaning)	General construction
	IBSA	Community services & Health	Service Skills	Agrifood	CPISC	
High completion rates according to NCVET data	x	(varies among ANZSIC areas)			(varies among ANZSIC areas)	(not provided in the data set)
High volume of participants			x	x		
Clear & well-trodden pathways to higher qualifications	x	x				x
Presence of traditional apprenticeships in the industry			(minor)	(minor)		x
Regulatory factors	x	x				x
Public regard		x				x
Occupational identity	x	x				x

Case study interview protocols

Protocol for industry stakeholders

Commence with core questions from high level stakeholder protocol and then move into questioning that covers the areas below. The different groups of stakeholders may be expected to have particular expertise in the areas indicated with X in the appropriate columns, with the shaded areas indicating the greatest expected expertise.

Quality component	Prompts / Categories	Curriculum managers	Unions	Industry Assoc	Skills councils
Inputs	Training Package	X	X	X	X
	Resources	X	X		X
	Funding and incentives	X	X	X	X
	Sense of vocation		X	X	X
Processes	Pedagogy: on and off the job	X			X
	Employer-trainee psychological contract		X	X	X
	Intermediary interactions	X	X	X	X
Outputs	Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees		X	X	X
	Pathways to higher qualifications	X	X	X	X
	Attrition during traineeship	X	X	X	
Outcomes	Career progression		X	X	X
	Skilled staff for businesses and industry		x	X	X
	Staying in the industry	X	X	X	

Protocols for company examples (five separate sets of questions, for different participant groups)

HR Manager or senior line manager with HR responsibility

1. What is your role within the organisation?
2. What is your role in the organisation with respect to traineeships? Have you had any previous experience with traineeships?
3. How many trainees does your organisation employ? - please give an overview of your organisation's involvement in the traineeship system.
4. Why does your organisation participate in the traineeship program, and what are your expectations of traineeships? (include the role of incentives)
5. What has been your overall experience of traineeships within this company? (Ask for changes over time)? Generally speaking, what do you think are the most satisfying things about traineeships? and the most challenging or frustrating things about traineeships?
6. Where do you learn more about traineeships? (e.g. networks etc)
7. Have traineeships had any impact on your organisation's approach to recruitment and career development more broadly?
8. Have traineeships had any impact on your organisation's learning & development programs?

Please describe retention/attrition of trainees, pathways to higher quals, and other outcomes. What is the industry acceptance of the qualification? Does this company recruit people who already have traineeships?

What would you say needs to happen for there to be a high quality traineeship – in your company, in your industry, more generally?

9. Do you think that the quality of traineeships is affected by issues such as employment practices, industry area, Training Package content and structure, industry traditions, status of the industry/occupation?

What do you think are the key things that the RTO has to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship?

Have you been satisfied with the services of your RTO's and intermediary organisations (GTC, NAC, employer associations etc)?

How can RTOs be encouraged or better supported to improve the quality of traineeships?

What are the key things that the employer needs to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship? And specifically, the HR department?

How can employers be encouraged or better supported to improve the quality of traineeships?

10. What is necessary, or what needs to change, to improve the quality of traineeships (*only ask if not already addressed*)?

Training manager or equivalent

1. What is your role within the organisation?
2. What is your role in the organisation with respect to traineeships? Have you had any previous experience with traineeships?
3. What has been your experience of traineeships within this company? (Ask for changes over time)? Generally speaking, what do you think are the most satisfying things about traineeships? and the most challenging or frustrating things about traineeships?
4. Where do you learn more about traineeships? (e.g. networks etc)
5. Have traineeships had any impact on your organisation's learning & development programs or any other aspects of HR?

Please describe retention/attrition of trainees, pathways to higher quals, and other outcomes. What is the industry acceptance of the qualification? Does this company recruit people who already have traineeships?

What would you say needs to happen for there to be a high quality traineeship?

6. Do you think that the quality of traineeships is affected by issues such as employment practices, industry area, Training Package content and structure, industry traditions, status of the industry/occupation?

What do you think are the key things that the RTO has to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship?

What do you consider to be best practice delivery and assessment (by the RTO) in traineeships? How important are learning materials/study guides and off-the-job training within traineeships?

Have you been satisfied with the services of your RTO's and intermediary organisations (GTC, NAC, employer associations etc)?

How can RTOs be encouraged or better supported to improve the quality of traineeships?

What are the key things that the employer needs to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship? And specifically, the training department?

What do you consider to be best practice delivery and assessment (on the job) in traineeships? Can you give any examples from within your own company?

How can employers be encouraged or better supported to improve the quality of traineeships?

7. What is necessary, or what needs to change, to improve the quality of traineeships (*only ask if not already addressed*)?

Supervisor with responsibility for trainees

1. What is your role within the organisation?
2. What is your role in the organisation with respect to traineeships? What has been your experience of traineeships, here and in other organisations?
3. Generally speaking, what do you think are the most satisfying things about traineeships? and the most challenging or frustrating things about traineeships?

4. What's been the impact of traineeships in the organisation? Have they affected staff morale, interactions amongst staff, attitudes towards further training and skill development?
5. What are the arrangements with the RTO (training provider)?

What would you say needs to happen for there to be a high quality traineeship?

What do you think are the key things that the RTO has to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship? What do you consider to be good practice delivery and assessment in traineeships? How important are learning materials/study guides and off-the-job training within traineeships?

How do you train the trainees under your supervision? How did you learn how to do this training?

What are the key things that the supervisor and the company as a whole needs to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship?

How can employers and supervisors be encouraged or better supported to improve the quality of traineeships?

6. What is necessary, or what needs to change, to improve the quality of traineeships?

RTO Traineeship Coordinator & RTO Trainer

1. What is your role within the RTO?
2. What is your role in the RTO with respect to traineeships? Include numbers of trainees, industry areas etc? Have you had previous experience with traineeships?

What has been your experience of traineeships generally?

What has been your experience with traineeships involving (insert case study employer name)? What delivery arrangements are there? Do you deliver the same qualification to other companies and do the arrangements differ?

Please describe retention/attrition of trainees in this industry area, pathways to higher quals, and other outcomes. What is the industry acceptance of the qualification? Do companies recruit people who already have traineeships?

3. Generally speaking, what do you think are the most satisfying things about traineeships? and the most challenging or frustrating things about traineeships?
4. Where do you learn more about traineeships? (e.g. networks etc)

What would you say needs to happen for there to be a high quality traineeship?

Do you think that the quality of traineeships is affected by issues such as employment practices, industry area, Training Package content and structure, industry traditions, status of the industry/occupation?

Have you been satisfied with the services of intermediary organisations (GTC, NAC, ITABs, employer associations etc)?

What do you think are the key things that the RTO has to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship?

What do you consider to be best practice delivery and assessment in traineeships?

How important are learning materials/study guides and off-the-job training within traineeships?

How can RTOs be encouraged or better supported to improve the quality of traineeships?

What are the key things that the employer and supervisor need to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship? How can the RTO assist?

Across the board, what is necessary, or what needs to change, to improve the quality of traineeships?

Trainees

1. How long have you been doing your traineeship for?
2. Have you done a traineeship previously? (provide details: qualification, employer, completion)
3. Why did you decide to do a traineeship? What is your career plan and/or plan for further study, and how does the traineeship fit in with this?
4. Generally speaking, what have been the most satisfying things about your traineeship? and the most challenging or frustrating things about your traineeship?
5. What have you learned during your traineeship and where did you do most learning (e.g. on the job, in off the job training)?
6. Do you get treated any differently to other staff because you're on a traineeship?

Have you been satisfied with the training and support provided by the RTO? (provide reasons as to why or why not)? What could improve?

Do you use learning materials and/or study guides? Are they easy to work with / informative / relevant to your job? (provide reasons as to why or why not)

Is there any off-the-job training? If yes, how does that work? Does it relate to what you do in your job – is it relevant? What are the good and bad things about off-the-job training?

Is there any on-the-job training? If yes, how does that work? Are you given time at work to study or learn from other staff? If no, how are you expected to learn about the job?

Have you been satisfied with the training and support provided by your supervisor during the traineeship?

What are the key things that the supervisor needs to get right for there to be a high quality traineeship?

How can employers and supervisors be encouraged or better supported to improve the quality of traineeships?

Would you recommend a traineeship to your friends or family? Why/why not?

7. Do you have any suggestions about how traineeships might be improved – in your company, in the industry, more generally?

Appendix 4 – Industry case studies

Industry case study reports

Introduction

This appendix presents the six industry case studies. The research method for the case studies is outlined in appendix 3.

Pseudonyms have been utilised for all individuals and all enterprises. Registered training organisations (RTOs) and group training organisations (GTOs) were provided with the option of choosing to have their real organisational names used, and in most cases it was their preference to have their organisation's name used. Industry stakeholders that were interviewed are described by their position and their organisation's names. In each of the six industry case studies there were two company examples and a number of interviews with relevant stakeholder groups. Table 4 summarises the state/territories where site visits were undertaken for the company examples; some of these companies were national in nature. There was a mix of metropolitan, suburban and regional locations in the site visits.

Table 4 State/territory sites of company examples

State/Territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	ACT
Industry area				
Asset maintenance (i)		1		
Children's services	1		1	
Finance & insurance	1	1		
General construction	1			1
Meat processing	1	1		
Retail	1		1	

Note (i) There was only one company example for asset maintenance, but in addition detailed interviews took place with companies and registered training organisations in Victoria and NSW.

The stakeholder interviews external to the company examples, which were with national or State level personnel in most cases, were undertaken with respondents in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia.

Brief summary of each case study

The asset maintenance (cleaning) case study was carried out through interviews with national stakeholders, a company example in a medium sized cleaning company in regional Victoria, and interviews with a national commercial company, a Group Training Organisation in Victoria employing disadvantaged people, and a large registered training organisation in NSW with a broad clientele in the cleaning industry. Cleaning in Australia is a large but low-profile industry which has traditionally employed casual staff, with a large turnover. Before the advent of the Training Package

there were no national qualifications and the industry believes that the wide use of traineeships will not only lead to greater worker satisfaction, lower labour turnover and better career paths, but also higher industry standards and a better safety record in the industry. The research clearly indicated the depth of skills and knowledge required to be an effective cleaning worker and the rapid technological advances. Many workers have language or literacy difficulties and the training methods need to account for these. Government traineeship incentives are important for most employers because of low profit margins. The passion of those working in cleaning training for their industry was evident in the research.

The children's services case study was developed through a series of interviews with industry experts and two company examples. The company examples involved a medium sized child care operator with nine centres in metropolitan and regional NSW, and a smaller single community based centre in metropolitan Brisbane. The children's services sector forms part of the broader community services & health industry, delivering a variety of services including centre-based long day care, preschool care, family day care, home based care, mobile services, occasional care and outside school hours care. The children's services sector has enjoyed high levels of growth in recent years, but has witnessed significant consolidation as larger operators and corporate interests have emerged alongside traditional community based providers. Traineeships in the sector have grown in recent years, driven by the emergence of larger employers and a growing experience base and history of engagement in the industry. Employers typically prefer on-the-job traineeships but inconsistent state traineeship funding arrangements and industry regulatory requirements are affecting take-up. Attrition is also considered an issue, with factors including inappropriate recruitment practices and a lack of support for trainees in the workplace. Employers and industry stakeholders identified support in the workplace as a key driver of quality in traineeships, and called for improved marketing and promotion of traineeships for their industry.

The finance and insurance case study was investigated through a series of interviews with industry experts and two company examples. The case studies included a large multinational bank and a small, regional insurance broking company. The finance and insurance industry has enjoyed a high level of growth in recent years since deregulation of the industry in the mid 1980s, but the industry is quite fragmented with a few very large banks and a large number of smaller, often regional, financial institutions. The adoption of traineeships by the industry has been hampered by the decentralised nature of the institutions. The Finance and Insurance Training Package is held in high regard in the industry but it is often viewed as rather generalist in an industry populated by many specialist staff. Adoption of the Training Package by employers has been slow until recently. Adoption is now being driven by two factors. Firstly, the Financial Services Reform Act of 2004 mandates a Certificate III qualification for those giving financial advice to the public and higher level qualifications for more specialist advisors. Secondly, the industry faces difficulty in attracting young people – particularly to smaller financial institutions. Employers in the industry identified the importance of workplace support factors in determining the quality of traineeships in the industry. These factors included the recruitment of good quality trainees, the provision of career pathways for trainees after graduation, the commitment of employers and the level of support from intermediary agencies such as registered training organisations and employment service providers.

The general construction case study constituted interviews with national stakeholders, and company examples in a large GTO in a medium-sized city and a small town in regional NSW. The construction industry in Australia is important to the economy and is experiencing skills shortages in some trades partly because the industry has become increasingly sub-contracted with sub-contractors reportedly unwilling to employ apprentices. The Certificate II qualification available at the time of the study was something of a compromise among competing interest groups and proposed new qualifications were the subject of political argument, still unresolved at the conclusion of the research. The traineeship is mainly used for particular client groups, e.g. disadvantaged groups and school-based trainees, although there are some mainstream examples, as in the second example in the case study. The case study indicated that some off-the-job training is considered preferable although there may be circumstances when on-the-job only delivery is necessary. In the latter case, particular arrangements need to be made for likely learning difficulties

and to compensate for limited experiences available in some work-sites. Some education of employers is necessary to compensate for lack of experience with traineeships and in some areas of the industry, lack of experience with apprenticeships. Articulation to a Certificate III qualification is problematic, although progression to an apprenticeship itself appears to be a common outcome.

The meat processing industry case study involved interviews with national figures and visits to two large meat processing enterprises in regional NSW. The first enterprise processes only beef and it is a multi national company with its base in the United States. The second enterprise is an Australian owned company that processes only sheep. The second company is vertically integrated and uses the 'waste' products from meat production to market a range of other products including wool and pet foods. Both companies produce for international markets. A series of interviews were conducted with industry experts and the case studies were carried out on site. The meat industry is highly regulated and production is circumscribed by stringent health, hygiene and OH & S regulations. The viability of the enterprises depends on their ability to demonstrate adherence to these national and international standards one of which is demonstrable proof of the type and duration of training that employees undertake. Traineeships are therefore ideally suited to this industry. The Training Package has been recently revised and the Meat Industry Training Advisory Council, which is funded by the industry itself, has been responsible for dissemination, implementation and the provision of support resources to assist in the take up of the new credentials. The meat industry has the persistent problem of attracting and then retaining staff and the possibility of gaining a nationally recognised qualification through traineeships is regarded by the industry as a possible way of addressing these problems. Industry members suggested that close relations with the registered training organisation, high levels of workplace support and mentoring, good quality resource materials and the commitment of the enterprise to the value of training all contributed to the level of quality of the traineeships.

The retail case study was developed through a series of interviews with industry stakeholders and two examples in large companies, one an enterprise registered training organisation. The retail services industry is highly diverse, with a wide range of products and services offered through enterprises of varying size and distribution, including micro-businesses and multinational companies. The case study company examples involved a large national privately owned clothing retailer, and a national fast food retailer which is part of a larger multi-national corporation. The retail industry is the largest single industry providing employment within Australia, and has long been a sector that provides the first experience of employment. Consequently, traineeships are a popular entry level program, particularly amongst retail chains with multiple outlets. Whilst skill shortages have become more of an issue for the industry in recent times, traineeships continue to grow, particularly amongst large national retailers who have shifted away from store driven engagement to a more strategic national involvement in the traineeship system. The research found that employers typically prefer on-the-job traineeships but acknowledge that quality outcomes are more likely to be achieved through a good mix of on-and-off the job training where trainees are supported in the workplace and can interact with peers off-site. Major concerns exist around the national inconsistency of funding and administrative arrangements which impede efforts to develop career pathways and more strategic engagement with traineeships. Industry concerns over quality also exist, but despite this, traineeships at Certificate II & III continue to be generally well regarded in the industry.

Detailed case studies

Asset management (cleaning) case study report – Erica Smith

Introduction

The cleaning industry in Australia as in all developed countries is large, with the most recent ABS report on the industry showing national turnover of \$2 billion a year (ABS, 2000). The industry is also diverse, with

small employers dominating. Whilst half of companies are sole proprietors, there are three major companies, Big Clean Services, ISS Facility Services and Menzies International (IBISWorld, 2008). There was a workforce of 95,000 in 1999 (ABS, 2000), and it is likely that numbers have considerably increased since then. Whilst the majority of workers are employed in the commercial sector (e.g., cleaning services for hospitals, offices etc) there is also a strong domestic sector including specialisations such as carpet cleaning. The industry is characterised by low pay, high labour turnover, a large proportion of part-time, casual and ‘self-employed’ workers, workers with literacy and language disadvantage, and an international student workforce (ineligible for traineeships) in the metropolitan areas. A recent report on the cleaning industry by the Department of Employment & Workplace Relations (DEWR, 2006) found there were substantial recruitment difficulties especially in WA, and that the available pool of workers was often of a lower quality than employers would have liked.

The major employer associations in the industry are the Building Services Contractors’ Association of Australia (BSCAA) and the Australian Cleaning Contractors’ Association (ACCA). The major trade union is the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers’ Union. The industry is part of property services which at a national level is covered by the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council (CPSISC). Trainees in the cleaning industry undertake qualifications in Asset Maintenance (Cleaning Operations) which are included in the Asset Maintenance Training Package PRM04. The focus of this case study is on the Certificate III in Asset Maintenance (Cleaning Operations). Certificate II appears to be most commonly offered as a pre-employment course, and Certificate IV is generally undertaken by supervisors. There is also a Certificate I in Asset Maintenance (Cleaning Operations) which contains only three units and appears to be offered to particular client groups e.g., potential early school-leavers. The Certificate III PRM30104 has five core units and 14 electives, of which three may be from another Training Package. There is a large overlap between Certificate II and III but none between III and IV. A new cleaning qualification became available within the new Health Training Package HLT07, being designed for cleaners in hospitals, aged care facilities and so on.

This cleaning industry case study has been constructed as a result of interviews with industry stakeholders and example company employees. Due to particular developments at the time of data collection within companies that were recommended by stakeholders, only one complete company example is provided. The second ‘company example’ is constructed from the experiences of personnel working in and with a number of enterprises using the traineeship. Two companies are described in detail in this example and a range of other companies summarised by the major RTO in NSW offering this qualification.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted by telephone and were of 45-90 minutes’ duration. The interviews were recorded and transcribed with permission. The table below details the non-company interviewees.

Interview	Position	Organisation
1.	Senior officer	Business Skills Victoria (BSV) – nominee of CPSISC
2.	Committee member	BSCAA - employer association. Also the proprietor of a cleaning company with 300 employees.
3.	Senior officer	Construction Services Programs, TAFE NSW - public RTO curriculum manager
4.	Senior officer	NSW, Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) – union
5.	Traineeship manager	Big Clean Co
6.	Senior officer	STEP, part of Brotherhood of St Laurence - group training organisation

In addition to the above, brief conversations were held with a senior officials of CPSISC and BSV who were involved with the initial development of the Training Package as well as its ongoing implementation in Victoria and NSW, including use of the training package in NSW schools where a Certificate II traineeship is offered as a ‘locally-developed’ course.

There was some division of opinion among the four stakeholders. While two of the stakeholders had very high expectations of traineeships which had been on the whole met, two felt otherwise. The NSW TAFE respondent, whose background was in the construction industry, oversaw delivery of cleaning qualifications in NSW TAFE as part of construction services. He did not have high regard for traineeships in general,

including this qualification in particular. There were not many students enrolled in this area in NSW TAFE, and no full-time teachers. He believed there were no technological advances in the cleaning industry and described the program as a 'bit of a shadowy thing'. The respondent felt that the training was low-level and did not move beyond what was already undertaken in the workplace. He felt he had no role to ensure quality, feeling that cleaning traineeships were better left to private RTOs and enterprise RTOs. He said:

We're not talking about something that's a critical occupation, an important one, we are not talking about someone who is doing something that's fundamental to human health and safety for example, so ... I'm not sure there's any major gain in this type of thing.

The response of the union representative was also, on the whole, negative, which on reflection he attributed to his own background in a traditional trade, and his traineeship experience in another industry at an earlier time when traineeships were not well regulated. Thus his view was that the apprentices 'got a better deal'. In his current role, he had been involved in an industrial dispute with a cleaning employer who, he felt, was abusing traineeships, employing staff in traineeships purely to depress their wages in order to meet budget on a contract.

In contrast, the other two stakeholders talked more positively, discussing, for example, the purpose of cleaning traineeships. They had hoped that traineeships would professionalise the industry and lead to a training culture, and felt that this was happening. They discussed the levels of skill inherent in the job and the way in which the traineeship validated and lifted skill levels. They felt that quality of work in the industry and particularly OH&S and sustainability would be lifted by traineeships.

(it needed to) really tackle the OH&S area because there are a lot of shonky practices, this is an area where obviously OH&S has such a big impact – correct movement, correct bending techniques, and using heavy equipment.

The BSCAA representative said that OH&S consumed greater and greater amounts of managers' time and hence good training of workers in this area was a business necessity:

'(As a manager) ten years ago I would probably have spent an hour a week on it, and I'm now spending probably a day a week.'

The union representative thought that with more trained staff, more full-time jobs might be created and more people attracted into the industry as a career choice. The preponderance of short-term international students in the industry in Sydney did not foster a strong sense of identity with the industry. He noted that contractors targeted particular communities of overseas students and his own team of organisers needed to possess arrange of language skills to be able to communicate with the rapidly changing nationality groups that were most common in the industry. However these workers were not eligible for traineeship incentives.

All agreed that there had been some instances of 'abuse' by employers to gain incentives but those with broader knowledge said that this had not been severe in the industry. Attrition rates of trainees were believed to be in the middle range across all industries. As many workers were part-time and often of low literacy or of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB), the qualification had been very valuable for equity reasons. The industry was diverse and the traineeship qualification offered a pathway both for employees and small business owners. The average age of business owners was rising, and traineeships offered a chance to provide pathways to senior management for younger workers.

The traineeship qualifications (Certificate II and III) were considered to be of high quality and had good industry acceptance among those who were aware of them. However, the industry was not yet routinely demanding qualified people, generally asking for 'experience' instead, but it was expected that a demand for the qualification would follow. The possession of qualified staff was beginning to be an issue for companies in tendering for major jobs. Possession of the qualification undoubtedly helped people get jobs because it is proof of experience and skills. As the BSCAA representative said

'They would have started the process to understand and learn the industry, There are obviously physical aspects of training like learning to vacuum, learning to clean toilets... they're all important and if the employer doesn't have to go through that process with a new employee then obviously it's saving a lot of time... a significant part of the traineeship is OH&S. You and I might think that getting the cleaner to check his cord before he plugs his vacuum cleaner in is a normal part of the process – well it's not easy to get them to do it... they've got to self-regulate.'

The qualifications (Certificate II and Certificate III) were said to be suitable for the typical learner group and the terminology used in the Training Package was industry-appropriate. It was said that the Certificate IV was not well used and was perhaps not necessary - a generic management qualification could be more popular with business owners. Another reason for lack of use of the Certificate IV was that the structure of the industry did not provide for many supervisory positions, with the highest normally an area manager. Funding

was essential in smaller companies as profit margins in the industry were so low; for larger companies, it was not mentioned as a major issue except in anecdotal reports of employers that ‘rorted’ the system.

The following were listed by the stakeholders as features of high quality traineeships in the cleaning industry.

Organisational (employment-based) features: In a high quality traineeship, companies would allow time for training, either off the job or within the workplaces. Those working with trainees would build trainees’ confidence and encourage them to ask questions. Mentors or buddies would be provided and supervisors would spend time with trainees to mentor and encourage their learning. Career pathways would be developed where possible. Companies would provide as full a range of experiences as possible, using Group Training or work release if necessary. As workers were often distributed across a number of sites, it would be important to provide good mentoring and supervision on the different worksites. Companies would provide good signage in workplaces to assist those from NESB or with low literacy. Companies would ensure that they modelled good practice in the workplace in order to provide a consistent message for trainees.

Pedagogical features: There would be ‘proper training’. RTOs would provide comprehensive and professionally produced learning resources including visual aids and resources appropriate for people with language and/or literacy disadvantage; a video produced as part of the national support materials was mentioned as an example. A coherent body of underpinning knowledge would be imparted to trainees. Authentic simulated environments would be developed for practice. There would be a high level of support where learners were disadvantaged and close attention by RTO to site visits where the training was on the job. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) would be used with care and with attention to risk. The general feeling was that off-the-job training led to higher quality learning. The BSCAA representative said

‘I think the training can be more structured if it’s off-the-job and I think you can be more specific, you know, specific skills off the job.’

In addition, off-the-job training was needed because cleaning companies were always working in somebody else’s premises, often with rigid access arrangements. As the union representative said:

‘There is a limited amount of time that the contractors can get the cleaners into the building to do anything ... for (extensive) on-the-job training to take place the cleaners would need access to stores and buildings earlier than what they get now. They basically get to the front door of the building at 6pm, get straight to work and are booted out of the building at 9pm. No scope in that time to do any training at all’

He thought that while it would be possible to negotiate extended access, cleaning companies were afraid of jeopardising their relationships with clients. When asked what was necessary to improve the quality of traineeships in cleaning, respondents hoped for a greater understanding of the importance of the industry and therefore of qualified staff. There also needed to be ‘an education process on what a traineeship is’ as the union representative put it. Greater regulation was suggested by the BSCAA representative. A greater understanding of the match between job roles and the different qualifications was also desired. They mentioned closer attention to the issue of supervising trainees where they move between worksites. Trainees needed to be made aware of practices across different workplaces, so that their learning extended beyond what they needed in their immediate job. Respondents suggested that supervisors themselves may not be well-qualified and compensation needed to be made for this. Recognition and awards for trainees should be encouraged. The BSCAA offered a scholarship of \$15,000 every second year for a young manager to travel overseas; although this was not directly related to traineeships it could be a model for traineeship awards. With regard to the Training Package a greater emphasis was suggested on sustainable products and less use of chemicals. Although there was a large emphasis on OH&S still more could be included. Another respondent felt there could be more emphasis on the role of the cleaner at a commercial premises in selling further services to the client. However, interviewees did not feel that the cleaning industry offered any special lessons for other industries, as good practice in cleaning industry aligned with good practice in other industries. As one respondent put it

‘If I could sum up what a traineeship should be... it’s proper training, meaningful training, delivering outcomes for employer and employee, and should lead to a career path for the employee. It should also lead to a more sustainable and better workforce.’

Company Example 1: Bill Saunders Cleaning

This was a privately-owned cleaning business in a regional city in Victoria that had been operating for 18 years. There were 18 employees, all of whom were employed on a casual basis, although many worked close to full-time hours at least some of the time. Most had been with the company for some years. Work was divided amongst commercial and domestic clients, the majority being commercial including schools, offices and other premises. The work was fairly gender-segregated with men normally doing windows and handling heavy equipment such as carpet cleaners, while women undertook the lighter work. The men's work tended to be daytime while the women's tended to be early mornings and after-hours. There were many management challenges associated with a large casual workforce, with substitute staff often needing to be found for staff sick or absent for other reasons. There were also problems associated with access to premises and security. The most important attribute of staff according to the proprietor was honesty. Also, staff working in schools needed to have 'working with children' checks.

The RTO utilised by Bill Saunders Cleaning was BRIT (Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE). Teachers travelled to the company to provide the off-the-job training. Bill Saunders was recommended as a high quality employer by the BRIT cleaning course coordinator; in turn BRIT had been recommended by the State Business Services ITAB as being the best provider of cleaning training in Victoria. Interviews were undertaken during March 2008 as follows:

Interview	Name	Role	Location of interview
1.	Bill Saunders	Company owner/manager	The manager's home which was also the company office
2.	John	Long-standing employee	The manager's home
3.	Susan	Employee for six months	Susan's own home
4.	Darren	Cleaning course coordinator and teacher	BRIT cleaning department

Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes and were all taped and transcribed. At the RTO, the researcher also viewed course materials and the training area including small 'booths' that contained the different types of surfaces that were encountered in cleaning.

Both Bill, the manager, and Darren, the RTO coordinator, had begun in the cleaning industry as a second job to earn more money to support their families, but had quickly become fascinated by the industry. As Darren put it, 'You won't slow us down; we're mad on our cleaning, all of us, all over the state.' The manager's interest in traineeships began when he found that when tendering for jobs with government departments and larger clients he was required to give details of his staff's training. He believed that those tenders that referred only to on-the-job training were 'put to the bottom of the queue' but that the client tended to accept certificated training. As a member of the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI), he received advice and was referred to BRIT as an RTO. At the time of the interview two groups of Bill's staff had undertaken traineeships. The first group included interested existing staff. The second group consisted of new staff who'd joined after the first program commenced. These workers started the program at the end of 2007. Eight staff, including Bill himself, undertook the first program which was run by BRIT for these people only. The second group had five workers and two people from another company who joined the group for part of the course. The two workers interviewed were John, from the first of two groups of trainees from the company, and Susan, from the second group. John had been working for the company for about 10 years. For some of that period he had also been employed in a second cleaning job where he had commenced a traineeship but had missed some of the sessions. He was highly committed and loyal to the company. Susan was a new worker who had commenced about six months previously having spent 17 years out of the workforce raising children.

Some confusion had occurred in the early stages of negotiation for the first group of trainees as the manager had been informed by VECCI that employment subsidies would be available for all workers when in fact there was a regulation that existing workers of 12 months' or greater service were ineligible for traineeships of this length. The VECCI representative later contacted Bill to inform him of this, expecting Bill to withdraw the existing workers from the scheme, but Bill persisted with the program. As well as paying the RTO for the training, Bill also paid the staff 8 hours each time they came in for their off-the-job training days. This was necessary because of their casual status. Darren thought attendance by the manager was very important:

Bill Saunders comes into his first group with eight of his staff— says “This is great!” — buys them a salad roll. So it was seen to be “Well, Bill is here, it’s obviously a good thing”. But a lot won’t do that.’

It was noted that some employers were more interested than others in the incentives and even built them into the operating cash flows for their businesses because of the tight profit margins in the industry. But the better employers, like Bill, were primarily interested in the increased skills and motivation of their workers and tended to use any ‘profit’ they made from the incentives to purchase new equipment that they often learned about through the course. Bill stated that if there were vacancies he would prefer to employ staff that had the Certificate III qualification: ‘It would be a bonus to have to put them through the course.’

Off-the-job training and assessment was undertaken in a hired room in the town, with a small number of sessions taking place at commercial premises. The off-the-job training took place over full days and appeared to last for about three or four months (recollections differed). Learners were given two workbooks and they were expected to pre-read relevant sections before each training day. On the training days these areas were reviewed and practical work was undertaken. Initial assessment took place on the training days and after the off-job training finished. The RTO kept in close touch with the company and remained available for remedial training during the traineeship. At the end of the traineeship, if the employer was satisfied with the performance of the worker, the RTO granted the certificate, on the dual basis of assessment off-the-job and employer sign-off. This usually took place after about nine months, although some learners needed to be brought back in or visited on-site for remedial training.

In general both the manager and the workers interviewed were satisfied with the training. All – including the manager - were able to point to new learning they had undergone. The manager felt that a little more attention could have been paid to practical skills – for example he said that a great deal of time was spent in looking at the bacteria around toilets but less attention was paid to ‘the actual cleaning right in behind the toilet, and actually go through the whole toilet.’ He also felt that more ‘people skills’ could be included in the course. He accepted however that the responsibility for training was shared between the RTO and the company – and also stated that he was quite certain that the RTO would adapt and/or extend the material covered if he requested it. He felt that staff had profited from the training:

The workers confirmed that they saw the portability of the qualification as a benefit. The manager also stated that he explained to them the necessity of having a trained workforce in order to win tenders, and that ‘they come around pretty well like that.’ The staff interviews confirmed that they attended the course primarily because Bill had asked them to and that they would do more training only if Bill asked them to.

Although the course involved written materials the literacy requirement was not high. Darren the course coordinator explained that the materials had been progressively modified to make them more accessible. The written parts of the assessment tasks were generally a matter of ticking the correct answer or of indicating parts of a diagram and so on. Bill felt that the training and assessment was quite thorough; however John, the more senior worker, who took part in the first course, had a different view. He felt that some people passed through the written assessment too easily:

‘Everybody sort of sat down and worked it all out and then if the answers weren’t right, they would give them to you, so it made it a bit too easy... whereas if they had to answer for themselves and figure it out for themselves it might be a bit better’.

He noted that these were all experienced workers and that their on-the-job experience ensured they were competent; however he felt that the same assessment methods if applied to new workers would not be rigorous enough. However he also noted that the practical skills assessment was more rigorous. Both workers commented on the skill of the trainer. The female trainer who undertook most of the training on the two courses ‘didn’t let anything faze her’; she was prepared for people to make many mistakes and to ‘jump out of the way’ when equipment was poorly steered. It was enjoyable for the women to utilise the equipment that the men normally operated. Susan felt that this made her more useful at work because if a job required use of a floor polisher, for example, she was able to assist whereas previously another worker would have needed to be brought in.

Careful attention was paid to off-the-job training. Staff normally worked in pairs but if there was a new trainee, the trainee was attached to a pair as a third team member to enable effective on-job training. Mentors were selected from among long-standing and efficient workers who had good communication skills. Bill, the manager, noted that sometimes staff could get upset if their work was criticised and so the latter were important. Darren mentioned that differences between off-the-job learning and work practices arose in some companies, particularly where the manager had not undertaken the qualification and might see the ‘correct’ way as wasteful of time and resources. He explained that some people retired from a career job and thought they could buy a cleaning business, not understanding the depth of knowledge and skills required. At Bill Saunders, staff said that on the job training was never at variance with the off-the-job training because all of

the staff had done the course. While Susan felt that she learned equally from on- and off-the job training, John said that he had known most of the skills and knowledge before he started the course. However, he still enjoyed the course.

BRIT ran a large number of cleaning programs all over Victoria, NSW and Tasmania. The RTO ran Certificate II, III and IV programs as well as some non-certified programs and was offering the new Health cleaning qualification. The mode of operation was almost always off-the-job, with on-the-job support. If a major client insisted on on-the-job delivery BRIT would develop a program that met the requirement while involving some time away from workstations (for example in a staff room). Darren felt that learners needed time away from the work station to learn and to make mistakes. However, BRIT's reluctance to provide on-the-job traineeships had lost the RTO some potential clients. Despite this they still had an expanding client base. Cleaning was one of the flagship areas of the Institute and BRIT had opened a major training facility at Essendon Airport as the terminal provided a real work environment for learners. When servicing rural and remote areas the teaching team hired a village hall or similar venue, which provided some cleaning opportunities, and took along a specially equipped van that contained all the cleaning equipment used for training. BRIT staff held occasional days for industry to inspect new equipment which obviated the need for local businesses to travel to a capital city to see such equipment. BRIT staff were members of the employers' association and regularly attended conventions and industry events. Darren referred to the importance of face to face meetings with potential clients as people could misunderstand other forms of communication. Often people contacted Darren through word of mouth and he set up meetings with an Australian Apprenticeships Centre (AAC) for them, as employers were nervous about approaching an AAC themselves. Darren emphasised the level of skills and knowledge required in the industry.

'.. the equipment that is out there now, the responsibilities and security factors – these cleaners are locking up multi-storey buildings and banks with guards and a lot of responsibility ... people are getting very, very ill in this industry. The chemicals we use can kill people. The manual handling (problems) are probably one of the worst. They're still bleaching the daylight out of hospitals and we shouldn't even be using bleach.'

Nevertheless he felt that the Certificate III was 'at a level where 99.9% of people can do it and achieve it.' He mentioned that while there was not much difference between Certificate II and III (and only 8 additional units) there was 'an enormous step' between Certificates III and IV.

Quality features evident in traineeships in this company included the personal commitment of the manager – which extended to undertaking the course himself - and the possession of in-depth knowledge of the industry by the RTO staff and the company manager. RTO staff continuously updated their industry knowledge and passed on their knowledge to client companies. Off the job training, which staff were paid to attend, provided a chance to learn the full range of skills in the industry whereas workers' day to day assignments were often fairly limited. High quality learning materials were provided that acted as a reference later and supported the development of soft skills. The company promoted high quality work practices that did not contradict the 'correct' methods taught off-the-job. On-the-job training included different tasks to get the full range of experiences.

Possible quality improvements were suggested, including Commonwealth funding for existing workers to enable more companies to train their workers. The better companies used the 'profit' they made to purchase new equipment or further training. More transparent information about funding was needed, both for managers and for workers. A view was expressed that managers taking on trainees should be appropriately qualified and/or that AACs should assess companies for suitability. The RTO identified poor management as a major problem in the industry, and so more engagement in Certificate IV programs would help both generally and with supervision of trainees. It was strongly felt that training improved the status of the industry. As a small contribution to this, a proper textbook for the area might assist.

Company Example 2: Various enterprises

As part of the stakeholder interviews for the cleaning industry, the researcher was referred to several enterprises and RTOs that engaged heavily in traineeships. Representatives from these organisations were interviewed, but for various reasons none was, in the end, able to provide the opportunity for a company example. However the interviews provided valuable insights into the use of traineeships in several different contexts within the industry and hence have been included in the case study in lieu of a second company example. Interviewees were as follows:

Interview	Name and role within organisation	Organisation & location	Nature of organisation
1.	Traineeship manager	Big Clean Co (national)	A major employer of cleaning trainees
2.	Cleaning coordinator	Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) cleaning enterprise (Vic.)	An enterprise that hosts cleaning trainees
3.	Manager of BSL GTO and RTO	BSL GTO	Employer of the BSL enterprise trainees
4.	Director, Business Development.	Lennox Institute (NSW).	Major RTO working with a many cleaning enterprises.

Note: Pseudonym utilised for company in interview no 1

Interviews took place between October 2007 and March 2008. All interviews were undertaken by telephone and were between 30 and 75 minutes long. The first two were taped and transcribed, with permission, and notes were made for the remainder.

Big Clean Co: A major support services company: Big Clean Co had been employing trainees and apprentices in a range of its operational areas (including food services, laundry, cleaning and maintenance) but in 2006 a more standardised approach to the company's engagement with nationally recognised training was adopted. Traineeships became a 'national project' and the interviewee was employed to 'tie together ... all the strings that were hanging loose'. Cleaning operations employed the greatest numbers of trainees, 341 of 1400 trainees. Traineeships were 'sold' within the organisation as a 'win win', i.e., with benefits to management and workers alike. Managers would benefit from 'retention, motivation, productivity, happier employees and financial incentives. The interviewee saw the advantages to workers as follows:

'a lot of these traineeships are you know, targeting a blue collar audience... like someone who's been a cleaner for 5, 10 years, but there's been no formal recognition of what they've done, and ... they see themselves as just a cleaner...so the combination of on the job training and recognition that what they're doing actually does have some value somewhere in an educational framework, has made them feel, I think, just a lot more proud about what they do, in themselves, with their self esteem.'

To foster the trainees' pride in their achievement, the company held graduation ceremonies when a number of cleaners from one site, or sites near each other, had finished their programs. While Big Clean Co was an enterprise RTO, its scope of registration was quite small and the cleaning training was all outsourced. This was considered better than trying to deliver in-house, as Big Clean's operations were dispersed across Australia. Local training providers were engaged and in some cases reciprocal commercial arrangements were established; for example a TAFE Institute in Queensland employed Big Clean to do its cleaning and Big Clean employed the Institute as the RTO for its cleaning trainees in that State.

Traineeships were primarily delivered on-the-job. This provided minimal disruption and also fitted with the typical cleaning manager's 'tactical rather than strategic' focus. Where there were substantial numbers at any one site, the trainers were able to organise classroom sessions, but these needed to be arranged carefully at the cross-over of shifts. The interviewee believed that training was well-received as it was 'practical and hands on', and that managers believed it meshed very well with the tasks employees were performing day to day. While many of the employees were non-English speaking, many of the managers were too, and were therefore tolerant and prepared to assist the workers with their learning. The RTOs all used workbooks for the trainees and an internal document was written for site managers 'The seven habits of highly effective traineeships'. The document, for example, recommended that site managers spend time every fortnight with each trainee, even if only ten or 15 minutes.

RPL was offered to trainees but the company preferred the option for long time employees rather than new staff as the company knew that past work of their own employees was performed to a requisite standard. Progression as result of completing the traineeship was fairly limited because most sites employed only a small number of cleaners and there was usually only one supervisory position. While it was possible that some may have gone on to complete the Certificate IV in Asset Maintenance, the company was not aware of them as they did not attract funding. There was also the situation, as in other traineeship areas, that the Certificate IV created expectations of leadership roles which might not be available.

Brotherhood of St Laurence: Traineeships for disadvantaged learners: BSL operated a range of programs for disadvantaged people as well as undertaking research and advocacy activities. The cleaning enterprise, one of several operated by BSL, employed disadvantaged clients selected into the traineeship program. Eight to ten clients were employed each time a program ran. The program had been in place for approximately four years at the time of the study. Groups of clients, recruited from targeted communities, were taken through a pre-employment program covering employability and similar skills, and provided with information about different BSL programs. After an interview, they were allocated to an enterprise within BSL that best suited their needs and aspirations. Many of the clients were long-term unemployed. They were actually employed by the BSL GTO, so the BSL enterprises acted as host employers. At any one time the GTO employed about 80 trainees of which close to 10% were in cleaning. A case management approach was used to ensure regular meetings with between clients, support workers and the dedicated GTO field officer. As both the RTO sessions and the work sites were in the city centre, clients also gained experience and confidence in negotiating public transport and feeling confident in the city.

Trainees were employed for about 15 hours a week and attended off-the-job training sessions for half a day every two to three weeks. Eighteen units of competency were completed. The training was undertaken by the BSL's own RTO and workbooks were provided. Clients were encouraged to enrol in the Certificate III but if their confidence was low they might start with the Certificate II. English and Maths tests were administered by the RTO on commencement for diagnostic and remedial purposes. Learning materials were prepared by a trainer with language literacy and numeracy expertise to minimise the need for written assessment. Visual aids such as labelling and colour-coding were used both in the classroom and on-site. Off-the-job training was seen as important because it was possible to gather all the required equipment in one place, and areas within the rest of the building were available for practice. In this way quite sophisticated simulated environments could be developed. BSL RTO had been approached by other potential clients seeking cleaning training, but the manager of the GTO and RTO reported that they tended to 'back off' when they heard that off-the-job training was involved. Trainers had extensive industry knowledge and possessed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment 'with a deep understanding of that qualification', according to the manager.

In between off-the-job sessions, the cleaning co-ordinator visited trainees on-site approximately once a week to check the quality of their work and to monitor their training. In the on-the-job sessions it suited the client group to be able to refer very explicitly back to off-the-job sessions as repeating information in different contexts assisted retention of learning. The learners were provided with log books to complete on-the-job. BSL was considering moving more of the off-the-job training to the beginning of the traineeship as many clients were finding permanent work after around nine months. With more up-front training, clients would be more likely to be able to complete the qualification before leaving. However, the State Training Authority was reportedly suspicious of the traineeships being completed in nine months, although BSL felt this issue to be more relevant to other companies that did not provide intensive training.

Issuance of a qualification was viewed as a confidence booster for learners which would not be replicated if they were employed without a traineeship. Potential employers knew that trainee graduates were competent in a range of skills and employable, with a high placement rate into permanent work. Some graduates went to work in areas other than cleaning, but this was also seen as a positive outcome. Cleaning involves working at different sites, working in a team, and quite often interacting with employees and the public at different work sites thus providing an excellent foundation for many types of work. The cleaning co-ordinator described it as 'like getting an arts degree ... it gives you the skills to do something else.' He saw the program as 'taking them out of their shell, out of their comfort zone'. The program also built friendships among the participants.

Lennox Institute: Provider of cleaning traineeships to several major enterprises, mainly in NSW: In NSW the cleaning traineeship was two years long and so was eligible for government funding. Also, NSW provided user choice funds, so cleaning traineeships were able to operate on a firmer financial footing than in Victorian, reported in this example and the remainder of the case study. There were variations among the States and Territories regarding the fees that RTOs were allowed to charge and this complicated matters for RTOs operating across State borders. In addition, differing and complicated rules for equity groups in some States made funding arrangements impenetrable for many RTOs and employers. Some clients were reported to enrol staff in traineeships primarily to help them win tenders, and in these cases, sometimes 'the learners have to be dragged through it'. They took more interest if the manager showed a clear commitment to the workers' learning. The cleaning industry has a high turnover, often 70% a year. Therefore for some clients the Institute offered continuous traineeship training so 'as people start work they can jump in wherever the course is at'.

The Lennox Institute prided itself on ‘actually delivering training’. Three hours of training was provided off-the-job throughout the traineeship which could be off-the-job at the worksite. The interviewee said:

We sometimes get asked “Can’t you just follow them around?” But generally clients prefer off-the-job training and they often complain to us about their previous RTOs.

At the time of the monthly visit the trainer would spend extra time with individual trainees, giving them additional training or assessment. Traineeships were seen to be more effective if company managers sat in on the training, held prize-givings and made a fuss of people proceeding onto Certificate IV. Managers were encouraged to be fully involved in on-the-job learning. The interviewee reported that the revised Training Package had tightened the literacy requirements for being deemed competent. This reportedly made achieving competency difficult for the predominantly non-English speaking workforce. However, the researcher was unable to locate such a requirement in the units of competency in the Certificate III. The new cleaning qualification in the Health Training Package was more appropriate for health facilities environments but some companies were unaware and still requested the asset maintenance qualification.

Quality features in Big Clean included systematic management of traineeships across the whole company and clear identification of the benefits of traineeships enabling their marketing to managers. There was systematic evaluation of delivery quality, and regular meetings with RTOs that supplied training services. Training and support for supervisors was provided and there were mandatory regular meetings between trainees and supervisors to monitor learning. Graduation ceremonies for trainees boosted their self-esteem. At BSL, quality features revolved around the appropriateness of the delivery style for the client group. There was tailoring of the program without sacrificing rigour and reinforcement of off-the-job training on the job. A range of assessment tools were tailored to suit learner needs, and off-the-job training enabled careful coverage of the full range of units of competency. Both on and off-the-job trainers had deep industry knowledge and high-quality training qualifications. Extensive support systems for the disadvantaged client group were provided. It was considered that the method of delivery had wider applicability in the cleaning industry because many workers in mainstream cleaning have some sort of disadvantage.

The Lennox Institute displayed a deep knowledge of the cleaning industry among its staff and a commitment to off-the-job training. They undertook regular site visits for assessment and remedial training. They emphasised that high-quality employers selected appropriate qualification and units for the working environment; and that such employers evidenced a commitment to the industry.

This composite example suggested a number of possible improvements. A more coherent body of knowledge would enable better evaluation by companies of the training provided by RTOs particularly if the company, as in Big Clean’s case, did not have cleaning specialists in its senior management. More consistent and transparent funding arrangements were clearly needed among the States; and higher funding was needed for BSL-type programs as learner attributes were more challenging due to low unemployment.

Analysis

The following analysis of traineeships in the cleaning industry considers inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes as defined in the overall research project.

Inputs:

- Training Package

The Training Package qualifications were considered to be appropriate for the learners and were said to show evidence of sound industry inputs. There was some disagreement about the appropriateness of the Certificate IV; some considering it to be under-utilised due to limited job roles of that type. However, BRIT considered it to be very appropriate for the industry and important in building managerial expertise.

- Resources

High-quality learning resources were felt to be important and workbooks of a fairly similar nature were used by RTOs although there may be room for more differentiation. These were developed to cater for the client group which usually included people with language or literacy difficulties and were used as reference following the course. This may indicate the need for a high-quality textbook for reference purposes. Audio-visual aids were useful for the client group. A great deal of attention was paid to the provision of simulated

learning environments. These could be specially-constructed ‘booths’ which could be portable or could involve creative use of premises to allow for different cleaning experiences.

- Funding and incentives

The availability of funding was very important to the majority of employers who operated on very tight profit margins. However some employers will still train their workers when no funding was available, as was the case for existing workers. This was particularly so when a benefit was seen to the company such as more success with major tenders, better OH&S outcomes and ‘softer’ benefits such as increased self-esteem and motivation. It was reported that some employers felt guilty about receiving incentives and made sure that the money was ‘returned to the workers’ such through the purchase of up-to-date equipment that made their jobs easier. It was clear that there were inconsistencies among the States and Territories in funding rules, both directly in terms of user choice, and indirectly in Commonwealth incentives. In addition, the lack of transparency and publicity about incentives discouraged some employers.

- Sense of vocation

This was probably the most important area in cleaning traineeships. Cleaning is an area of work that has in the past been considerably undervalued, to the extent that the respondent in charge of curriculum for a State TAFE system stated that there was little skill or knowledge involved in the job. Better training could create better jobs, through multi-skilling, and will attract better candidates to the industry. There was a clear sense from the research that key players were consciously working with the traineeship system to increase the status of the cleaning industry and the sense of vocation among its workers. However the research also revealed that there might be major stakeholders who were passively if not actively trying to downgrade the status of cleaning training and through this, by implication, the occupation of cleaner.

Processes:

- Pedagogy: on and off the job

There was a consensus among most interviewees that it was important to have off-the-job training. The underpinning knowledge and OH&S implications needed to be imparted in some depth and without distractions. Big Clean was the major exception where there was little off-the-job training but compensated by attention to internal training processes and quality control. Off-the-job training was not without costs and employers needed to be prepared to pay casual staff to attend training. On-the-job training also had financial costs because trainees really needed to be surplus to rostered staff in order for the team to achieve work targets. Effective off-the-job pedagogy included delivery and learning materials appropriate for the client group, constant reinforcement of messages, and a caring and skilled trainer. Trainers needed to display enthusiasm for the industry and keep up with rapidly evolving technology and work practices.

- Employer-trainee psychological contract

The availability of traineeships appeared to strengthen the psychological contract although in some cases there was initial resistance from existing workers to training. Good RTOs consistently underlined to trainees the benefits of training and to employers the benefits that employment incentives brought them as well as the expected improvements in worker performance. These actions helped to align employer and employee commitment and expectations.

- Intermediary interactions

Intermediary organisations were important in helping traineeships to occur and protecting employers and employees from potential exploitation. However the research uncovered one definite instance of an AAC giving incorrect information about incentives, with potentially disastrous consequences, and other reported instances where employers belatedly found out that their staff did not qualify for incentives, and literally pulled them out of the training room. These instances are unfortunate and would no doubt be telegraphed around the industry. Trust appeared to be very important in establishing partnerships; and BRIT, for example, appeared to inspire trust and hence employers approached BRIT directly. The case management approach adopted by BSL was necessary to support and develop learners who might fail in non-protected circumstances.

Outputs:

- Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees

While traineeships remained relatively underutilised in this industry compared with the numbers of workers, it was not yet important for job applicants to possess the qualification. Those employers seeking government contracts and contracts with major clients such as shopping centres sought people with qualifications to boost their profile and chances of success. Other employers understood and valued the skills that the qualification implied. However it was also reported that some employers preferred people without the qualification in order to access traineeship incentives.

- Pathways to higher qualifications

The standard qualification appeared to be Certificate III as this provided a sound knowledge base as well as skills. Certificate II seemed to be used primarily as a pre-employment course or for traineeships for severely disadvantaged learners. Progression from Certificate II to Certificate III was relatively straightforward. Progression to Certificate IV was a bigger leap and job opportunities at the Certificate IV level were not available in many companies. Most workers appeared to be introduced to the concept of traineeships through their employer rather than actively seeking a traineeship. In this way they seemed to become reliant on their employers to inform them of training opportunities and independent seeking of higher-level qualifications was not common.

- Attrition during traineeship

While it was stated that the turnover in cleaning was high, and the Lennox Institute interview suggested that this applied to trainees during their course, no direct figures were obtained on attrition. The Bill Saunders traineeship program with two groups of trainees experienced no attrition.

Outcomes:

- Career progression

As already discussed there were relatively few opportunities for supervisory positions in the industry due to its distributed nature, but at the same time, concerns were expressed about the dearth of future managers. Much managerial-level employment is in the position of owner-operator and currently many people who bought companies had not had previous cleaning experience. More general progression was also possible to other industry areas. For disadvantaged learners a cleaning traineeship was a good foundation for many areas of work and qualifications, and at higher levels, a senior cleaner might move onto a generic management qualification that opened up possibilities in other career areas.

- Skilled staff for businesses and industry

As discussed in the introduction there is a severe shortage of staff in the cleaning industry and the skills of those gaining employment are not always acceptable to employers. Therefore traineeships are of paramount importance both for individual employers and for the industry as a whole. Low wages will, however, remain a problem and arise from tight contracts negotiated by clients.

- Staying in the industry

In general, employers viewed the training as an investment in their workforce and sought to retain them in the longer term. The cleaning industry was conscious of the need to improve its management workforce and therefore welcomed traineeships as one way to attract and retain good workers.

Conclusion

While large numbers of workers had undergone traineeships in the cleaning industry, the reach, particularly into small enterprises, remained underdeveloped. People often entered the industry in casual jobs, after a period out of the workforce, and/or as second jobs and did not necessarily all have a great initial commitment to the industry. Good training appeared to help foster that sense of enjoyment, pride and self-efficacy in their work, which improved the likelihood of people staying in the industry. This provided the chance for managers to build a more stable workforce. Traineeships were playing a major part in increasing awareness of, and practices relating to, occupational health and safety issues which were prominent in this

industry. The lack of expertise and industry knowledge of many managers of small businesses appeared to be a barrier to quality.

RTOs appeared to play a major part in maintaining and improving standards and in lifting the professionalism of the industry. They appeared to act as disseminators of good practice and of technical knowledge more broadly beyond the actual trainee participants. Funding was essential to the continued operation of traineeships especially because the underdeveloped part of the industry seemed to be in small businesses whose profit margins were low and whose managers were not necessarily receptive to the concept of training initially. The lack of managerial skills and confidence meant that intermediary advice needed to be readily available and correct, which was not currently always the case. Different funding arrangements across States and Territories exacerbated this problem and seemed to be impeding cross-border operations of some RTOs.

Summary

- Traineeships are of vital importance in this undervalued but vital industry. There is an absolute shortage of workers in the industry as well as low skill levels.
- Evidence of trained staff is increasingly a requirement of major clients, which will increase demand for traineeships.
- Some RTOs have a passionate commitment to high quality training and this always involves off-the-job training by staff that are highly experienced in the industry.
- Part-time and out-of-hours work arrangements can, but need not, act as a barrier to participation.
- Low industry profit margins may discourage participation in training, making funding very important.
- The need to find more workers will lead to engagement of more people from those currently unemployed. This might require additional funding but could reap many benefits for other industries as people make the transition through this industry into others.
- Training through traineeships is likely to improve the status of the industry and lead to increased professionalism and industry reform.
- It may be that staff in some public providers, State Training Authorities and intermediary agencies need education about the industry and in particular the level of skills and knowledge required.

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Children’s services (child care) industry case study report – Paul Comyn

Introduction

The children’s services sector forms part of the broader community services & health industry. Forty-three percent of all community organisations deliver children’s services in a variety of ways including centre-based long day care, preschool care, family day care, home based care, mobile services, occasional care and outside school hours care. Other services support children with additional needs. In 2002, the Australian Government supported about 500,000 child care places, an increase of around 42,000 places from 2001. The number of supported child care places in 2002 was equivalent to 15.0% of children aged 12 years or younger, with the majority of Australian Government child care places being for outside school hours care (46.1%), followed by centre-based long day care (38.8%), family day care (14.2%), occasional care (0.6%) and other care (0.4%) (CSHISC, 2005). Since then, the sector has continued to experience significant growth and has witnessed increasing corporatisation of child care services which has altered the traditional dominance of community based providers in this sector.

Trainees undertaking the Certificate III in Children’s Services (CHC30402) are required to complete 15 units of competency comprising 11 compulsory and four elective units. It aims to prepare workers who use organisational policies, procedures and individual children’s profiles to plan activities and provide care to children, facilitating their leisure and play and enabling them to achieve their developmental outcomes (CSHISC, 2007).

Stakeholder Interviews

This children’s services industry case study was constructed as a result of interviews with both industry stakeholders and example company employees. Interviews were conducted by telephone and were of 45-60 minutes duration. The interviews were not recorded, with data collected through written notes and supplementary material provided by some respondents. The table below details the non-company interviewees.

Interview	Name	Position
1.	Senior officer	Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (CS&HISC)
2.	Board member	Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (CS&HISC)
3.	Senior officer	Childcare Industry Association of Queensland - employer association
4.	Senior officer	Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA) - public RTO curriculum manager
5.	Senior officer	Charleton Browne - private RTO manager
6.	Senior officer	Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) - union
7.	Senior officer	Australian Training Company (ATC) - group training company

The industry stakeholders interviewed for this case study had roles that covered the spectrum of issues associated with traineeships, and as might be expected, their expectations and experiences of traineeships were varied.

The Community Services & Health ISC managed the Training Package that included traineeship qualifications. The skills council saw traineeships as an opportunity for the industry to have more controlled input into what training is delivered. They suggested that employers preferred new staff to go through a traineeship rather than complete an off-the-job training program because of the practical experience, and saw traineeships as a useful policy tool, providing employment linked to skills development. The skills council suggested that traineeships were working well in most states except NSW, where although the Diploma was the entry level industry qualification, government would only fund the Certificate III.

As the union with coverage of most child care centres, the LHMU dealt with issues confronting child care workers doing traineeships. They generally considered traineeships in the child care industry to be a positive development, having provided training and qualifications for people entering the industry. The union

believed traineeships could work well and were a genuine undertaking in many centres, but noted trainees were often left alone, without support or professional development and were used as cheap labour. Childcare Queensland, the peak body for child care providers in Queensland, had responsibility for responding to member issues which had recently come to include traineeships as their take-up in industry grew. The overall experience of the association was positive, although their members had reported examples of both good and bad practice. The association expected traineeships to create a pathway to a career in the child care industry, deliver a win-win solution for the trainee and employer, and add value in the workplace.

As a Group Training Company active in the community services industry, ATC aimed to source and seek suitable applicants and place them with appropriate child care centres. They expected traineeships to meet skill shortage, provide quality interaction between employers and the RTO and provide adequate knowledge and skills to new staff so they could function on-the-job. Their experience was generally positive but they too noted examples of good and bad practice in the industry. The private RTO Charleton-Browne, operated with both government user choice traineeship funding, including school based traineeships. The RTO expected traineeships to provide positive outcomes for students, provide career paths for them to remain in the industry, and to deliver good underpinning knowledge and skills. Their experience with traineeships was varied, with some great students and employers on board, but they reported that teachers often found themselves working with students not well suited to the industry who had been inappropriately placed with employers.

As part of a public provider active in Queensland, DETA product officers were involved in a range of processes associated with traineeships including the endorsement of Training Packages, curriculum and resource development, and advice on delivery and assessment. They believed traineeships were programs that provide authentic experiences to deliver the competencies. The DETA staff believed that traineeships had been effective in up-skilling the children's services sector, but as for quality, they too noted a mix of good and bad. When questioned on the features of high quality traineeships, these stakeholders provided a range of responses that primarily focussed on issues surrounding the workplace environment and pedagogy. Key quality features included:

- A shared view amongst trainees, trainers and employer on the traineeship's purpose and operation;
- Clear and effective communication between all parties leading to an effective working partnership;
- Effective trainee supervision and clear direction as to what was required at work;
- Employers releasing the trainee for learning, extra tasks, discussion, reading and observing other staff;
- Effective scheduling of visits from RTOs;
- Effective professional and personal support for trainees including the use of technology to allow for immediate feedback on issues (including phone, email & SMS);
- Employers and RTO staff who understood the Training Package and the requirements it imposed;
- A mix of on-and-off the job training, but no set times of the hours to be spent on each;
- Wholly on the job traineeships that add value to the workplace as a whole and not just the trainee;
- An off-the-job component that allowed trainee interaction with other trainees;
- Trainers both on and off the job that have adequate skills, knowledge and experience; and
- A range of experiences and resources available.

When asked what was necessary or needs to change to improve the quality of traineeships, the stakeholders made a range of suggestions including:

- Introduction of different rates of pay for trainees who had completed the program;
- The need for trainees to understand that they needed to add value to the workplace;
- The need to market child care traineeships more effectively;
- Improved industry experience and knowledge of RTOs and the quality of resources they use;
- Improved engagement of employers and trainees by RTOs so that each party's expectations were clear and could be met as much as possible through flexible delivery and assessment; and
- RTOs should be given more resources so that they can provide improved delivery options that meet employer/trainee needs.

Despite these various views, the main theme of interviewee responses was that the most significant improvements to quality would occur if all parties approached traineeships with shared understandings of the purpose of the program and the inputs required to see the trainee successfully complete the program.

Company Example 1

In addition to the industry stakeholder interviews, two organisations operating as child care centres were the focus of this case study. The first was a private operator that managed nine child care centres catering for children under the age of five. This firm, known as *Sunny Valley Child Care* for the purpose of this study, employed 46 staff, 11 of which are trainees. Eight of its centres were located in the Sydney metropolitan area with one centre in a mid-sized regional town on the mid-North coast of NSW. Sunny Valley had operated for over 30 years and had grown from two to nine centres since 2000 in response to the growth in demand for child care places in NSW. The centres predominantly offered long day care support, catering for working families.

Eight interviews were conducted over one day, with visits to two Sunny Valley centres in Sydney and their RTO based in Wollongong. The interviews were conducted on site and were of 45-60 minutes' duration. The interviews were not recorded, with data collected through written notes and supplementary material provided by respondents. Interviewee details are shown in the table below.

Interview	Position
1.	Chief Executive Officer
2	Service Coordinator
3. – 6.	Trainees
7.	RTO Student Coordinator
8.	RTO Trainer / Assessor (RTO)

Sunny Valley had participated in the traineeship system since its inception, with seven of its nine centres managed by ex-trainees at the time of the interviews. The company saw traineeships as a way of developing their staff at the same time as providing national qualifications. Traineeships were considered a great initiative as they provided genuine practical experience that benefitted the industry, the company and the individuals concerned. As noted by the Service Coordinator:

'for those people that really want to be in the industry, practical experience is the key, and traineeships are great at providing that'.

Whilst they valued the traineeship system highly, as a general rule, Sunny Valley did not recruit new support staff who had qualifications, preferring instead to introduce new entrants to the 'Sunny Valley way' of working. This approach also guarded against the fear of employing qualified staff who were not adequately skilled due to inadequate training provided by unscrupulous operators and RTOs, which the CEO believed exist in the industry today. Traineeships were seen by Sunny Valley as a way of obtaining support from the government to train staff wholly on-the-job so that the benefits of practical experience were maximised. They considered wholly off-the-job programs to be inadequate as they did not develop a practical skills base for new entrants to the industry. As noted by the Sunny Valley CEO:

'on the job training is the only way to go, it's better than tech or uni - sitting in a classroom instead of being on the floor with kids around you'.

Sunny Valley took the view that all trainees were recruited with the goal that they would have the skills necessary to manage a centre by the end of their traineeship. Their training on the job covered all aspects of running a centre and covered a wide range of practical skills. As regulations in NSW required supervisors to hold the Diploma in Children's Services and have at least 12 months work experience, at Sunny Valley, trainees were encouraged to commence the Diploma as soon as possible, either within 12 months of being employed or at the completion of the traineeship. Sunny Valley also used their network of nine centres as a means of rotating trainees or providing new challenges once the traineeship had been completed.

The approach to traineeships within Sunny Valley demonstrated a number of key quality features. First amongst these was the important status trainees had within the organisation and the strength of monitoring and support trainees received from other staff. There appeared to be a genuine culture of recruiting trainees to succeed and grow as valued members of the Sunny Valley team. The involvement of parents at the

beginning of the traineeship was also a unique strategy to secure ongoing commitment from the trainee and their support networks, with trainees fully aware that their parents would be contacted if they failed to meet the requirements of the traineeship.

Due to its longstanding involvement in the traineeship system, many Sunny Valley supervisors had progressed through the traineeship system themselves and were able to provide a higher level of informed support and encouragement to trainees than might otherwise have occurred. Through structured weekly meetings, trainees and supervisors discussed traineeship progress. They reinforced the importance of the written work and supported the development of good learning habits as trainees progressed to the Diploma program. Supervisors were also available after hours to provide assistance when trainees were completing written work. This level of support and interaction was claimed to contribute to the high completion rates and progress to Diploma studies reported by Sunny Valley management. Overarching monitoring of trainee progress by the Service Coordinator added a further layer of oversight and support as supervisors and trainees were both able to contact the Service Coordinator directly.

Whilst face-to-face visits from the RTO were minimal in the distance mode, ongoing telephone and email support, coupled with written feedback on assessments, provided trainees with a range of contact options and adequate levels of support. Whilst more site visits would have been possible with additional funds, there was a generally positive attitude towards the RTO and their program within Sunny Valley. The RTO was very conscious of the need to understand the way Sunny Valley operated and they particularly looked to develop good working relationships with supervisors at each centre.

Another quality feature evident at Sunny Valley was the effort to link the trainees learning and assessment with the workplace practices. This was achieved through three key elements; supplementary materials provided by the RTO; the use of weekly meetings to allocate activities that linked with content being studied at the time; and the use of RTO visits to identify customised assessments that linked to scheduled activities within the centres. The practice of rotating trainees across different Sunny Valley centres also provided a broader experience base and greater positive experiences for trainees.

Neither Sunny Valley nor the RTO had any specific plans to improve the quality of their traineeship program as both were broadly satisfied with how it was progressing. However, a number of possible improvements to the wider traineeship policies and regulations were suggested. Management and staff within Sunny Valley and the RTO believed that the traineeship in NSW should lead to a Diploma qualification and be offered over 18 months to two years. With the traineeship only leading to a Certificate III outcome, trainees were not able to work as supervisors in NSW centres. Similarly, Sunny Valley management also commented that the staff/trainee ratios mandated by the Department of Community Services (DOCS) in NSW had a negative impact on traineeships and limited the ability of smaller centres to take on trainees. It was suggested that staff holding a Certificate III should be able to act as a buddy of a trainee. It was also suggested that married women with children doing traineeships should be entitled to the Commonwealth JET allowance to subsidise their costs of child care, as current subsidy levels were seen as inadequate to encourage women to re-enter the workforce and relive staff shortages. Traineeship sign-up arrangements were also seen as an impediment by both Sunny Valley management and the RTO. Delays in processing by the Department of Education were cited as the major issue, along with the length of time taken to rectify simple administrative errors. Finally, whilst RTO staff felt that it might be beneficial to provide greater information to supervisors on how to deliver on-the-job training, Sunny Valley Supervisors thought that the RTO should involve them more directly in trainee assessments.

Company Example 2

The second company example was a single child care centre operated by a community organisation in the eastern suburbs of Brisbane. This centre, known as *Happy Nappies Child Care Centre* for the purpose of this study, was operated by the local community association as one of several community services offered to residents in the local area. The local community association had been working for more than 25 years to strengthen local family and community life through a range of activities including community development activities, disability services, youth and family supported accommodation, child and youth services, family relationship education and corporate and community training. Happy Nappies was a limited hours child care centre operating for 4 hours per day on 4 days per week. It cared for 43 different children in any one week, with the capacity to handle 14 children of mixed ages at any one time, ranging from 18 months to five years of age. The centre employed two full-time staff, three part-time trainees and drew on the services of four local volunteers when necessary.

Seven interviews were conducted over one day, with visits to the suburban Happy Nappies centre and their RTO, based in Brisbane CBD. Six of the interviews were conducted on site with one conducted via

telephone. All interviews were of 45-60 min duration. The interviews were not recorded, with data collected through written notes and supplementary material provided by respondents. Interviewee details are shown in the table below.

Interview	Position
1.	Children & Youth Services Hub Coordinator
2	Child Care Centre Director & Supervisor
3. – 6.	Trainees
7.	RTO Academic Manager
8.	RTO Trainer / Assessor

Happy Nappies had participated in the traineeship system for the past three and a half years, since commencement of the tenure of the centre director. The parent community organisation saw traineeships as a way of developing their staff at the same time as providing national qualifications. The Children & Youth Services Hub Coordinator noted that:

'traineeships are valued here because they contribute to community development and because they give the trainees good practical experience alongside more formal training'.

As Happy Nappies was part of the community sector, they did not see the incentives as a major driver of their involvement. They did, however, acknowledge that incentives were helpful. The centre's experience with traineeships had grown from involvement in the local high school's work experience program. The program developed into a VET in schools program where one day each week, children and carers from the centre were transported to the school so that students undertaking the Certificate III in Children's Services could have access to children. This innovative program received an award of excellence in 2005 from the State Training Authority and led to commencement of school-based traineeships at Happy Nappies.

The RTO working with Happy Nappies was a specialist provider of care training. It was established in 1985 with the dual purpose of training and employing qualified and professional nannies and carers. The RTO offered a range of courses and placements in the Child Care, Aged Care, Disability Care and Nanny Service industries, with offices around Australia and overseas. However, they had only delivered traineeships over the last two years as they wanted to ensure that they could maintain the same standards of quality that they achieved with their fee-for-service courses, which catered for both domestic and international students. At the beginning of 2008, they had 40 trainees enrolled in the Certificate III in Children's Services, including the three school-based trainees at Happy Nappies Child Care centre.

The approach to traineeships within Happy Nappies demonstrated a number of key quality features. First amongst these was the support trainees had within the organisation and the strength of monitoring and encouragement trainees received from the centre director. The centre director had a unique set of skills that enabled her to provide quality on-and-off-the-job training which provided a unique environment for the school-based trainees to develop skills and confidence in a realistic but non-threatening environment. Another quality feature evident was a unique capacity to integrate trainee learning and assessment with workplace practices. The use of the trainee's supervisor as the trainer/assessor allowed for very close monitoring of trainee progress and provided clear and strong links between underpinning knowledge and the application of skills in the workplace. Whilst the operational circumstances of the Happy Nappies centre made this arrangement possible, the apparent benefits suggest that it is a model that should be encouraged more broadly. Another key quality factor was the fact that best practice care was modelled in the workplace. This reinforced both the content in the workbooks and the on-job learning, as trainees could observe what was supposed to happen.

Neither Happy Nappies nor the RTO had any specific plans to improve the quality of their current program as both were broadly satisfied with how it was progressing. However, a number of possible improvements to wider traineeship policies and regulations were suggested. The RTO suggested that it would be useful if there was a support person/case leader within the Department of Education, separate from the audit function, who could provide advice on traineeship operations in a non-threatening, non-confrontational manner. They believed they had made simple errors with traineeships out of sheer ignorance, and that more information could have been supplied up-front on what best practice meant. Traineeship sign-up arrangements were also seen as an impediment by both Happy Nappies management and the RTO. Delays in processing by the

apprenticeship centre were cited as the major issue, along with the lack of follow-up by NAC staff. Finally, the question of feedback in traineeships generally was raised by the Happy Nappies Centre director. Reflecting on her experience prior to becoming responsible for the off-the-job training component, she commented that:

'there should be a better feedback mechanism on assignments so that trainees don't simply get told they're not yet competent. We need to protect their self esteem and RTOs need to take greater ownership of trainee achievement'.

Analysis

The following analysis of traineeships in the children's services sector is set against a framework that considers inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes.

Inputs:

- Training Package

In most cases respondents saw the Community Services Training Package as assisting quality in traineeships. However, some comments from the RTOs suggested there were some issues needing attention, including some units being too prescriptive and others creating unrealistic expectations for new entrants, such as the ability to show parents around the centre and explain facilities. The general view however was that the flexibility and creativity of RTOs had a large bearing on how the Training Package was implemented and what resources were used.

- Resources

The effectiveness of resources was seen as primarily determined by the approach of the RTO. It was also noted that the nationally endorsed support materials were predominantly from South Australia and did not adequately cater for practices in other states. Ultimately, respondents commented that there should be a range of experiences and resources available to suit the program, and that resources needed to be as relevant as possible, with current policies and practices reflecting different state legislation. The majority of stakeholders also noted the importance of customised training and assessment materials to provide a link between workbooks and actual workplace practices. Most respondents felt this was not a widespread practice amongst RTOs, with too much reliance placed on template workbooks and generic national resources. The sequencing of content was also seen as an issue, with some respondents commenting that the shortage of learning resources amongst some RTOs meant that content was delivered to trainees in a different sequence so materials could be shared amongst trainees. Clearly, the development and use of resources to support children's services traineeships requires further examination.

- Funding and incentives

Funding was generally recognised as a contributor to quality outcomes, both in terms of funds for RTO delivery and assessment, and through funding traineeships at higher levels to support career pathways. In children's services, wage rates were seen to be a barrier to quality outcomes, with employers typically opting for the lowest wage rates available. Some respondents suggested child care employers were less generous than those in other industries. It was also noted that the industry was becoming increasingly dominated by large private operators that ran multiple centres and were often enterprise RTOs. This was considered detrimental for other RTOs forced to place one or two trainees at different sites thus affecting the profitability and viability of the traineeship. It was also the view of the RTO that traineeship payments tied to completion of a unit could act as a disincentive to RTOs who would thus not be paid for work done if a trainee did not complete. There also remained concerns surrounding inconsistent funding arrangements between states and territories, including funding of traineeships at different levels. Clearly, there remained a need to streamline the administration and operation of traineeships across the states and territories.

- Sense of vocation

There was a general consensus that successful traineeships will develop a sense of vocation in child care, particularly if the trainee was well supported and encouraged to consider child care as a career. However, a number of respondents commented that many school leavers were inappropriately encouraged to sign up for traineeship because they liked children, without being adequately briefed on the realities of the job.

Processes:

- Pedagogy: on and off-the-job

The consensus view amongst those interviewed was that, whilst quality outcomes could be achieved through all modes of delivery, the ideal traineeship model involved a combination of on and off the job training, with no set times regarding the hours to be spent on each. It was suggested that traineeships could be delivered wholly on-the-job, but only where there was a good relationship between the three main parties. However, as the traineeship mode was open to negotiation between employers and RTOs, it was noted that employers preferred wholly on-the-job delivery due to reduced costs and less absenteeism. However, this was often the least viable option for RTOs which might have to cut quality to service multiple trainees at geographically dispersed sites. It was suggested there should be more flexible approaches to delivery to ensure there was some face to face training, but if that was not possible, the centre director should take a greater role in delivery. It was acknowledged that there were emerging concerns amongst employers about the lack of off-the-job training as it limited the underpinning knowledge and skills of trainees and affected their ability to pursue Diploma level study. The lack of face-to-face contact with RTOs was also noted as a problem, with telephone contact alone seen as inadequate interaction between the trainee and the trainer/assessor. In all cases, it was noted that program should be delivered by trainers (both on and off-the-job) with adequate skills, knowledge and experience, and it was suggested that school-based traineeships presented particular challenges in this regard. A number of respondents also commented that good practice in children's services traineeships involved RTO staff assisting trainees to run a room. It also involved RTOs that came to the centre, observing and supporting them in the workplace. It also involves the employer releasing the trainee for learning. Central to all delivery models was also the need for learning support from both the employer/supervisor and the RTO. On-the-job approaches such as shadowing, buddy systems or mentoring were oft cited tools, as was the use of email/telephone/SMS systems by the RTO.

- Employer-trainee psychological contract

A number of respondents commented that positive engagement between the three parties to a traineeship was the key determinant of quality. Trainees, trainers and the employer needed to share the same view of the traineeship's purpose and be focussed on the one thing, which was to enable the trainee to develop the competencies to grow with the traineeship and develop in the industry. The case study suggested that the status trainees had within the organisation and the strength of monitoring and support that they received were also very important factors. In children's services, however, there appeared to be an issue with employers expecting too much of trainees, and because of skill shortages in the industry, there was evidence that employers might push young trainees into being a group leader when they were often not mature enough or prepared to take this responsibility.

The training culture and attitude to traineeships were considered to vary between employers, with many influenced by negative past experiences. The point was also made that a relatively high number of trainees had unrealistic expectations of the industry. Consequently, employer attitudes towards trainees were not always positive, which in turn affected the ongoing likelihood of success. It was noted that employers should be more aware that when they sign a contract for a traineeships, they needed to give trainees time off to undertake training and that, through structured weekly meetings, they needed to discuss the traineeship and participate in active dialogue on its progress and completion.

- Intermediary interactions

If intermediaries are taken to include state training agencies, then the major concern identified by respondents was the lack of a nationally consistent approach and the inefficiency of systems within state training agencies and apprenticeship centres. In particular, the national stakeholders suggested that traineeships were working well in most states except NSW, where although the Diploma is the entry level qualification, the government would only fund the Certificate III. Whilst most respondents commented that the relationship between the trainee, trainer and employer was most crucial, a number acknowledged that the operation of apprenticeship centres varied widely, which could lead to negative experiences by both the employer and RTO.

Outputs:

- Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees

The general consensus amongst respondents was that there was generally good acceptance of traineeship qualifications within industry but that perceptions of school teachers and career advisors needed to change if traineeships were to become a more attractive option for some school leavers. It was also accepted that the calibre of traineeship graduates was not a major issue, although lingering industry concerns with the quality of some of RTOs mean that employers did not always feel able to accept traineeship qualifications at face value. It was suggested that current industry skill shortages were causing some RTOs to push people through who were inappropriate for the role. However, as the industry acceptance of traineeships continued to grow and the number of ex-trainees working in the industry increases, it was expected that the industry acceptance of graduated trainees would continue to improve.

- Pathways to higher qualifications

Whilst the Community Services Training Package provided qualification pathways relevant to industry, the general lack of funding for traineeships at Diploma level was seen as a barrier to ongoing involvement in the traineeship system. This was exacerbated by the fact that the Certificate III is embedded in the Diploma, which in itself encouraged ongoing study. Barriers were also seen to exist through the inconsistent approaches to funding at Certificate III & IV in some states, and the regulations governing the participation of existing workers. Most respondents also commented that traineeships were seen in the industry as a pathway to valuable credentials, but that the use of traineeships as cheap labour worked against this. Clearly, there was scope for further rationalisation and streamlining of arrangements governing traineeships in Australia so that pathways are better supported.

- Attrition during traineeship

A number of respondents commented that there was a relatively higher attrition rate in the child care industry and that this was reflected in traineeships more broadly. Whilst low wages may be a contributing factor, some respondents suggested that the relatively high non-completion rates were evidence of child care operators using traineeships as a source of cheap labour. Attrition was also linked to the quality of wholly on-the-job traineeships, with one respondent citing higher completion rates in the ICT industry as a consequence of RTOs visiting every fortnight as opposed to every four weeks which was the average in child care. Clearly, more frequent visits are an effective way to strengthen links between theory and practice, as well as providing the opportunity to quickly deal with any motivational or relationship issues in the workplace that might lead to non-completion.

Outcomes:

- Career progression

Whilst most respondents agreed that traineeships create a pathway to a career in the child care industry, the inconsistent funding arrangements were considered a negative influence on employer decisions to work with traineeships, particularly those that operate across state boundaries. It was noted however, that the Certificate III was recognised as a separate pay level in the award, and that this gave legitimacy to the traineeship and encouraged workers to undertake further study. The fact that the Certificate III was nested in the Diploma was also seen as a positive influence for career paths, despite the general lack of funding at this level.

- Skilled staff for businesses and industry

Traineeships have been recognised as playing a role in up-skilling the children's services sector. In general terms, across the community sector, traineeships have been seen to facilitate the take-up of qualifications, but as varying state arrangements hindered implementation, it was not clear if traineeships were the most effective way to increase the number of credentialed staff. It was noted that as the supply of tertiary qualified Allied Health workers continued to decline, there was a growing expectation that the VET sector will play a more significant role in providing skilled staff for industry. As children's services was a highly casualised industry, traineeships had already had the effect of changing the patterns of recruitment and retention. Despite the growth in traineeships, there were also calls for ongoing professional development and higher qualifications for child care workers in general, along with greater access to peer support and mentoring for workers. Without this, traineeships would be placed under greater pressure to deliver increasing skill needs of child care workers, particularly as community awareness of childhood development issues increases.

- Staying in the industry

The general view amongst respondents was that at the end of the program, trainees should have the skills and experience to improve their future work choices and continue in a range of roles in the industry. Whilst this was the case in many situations, it could be argued that as pay rates increase, there would be increased demand for jobs in the industry which would allow employers to be more selective and which would reduce attrition and the rate of traineeship non-completions. Clearly though, in an industry like children's services, a key role of traineeships was to introduce young people to the industry and provide them with the opportunity to understand whether a love of children could translate to a career more broadly.

Conclusion

The operation of Certificate III in Children's Services appeared to be considered a success notwithstanding concerns surrounding some evidence of abuse of the system and high attrition. Whilst inconsistent funding and administrative arrangements continued to frustrate effective implementation, key factors were identified that would improve quality if embraced by employers and RTOs and supported by government. Chief amongst these was the need for renewed efforts by employers and RTOs to ensure that trainees were valued in the workplace and received the support required to effectively work with children in often challenging situations. RTOs and other industry stakeholders needed to work to ensure that each traineeship suited the needs of the employer and linked the trainee's learning to workplace activities and current business needs where possible. Finally, adequate visits, contact and support from the RTO were a must if attrition rates were to be reduced and the career-building potential of traineeships in the children's services industry was to be realised.

Summary

- Traineeships are successful in the children's services industry but concerns linger over quality;
- As a critical mass of trainee graduates continues to grow, traineeships will become more widely accepted and better managed;
- There exists a need for improved support materials for employers, supervisors and RTOs that highlight good practice and illustrate traineeship quality features;
- A mix of on and off-the-job training is the key to a quality program, with interaction with peers an important element;
- There is no one delivery model imposed on the employer and the training should be delivered by trainers that only train in the child care industry; and
- The key success factor is a strong and supportive relationship between the employer, RTO and trainee that provides support on-the-job and after-hours.

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Finance and insurance industry case study report – Andy Smith

Introduction

The finance and insurance industry is a rather closed sector in terms of training and employer representation arrangements. There are over 70 employer associations in the sector, many of which are quite small, representing specialised niches within the sector. The sector is composed of a small number of very large organisations – typically the banks – and a very large number of small organisations, many of which are one person businesses. The fragmented and dispersed nature of the sector partly accounts for the complex system of employer representation and training arrangements.

The Certificate III in Financial Services is the most common traineeship qualification in the sector. Of about 4,000 traineeship commencements in 2006, over 3,000 were in the Cert. III. A further 750 were enrolled in the Certificate IV. The Certificate III is a very generic qualification and has been designed to cover all the various occupations to be found in the sector. As a result it has become increasingly popular with employers and trainees in recent years. There is a move towards higher level qualifications in the sector, particularly to the Diploma level and the Tasmanian Government is introducing the first traineeship at Diploma level in the sector later in 2008. Take up of traineeships has been driven in the last few years by the passage of the Financial Services Reform Act (FSRA) of 2000. This specifies that no one can give financial advice to the public without meeting competency standards developed by the industry. In order to become licensed, organisations providing financial advice to the public need to show that staff involved have been certified against these competences which are incorporated in the Certificate III. The traineeship has become the normal way for organisations to meet their licensing requirements under the Act. Another driver for traineeships has been the tightening labour market. In order to attract young school leavers into the industry more organisations have been offering traineeships. Some of the larger organisations such as the banks have been bundling the Certificate III and the Diploma into a 4 year ‘apprenticeship’ with clear career pathways after the qualifications have been completed. More recently graduates coming into the industry have been undertaking traineeships in order to gain the vocational skills necessary to practise in the industry. Thus there is a two way flow from diploma graduates to higher education and from higher education into diploma qualifications.

Stakeholder Interviews

The following stakeholders were interviewed by phone in late 2007.

Interviewee	Position
1.	General Manager, Innovation and Business Skills Australia
2.	Education Officer, Finance Sector Union
3.	Curriculum Manager, Chisholm Institute of TAFE
4.	Professional Development Manager, National Institute of Insurance Brokers

The interviewees identified the following features of a high quality traineeship in the sector:

- The traineeship needed to be relevant to the industry. Most interviewees responded that the Certificate III traineeship fulfilled this criterion and that the Diploma traineeship would be an important advance for the industry in these terms.
- The traineeship needed to be well managed at the workplace. Interviewees reported that trainees could be left to their own devices especially if they were employed in a small organisation. Quality of learning could only be assured if the employer provided a dedicated mentor for trainees who met with them regularly to check and ensure their progress through learning materials. The workplace training program also needed to be well-structured to ensure trainees received exposure to all the major functions associated with the traineeship.
- The traineeship needed to be supported by high quality non-endorsed, learning materials.
- Despite the dispersed nature of the industry, RTOs needed to actively engage trainees in the workplace.
- The traineeship needed to be viewed by organisations as part of their overall workforce development strategy. This was increasingly the case especially in larger organisations in the sector.

Company example 1: Bank

Bank was one of the 'Big Four' banks and the fourth largest company in Australia, and the largest bank in New Zealand. Bank employed 30,000 people in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe, India and the USA operating in over 30 countries worldwide. Bank had more than six million customers. In 2007, the then CEO responded to the call by the chair of the Business Council of Australia for members to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Bank had set clear targets in the all important area of employment including:

- Recruiting indigenous staff so at least 3 per cent of regional and rural banking staff are from an indigenous background by 2011;
- Promoting indigenous employees so there would be 20 in management positions by 2014; and
- Implementing a traineeship program for indigenous people with at least 100 trainees enrolled each year and 33 per cent of them being offered full-time work with the bank by January 2009.

This case study focused on the latter target – the indigenous traineeship program. The company example was carried out through site visits in March 2008 involving face to face interviews with the following people:

Interview	Name	Position
1.	Brian	Indigenous Traineeship Manager
2.	Delyse	Project Manager
3.	Eve	Branch Supervisor
4.	Heather	Career Development Manager
5.	Sean	Traineeship Co-coordinator, Aboriginal Employment Strategies
6.	John and Brad	Ex-Trainees
7.	Martina	Current Trainee

Like many of the major banks, Bank had not developed a centrally organised traineeship program. The employment of trainees was a decision taken by individual branch managers, often in conjunction with local RTOs who wished to develop the business. As a result, Bank's engagement with traineeships had been patchy. Until the launch of the indigenous traineeship program, in 2007, there had been no attempt to develop the program at a company level.

The traineeship was based on creating career pathways for indigenous students that entered Bank as school-based trainees. The school-based traineeship lasted for two years and students undertook either a Certificate II in Business or in Financial Services. The initial traineeship was completed by trainees at their local branches and was based around the work of the branch teller. After successful completion of the school-based traineeship, trainees were then given the opportunity to further their career with Bank by undertaking a full-time Certificate III in Financial Services. This traineeship led trainees into the more complex financial aspects of the bank and normally required trainees to move to one of the larger branches in a metropolitan area. At this point, trainees might be offered full-time employment with the bank and, in some cases, the bank might sponsor the trainees to undertake university study whilst working part-time. Thus the two traineeships had been fashioned into an employment pathway for young indigenous people. At the time of research, about five indigenous trainees had completed the pathway and were studying at university under the sponsorship of the bank. This number was expected to grow substantially as the traineeship developed in the next two years.

Trainees initially started with Bank at the end of the year after the Year 10 examinations around November. Trainees started as a cohort within the organisation and attended a 2 week off-the-job induction process at the NSW headquarters in Sydney. The induction worked to create a sense of community amongst the trainees who kept in regular touch with one another during the program. In the branches the trainees worked full-time over the Christmas holidays and underwent the same training as a branch teller. The trainees were provided with a mentor who was usually a senior employee at the branch level who supervised their training during the two year traineeship. The eight week period as a full-time trainee teller ensured trainees received a head start in training. After the holiday period, trainees reverted to the usual pattern of the school-based traineeship, which was one day at the branch and four days at school.

An important element of the indigenous traineeship program was the close involvement of the employment agency, Aboriginal Employment Strategies (AES), which specialised in traineeships within the finance industry. The alliance with Bank started through their involvement in the original traineeship program in Tamworth and the organisation now brokered the entire program for Bank. AES co-ordinated and brokered the indigenous traineeship program at Bank. This started with the marketing of the traineeship to local indigenous Year 10 students. AES had very close connections with schools in the region and had experienced strong levels of interest amongst indigenous Year 10 students. Typically AES claimed they received up to 10 applications per trainee place. AES undertook a screening process for Bank after which successful candidates had a behaviour-based interview and assessment by the Branch Manager.

Once accepted into the program, trainees were employed by AES, acting as the GTO. AES convened regular meetings of the all stakeholders in the traineeship process including the school, the RTO, the parents of the trainee, the Australian Apprenticeship Centre and AES itself. These meetings ensured that they maximised visible support for the trainee and that any problems could be addressed by all those involved. The AES also paid regular fortnightly visits to trainees. Meetings involved significant mentoring for trainees and included help with the off-the-job elements of the traineeship for those undertaking the Certificate III program. All trainees underwent a regular three-monthly appraisal session with AES which also involved the school, the RTO and the parents of the trainee. AES played a highly supportive and unique role in the traineeship program with the result being that the program enjoyed a 90 per cent completion rate, compared with the less than 50 per cent completions normally recorded for traineeships.

The indigenous traineeship program enjoyed a very high level of satisfaction amongst all participants. Bank saw the program as a major success and as a key element in the RAP. It operated as an effective pipeline of talented young people into the organisation at a time of very strong labour market competition. The trainees interviewed were all very enthusiastic about the program, borne out by the extremely low attrition rates experienced. The program had also had an impact on the human resource management practices of Bank. The use of a detailed and careful selection process had led to a review of the usual recruitment processes within the bank. The need to translate existing training materials into more structured distance learning materials for trainees highlighted the need to develop more sophisticated training materials in the organisation more generally. The quality features of the indigenous traineeship that had led to its success include the following:

1. The program was voluntary for branches within Bank. Although the program was mandated by the CEO as part of the RAP, Branch managers chose whether to participate and there was no compulsion. This was a key element in the success of the program as workplace support for the trainees was critical to its success and branch managers had to be motivated to make the program succeed.
2. Development of comprehensive guidelines for branches. The Indigenous Employment Unit within the human resource management function at Bank developed a very comprehensive set of guidelines for branch managers to use in the management of the program. This ensured consistency in the experience of the trainees and ensured the Bank's training standards were being met.
3. Careful recruitment. Recruitment through the processes of both the AES and the bank ensured that only trainees with the ability to succeed in the program entered.
4. The role of the AES. The role of the AES in providing constant support not only in the workplace but also in schools and through the involvement of the families of trainees cannot be overestimated. The level of workplace support was expensive but played a crucial role in the overall success of the program.
5. Nature of the training. Trainees were treated as other workers not as a special category of worker. The trainees enjoyed the confidence that this implied in their ability on the part of Bank and responded by meeting the normal employment expectations of all other employees.
6. Career counselling. From the start of the program the trainees were given access to high quality career counselling from members of the Indigenous Employment unit within Bank. This counselling would assist Bank to meet its RAP targets of 3 per cent indigenous employment and 20 indigenous managers.

The indigenous traineeship program at Bank was only in its first full year of operation. Bank plans to expand the number of trainees to about 300 in coming years. This would involve the extension of the program to other States, notably Victoria and to other branches. At the time of research, the organisation was undertaking a major marketing campaign amongst interstate branches and with state governments to prepare for this expansion.

Bank also recognised that it would need to establish effective pathways for trainees to move into other, especially non-retail, areas of the bank. At the moment these pathways were relatively closed but there were a small number of former trainees who were now taking up positions in the business banking divisions of the bank. In summary, the indigenous traineeship program had been a major success for Bank and for the trainees that had undertaken the training. This was because it met both the corporate social responsibilities

of the bank by its central position in the RAP, and the long term strategic needs of the organisation to create a pipeline of talented young people to take up careers within the bank.

Company example 2: Ausplan Insurance Brokers

Ausplan Insurance Brokers was a regional insurance broking firm based in Geelong, Victoria. The company was a broker for individuals and companies to gain the best possible insurance cover for their needs. They employed over 80 staff in seven regional offices throughout Victoria. The qualification of insurance brokers was regulated under the Financial Services Reform Act (FSRA) of 2004. A key element of the FSRA was that every person who gave financial advice to the public must be licensed by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). In order to obtain licensing, a person must meet the 'Tier 1' standards of ASIC. In practice, this meant insurance brokers were required to be qualified up to the level of Diploma in Financial Services under the Financial Services Training Package. This regulatory requirement had had a significant impact on training in the financial services industry and on the training programs operated by Ausplan.

The company example was carried out through a site visit in March 2008 involving face to face interviews with the following people:

Interview	Name	Position
1.	Julie	Traineeship Co-ordinator
2.	Alan	Managing Director
3.	Brad	Account Manager
4.	Roslyn	Direct Supervisor
5.	Christa and Charlie	Ex-Trainees
6.	Andrew	Current Trainee
7.	Lorette	RTO Manager

Ausplan had been involved with traineeships for approximately five years. The traineeship program was controlled by the Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer. This situation occurred because the organisation had not employed any specialist human resource staff. However, at the time of research, Ausplan had commenced recruitment of a human resource manager who would become responsible for learning and development in the organisation including administration of the traineeship program.

Ausplan decided to recruit trainees as a result of the skills shortages in the area of financial services. As the CEO said, insurance broking was 'a rather obscure part of a not very glamorous industry' and the organisation had found it increasingly difficult to recruit new staff who wished to make insurance broking their career. As a result, Ausplan decided to embark on a policy of growing its own insurance brokers via traineeships. The organisation now recruited two or three new trainees per annum and at any one time there were about seven trainees in the organisation placed in different branches. Thus the traineeship program at Ausplan was a response to the growing difficulties of recruiting new insurance brokers and the need to conform to the FSRA accreditation requirement. The aim of the traineeship program was to produce fully fledged insurance brokers but the organisation had found many trainees preferred to take up back room 'processing' roles rather than move towards full insurance broker status.

The formal traineeship focused on the Certificate III in Financial Services which was a general qualification for the financial services industry. At this point, trainees gained 'Tier 2' accreditation with ASICu, were allowed to undertake general insurance processing activities (renewals, upgrades etc), and to engage in routine communication with clients. Whilst the Traineeship was completed in less than 12 months, trainees undertook further modules of study with the RTO to gain firstly ASIC 'Tier 1' status and then the Diploma in Insurance Broking. All trainees took this study pathway regardless of whether they intended to enter the broking occupation or not.

In the past, when trainees joined Ausplan they had begun their careers carrying out routine clerical tasks – mail, filing and so on, spending their three month probationary period in this general 'dogsbody' role. After

this period, trainees went on to formally start their studies for the Certificate III. However, the organisation found that as trainees undertook little or no work relevant to their traineeship during this initial probationary period, there was a high level of turnover. As a result, this initial period had been dropped. Trainees now moved straight into the processing area of the organisation. Trainees were given a mentor or 'buddy' and followed a structured plan to experience all the work undertaken in this 'back room' function. Trainees also listened into phone calls from staff to clients, learning the skill of how to deal with a range of mostly domestic insurance clients. During this period of training trainees were allowed up to three hours per week away from the job to study learning materials provided by the RTO and to carry out the assessment tasks. However, most trainees said that studying was carried out in their own time at home. The traineeship was delivered fully on the job with no release to formal training at the RTO premises.

The RTO was one of two national organisations representing insurance brokers. (The other organisation, the Australia and New Zealand Institute of Insurance (ANZII), provided Ausplan with off-the-job training in brokering.) The RTO used for traineeships also provided online training for employees at Ausplan in areas such as customer service and sales negotiation. The trainees also undertook these on-line training programs along with the other staff of the organisation. In the traineeship program, the learners studied the materials for their Certificate III and undertook on-line assessments at about six weekly intervals. These were marked and returned by post to trainees. The RTO's representative in the region supposedly visited the trainees about every three months, although the trainees were of the opinion that they only met with the RTO representative twice in their 12 month traineeship period. The visits were relatively cursory lasting about 15 minutes and were little more than a check with the trainee that they were happy with the training they receive. The trainees did not find the RTO visits useful. Ausplan and the trainees also voiced some criticisms about the standard of learning material provided. In general the materials seemed to be often out of date and assessment items were set that had little relevance to the work of the trainees. There was often up to a four week turnaround period for marked assessment items to be returned and there was evidence of inconsistent marking leading to some confusion on the part of the trainees. Ausplan was in discussion with the RTO about the improvement of the standard of the learning materials that the trainees received. The trainees themselves found the material useful as an introduction to the insurance business, but often not up to date and not as relevant to their organisation as they would have liked.

After they acquired the Certificate III, trainees continued their training to become a fully qualified insurance broker. As the achievement of the Certificate III gave trainees 'Tier 2' ASIC accreditation, they could interact with existing clients but were not allowed to give financial advice. To achieve 'Tier 1' accreditation, trainees completed a further two modules of training from the RTO. During this period, the trainees moved into the commercial insurance broking area of the organisation and were attached as a personal assistant to a group of insurance brokers and worked with them to service their client books. This involved giving basic financial advice and visiting clients with brokers. After about six months, trainees were given a 'business book' of about 50 existing clients for whom they now became the insurance broker. This allowed the trainees to develop their own client base from the 50 clients given to them. The trainees were then remunerated like the brokers on a commission basis and thus provided with a strong financial incentive to complete their Diploma in Financial Service (Insurance) and become a fully qualified brokers.

The trainees appear to be very satisfied with the traineeship at Ausplan. All three trainees interviewed said that they had not initially considered a career in insurance broking but had 'fallen into' the industry by accident. Now that they had undergone the traineeship, they all felt that this was a good career that offered significant rewards for them. The major quality features of the traineeship at Ausplan included:

1. Careful recruitment of trainees into the program. The CEO and the Traineeship Co-ordinator both stressed that the correct selection of trainees to enter the traineeship and the business was critical. Although the organisation used advertising through an agency to attract trainees, personal recommendation by existing employees had proven to be a better source of committed trainees.
2. Structured on the job training. On the job training at Ausplan was considered to be well-structured. There was close mentoring of all trainees who valued the relationship to their mentors highly. In some ways, the processing area which was the basic training ground for the trainees had been turned into a learning department for trainees who all expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the training and the relationships that they experienced in this area.

The organisation identified two major developments for the future. Firstly, the source of recruits into the traineeship would shift to focus on more mature entrants who managers believed would be more likely to stay with the organisation and progress into the fully fledged insurance brokers. Secondly, the organisation strongly believed that the learning materials that the RTO supplied and the role of the RTO needed to be enhanced so that trainees received a higher quality off the job component to their traineeship.

Analysis

Inputs:

The finance and insurance industry had traditionally not interacted successfully with the VET system. Until quite recently, employers in the sector did not use the VET qualifications available to them, preferring instead to either train staff through firm-specific on-the-job training or rely on recruiting higher level staff from university with degrees in finance, banking and accounting. This lack of engagement was exacerbated by the fragmented nature of much of the industry. Outside the major banks and insurance companies, most financial institutions had traditionally been small-scale, often regionally based organisations. The change to the financial services Training Package in the late 1990s provided a suite of qualifications that could be used by the industry to qualify and train staff operating in sub-degree occupations – tellers, advisers, brokers etc.

The take up of the Training Package was driven by two factors. The passing of the Financial Services Reform Act in 2004 required employers in the industry to train employees in a more structured manner and, in particular, to ensure that those who gave financial advice were qualified at two levels – Tier 1 for basic information giving processes and Tier 2 for direct financial advice. These Tiers were fulfilled by the Certificate III and the Diploma qualifications. The second fact was the need to attract more young people into the industry as the labour market tightens and to counter the rather staid image of the industry in the minds of many people. Thus the Certificate III and the Diploma qualifications had been more broadly taken up within the industry.

However, the use of traineeships was not as great as it might have been. Firstly, the fragmentation of the industry meant that most organisations were very small and their knowledge of the VET system was very limited. Often employers did not know what training was available and how it might help them. Secondly, even the large institutions operated on a highly devolved basis with highly dispersed branch systems. Thus the decision to hire a trainee was often taken by local branch managers rather than centrally with the result that the organisation might support a number of trainees but not be aware of it. Finally, the highly specialised nature of the industry meant that employer acceptance of the rather general content of the qualifications has been low. This point was made in the company examples where managers and trainees criticised the general and often out of date nature of the learning materials. As one manager put it:

'Administratively, they're (the RTO) very good to work with, but I think they just have to make the training relevant. The questions need to be relevant- it's the content of the training material that we find frustrating. The course work does need to be definitive, so that the student knows, at least in that situation, their answer is correct.'

Processes:

The major success factors associated with the traineeship were focused on the processes of delivery in the workplace as borne out in the two example companies. Once the organisation made the decision to adopt training package qualifications, there were a number of very clear factors which determine the success of the traineeship. These included:

1. Recruitment of the right people for the traineeship. Both of the example companies stressed the need to have very careful recruitment and selection procedures that ensured that motivated trainees were selected that were likely to complete the program.
2. Commitment of the employer. Both example organisations emphasised the importance of the commitment of the organisation to ensuring the success of the traineeship programs. In the case of Bank it was the commitment of the CEO to make indigenous traineeships a major plank of the RAP that ensured successful adoption of traineeships throughout the organisation.
3. Role of the RTO and other intermediaries. A key element in the success of the traineeships in both example organisations was the role of the RTO. In the case of Ausplan, this had been problematic with poor response times to assessment task submission, and relatively infrequent and very brief visits to trainees which contributed to high levels of attrition. At Bank, the role of the AES was acknowledged as critical to the success of the program and in achieving a 90 per cent completion rate. However, their involvement went beyond that of the traditional RTO encompassing frequent face to face contact with trainees and close involvement of all stakeholders including the parents of trainees.
4. Off-the-job training and learning materials quality. In both cases, the time given to trainees for off-the-job training was important. In the case of Ausplan this amounted to 3 hours per week which was given as time to complete assessment work. At Bank, the trainees were school-based and so covered the theory in the classroom. The initial 2 week off-the-job induction at Bank was regarded as a critical part of the success of the program. Trainees in both organisations stressed the importance of having this time. The

quality of learning materials was problematic in both cases. This sometimes led to confusion on the part of trainees and the need to supplement their learning through in-company training courses.

5. Future career pathways. Both organisations were keen to ensure that trainees stayed with organisation on completion. At Bank this was being achieved through on-going career counselling during the traineeship and the conscious creation of pathways from the traineeship to employment in other parts of the business. At Ausplan, the organisation was tackling the higher attrition rate by encouraging trainees to move into higher level brokering jobs on completion of the initial traineeship and studying for higher level qualifications. Trainees themselves emphasised the importance of good career prospects for their decisions to stay with the organisation after completing their traineeship.

Outputs and outcomes

Despite the slow adoption of the Training Package qualifications by the industry, there was little doubt that qualified graduates were valued by employers. Both example organisations took steps to ensure that qualified trainees stayed in the organisation by ensuring the creation of good career pathways. But both organisations also were able to quote examples of recent graduates who had quickly moved to higher paying jobs with other companies. Thus the Training Package qualifications were clearly producing graduates and skills that the industry needed and would employ. The completion of the basic traineeship in a Certificate II or III led to Diploma studies for many trainees who aspired to move to more responsible jobs in the industry and, in the case of Bank, to sponsored university study. Attrition rates in the traineeships could be high but in the case of both example organisations, steps had been taken to reduce the level of attrition mainly through improving the structure of on-the-job training and through the close involvement (in the case of Bank) of the GTO, the AES. Doubts were expressed by all the parties about the quality of learning materials and by level of support provided by RTOs. This was clearly an area for improvement in the industry and improvement would help to both extend the adoption of traineeships and improve the levels of retention and career progression in the industry.

Conclusion

Despite the relatively slow adoption of the Training Package by the finance and insurance industry, the qualifications appeared to work well for employers and trainees alike. The fragmented nature of the industry will continue to hamper the spread of nationally recognised training but other factors such as the tightness of the labour market and the need to comply with the FSRA will ensure that the qualifications are increasingly used by employers. The role of the RTOs and the quality of learning materials need to be addressed but the key to the successful completion of traineeships in the industry lies in the workplace arrangements made by employers to support the training, including good human resource management practices, career counselling for trainees, structured on-the-job training and the involvement of RTOs and intermediary organisations in supporting the training.

Summary

1. The use of the Training Package qualifications in the finance and insurance industry is being encouraged by the impact of the FSRA and the need to recruit and retain good staff in organisations.
2. The Training Package qualifications are held in high regard by employers but the provider-developed learning materials require attention in terms of their quality and relevance to the industry. The initial 2 week off-the-job induction at Bank was regarded as a critical part of the success of that program.
3. The key to successful traineeships in this industry lies in the workplace arrangements including:
 - Good recruitment and selection of trainees;
 - High employer commitment;
 - High level of support from the RTO and/or other intermediary bodies;
 - Good off-the-job training and high quality learning materials; and
 - Well planned career pathways.

General construction case study report – Erica Smith

Introduction

The construction industry is a vital part of Australia's economy employing around 900,000 people and with a share of around 6.4% of Australia's GDP. Industry turnover was around \$60 billion in 2005-6 (ABS, 2008). The industry has traditionally had a great preponderance of sole proprietors in the domestic sector and large companies in the commercial sector. The proportion of sole proprietors is falling (ABS, 2008) with structural changes in the commercial sector seeing larger companies retreating from direct employment to operate through large numbers of sub-contractors on increasingly tight profit margins. The major employer/industry associations are Master Builders Australia (MBA), with membership of around 30,000, and the Housing Industry Association (HIA) with 33,000 members. The major trade union is the Construction, Forestry, Mining & Energy Union (CFMEU). The industry is covered by the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council (CSPISC). The industry has the benefit of training levy schemes set up in each State/Territory, which provide funds for training in the industry.

The construction industry currently affords the opportunity for several traineeships. In the General Construction Training Package (BCG03) there are Certificate II qualifications in General Construction as well as Certificate III qualifications in occupations such as Concreting which are regarded as traineeships rather than apprenticeships. For example, it was reported that they are used extensively in Queensland, primarily for existing workers. The traditional trades of carpentry, plumbing, electrotechnology and so on are apprenticeships at Certificate III level and several Training Packages operate within the industry. While a new Training Package in General Construction has been endorsed it remains unimplemented due to political resistance from some stakeholders against the Certificate II traineeships in traditional trade areas. In March 2008 the controversy reached the national press (Norington, 2008) although it was interesting that those interviewed for this case study were not aware of the controversy.

The current General Construction Certificate III has 14 core units and three electives. Most units are quite general although there are specific units on scaffolding (restricted height) and concreting. For the three electives, students may select two from a provided list of 16 and one, if desired from elsewhere within the Training Package or another Training Package. The General Construction Certificate II was selected for the project because it is an example of the use of traineeships in traditional trade areas. It quickly became apparent that its implementation has been patchy and it was very difficult to identify suitable case studies.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted by telephone between October 2007 and February 2008 and were of 45-90 minutes' duration. The table below details the non-company interviewees.

Interviewee	Position	Organisation
1.	Executive Director	Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council (CPSISC)
2.	Executive Director	ACT Regional Building & Construction Industry Training Council
3.	Senior Executive Director of Legal Affairs & Corporate Services,	Housing Industry Association (HIA)
4.	National Manager, Training Policy,	Master Builders Australia (MBA)
5.	Assistant National Secretary, Construction & General Division,	CFMEU - union
6.	Manager	Construction Centre of Excellence, Qld - private RTO
7.	General Manager	South Metropolitan Youth Links (SMYL) – GTO

SMYL was a GTO and RTO which delivered the Certificate II to many indigenous students especially in the Pilbara (Port Hedland region). The Construction Centre of Excellence was one of several construction industry-based centres around Australia, funded by the training levy, that offered a range of courses in the industry and purchased training from other RTOs. In Queensland the Centre was one of the industry Centres of Excellence designated by the current Labor government.

The view of most of those interviewed was that although the General Construction Certificate II was not perfect, it did begin to offer career pathways and was especially important in getting young people involved in the industry. It also provided systematic skills in an industry where the training culture (apart from apprenticeships) was very low and where many workers had no recognised skills. Traineeships were hoped therefore to (a) improve the supply of labour to the industry (b) allow individual workers skill pathways and (c) improve the quality of building in Australia. Because RTOs were only allowed currently to work with the General Construction Certificate II and not the new qualifications, the Certificate II was seen as being most suited for particular equity groups such as school-based and indigenous while the new qualifications would provide much more targeted and occupational-specific skills. The current Certificate II had limited success, with particular client groups, and it was suggested that this was because it was a general qualification which made it hard to share amongst contractors. One respondent considered that the industry-specific Certificate IIIs such as rigging, dogging and scaffolding, were more useful.

The CFMEU offered an alternative viewpoint. Located as might be expected in an industrial relations paradigm, the union's primary concern was for workers' pay and conditions. It was explained that there was no tradition of junior wages in the industry apart from apprenticeships. The CFMEU interviewee believed that the current Certificate II was hardly used at all, citing only one employer as a user. He claimed that a previous traineeship had been more useful, and that 'employers don't really want' the new qualification. He considered that it produced a 'general labourer' and that employers did not have much use for such a worker. The issue for the union was completion rates of apprenticeship; they were already too low and it was believed that a Certificate II qualification would offer an 'excuse' for trainees not to proceed to a full qualification.

'It'll fill the industry up with a big group of semi-skilled people who are going to do damage.'

The union did not oppose the current General Construction Certificate II because it did not offer 'elements of a trade' in it:

'Our objection is pulling down the Cert III stuff and putting it in at Cert II... we certainly won't support bodgy traineeships that fragment the trades.'

Another interviewee said that having a number of units of competency might mean trainees were entitled to higher wages and 'might make themselves unemployable'. It would be fair to say that whether the stakeholders agreed or disagreed with traineeships in general, the weight of tradition behind apprenticeships in the building industry meant traineeships had always faced an uphill struggle. While builders were familiar with the concept of employing a person and training him (or her) up, they were more comfortable with a traditional apprentice because that was what they were used to, and in their daily work they mixed with other people who had been trained in the same manner. On the other hand some sections of the industry such as concreting had virtually no tradition of training, which created its own problems.

Because the construction industry had always expected governments to provide funds towards entry-level training, the appropriateness of funding was not raised as it was assumed it would be available. Joint Group Training Funding enabled the GTOs to carry out their work. In the ACT some employers were not charged for trainees and the GTO subsidised the placement as the traineeship was seen as a hook into an apprenticeship. The Pilbara SMYL (see below for vignette) subsidised the meagre user choice money with the GTO's employment incentives. Therefore without employment incentives many programs would collapse, unless quality was severely compromised.

The following were listed as features of high quality traineeships in the General Construction Certificate II.

Organisational (employment-based) features: In a high quality traineeship, companies including GTOs would undertake rigorous selection of candidates. They would provide good mentoring, supervision and, if appropriate to the learner, pastoral care. They would rotate trainees among different employers or worksites to get the full range of experiences if the company or site could not provide enough variety. There would be high quality workplace trainers. They would provide worksites with good working practices and conditions.

Pedagogical features: There would be a mix of off-and on-the-job. There would be good learning resources and a strong emphasis on OH&S. There would also be a strong element of underpinning knowledge; as one respondent put it, 'The secret is understanding why you're doing what you're doing'. There would be a strong

structure and rules, especially for young people. There would be literacy and numeracy support, and equity groups would have already had pre-employment training. There would be individualisation of training to the learner and to his/her particular trade interest. Employers would deliver on-the-job training that provided appropriate experiences and learning.

The Training Package: Because of the debate about the nature of traineeships in this industry this section is expanded beyond the General Construction Certificate II. Generally, interviewees agreed that a high quality traineeship would provide a qualification that was either targeted to a specific occupational role or was generic and provided a good grounding in the industry and generic skills. It would provide a licence if possible. It would be well-nested within a higher qualification and would provide flexibility into other pathways. It would include 'life skills' (not just employability skills) – it was stated that construction workers suffer from many issues and there is a high rate of suicide.

The role of intermediary organisations: GTOs were very important in this traineeship area, partly because of the distributed nature of the building industry and partly because the qualification was best suited to equity groups that needed a lot of pastoral care. Also the GTOs were highly committed to maintaining a supply of skills to the area and were inventive in finding ways to do this.

Attrition/retention & persistence/progression in the industry/sense of vocation: A high quality traineeship led to high retention into apprenticeships, particularly from school-based programs; and those apprenticeships themselves had low attrition. More generally the traineeship would have a permanent job outcome, but several interviewees agreed that this could be anywhere within the industry – not necessarily the company or even the occupation. In fact one function of a traineeship was to try out an occupation and a company without necessarily making a permanent commitment to either.

Some suggestions were provided to lift the quality of traineeships. These included closer monitoring of quality and greater accountability, with performance indicators such as: selection processes, offsite component, reports from employers for the RTO. One interviewee advocated weeding out the poorer providers to raise the status of traineeships. GTOs could be more widely used especially in skill shortage areas. It was suggested that training skills should be built into apprenticeship programs so that new skilled workers realise their duty to, and know how to, train others. Higher quality national support materials and higher user choice funding were advocated. One interviewee suggested a requirement for a certain proportion of apprentices and trainees to be employed– if everyone was forced to do it then employers would acquiesce. This section of the case study concludes with a brief vignette of the SMYL program in Western Australia which illustrates the creative use of the qualification to meet specific needs both of the client group and of the local economy. Information was provided by the General Manager.

SMYL- delivering General Construction Certificate II to indigenous people in the Pilbara

SMYL is a multi-function provider of services to disadvantaged people. These services include a GTO, an RTO, literacy and numeracy programs and job seeking advice. It is based in Perth but has operations in regional areas. The General Construction Certificate II program at Port Hedland is used in this vignette. At Port Hedland, TAFE does not offer construction training, and so apprentices had to go to Perth (1650km distant) on block release, which did not suit the indigenous client group. Yet Port Hedland has a shortage of construction workers due to the mining boom. The program was designed both to increase numbers of workers in the residential sector and to improve the quality of those workers. The trainees are employed by the GTO and rotated among host employers. Pre-employment training is provided and literacy/numeracy training is integrated with the off-the-job training. TAFE delivers some units that are non-construction specific and most of the remainder is delivered on-the-job. Because of the nature of the client group and SMYL's policy of trying to contextualise the training to the trade preference of each learner, the user choice funding for off-the-job training is inadequate. The program has not been running long enough to identify post-traineeship outcomes but in general it is seen as successful in meeting the specific local needs. However, better learning resources are needed and the opinion of the SMYL manager is that the qualification itself is of low quality compared with Certificate II traineeships in other industries. He also feels that it is difficult to guarantee high quality training when the training culture of the local industry is low.

Company Example 1: Individual Homes

Individual Homes was a privately-owned house-building business in a small regional town on the border of NSW and Victoria. It had operated for the past six years as a franchise from a major home-building company which described itself as a 'national network of local builders'. The company was managed by Jim with administrative assistance from his wife. There were two full-time employees, one a trainee, Tom, who had been working for the company for approximately three months, and one an apprentice, Tom, who had

completed a traineeship before moving into an apprenticeship. Liam had joined the company straight from school (where he had completed a Certificate I in General Construction including a period of work placement with Jim). Tom had previously undertaken a horticultural apprenticeship and worked in his father's landscape gardening business. Whilst Jim met his other labour needs by hiring sub-contractors, the recruitment of a second trainee was a big step because the business was not huge, but was necessitated because he was not able to find sufficient high-quality sub-contractors. Interviews were undertaken during February 2008 as follows:

Interview	Name	Role	Location of interview
1.	Jim (with his wife attending the interview and offering some comments)	Company owner/manager	The company office in the main street of the town
2.	Tom	Fourth year apprentice	On-site at a domestic house site
3.	Liam	Trainee	On-site at the same site
4.	Mark	General construction course coordinator and teacher	Albury TAFE construction teachers' office

Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes and were all taped and transcribed, with permission. While at Albury TAFE, the researcher inspected workbooks and other materials used in the course, as well as photographic samples of students' work.

The manager's interest in traineeships began when he made the decision to employ full-time staff rather than an apprentice who went to TAFE once a week. Traineeships were marketed to him as on-the-job and this appealed, because as he put it 'if you're doing frames or trusses or something, you can't do it on your own'. Jim felt that the amount of learning at TAFE in the first year of an apprenticeship was fairly low and therefore he thought it could mostly be learned on-the-job: 'I don't see them missing out on 12 months of TAFE as being disadvantaged.' Neither Jim nor his wife could quite remember how they had first found out about on-the-job traineeships; it was possibly through an Australian Apprenticeship Centre but they were not familiar with the terminology. The trainees said they had not really taken any notice of the fact that they were taken on as trainees rather than apprentices. They called themselves apprentices, anyway and the fact that they achieved a Certificate II on the way to a Certificate III was of minor importance to the two trainees as they knew that they had been taken on to complete an apprenticeship.

Whilst the traineeship was undertaken on the job the TAFE teacher planned to visit monthly and the trainee would undertake a small number of units at the TAFE college. These were units that develop skills that would not be possible on the job, for example fork lift, elevated work platforms and so on. Jim felt that what was learned was appropriate for the work, however he was not happy that the traineeship did not coincide with the first year of the apprenticeship. Some units in the traineeship, according to Jim, were from the second year of the apprenticeship, and some units had to be 'caught up' when transferring into the apprenticeship. The problem was manageable and appeared to be an annoyance rather than a major issue.

The manager did not make specific times to sit with the trainee and considered that 'I think he's learning more on the tools and doing what he's doing than any bit of paperwork'. Also, he considered that to be the job of the RTO: 'It's more important for him (the teacher) to sit down and talk to Liam than it is to me. I'm not a school teacher.' Monitoring of the trainees' progress was easily obtained as the company was so small and the manager visited the sites several times a day. The trainees reported that they were given specific responsibilities in their work and that if they did well they were 'rewarded' with discrete projects such as building stairs. It was noted on the site visit that the trainees had a great deal of interaction with several sub-contractors who were on-site. It was probable, therefore, that learning from the sub-contractors was a feature of the trainees' experiences as well as learning from the owner.

The trainees were given workbooks and these were generally completed in the trainee's own time although the trainee could seek assistance if it was needed and could ask for working time to complete if he wished. It was considered that 'homework' was acceptable to the trainees because they had so recently been at school or in another TAFE course. Although Tom did not rate the RTO training he had received very highly, he did not consider he missed out by not attending TAFE. What was covered in year 1 of the apprenticeship at TAFE was not much beyond what he did at work and in his workbooks. Jim's satisfaction with the new RTO was readily apparent. He was not concerned how often the visits were made; he thought that if Liam could work through all of the 'books' in a couple of months he would be quite happy but was equally happy

if it took all year. Sandra said that she thought that visiting work-based trainees provided an opportunity for TAFE teachers to get out into workplaces and update their knowledge of industry practices. Tom identified some features of Liam's RTO experience that were superior compared with his own: Liam's workbooks were higher quality (the first RTO even provided workbooks with pages missing); they were more like the workbooks that apprentices were given. The new RTO teacher, Mark, spent more time explaining the workbooks to Liam and discussing how to approach questions. Also Tom found that the new RTO seemed better organised with visits and with follow-up on queries. The main positive feature for Tom was the emphasis on safety equipment and safe working practices, but as he said, 'Jim was always like that anyway... if he sees you're not wearing glasses, he'll tick you off.' Tom pointed out that while on-the-job training was fine in his case where he had a variety of work in his job, he noticed once he began attending TAFE that some students did not have this variety.

The interview with Mark, the TAFE teacher, provided useful additional information about the way in which the qualification was delivered within that Institute. He reported that there were quite a large number of General Construction trainees in TAFE NSW and that they worked in a range of construction environments. For example, roof plumbers and tilers enrolled, although the majority were carpenters. Mark had some criticisms of the traineeship. He reinforced the criticism of the company that the traineeship did not align well with the first year of the apprenticeship. He noted that the funds available to his section were inadequate to service the trainees, especially those at a distance, and that he viewed the course as a sort of 'loss leader' to attract people who might subsequently wish to articulate into Certificate IIIs. He said, 'If you look at it as an introductory course to construction... people think of it that way sometimes.' He also noted that it attracted some people to TAFE who might otherwise never have attended and that they moved into courses in different industry areas. He regarded this as a positive outcome.

Mark found that it was not possible to teach learners that were on-the-job trainees as easily as other learners that were on-campus, particularly when learners had problems with literacy or with calculations. While learning support was available, on-the-job trainees did not access it. On campus it was possible to integrate literacy and calculations into teaching skills but this was not possible on-the-job and he considered that few workplace supervisors would undertake this role. On the other hand Mark enjoyed the contact with the good employers and learned a great deal about the industry from his employers and from the site visits. He learned from other traineeship areas within the Institute about better ways to manage on-the-job trainees. Assessment was an area of concern for Mark. He considered that some RTOs relied too much on the judgment of the employer. Mark made sure always to gather three forms of evidence before passing a student as competent although he knew that his assessment of the students 'can be very narrow.' When asked about possible areas for improvement he said that the amount of funding definitely needed attention, and that employers should be made aware of the need to really train, including underpinning knowledge. He believed the traineeship curriculum should be better aligned to the trades but that he knew this would lead a demand for electives that he would find it difficult to service.

Quality features evident in traineeships in this company included a commitment by the manager to building a future workforce, some off-the-job training that provided a chance to learn certain skills that could not be learned on-site, and on-the-job training where learners were able to undertake a wide range of tasks, some of them as small but authentic projects. There were appropriate learning materials, a well-organised schedule of visits and record keeping by the RTO and a concern by the RTO for correct assessment practices. There was encouragement by the RTO for learners to proceed to further qualifications, and learning about, and engagement in, traineeship development by RTO staff.

Possible quality improvements highlighted by the participants include better articulation pathways from Certificate II to III. More funding is needed for rural on-the-job traineeships to provide better support especially in literacy and numeracy. Suggestions made included a requirement for people taking on trainees to be qualified and/or to be better educated about their responsibilities, and a particular need for this among employers in areas of the industry that have not had a tradition of apprenticeships.

Company Example 2: Master Builders' Association of the ACT Group Training Organisation

This was a complex company example as it involved interviews with GTO staff, two host employer visits, and a telephone interview with one of the founders of the program. The example illustrates the use of the General Construction qualification for a particular client group, in this case school-based trainees or, more properly, Australian School Based Apprentices (ASBAs). The example was well known throughout the construction training industry, and staff and committee members had made presentations interstate on the program hoping that it would lead to take-up in other States. School students completed the traineeships over

two years, Years 11 and 12. In some, if not all, States and Territories MBA was also a GTO responding to a need to retain and grow the pool of skilled workers in the construction industry. In the ACT there was also an RTO within the umbrella. The offices were on a major highway in suburban Canberra, with training rooms and large practice workshops on-site. The construction industry in Canberra was currently booming but still employers were reluctant to employ apprentices, primarily due to the shift to sub-contracting. In this context, school-based trainees were marketed as a low-risk option for employers because both parties could try the relationship out without a four-year commitment. They were also marketed as a way to grow a workforce, leaving the employer freer to work off-site and to take leave.

Interviews were undertaken during February 2008 as follows:

Interview	Name	Role	Location of interview
1.	Gerry	MBA GTO field officer	MBA office, Canberra
2.	Sharyn	MBA GTO school-based programs coordinator	MBA office, Canberra
3.	Ryan	MBA RTO trainer	On-site at the same site
4.	Michael & Lee	Previous school-based trainees; now full-time apprentices	On-site at a domestic house site
5.	Ben	Senior supervisor and manager of school-based programs for a MBA host employer	On-site in office at major construction site (a prison)
6.	Martin	School-based trainee	As for Ben
7.	Desmond	National general manager for a large construction firm and one of the founders of the MBA school-based trainee program.	By telephone

Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes and, with the exception of interviews 4 and 7, were taped and transcribed, with permission. Interviews 1 to 3 took place at the MBA offices, 4 to 6 on-site at the host employers' work sites, and 7 by telephone. The field officer accompanied the researcher to the work sites but did not sit in on the interviews.

MBA had a well-established business as a GTO with around 200 apprentices, and through the RTO, operated a number of other courses as well. There was also a cadetship program which offered traineeships in non-construction trades for people wanting to work in administrative or other occupations within the construction industry. In addition MBA had been working for some time in VET in schools with the aim of increasing recruitment into the construction industry and assisting disadvantaged youth.

The school-based traineeship (or SNAP, from school-based new apprenticeship, as it was generally known to those associated with the MBA program) started in approximately 2005 when two managers working for a large construction company decided to assist in setting up the program. The managers 'got their subbies on board' and encouraged other employers to join. In the first year 30 students were employed, and all got jobs in the industry. The company was completely committed to the program which it saw as 'bringing the industry option back on the table whereas it has been pushed away by an emphasis on academic subjects at school'. In all, around 90 school students were involved in MBA programs. Around 30 at any one time were SNAPs, with 15 commencing each year as Year 11s and 15 continuing as Year 12s. In addition MBA, as an RTO, trained school-based trainees working for other employers. Because SNAPs were casual, they were paid a loading and so they actually cost host employers more per hour than apprentices. MBA recognised that there needed to be goodwill on the part of host employers because SNAPs often provided little added value.

MBA aimed only to break even on the SNAP program; they undertook the activity as an investment for the industry and also as a recruiting ground for high-quality apprentices for their GTO pool. It was also clear from interviews with all staff that there was also a strong social justice element. Many of the SNAPs, and also the GTO's apprentices, were from disadvantaged backgrounds and many measures were in place to support them, such as a counselling service. All graduates of the Kids Assist program mentioned above were given the chance to enroll in the traineeship. The pastoral care seemed exceptional.

SNAPs were required, by ACT regulations, to spend 11 hours a week on the program. This translated to 8 hours on the job and 3 hours training at the RTO. The on-the-job training was undertaken one day per week but often trainees did extra hours at weekends or in school holidays, partly from their own volition but sometimes to catch up on hours missed due to school excursions, wet work days, etc. The three hours off-the-job training was after school once a week from 4.30pm – 7.30pm, first years on one night and second

years on another night. Travelling to the off-the-job training after school often required the co-operation of parents, because the trainees were drawn from schools all over Canberra. Arrangements were in place with most of the schools in the ACT. One of the most challenging jobs for MBA, according to two of the staff, was maintaining liaison with the schools as there was a large turnover of careers staff. The administrator said that one of her major tasks was tracking attendance because students could say they were at either work or school when in fact they were at neither.

It was competitive to get into the traineeships. The program had a high reputation and students, and particularly their parents valued its opportunities. The main draw cards were (a) that it offered the chance to sample the building trades without making a firm commitment to one trade, and (b) the way the school curriculum was structured meant that students could still go on to university if they wanted to. All three trainees appreciated this opportunity to keep their options open. As they said, it helped them make post-school career choices too. Once selected for the traineeship, students were allocated to an employer, sometimes not quite in accordance with their preferences. MBA staff stated that students tended to prefer residential placements but they actually had more places in the commercial sector, which were not so popular. There were particular reasons why MBA chose the host employers they did. Firstly they did not want to saturate the host employer market for apprenticeships, as they had 200 apprentices to find hosts for. Secondly they wanted deliberately to introduce trainees to a wider range of jobs within the industry than carpentry as there was little labour market demand for carpenters but plenty for other trades such as bricklaying and plastering. In addition, they matched host employers carefully to the students and had to consider both the safety of the student and the well-being of the employer. Host employers were required either to hold trade qualifications themselves or to have member of staff on-site who did. The GTO encouraged students to work extra hours where they were offered as this was more likely to lead to an offer of an apprenticeship. Both Michael and Lee were working for the same employer that they had been placed with in their traineeship, and this was reported to be the case for about two-thirds of the trainees. In some cases it was reported that students went straight onto an apprenticeship before completing the SNAP.

It was reported by both the senior supervisor, Ben, and the trainee, Martin, at the large commercial host employer that a large construction site was quite difficult for students to navigate because the project managing organisation managed a large number of sub-contractors. The supervisor interviewed was in charge of two buildings at the site and had 60 subbies to supervise on a particular day. Some subbies were very keen to take a trainee to work with them but others had to be pushed into it and found it a chore to manage the student let alone undertake training. It was difficult for the senior supervisor to motivate the subbies and it was clear that although he felt that it was a good program for the company to be involved with, in fact it was a challenging part of his job. The ex-trainees, Michael and Lee, interviewed on the residential site, by contrast, were very happy and enjoyed the work. They both recounted how their employer had given them responsible work from their very first day – putting up frames in one case and putting in a floor in the other. One said ‘(He) puts you in at the deep end. He doesn’t just give you a broom.’

On-the-job training appeared to vary greatly. At the big sites it was really a matter of luck whether the student was placed with a subbie that had both the inclination and the ability to train. With all three trainees it was the richness of the work that pleased them rather than any explicit training they received on-the-job. Trainees seemed to be most motivated and learned most when they were given small authentic projects to carry out.

The off-the-job training was carefully structured. Ryan explained that to maintain interest he had a one-plus-one policy: one week theory and the next week practical. He engaged the learners in project work which utilised the skills from several units of competency and enabled them to see how the skills and knowledge was applied. Ryan the trainer had only recently completed a Bachelor of Education (Technology) and was clearly very conversant with learning theories and utilised them in his practice with his SNAP students. He explained the need to scaffold students all the way through the project so that it was clear how the theory contributed to the practice. The trainees all reported that they enjoyed the classes (although preferring the practical sessions to theory); they felt they were treated as adults and enjoyed the use of anecdotes from the trainer’s time in the industry. Anecdotes about safety appeared to have a particular resonance. Additional literacy and numeracy assistance was provided on a one-to-one basis as needed; the trainer would stay behind after class if he observed a student having difficulties, and all students were diagnosed at the beginning of the course so that Ryan knew where the problems lay. Students were provided with a textbook that came with four student workbooks. The workbooks were completed in class following group discussion. Ryan considered that off-the-job training was essential, particularly to provide a broad range of skills. He also noted that if the trainees were on-the-job he would not be able to devote the necessary time to observe the students undertaking different tasks. He also considered that only in an off-the-job situation could one be sure that the student received the requisite underpinning knowledge. In the off-the-job training the students were taught how the different trades fitted together; for example the fact that an error by one tradesperson would affect all others on a site.

While most trainees went on to become apprentices, articulation of the qualifications side was not straightforward. A student who went on to become a carpenter would find that he or she received credit for all of the units in the Certificate II (unlike the arrangements in the Individual Homes case study), but trainees entering some trades received very little. For example plumbers and electricians received no credit at all. Even for the carpenters, the trainer noticed that trainees were not as skilled as the second-year apprentices. Ryan attributed this to the fact that apprentices received six blocks of five-day-week work and that much more intensive learning could take place in that way, compared with the short sessions that the trainees had.

There were a number of quality features evident in this example. There was commitment by the GTO and key host employers to building a future workforce, with an attempt to address skill shortage areas. Major companies encouraged their sub-contractors to take trainees, thus addressing the difficulties caused by the fragmented nature of the industry. GTO and RTO staff had deep experience in the industry and extensive networks. There was a realistic expectation of what could be expected from host employers and an attempt to addressing what could not. There was regular off-the-job training that provided a chance to learn a broad range of skills and underpinning knowledge, by a trainer who was teacher-trained at degree level. Off-the-job training included literacy and numeracy support, and extensive learning resources and workshop areas providing the chance for project work and integrated assessment. There was intensive pastoral care and clear employment pathways both into and out of the traineeship. The program had a high profile both within the industry and within schools in the ACT.

Possible quality improvements highlighted by the participants included improved handover between careers teachers at schools to ensure the program retains its profile and improved on-the-job learning arrangements at the commercial sites which could include examples of suitable projects that could be provided to host employers who were finding it difficult to allocate work. The availability of better articulation pathways from Certificate II to III for all trades was also evidently a need.

Analysis

The following analysis of General Construction Certificate II traineeships considers inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes as defined in the overall research project.

Inputs:

- Training Package

The Training Package, and contracted training arrangements associated with the qualifications, formed the kernel of the arguments among the stakeholders. While some saw the presence of traineeships as an opportunity to improve skills in the industry and attract new workers, the union saw them as a threat to existing apprenticeships and to skill levels. Clearly the current General Construction Certificate II had evolved as a compromise between the two positions, offering general industry skills but no specific 'trade' skills. Hence its use was fairly limited. Those who used it complained about the lack of articulation to Certificate III level although at the same time acknowledged the utility of the broad base of skills. The proposed, more specialised, qualifications in the new Training Package would provide for better articulation although learners would then have to make a choice at the traineeship level about their preferred 'trade'. The ability to keep options open was noted as an advantage of the current qualification.

- Resources

Most of those involved with the traineeship were from traditional trade backgrounds and expected a proportion of training to be off-the-job. Hence when discussing resources they tended to think of printed materials and presentations that could be used in class, and of materials that could be used in the construction of practical projects. In the on-the-job example, workbooks became much more important, and the quality of these was seen to be vital. The workbooks were expected to be all-encompassing and trainees were not expected to have to look beyond them for the necessary information. Variety in the presentation of workbooks and the written assessment tasks was appreciated.

- Funding and incentives

Funding was not a major issue for discussion in this case study. As the construction industry has always received government funding it was taken as a given that traineeships would be funded, and they always were. However, the 'user choice' money was felt to be insufficient for delivery in some cases particularly rural and remote instances and not all GTOs charged employers for their school-based trainees so as to encourage take-up and draw on altruism in the industry.

- Sense of vocation

Despite the worries of some stakeholders it was readily apparent throughout this case study that those entering as trainees were committed to the industry. The two examples showed that the majority of trainees proceeded through to apprenticeships. The school-based example suggested that the program captured some young people who otherwise might have been hesitant about entering an apprenticeship, perhaps considering university as a pathway instead. The research also showed that trainees remained committed to their ‘trade’ of preference. While more research would be needed to verify this, it seemed that the notion of using the broad nature of the qualification to persuade young people into other areas of the industry might not be successful.

Processes:

- Pedagogy: on and off the job

Employers seemed to feel more comfortable the more closely the pedagogy replicated traditional apprenticeship arrangements. ‘Good teaching’ was applauded, such as the use of methods to cater for diverse learners, appropriate application of learning theory, project work that was well scaffolded, group discussions rather than lectures, and use of anecdotes to spark interest. Assessment that was holistic and project-based was appreciated. Where delivery was on-the-job all of this was much more difficult to achieve. It was important for RTO staff to scaffold the learner’s use of the work books because it was unlikely that employers would find the time to assist trainees. There was also the potential for the trainees to use technology such as sending photos by mobile phone to submit work for assessment, but trainees did not yet appear ready as a group for these means. On-the-job training could be compromised where learners were placed with workers who were not very keen to take responsibility for them.

- Employer-trainee psychological contract

Because of the tradition of apprenticeships in this industry there was a strong psychological contract between the trainee and the employer. Trainees expected to learn, and good employers expected to teach – to a limited extent. However the fragmented nature of employment in large companies and on large projects meant that this contract broke down and it was fairly clear that this made the process unsatisfactory for both parties. Where trainees were placed on small sites in close contact with managers the contract was upheld.

- Intermediary interactions

GTOs were vital to the survival of apprenticeships in the industry and to the promotion of traineeships. GTOs that had a particular focus on the industry, such as MBA GTO, developed a range of programs among which traineeships formed one element. GTOs were able to persuade employers to take trainees, to monitor their progress, and to deal with any issues where trainee or employer was unhappy. They were also able in some cases to ‘discount’ a trainee to make it more attractive to employ him or her. Where GTOs were not involved AACs were important in marketing traineeships to individual employers.

Outputs:

- Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees

While traineeships remained relatively underutilised in this industry compared with the numbers of workers, it was not yet considered an advantage for job applicants to possess the qualification. Instead, graduated trainees were seen as people who had completed the first year of an apprenticeship. Completion was however an indicator of likely persistence in the industry and ability to cope with the training.

- Pathways to higher qualifications

In some ‘trade’ areas the Certificate II in General Construction provides a reasonable amount of credit into a Certificate III but in other areas there was very little. Added to these problems is the question of delivery mode of the Certificate II and the Certificate III. For example at Individual Homes, the company and the trainees complained that there was an imperfect match between the units studied in the traineeship and the carpentry apprenticeship first year. On the other hand at MBA the match was said to be perfect. In other words, MBA appeared to have structured their delivery of both qualifications (and probably their offering of electives in the Certificate II) so that they matched. Individual trainees accessing providers, as Individual Homes’ trainees did, could not take advantage of such arrangements. The proposed new Certificate IIs would offer more straightforward pathways within specific ‘trade’ areas.

- Attrition during traineeship

Attrition appeared to be low in these traineeships. In the MBA example the main cause of attrition was recruitment directly into an apprenticeship.

Outcomes:

- Career progression

As already discussed, the usual outcome was movement into an apprenticeship or, in cases where learners were from a non-trade area, into a Certificate III qualification in a non-trade area. While the union expressed concern that too many people would be trained for the eventual supervisory positions obtainable, most stakeholders welcomed the advent of more workers into the career ladder. It does not seem that any stakeholder participant regarded the attainment of a Certificate II as a career end in itself.

- Skilled staff for businesses and industry

As discussed in the introduction, there is a shortage of construction workers in some trades and in some geographical areas. The qualification appears to provide a sound grounding for working in the industry but is not regarded as providing more than basic skills.

- Staying in the industry

Traineeships were regarded by those who utilised them as an excellent way of attracting workers to the industry and training them. Because of the training culture in the industry, it seemed to be accepted that trainees once completed might move around the industry. Employers hoped they would stay with them but were not distressed if they did not.

Conclusion

All stakeholders agreed on the need to attract more, and higher quality, workers to the construction industry and many innovative examples of programs have been documented in the literature. Traineeships appeared at face value to be a prime means of attracting new workers who might not wish initially to undertake the full commitment of a four-year apprenticeship. They would also appear to be attractive to employers who would like to try out a particular worker, or the concept of employing a worker rather than using sub-contractors. The utility of the traineeship had been compromised by the competing interests of stakeholders, which have produced a qualification that has some flaws, most notably in the dearth of suitable pathways. It had also been compromised by the obvious disapproval of the major trade union which has no doubt hindered the marketing of the qualification. The examples that were studied in this case study showed that the traineeship could be successful but that its efficacy appears to be greatest where people sought, and were given, a fairly traditional building industry experience. It was also particularly suited to equity groups and for use in school-based traineeships. The challenge would be to extend this and to use the qualification as a catalyst for change. It remains to be seen whether the new Training Package will provide improved pathways and whether the new Certificate IIs will retain the positive features of the current Certificate II.

As construction was an established teaching area in most TAFEs and many other providers, there seemed to be appropriate expertise to deliver the qualification. It appeared to falter when providers who were not traditional deliverers in the industry area try to enter the market. On-the-job provision was viewed with some mistrust and indeed presented many challenges. In some circumstances, e.g., remoteness, there was not a great deal of choice except to deliver on-the-job and hence better methods need to be devised.

More research is needed into the implementation of traineeships in non-trade areas and the experiences of learners enrolled in the General Construction Certificate II who work in non-trade areas. Both of these circumstances were mentioned but were not directly researched. In these instances, the implementation of traineeships could be making a valuable contribution to the development of a training culture across the whole of the building industry not just the traditional trade areas.

Summary

- The construction industry is considered to be in a recruitment crisis because of the extent of sub-contracting. Traineeships could provide a low-risk method for small employers and sub-contractors to (re)enter the contracted training sphere;

- The nature of a traineeship curriculum is highly politicised in this industry and has not been resolved. This controversy is a barrier to implementation;
- Implementation has occurred where stakeholders see the traineeship's ability to fill a particular need;
- Champions of traineeships are necessary for effective implementation and they are often driven by a commitment to young people as well as to the industry;
- Off-the-job delivery appears to be the most suitable way of delivering underpinning knowledge and skills in areas that are not available on individual worksites;
- Teachers need to have qualifications and experience in the industry;
- Literacy, numeracy and pastoral support are necessary for the client groups currently engaged;
- Employers, and in particular sub-contractors, may need assistance in appropriate ways to work with trainees.

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Meat processing industry (abattoirs) case study – Ros Brennan Kemmis

Introduction

Australia is one of the most successful producers and exporters of meat and livestock. The industry contributes \$15 billion to the Australian economy although this figure fluctuates according to the weather conditions and the consequent capacity to raise livestock for live export or slaughter and processing. The ‘whole of chain’ approach to the raising and marketing of beef and sheep for national and international markets contributes significantly to the success of this industry. Rigorous quality assurance systems begin on the farm and end with the sale of the meat and associated products. This form of monitoring and regulation operates at both national and international levels. The Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) is the national regulatory system under the legislative authority of the Federal Government. AQIS conducts regular audits on meat processing companies and these include accessing information about the level and type of training that employees receive. Different importing countries also impose a variety of quality compliance frameworks relating to health and food safety standards. The industry is highly sensitive to the possibilities of product contamination and the recalling of products can be an expensive and damaging exercise. Industry accountability for the quality of the meat products and the health of the consumers are strong imperatives for both internal and external regulation (Malerblog 2007).

The meat processing industry is a dangerous industry. Employees frequently work in confined spaces with sharp tools and surrounded by heavy pieces of potentially lethal equipment. A great deal of time and resources are spent on training employees in safe work practices. However the accident rate remains relatively high in comparison to other industry areas such as retail or hospitality. The public perception of the meat processing industry is also not always a favourable or generous one. These preconceptions influence the company’s ability to attract staff and the meat processing industry is, and has been, chronically short staffed. The nature of the work and the reasons why people seek employment in this industry both contribute to high levels of staff turnover.

The final set of external conditions that impact on this industry relate to fluctuations in weather and climate. Drought particularly affects the price and quality of meat for slaughter and processing. The meat industry has had a reputation for ‘opening and closing’ and only large companies that have a capacity to absorb the results of severe weather conditions survive in the marketplace. It is in many ways a very precarious industry.

Trainees in Meat Processing (Abattoirs) MTM20107 enter at AQF Level II and are required to complete six compulsory core units of competency. There are an additional 158 units of Technical Competence that cover all aspects of the meat industry from handling animals, preparing the carcass, operating mechanical aids, trimming the carcass and despatching the carcass from the slaughter floor, to cleaning up after operations and operating vehicles. Each Unit of Technical Competence appears with a unit value that ranges from one to 10 points. Trainees need to complete Technical Units to the value of 20 points to be awarded a Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs). This clearly allows the employer to select those units of competency that are relevant to their particular enterprise and customise the Training Package to their circumstances. Trainees can progress from Certificate 2 through to an Advanced Diploma in Meat Processing.

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a range of industry stakeholders. The stakeholders are listed below.

Interview	Position	Organisation
1.	Senior officer and curriculum manager	MINTRAC
2.	Senior officer	Murray Mallee Training Company
3.	Curriculum manager	OTEN
4.	Director	Agrifoods Skills Council with responsibility for Meat Processing

Each of these stakeholders had a particular perspective on issues associated with ‘quality’ in traineeships, depending on their role and experience with the industry. They all agreed that there was a high rate of turnover of staff in this industry and although not officially being listed on the Skills Shortage Register, the

recruitment and retention of staff was a formidable issue for the industry. The high turnover of staff was related to the often-repetitious nature of the work, the physicality of the work and the people-intensive features of the workplace. There was a 35% completion rate of traineeships.

The expectations of traineeships from all interviewees were concerned with staffing the industry with employees who conformed to the stringent legislative and health requirements that apply in this industry. The meat industry was characterised by a high turnover of staff and traineeships helped to reduce this. It was an HR strategy in some companies - 'growing your own' workers. Traineeships were expected to provide 'work ready' staff. Similarly employees expected that they will be trained. All those interviewed, with the exception of the Skills Council participant, had extensive and direct experience of traineeships in the Meat Industry. Participants regarded and experienced traineeships as a method of providing qualified staff, and they focused strongly on issues of what constituted 'quality' in traineeships.

All participants agreed that meat industry traineeships were very specific and were tied closely to the legislative and commercial needs of the industry. It was seen as an industry dominated by training. Unless training credentials conform to the national and international standards, the enterprise could not sell its products. Employers were subject to regular two monthly audits and all training records were checked. Many participants thought that the level of workplace supervision and on-the-job teaching defined quality. MINTRAC supplied many kinds of assistance to ensure that this aspect of quality is maintained. For example, teaching and learning materials, assessment banks of items, and ongoing professional development of staff were provided to support this aspect of quality. Trainers and assessors were not left alone to interpret Training Packages. All supervisors are accredited workplace trainers. All traineeships were delivered on the job and MINTRAC was committed to its entire supervising staff having the new Certificate IV TAA40104. Industry funding made this possible. Because of the location of abattoirs across Australia, much of the off-the-job training was delivered flexibly. In particular, participants identified the following features of sound pedagogy that contributed to high quality traineeships:

- Frequent opportunities for practice of newly learned skills;
- Workplace mentors available for trainees;
- Well trained assessors and supervisors;
- Orientation sessions for new employees/trainees;
- Explicit career paths;
- Learning is work situated; and
- Customisation of delivery to meet the specific needs of the enterprise.

The meat industry was a relatively socially and culturally 'closed' industry. The traditions of training are accepted without question and employees expected to be trained. It was interesting to note that the perceptions internal to the industry may not necessarily be those held by the wider community. An Impact Study of an abattoir in southern NSW had just been completed by MINTRAC where it was found that:

- Traineeships gave confidence and self-esteem to the workers who were overwhelmingly proud of their achievement;
- Trainees saw that the skills gained in the traineeship were transferable to other contexts;
- The community perceived the commitment to training and its value; and
- Workers generally did not disclose their occupation to the broader community and perceived that it was a relatively low status occupation in the eyes of the community.

Participants recognised that the availability of government incentives funding might have been a reason for the take up of traineeships at other times, but the greatest incentive for the meat industry traineeships was the prospect of having trained employees. In this way the industry could demonstrate compliance to national and international health standards and thereby expand their markets and profitability.

There were clearly articulated pathways and career progression routes for employees undertaking traineeships and this was regarded as contributing to the possible attractiveness of these jobs.

Career progression in the meat industry was taken very seriously. The industry offered training to all its employees, from trainees to upper levels of management; currently 200 employees were studying at Diploma level. Funding was also available to support Advanced Diploma study, and MINTRAC was offering undergraduate and postgraduate degree level sponsorship in 2008. There were comprehensive plans and practices for staff development, and every State and Territory office of MINTRAC had a Training Manager. The Network of Training Managers worked closely with the RTOs in the states and territories and these collaborations contributed considerably to quality.

High levels of regulation and international compliance in the Meat Industry had led to a close alliance between the Training Package developers and the industry. This alliance was accepted and praised by the Skills Council. The elements of quality in traineeships that were evident included commitment on the part of the company and the trainees; partnerships between the provider and the industry; high quality trainers and assessors who took a personal interest in the wellbeing and progress of their trainees; trainers and assessors who have particular experience and expertise in the discipline area and a great deal of experience in workplaces.; customisation of the Training Packages to suit the industry/ enterprise contexts where trainees are located and a time commitment on the part of the employers.

All participants agreed that these features of high quality were replicable in other traineeship areas. The model outlined above could be used in other industry areas. There needed to be industry wide commitment to the notion of ensuring quality and this needed to be supported by industry with funding. The legislative requirements in the meat industry had made this a necessity and not a matter of choice.

Case Story

The case story that appears below highlights some of the features of the Meat Industry including high levels of staff attrition, the ways in which HR practices can be adapted to foster staff development, industry commitment to training and focus on sound pedagogical principles in the delivery of traineeships. The case story was part of an interview with an officer from Murray Mallee Training and referred to a relatively small abattoir in northern Victoria.

It would be 5 years ago I suppose, the abattoir was really going through a growth spurt, and one of the biggest dangers they had was the lack of meat inspectors. So what they did was they started with a group of people doing Certificate II in Abattoirs and some of them went through and did Certificate III, and they identified the group that they wanted to go on and become their meat inspectors. The group went through and did the meat inspector course of study and it is quite a difficult and long-term commitment. A few of these were women who started, and they were cleaners. They were cleaning up the bloody kill floors, and you know, pretty average work, really average work, and they went right through the system to become meat inspectors. Which, for them, they were women who were probably I don't know, in their 40's and had probably, I'd say had you know, pretty basic employment all of their working lives. And you know, it took them through into an occupation and a pay scale that they probably couldn't have ever dreamed of. They were incredibly proud of themselves. And extremely committed. The employers have built enormous stores of goodwill because of what they've done for those people. So that also makes for a pretty good workforce, and that's why, I think, this abattoir is pretty successful, you know. They really don't have a lot of turnover but they actually have gone through a pretty big growth spurt over the last 5 years, and they have found it difficult to attract the required numbers of staff. This was one way of 'growing their own' and holding on to them.

It is a real advantage to target and support willing staff in training. A lot of the people we have that do these courses left school because it was a bad experience. And if you put them back into an environment that they equate with 'back to school' they are very resistant. Whereas if they just go to work, and they're shown how to do something, it's not even called training to them, it's just that I'm showing you how to do something and they work, and they get good at it and they get paid, and they're really happy. And then of course, the assessment process is quite informal. There's no sitting tests, or things that often take them again back to their unhappy school days. And they achieve a qualification, and they do actually value it. And you know, there are some people there that don't really care too much, because for them it's about working and getting paid. But there are a lot of people there that never achieve anything academically, but because they didn't doesn't mean they're stupid people. It's just that that type of learning didn't do it for them, whereas on the job learning has obviously been successful for them. They've had a good experience and they've got their qualification and they're pretty proud of that.

Company Example 1.

The two companies where the detailed examples case studies were carried out had an ‘industry reputation’ for delivering high quality and well organised traineeships (Mary Brown, MINTRAC). In the two companies the first used an external RTO (Central West Community College) while the second one was an enterprise RTO. The researcher visited these sites, undertook a guided tour of the various sections of these huge complexes, and conducted interviews with a range of people involved in the delivery of traineeships. The interviews were taped and sent for transcription. In one case the person being interviewed did not wish to be taped and notes were taken during this interview. Information about the company was compiled from the interviews and the printed material about the company. The company web site was accessed for detailed information about the history and international operations of the parent company.

The first company was a multi national company that slaughters and processes beef for the national market and overseas. Munchy Meats was an extremely profitable and successful international company. It was a vertically integrated company and provided services and products from ‘gate to plate’. The following extract, with pseudonym substituted, is taken from the company web site:

“Munchy Meats is a wholly owned subsidiary of Munchy Meats Incorporated. Munchy Meats is an international provider of food, agricultural and risk management products and services. With 149,000 employees in 64 countries, the company is committed to using its knowledge and experience to collaborate with customers to help them succeed. Currently Munchy Meats sells protein meals and vegetable oils, beef products and cotton lint as well as exporting food ingredients via Tosboku. Investments in Australia total US\$250 million with an annual turnover of approximately US\$500 million. Munchy Meats employs over 1,200 people in Australia”.

Six interviews were conducted, with the following people (pseudonyms utilised):

Interview	Name	Organisation
1.	Tom Baton	Training Manager
2.	Steve Harris	Human Resources Manager
3.	Paul Henry	RTO Trainer
4.	Wardy	Boning Room Supervisor
5.	Ken Simpson	Boning Room Supervisor
6.	Barry McKeown	Boning Room Trainee

The advent of traineeships in the industry provided a training framework and economic incentives to employers to extend their existing training practices to include the award of a nationally recognised credential to employees. Almost all new full time employees were signed up for a traineeship. Those who did not were still required to take part in the health and safety training that was provided to all casual and part time employees. Munchy Meats was committed to traineeships. Tom Baton summarised the reasons for this support when he said:

‘The traineeships here are of a high quality. They are consistent in their approach and this gives us a structure that we wouldn’t have otherwise. It would be hit and miss and supervisors would be left to their own devices. If we didn’t have structured traineeships the development and the training of all these people would fall aside. This would then flow on to poor yield, poor food quality and poor everything.’

Two permanent staff from the Central West Community College - the RTO which worked with Munchy Meats - were located in the meat-processing complex. They were responsible for signing up the trainees, monitoring their progress, organising the collection of evidence for assessment and working with the supervisors who have day-to-day responsibility for the trainees in the workplace. The Training Manager, Tom, was responsible for the shop floor trainees, their conditions of work and their relationships with their supervisors. Tom worked in conjunction with the RTO staff. Tom was also responsible for the monitoring and encouragement of staff to undertake further study. The company supported staff who wished to move beyond the Certificate II in Meat Processing and provided opportunities for them to undertake other qualifications in management, supervision or meat inspection. Munchy Meats had just employed another member of staff whose role it is to focus on the training and development of senior staff.

The supervisors undertook 'the majority of the training and assessing of the trainees and provide the referees reports to the RTO'. The supervisors' roles were therefore crucial and they had completed some units of competency from the Training & Assessment Certificate IV, TAA40104. These units were generally those that related to face-to-face training.

Company Example 2.

Australian Fresh Lamb was a wholly Australian owned company that had been in operation for 35 years. It was a family owned business exporting sheep meat and wool based products to 90 countries. It was a multi million-dollar business and employed over 1,300 staff in Dubbo in NSW and Albany in Western Australia. These two plants had the capacity to process over 90,000 sheep and lambs per week. It was a vertically integrated company, and significant landholdings guaranteed stock for slaughter and processing. The by products of meat processing were also marketed as wool tops, pet food, bone meal, tallow, gall, pelts and sheepskins. Interviews were conducted with:

Interviewee	Name	Organisation
1.	Alan Morgan	Training Manager
2.	Sally Page	RTO Administrator
3.	Elliot Holmes	Human Resources Manager
4.	Stewart Dillon	Trainer/Supervisor
5.	Rob Makem	Supervisor
6.	Annette Summers	Trainee
7.	Julian Weller	Trainee
8.	Aidan Wallace	Apprenticeship Centre Manager

Australian Fresh Lamb promoted its HACCP and ISO accreditation for quality assurance and its verification by the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS). The importance of trained staff who complied with these regulations was clear and Australian Fresh Lamb had an overt commitment to employing trainees and promoting from within whenever and wherever possible. Australian Fresh Lamb was committed to training and had been since its first operations. The company introduced the first traineeships in 1996. This commitment was palpable with the staff interviewed. The attitude permeated the day-to-day relationships among all staff and it was interesting to note that the Human Resources Office and the Training Department were co-located in the same building. Australian Fresh Lamb was an enterprise RTO.

The company was highly supportive of traineeships because all the trainees were exposed to the same materials that were industry relevant. The company was satisfied within limits about its success with traineeships. The research undertaken by the Training Manager on some of the possible causes of high levels of staff turnover, supported by the Human Resources Department, had resulted in some coaching and mentoring programs for new trainees and for supervisory and training staff.

The company was wedded to working with all staff at all levels and providing them with opportunities for career progression and further education and training. Recently Australian Fresh Lamb had been involved in an Indigenous Strategy aimed at recruiting and retaining indigenous trainees. Of the cohort who began, 10% remained and whilst this may not be regarded as significant success, as the training manager said, "10% is a lot better than no percent". The company had clearly marked pathways to higher qualifications for trainees. Most of those staff in supervisory roles had 'come up through the ranks'. There were opportunities for leadership programs and staff often studied units of competency from the Certificate IV in Leadership. MINTRAC offered scholarships for further study and articulated programs in Universities.

Analysis

The analysis that follows is based on features identified as contributing to 'quality' in traineeships. The analysis focuses on inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes for this reason.

Inputs:

- Training Package

MINTRAC had the responsibility for the development of the new Training Package (which contained the Certificate II in Meat Processing: Abattoirs). The Training Package for the Meat Industry was extensively reviewed during 2007, and respondents who were aware of the processes used to review the Training Package were impressed by the level and extent of consultation conducted by MINTRAC during this review. The new Training Package Units also reflected the increasingly divided work practices within the industry. The Training Package stated, 'Several new units have been introduced, including units in Meat Hygiene Assessment, Refrigeration Index and a broader range of units for the handling of animals in stockyards'.

- Resources

Resources to support the trainees came primarily from the National Meat industry Training Advisory Council Limited (MINTRAC). The wide range of resources produced by MINTRAC were regarded as being current, affordable and available in different formats from print to online materials. MINTRAC was extremely active and highly respected:

'MINTRAC is the custodian of traineeships. They manage the requirements around traineeships. They consult with industry. They deal with the new Training Package requirements and they are continually looking abroad to see what's happening' (Interview 1).

The simultaneous implementation of the new Training Package and the release of curriculum and assessment resources to support trainee learning were clearly orchestrated by MINTRAC. Trainers and those with responsibility for managing this training thought that this process contributed to their confidence and skill and lead to high quality outcomes for the trainees.

- Funding and incentives

The responsibility for securing the funding and completing reporting requirements lay with the RTO in consultation with the company Training Managers which made these bureaucratic chores a relatively pain free activity. The incentives for Munchy Meats in having trainees included the obvious financial ones but also importantly included the ability to demonstrate to auditing authorities and overseas customers that its employees were participating in nationally accredited training. Training was explicitly linked to career and salary progression in the meat industry. The regulatory framework and the need to document the level of skills of employees to quality assure the national and international health and safety standards of the products meat that all producers had to be able to demonstrate explicitly that staff had appropriate qualifications. Continuous auditing by health authorities included close scrutiny of training records and possible deregistration of the company if training cannot be shown to be occurring.

- Sense of Vocation

The staff profile at the two meat processing sites was bi-modal. There was one group who have been employed for over 10 years at the one site, who displayed both passion and loyalty towards their work. These employees had developed a strong sense that they are meat industry workers. These staff had frequently moved up through the ranks in the company and now had supervisory or middle management positions. They were experienced, they knew and could navigate the culture of the workplace, and they had firm views about the types of training they needed to deliver and assess. The other group of staff included current trainees who had many different reasons for working in the company. For many it was a 'last resort job', ostensibly unattractive and plagued by negative preconceptions about the nature of the work. For some, their experiences in the realities of the meat processing plant altered their attitudes and they were pleasantly surprised. For others the repetitive and sometimes physically strenuous work that required high levels of stamina (employees typically worked 10 hour shifts) prompted early leaving. It was also interesting to note that Munchy Meats employed a significant number of new arrivals and refugees and while this group might not have developed a 'sense of vocation', the levels and types of training, the fact that they received full wages and the possibility of receiving a national qualification impressed them (Interview 6).

Processes:

- Pedagogy on and off the job

The Certificate II in Meat Processing was delivered as a fully on the job traineeship. All new staff who signed up for a traineeship underwent health and safety training and induction sessions prior to commencement on the factory floor. The same procedure was used with part time and casual staff. One Training Manager maintained that in this way 'we have consistency in their training and they are all following the same path and the same material' (Interview 1). During the traineeship there were a number of sessions run through the RTO or by RTO staff where further occupational health and safety issues were taught. These were either done face to face or via online modules produced by MINTRAC.

Pedagogical responsibility was to a large extent vested in the factory floor supervisory staff. All new trainees in one site were issued with iridescent lime green hard hats and in this way supervisors could recognise them quickly and monitor their performance. 'The supervisors can pay particular attention to the jobs they are doing and if they see a person doing something not quite right they'll hopefully go and do some teaching' (Interview 1). The supervisors also worked with the RTO staff to ensure that trainees' progress and had opportunities to work in other roles to satisfy the requirements of their traineeship. The supervisors also worked with the shop floor trainers who worked with specific trainees and who were also responsible for assessment.

The demands placed on the supervisors were quite extensive and the contributions they made to the quality of the traineeship are extensive. They were balancing outputs, productivity, safety and learning. Everyone acknowledged that this particular group of people must have excellent 'people skills' and be able to communicate clearly and effectively with trainees and other staff. Respondents also commented that the supervision load for anyone carrying out this role should not be any larger than five trainees. In one site the lead supervisor in the slaughter room explained the complexities of his work:

'I make sure that the training officers have their diaries right for the day. They have to let me know who is going to be trained and where this is going to happen. I have to make sure that all the paper work is right and that they have signed up people before they go on the machines. I am steering these guys through a minefield really because there's a lot of people up there. The placement of people is important. You have to be careful if you've got a group of people working together, you've got to get their personalities right and I've got to get to know them' (Interview 11).

Most of the formal learning occurred through demonstration, practice, and successive approximations to the correct ways of doing particular operations. Trainees were rotated through a variety of tasks and supervised during each of these. Some off-the-job training was provided, generally via online modules. However trainees did not regard this as significant. It was interesting and they felt they learnt some 'extra little things' but it was not thought to be critical to their work. Some trainees assisted newer employees and this was particularly the case where the new person did not speak English proficiently and had difficulty understanding instructions (Interview 6). Since each section of the meat processing line was dependent for 'quality' on the one immediately preceding it, the importance of raising and maintaining everyone's competence in efficient ways was crucial. Supervisors had an integrated role in delivery and assessment.

- Employee-trainee psychological contract

In the two large meat-processing companies surveyed in this study the level of responsibility or 'contract' between the parties was variable. In both sites the contract between the RTO and those staff managing the training was regarded as critical to the achievement of quality. However the 'psychological' and physical distance between the RTO and the shop floor supervisors did pose problems in one site. This distance was also linked to the culture of the industry and the sometimes entrenched work practices that made change and innovation difficult. This 'culture' also influenced the pedagogies of on the job training. One respondent commented that some supervisors 'take a hard line with trainees and this does not always help'. The RTO in these circumstances had to step into a mediating role.

The motivations that drove individual employment in the industry also influenced the nature of the contract. Some employees regarded work in this industry as transitory, short term and pragmatic. They appreciated the training within this psychological framework. Other employees regard the industry as their vocation and the contract between the company and the member of staff was strong and well articulated.

In both sites the strong commitment to training by management was regarded as important to the health of the contract with trainees. This commitment took a variety of forms and included provision of funding for higher level study, scholarships, study release time, and the appointment of mentors for trainees. In one site

female trainees could access 'female friendly rosters' and they could work between 9am and 3pm and thereby balance child care arrangements with work and learning. One respondent commented that 'training seems embedded into the company'.

- Intermediary Interactions

In the second site the Apprenticeship Centre was directly involved in all new staff inductions and the sign up processes for traineeships on a weekly basis. A member of staff would take the time to explain the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the traineeship to make sure 'that they understand what they are signing' (Interview 8). These involvements continued between the enterprise RTO and the Apprenticeship Centre, and staff regularly monitored the quality of training, assisted with smooth administration and financial matters, oversaw cancellations or suspensions and assisted with conflicts when they occurred. This 'partnership' relationship reduced the distance between government, employer and trainee and contributed to the quality of the traineeship.

The role of MINTRAC as the industry- funded body was seen as critical to the quality of traineeships. MINTRAC had been responsible for 'marketing' meat industry traineeships. This assertive campaign included advertising and the provision of hard copy and electronic information on the advantages of working and training in the industry. The two companies also stressed the opportunities for training and career progression. They both held open days for the public where the 'contract' between the employer and employee are regarded as strong selling points. They hoped that the public misconceptions about the nature of work in the industry and the high levels of staff attrition would be addressed.

Outputs:

- Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees

The distinction between trainees and other employees that operates in some industries was not present in the meat processing industry. Employers needed to have trained employees if they are going to sustain existing contracts and develop new ones; the demonstrable skill of their workforce was a strong selling point. There were regular audits of the company skills register and breaches of safety, health and security standards because of non-qualified staff could result in deregistration of the company. Thus companies were highly supportive of traineeships, as all the trainees were exposed to the same materials that were industry relevant and this base level of consistency helped to guarantee the quality of the product.

In both company examples there were clearly marked pathways to higher qualifications for trainees. Most of those staff in supervisory roles had 'come up through the ranks'. In spite of these initiatives some of those interviewed felt that traineeships still suffered from unfair comparisons with apprenticeships. They commented that 'apprenticeships give you a title and traineeships are just more or less about teaching skills and OH&S' (Interview 8) and while the industry itself valued the calibre of its trainees, this attitude was not necessarily shared amongst the wider community.

- Attrition during traineeship

The levels of attrition amongst trainees were high. One company estimated that their retention rate to completion was about 42% whilst the other company put this figure at about 48%. All new full time employees were put on traineeships and so the employment trends were directly reflected in the retention rates for traineeships. There are a number of reasons for high levels of employment churning in the meat processing industry. These include the sometimes repetitive nature of the work, the public perception of the status of the industry and the attitude that working in this industry pays good wages whilst being a transitory occupation. None of these factors have to do with the quality of the traineeship per se but are embedded in the nature of the industry itself.

- Career progression

There were many opportunities for career progression in both of the sites. These were clearly articulated and advertised. Staff were encouraged and supported to take on further education and training and for those who remain in the industry there were clearly defined career paths. In one site the stated company policy was one of promotion and appointment from within, and people could move through 'the whole chain'.

- Skilled staff for businesses and industry

Respondents felt that the traineeship helped to prepare staff for business and industry. In one site the lead supervisor commented on the range of 'employability skills' that the traineeship could contribute: 'We make people work ready and give them confidence. They are work ready for us or anyone else. We encourage them to communicate and they're ready to go anywhere' (Interview 11). Thus traineeships provided a mobile workforce for the meat processing industry.

- Staying in the Industry

The general view amongst the respondents was that at the end of their entry level qualification (Certificate II) trainees would have the skills and qualifications to move into another location or progress to higher qualifications. Quality traineeships were also seen to be those that created both a sense of passion and vocation in the individual towards meat processing as a viable career. An important factor that helped to develop these attributes could be described as the 'management ethos' of the organisation. Loyalty, care, attention to employee well being, a commitment to staff development and growth, the provision of opportunities and support for further study, and employment practices that acknowledged the potential of existing employees all contributed to staff stability and retention in the companies studied.

Conclusion

Traineeships in the Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs) appeared to be successful. There were high levels of attrition but these are more appropriately analysed according to employment trends and should not be used as a measure of quality of traineeships *per se*. In both examples the companies were committed to traineeships to provide the necessary skills in its workforce. The relationships between the RTO staff and the supervisory staff on the factory floor were critical to the everyday success of the traineeships and there were sometimes differences in pedagogical approaches that require attention and further training and development.

These traineeships provided opportunities for learning that would never otherwise be available to some groups of employees. This was particularly the case for women, new arrivals to Australia and people with few school-based qualifications. The fact that the traineeship was part of the work they were doing and it was a relatively well paid job helped to blur the distinction between learning and work.

Summary

- Traineeships are successful in providing qualified and trained staff in the meat industry to comply with a range of national and international regulatory frameworks;
- The industry is characterised by a high turnover of staff and this should not be used as a measure of quality of the traineeships provided;
- Supervisory staff are critical in their contribution to quality;
- Extensive and well organised industry support contributes greatly to the quality of the traineeships
- A close relationship between the RTO, the employer, the Human Resources Manager and the Apprenticeship Centre contributes to quality; and
- Company commitment to traineeships is extremely important in influencing quality.

References

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Retail industry case study report –Paul Comyn

Introduction

The retail services industries are highly diverse, with a wide range of products and services offered through enterprises of varying size and distribution, including micro-businesses and multinational companies. The retail industry is dominated in overall number by small businesses, although this dominance is balanced by a number of major companies with large store networks.

The retail industry is the largest single industry providing employment within Australia. It is made up of three main sub-divisions: food retailing, personal and household goods and motor vehicle servicing and retailing. There are a relatively small number of large employers (employing more than 200 employees) and many medium and small employers (employing less than 200 employees) (SSA, 2007). The retail industry has long been a sector that provides the first experience of employment, with many people citing retail as their first job. For a large number of young people, retailing is a part-time, transient occupation while studying for qualifications in other areas. A significant number, however, go on to make a career in retailing progressing through the many areas of the industry. In 2003-04, nearly 1.5 million people were employed in the industry, and the workforce is forecast to grow 1.5% per annum for the next seven years (SSA, 2007).

To achieve a Certificate II in Retail Operations a total of 14 units must be completed, comprising 10 core units and four elective units. The Certificate II has been designed as the standard entry level qualification for the retail industry and applies to those wishing to develop the skills and knowledge to begin a career in the retail industry. The Certificate III in Retail Supervision requires nine units of competency to be completed, comprising of five core and four elective units. The Certificate III has been designed to develop the skills and knowledge of those employees who wish to enter into a supervisory role (SSA, 2002).

Stakeholder Interviews

This retail industry case study was constructed through interviews with both industry stakeholders and example company employees. Interviews were conducted by telephone and were of 45-60 minutes duration. The interviews were not recorded, with data collected through written notes and supplementary material provided by some respondents. The table below details the non-company interviewees.

Interview	Name	Position
1.	Senior officer	Service Skills Australia (SSA) - industry skills council
2.	Senior officer	Australian Retailers Association (ARA) - employer body
3.	Curriculum manager	NSW TAFE Business, Arts & IT (BAIT) Curriculum Centre (public RTO)
4.	Senior officer	First Impression Resources (private RTO)
5.	Senior officer	First Impression Resources (private RTO)
6.	Senior officer	Shop, Distributive & Allied Employees Association (union) (SDA)
7.	Senior officer	Mission Australia (group training company)

The industry stakeholders interviewed for this case study had roles that cover the spectrum of issues associated with traineeships, and as might be expected, their expectations and experiences of traineeships were varied.

The industry skills council's interviewee stated that the ISC's role had little to do with implementation, but through the process of developing Training Packages, they managed the development of competencies that comprise traineeship qualifications. They saw the main role of traineeships as providing industry with a high quality and well trained workforce. Consequently, they expected state training agencies to fund traineeships at different levels so that most qualifications are available as traineeships and to support pathways through the Australian Qualifications Framework.

SDA, the main union, was involved in the national board of the skills council and fulfilled an industrial role for members including trainees who approach them for assistance. The union believed that traineeships were

about gaining and maintaining employment. They considered traineeships to be based on the premise that if young people had good education, training and skills they were more likely to gain and maintain employment. They believed that retail traineeships were generally of benefit to the industry and the individuals involved, but were concerned by the variable quality that appeared to exist.

ARA was the main employer association for the retail industry in Australia and, in addition to a range of advocacy services for members, operated a specialist RTO delivering traineeship programs at Certificates II – IV and a range of unaccredited short courses. The ARA had high expectations of traineeships and was also concerned with variable quality in the industry. It believed that traineeships should create a genuine career path through a combination of hands on experience and training. However, ARA believed that, on the whole, traineeships were poorly managed by retailers and RTOs, with generic training materials inappropriately used by inexperienced trainers who were often stretched across different industries.

First Impressions Resources was a specialist national retail training provider. The RTO believed that traineeships were an important tool to provide progression pathways for employers. They encouraged employers to make traineeships and the national qualification part of the employment package, and on the whole believed traineeships to be very successful when the delivery model was not driven by the RTO but embedded within the employer's culture. As a non-specialist provider, Mission Australia operated a group training company that takes trainees from a range of industries. They expected traineeships to provide good quality training for employers at a level appropriate for the learners. Their experience with traineeships was on the whole positive, although they preferred the flexible work-based model which they claimed was also the preferred choice of employers.

NSW TAFE Curriculum Centres provided a range of services to TAFE institutes relating to curriculum, resources, delivery and assessment of traineeships, and the interviewee believed that traineeships should lead to genuine careers through a structured program involving both on and off-the-job training. Whilst the experience of NSW TAFE had also been mainly positive, the Curriculum Centre believed that traineeships should have parity with apprenticeships and should be available for both new entrants and existing workers.

When questioned on the features of high quality traineeships, these stakeholders provided a range of responses that primarily focussed on issues surrounding the workplace environment and pedagogy. In most cases, respondents saw the Training Package as having an important role in determining the content to be covered. Whilst some respondents noted that industry characteristics, traditions and social construction affected the delivery of traineeships, most commented that quality was independent of these factors, being more a consequence of pedagogical and organisational factors. Whilst most respondents commented that the relationship between the trainee, trainer and employer was most crucial, a number also acknowledged the role of the apprenticeship centres and their administration of traineeships as having an impact on the quality of outcomes, particularly through regulatory inconsistencies across States and Territories and administrative inefficiencies related to sign-up and the payment of RTO and employer subsidies. Whilst adequate funding was recognised as a contributor to quality outcomes, both in terms of funds to RTOs for delivery and the funding of traineeship pathways at higher levels, the level of subsidies for employers was not seen to be a major factor.

Whilst it was recognised that attrition was an issue and that the industry was aware that completion rates should be higher, most respondents suggested that if the basic key issues were adequately addressed, then completion rates would increase. A high quality traineeship was seen to exist when:

- The program appealed to the trainee and maintained their interest;
- There was an RPL process early on to capture what trainees already knew;
- There was a good mix of on and off-the-job training where trainees were supported in the workplace but could interact with peers off-site;
- The program focused on the application of skills in the workplace and involved project or problem-based learning that delivered outcomes of value to the host employer;
- Any in-house employer training was embedded in the traineeship;
- There was not one delivery model imposed on the client and where the program was developed closely with the employer and worked for them;
- There were quality training and assessment materials customised to fit with what was happening in the workplace and not simply generic template workbooks;
- The programs were delivered by specialist trainers that only do retail training;
- There was early RTO engagement with the trainee and supervisor that developed into a partnership between the three parties where each met their obligations in a proper ethical manner; and
- There was an ongoing review process to monitor issues between the RTO, supervisor and trainee.

When asked what was necessary or needs to change, to improve the quality of traineeships, the stakeholders made a range of suggestions. SSA suggested that a differential funding model could be introduced, one that provided different incentive levels for smaller and larger employers and took into account the impact of large employers who commence large numbers of trainees across their chain. SDA and BAIT believed that the current funding model was unsustainable, commenting that the current structure of incentives encouraged abuse from employers. They suggested that payments should be more heavily geared towards completions rather than commencements, as a way to weed out those who took on trainees only for the subsidies.

SSA also suggested that to improve the quality of traineeships there should be more training for workplace supervisors and managers so that they understood the VET system and appreciate their obligations under the traineeship system. This was also supported by FIR who commented that RTOs in general needed specific professional development on good practice traineeships. SDA claimed that current RTO auditing arrangements were inadequate and that state training agency scrutiny of traineeships should be improved. SSA also suggested there should be new plain English publications, including material for workplace mentors on how to support trainees on the job, simplified feedback forms that would enable RTOs to intervene more rapidly when trainees got into trouble, and national assessment resources developed to assist those RTOs who needed support in this area. A number of respondents commented that there should be better information materials from state training agencies and that supervisors should be more actively involved in assessment.

ARA suggested that improved quality would arise if employer bodies took more leadership and stressed the commitments required for a successful traineeship program. They commented that employers need to know their responsibilities under a traineeship and should be clear that they are making a commitment to support training and assessment in the workplace. They also called for improved marketing to trainees as well, especially in relation to the flexible work-based model where they don't necessarily realise the commitment they are making and the study that will be required.

Company Example 1: Family Clothing

In addition to the industry stakeholder interviews, two companies with retail trainees were the focus of this case study. The first was a national family clothing retailer with over 150 stores across all states and territories. This firm employed approximately 5,000 staff of which nearly 1,150 were trainees. Eight interviews were conducted over two days, with visits to the Family Clothing head office in Sydney, one of their stores in metropolitan Brisbane and their RTO based in Brisbane city. The interviews were conducted on site and were of 45-60 min duration. The interviews were not recorded as data was collected through written notes and the supplementary material provided by respondents. Interviewee details are shown in the table below.

Interview	Position
1.	HR Manager
2.	Recruitment & Development Manager
3.	Store Manager and Supervisor
4. – 6.	Trainee
7.	RTO General Manager
8.	RTO Trainer / Assessor (RTO)

Prior to 2000-01, Family Clothing had an ad hoc approach to traineeships, with involvement initiated and managed at the local store level. Since then, the national office had taken a central role in promoting traineeships, encouraging stores to offer traineeships, providing assistance to managers and working with a specialist retail provider to develop a national program that integrates traineeships into the company's broader HR systems. As noted by the HR Manager:

'Traineeships are a fantastic addition to our business; it's not just about the subsidies, it's about developing the person'.

This view was shared by the Recruitment & Development Manager who commented that 'traineeships produce a better quality employee who'll have some buy-in to the business and hopefully stay with us down the track'. Management noted that the traineeship program ran at a loss against the incentives, and whilst the

incentives themselves were not a key driver, if funding was removed they might need to reconsider their involvement. At this stage however, the employer subsidies were used by head office as incentives for store managers, with the bulk of the subsidy passed on for managers to use as an offset to their in-store wages bill.

In cooperation with the RTO, which delivered only to the retail industry, Family Clothing had integrated company career pathways and in-house training programs into the traineeship qualifications and pathways. Family Clothing was very satisfied with the services of the RTO which had ensured that the delivery and assessment model suited their needs and accounted for the in-house training and induction delivered by the company. Consequently, progression from a school-based trainee to store manager within the company was linked to the attainment of national qualifications. All new employees were given the option of participating in the traineeship program, with inexperienced workers offered the Certificate II in Retail Operations and those with previous experience offered the Certificate III in Retail Supervision. Those with management aspirations were also encouraged to undertake the Certificate IV and Diploma programs irrespective of whether traineeship funding was available. In some states, Family Clothing also operated school-based traineeships at Certificate II, with school students working on the weekend and/or at nights to meet the employment requirements of the traineeship.

At some stores, managers had become so wedded to traineeships that they believed it was a condition of employment for all permanent staff. In early 2008, close to 75% of permanent and 5% of casual Family Clothing staff were trainees. Management also indicated that whilst data wasn't available, they believed staff retention was higher amongst trainees and that there had been a noticeable increase in the number of staff wanting to pursue management training over the last two to three years as a result of the critical mass of traineeship graduates that now existed.

A clear contributor to the quality of traineeships at Family Clothing was the strong commitment from head office and the close integration of national qualifications with the company's career pathways. The HR section played an active role in encouraging stores to offer traineeships, working with store managers so they understood the benefits of the program, assisting with sign-ups and administrative processes and playing an active circuit breaker role when conflict arose between the RTO, store manager and trainee. This active role was, in part, a result of the close and strong collaboration that existed with their RTO which specialised in retail only, operated with many national retail clients and prided itself on its flexible approach which looked to develop a bespoke delivery and assessment model that suited the needs of every business it partners with. Senior staff from the RTO had regular meetings with Family Clothing management and their trainers/assessors were clearly passionate about delivering the best solution for learners. Coupled with strong support from store managers and head office, RTO staff could ensure that trainees were adequately supported and conscious of the fact that the program they were enrolled in was valued by the company and their colleagues.

Another quality feature of traineeships with Family Clothing was the strength of the RTO's approach to delivery and assessment and their efforts to link the trainee's program with what was happening in the workplace. By maintaining close contact with store managers and keeping abreast of in-house training sessions each week, the trainers/assessors could highlight certain aspects of the modules, customise the activity sheets for each module and vary the order of the modules so that the traineeship content reinforced workplace activities and vice versa. Further evidence of the RTO's client focus was their reputation for having good administrative systems, and the fact that their trainers/assessors were punctual and had very strong industry backgrounds.

Neither Family Clothing nor the RTO had any specific plans to improve the quality of their current traineeship program as both were broadly satisfied with how the program was progressing. However, a number of issues were raised in relation to wider traineeship policies and regulations. The major impediment to quality identified by both the company and the RTO was the lack of a nationally consistent approach. With stores in all states and territories, efforts by Family Clothing's HR section to develop a national strategy were hampered by inconsistent regulations, guidelines and administrative systems across the different jurisdictions. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the traineeship program in some states, such as the status of casuals and the level of funding for different qualifications, the HR team planned to continue efforts to encourage store managers to offer traineeships and ensure that managers understand how they operate and the benefits they generate. Through this work, and an ongoing partnership with their RTO, Family Clothing intended to expand their involvement in the traineeship system if possible. The company and the RTO both noted that there was generally good acceptance of traineeship qualifications within industry but that perceptions of school teachers and career advisors needed to change if traineeships were to become a more attractive option for some school leavers. Finally, the RTO commented that the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) audit process needed to allow for a wider range of delivery and assessment models so they could

continue to meet industry needs without being bound by traditional views of what a traineeship program should look like.

Company Example 2: Quick Tucker

The second company example was a national chain of fast food retail outlets, operating 74 stores themselves with a further 20 stores managed by franchisees. This firm had stores in each state and territory that employed approximately 3,500 staff, of which nearly 10% (307) were trainees. Eight interviews were conducted over four days, with two visits to a Quick Tucker store in north-west Sydney and two visits to the head office in Sydney. The interviews were conducted on site and were of 45-60 min duration. The interviews were not recorded, with data collected through written notes and supplementary material provided by respondents. Interviewee details are shown in the table below.

Interviewee	Position
1.	Employee Relations Director
2.	Enterprise RTO Coordinator
3.	Store Manager / Supervisor
4. – 6.	Trainee
7.	Trainer / Assessor

Quick Tucker also operated an enterprise RTO which was part of the HR branch based in Sydney. The RTO managed the delivery, assessment and certification of trainees in five of the seven jurisdictions. In the other two states, a private RTO was responsible for the trainees as a result of special arrangements with the franchisee.

Quick Tucker was an active participant in the VET system, being represented on the advisory committee of the industry skills council. It had been involved in traineeships for the last three to four years and took the view that traineeships must be flexible and add value to operations in-store. The employee relations director stated that the majority of staff were early school leavers, and the company thus viewed traineeships as an important tool to improve the skills and competencies of their staff. Quick Tucker saw traineeships providing a career path for their staff from team leader to manager, and as giving greater structure to their in-house training. They also believed that the traineeship program gave greater credibility to in-house training, which has been aligned to the traineeship and is recognised through an RPL process for new trainees.

As an enterprise RTO, Quick Tucker was able to work closely with its existing training materials which they found fit well with the Training Package. Whilst they considered in-house training to be rigorous up to a point, Quick Tucker management considered traineeships as being more rigorous, with greater scrutiny and more formal assessments. The funds that accompanied traineeships allowed the company to deliver more in-depth training to trainees, with more detailed and broader content about the business and the industry, which management viewed as being good for career orientation and the industry more broadly. Quick Tucker viewed the option of a traineeship as being part of the package from an employer of choice.

Nearly 80% (246) of Quick Tucker trainees were enrolled in the Certificate II in Retail Operations, 18% (55) were enrolled in the Certificate III in Retail Supervision and 2% (6) in the Certificate IV in Retail Management. Quick Tucker believed that the traineeship program had increased retention amongst staff, particularly amongst team leaders and managers, and saw the program as providing an opportunity to better assess staff that have the potential to progress to management roles with the company. They company suggested that trainees became skilled more quickly and stayed with the company longer, indicating that annual staff turnover levels for non-trainee staff were 60-65% compared with less than 50% for trainees.

From a financial perspective, Quick Tucker aimed for its involvement in the traineeship system to be cost neutral and it worked on the principle that the RTO business would break even in any given financial year. The company averaged between three to four trainees per store and was looking to expand their involvement in the program due to the success and growing interest in the last two to three years. Consequently, due to the growth in traineeships, Quick Tucker management believed that it had not been as affected by the current skill shortages in Australia as they might have otherwise been. In 2006-07, the company experienced a 30% growth in traineeship commencements over those in 2005-06, and in 2007-08, were expecting similar growth.

The approach to traineeships within Quick Tucker demonstrated a number of key quality features that were contributing to the success of traineeships in-store and more broadly. As noted by a store manager:

'Trainees have a more positive attitude towards work and other staff seem to have a more positive attitude towards trainees. I think it's a great program that helps with communication in the store.'

The positive attitude seemed to be in part a consequence of a well designed program, but also due to the fact that many store managers had themselves progressed through a traineeship and had first hand experience of the benefits that it could deliver.

The operation of the enterprise RTO clearly brought additional benefits to the delivery of traineeships in Quick Tucker. Training materials were very closely linked to in-house training programs and intrinsically met the needs of the business. RTO staff had an intimate understanding of the needs of the business, and this both contributed to the quality of assessments and reinforced the links between workbook content and enterprise needs. The fact that all workplace assessors were ex-store managers also added great value to the support they provided to the trainees and the store managers, although the effect of this was probably compromised to some extent by the limited frequency of workplace visits. The strong culture of on-the-job training also contributed to the quality of traineeships in Quick Tucker. Trainees, store managers and other staff recognised the value of training and appreciated the importance of completing the program due to its links with career progression with the company.

Neither Quick Tucker management nor their RTO had any specific plans to improve the quality of their current traineeship program as both were broadly satisfied with how the program was progressing. However, the HR section was planning to conduct research with staff to identify differences in the experience and performance of trainees compared with non-trainees in the company.

This was aimed to assist in the development of a stronger business case to underpin the expanded involvement in traineeships. Linked to this was the plan to bring in-house training programs more in line with traineeships and national qualifications, by introducing a more formalised assessment process that might also provide additional certification options for their staff. Additionally, a number of possible improvements to the wider traineeship policies and regulations were suggested. The major impediment to quality identified by Quick Tucker and its RTO was the lack of a nationally consistent approach. With stores in all states and territories, efforts by Quick Tucker to develop a national strategy were hampered by inconsistent regulations, guidelines and administrative systems across the different jurisdictions. Current traineeship sign-up arrangements were also seen as an impediment by Quick Tucker management and RTO staff, with delays and errors in processing by apprenticeship centres cited as the major issue, along with the length of time taken to rectify simple administrative errors.

Analysis

The following analysis of traineeships in the retail industry is set against a framework that considers inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes.

Inputs:

- Training Package

In most cases respondents saw the Retail Training Package as having an important role in determining training content for the retail industry. The Training Package was considered to be reasonably generic and not too prescriptive. Those familiar with the Package suggested that it could be easily customised by those RTOs with genuine industry experience and an understanding of business needs. For those RTOs without that experience, it was felt that additional supplementary resources might be of value to assist with delivery. However some comments also suggested that much of the content reflected a fairly static model of the industry that did not altogether incorporate the needs of a more innovative future workforce. Whilst this was a minor criticism, in all cases, the overwhelming view was that the Training Package was adequate and that implementation differences amongst the states in relation to funding, training plans, program duration and monitoring requirements had greater impact on quality.

- Resources

It was clear that the majority of stakeholders understood that the use of customised training and assessment materials was an important feature of quality traineeships. Approaches such as the use of project/problem based learning that delivered outputs relevant to the host employer, or task sheets that provided a link

between workbooks and what was happening on the job were considered good practice. Underpinning this consensus was the view that currently, there appeared to be too much of a reliance on template workbooks and broadly based generic national resources.

Clearly, resources should be easy to use and navigate through, be written in plain English, make good use of graphics and include all the administrative details and paperwork relating to the traineeship. Whilst it was accepted that customised delivery and assessment resources were preferred, it was also suggested that the development of national assessment resources might be a useful initiative as RTOs were deemed to need more support in this area than with delivery. There also appeared to be a trend towards the use of blended learning approaches within traineeships, particularly given industry's preference for wholly on-the-job traineeships at Certificate levels II & III. It might be appropriate for industry and public resources to be directed towards this type of resource development given the advantages they offer RTOs servicing clients in thin markets or regional areas and those trainees with learning difficulties. There also appeared to be a need for additional support materials for both RTOs and employers. Suggestions included a range of plain English publications, including material for workplace mentors on how to support trainees on the job, and simplified feedback forms that enable RTOs to intervene more rapidly when trainees get into trouble. There was also a view, particularly amongst the RTOs, that there should be better information materials from state training agencies on what a quality traineeship looked like.

- Funding and incentives

Funding was generally recognised as a contributor to quality outcomes, both in terms of funds for delivery and assessment available to RTOs, and through the funding of traineeships at higher levels. The level of subsidies for employers was not seen to be a major driver of quality, and whilst employers indicated that if funding was removed they might reconsider their involvement in the program, in the case of retailers with multiple stores, it seemed that employer subsidies tended to be passed on by head office as incentives for store managers as an offset to their in-store wages bill. However, there did appear to be widespread concern surrounding the inconsistent funding arrangements between different states and territories, including the uncertainty surrounding the funding of traineeships at different levels. Specifically, the quota system of traineeship funding in Victoria was criticised, as was the different treatment of casual workers in that state compared with others. There was an expectation amongst industry stakeholders and providers that state and federal training agencies should fund traineeships at different levels, and that all levels should be supported to some extent so there are pathways through the AQF. It was also suggested that there be a further shift in payments to give a greater reward for completion of a traineeship. A differential funding model was also proposed, one that provided different incentive levels for smaller employers than for larger employers who might have the advantage of economies of scale by employing numerous trainees across their network of stores.

- Sense of vocation

There appeared to be general consensus that a successful traineeship developed an employee's sense of vocation in the retail industry, particularly if the program was integrated with clear career paths for that individual. Anecdotal evidence suggested that there had been a noticeable increase in the number of employees wanting to pursue management training over the last 2-3 years as a result of the critical mass of traineeship graduates that now existed in the industry.

Processes:

- Pedagogy (on and off the job)

The consensus view amongst those interviewed was that, whilst quality outcomes could be achieved through all modes of delivery, the ideal traineeship model involved a combination of on and off-the-job training. Whilst in this sense off-the-job training included delivery away from the work station but still in the workplace, there were also strongly held views amongst some respondents that interaction with trainees from other employers, at an RTO, was an important support mechanism and provided greater opportunities for reflection and discussion on the different workplaces that exist in industry. It was acknowledged also that on-the-job models relied on the trainee being given time to complete workbooks, and that trainees often had difficulty balancing the challenge of managing both work and study requirements. Some comments were also directed towards e-learning and blended delivery, with some respondents suggesting that, as much of the content in retail traineeships was fairly basic, blended delivery provided added interest, supported higher quality workplace learning and provides increased support for trainees. Examples included the use of CD and self paced learning materials combined with face-to-face delivery on site to one or two trainees at a time.

Most respondents also acknowledged that staff in both RTOs and workplaces needed to know about delivery and assessment so they could contribute to the program and that a partnership should be emphasised between the trainer, supervisor and trainee. Some respondents suggested that new trainees should be given the opportunity to complete as much of the traineeship through an RPL process as possible, and be encouraged to work towards accelerated completion if they so wish (by completing more than the set number of modules for each scheduled visit or off-job training session).

It was noted that with the workplace delivery model, visiting trainers/assessors were often under pressure from employers to 'be done and gone', adding to the risk of poor quality, compromised standards and a tick-and-flick approach to assessment. To counter this, many respondents suggested that there should be more involvement of supervisors in assessment. Another key pedagogical feature of both on and off-the-job delivery acknowledged by respondents was the need to link the trainee's program with what was happening in the workplace. By maintaining close contact with employers and supervisors and keeping abreast of any in-house training sessions each week, the trainers/assessors could highlight certain aspects of modules, customise activity sheets for each module and vary the order of the modules so that the traineeship content reinforces workplace activities and vice versa. Regardless of the delivery model, it was clearly agreed that delivery of the program needed to appeal to the trainee and maintain their interest. Central to all delivery models was also the need for learning support from both the employer/supervisor and the RTO. On the job, approaches such as shadowing and buddy systems or mentoring were oft-cited tools, as was the use of email/telephone/SMS systems by the RTO.

- Employer-trainee psychological contract

A number of respondents commented that positive engagement between the three parties to a traineeship was the key determinant of quality. It was noted that some employers fail to recognise that many retail trainees of school leaving age require additional pastoral care and assistance and that, if this was not given, the traineeship was more likely to fail. Quality traineeships were seen to occur when there was commitment from an employer to follow-up after a trainee had completed an off-the-job training session as this was seen to be crucial factor in maintaining a trainee's motivation and interest in the program. Central to the employer-trainee contract was effective communication, a requirement that also extended to the RTO so that there were 'no surprises' and that all three parties had a shared understanding of what the traineeship was aiming to achieve, how it would operate and how it was progressing.

It was also noted that in the case of larger retailers, the employer-trainee contract should include a strong commitment from head office. It was suggested that the HR section should play an active role in encouraging stores to offer traineeships, working with store managers so they understood the benefits of the program, assisting with sign-ups and administrative processes and playing an active circuit breaker role when conflict arises between the RTO, store manager and trainee.

A number of respondents also commented that more could be done to ensure that employers knew their responsibilities under a traineeship and were aware of the commitment required to support training and assessment in the workplace. They also called for greater marketing to employers so they know what they are committing to and to try and break the perception that traineeships are simply an option to engage cheap labour. All agreed that if the supervisor doesn't realise they have responsibilities under the traineeship then the traineeship will fail.

- Intermediary interactions

If intermediaries are taken to include state training agencies, then the major concern identified by respondents was the lack of a nationally consistent approach. National retailers in particular are hampered in their efforts to develop a national traineeship strategy and continue to be faced by inconsistent regulations, guidelines and administrative systems across the different jurisdictions. Clearly there should be closer cooperation between Federal and State authorities to standardise subsidies and regulatory arrangements for traineeships.

It was also suggested that state training agencies should be more active in the scrutiny of traineeships as a particular program type, and that more effort should be made to demonstrate best practice traineeship delivery and assessment to RTOs. It might also be appropriate to generate quality benchmarking data for RTOs to compare their performance with others delivering the same traineeship. Whilst most respondents commented that the relationship between the trainee, trainer and employer was most crucial, a number acknowledged that the role of the apprenticeship centres and their administration of traineeships also contributed to quality outcomes. A number commented that they believed apprenticeship centres often failed to follow-up trainees as they were

required to do, and suggested that more attention should be paid to ensuring that trainees were enrolled in the correct program and that administration was completed quickly and accurately. An impediment to an improved traineeship system also appeared to be the fact that whilst competency based, the system struggles to manage early completion by trainees.

Outputs:

- Calibre and industry acceptance of graduated trainees

The general consensus amongst respondents was that there was generally good acceptance of traineeship qualifications within industry but that perceptions of school teachers and career advisors needed to change if traineeships were to become a more attractive option for some school leavers. It was also accepted that the calibre of traineeship graduates was not a major issue, although lingering industry concerns with the quality of some of RTOs meant that employers do not always accept previous traineeship qualifications at face value.

- Pathways to higher qualifications

Whilst the Retail Training Package provided qualification pathways relevant to industry, the general lack of funding for traineeships at Diploma level was seen as a barrier to employer involvement in the traineeship system. Further barriers were seen to exist through the inconsistent approaches to funding at Certificate III & IV in some states, and the regulations governing the participation of existing workers. These combined were seen to be significant barriers to qualification pathways and career progression in the industry more generally.

- Attrition during traineeship

Whilst it was recognised that attrition was an issue and that completion rates should be higher, most respondents suggested that if the key quality issues in traineeships were more adequately addressed, then completion rates would increase. It was also suggested that retention was an issue across the industry more broadly and not simply a consequence of low quality traineeships in retail. Although concerns were raised that some employers expect a high turnover of entry level staff and use traineeships as a way to mediate the cost, the general view was that there were lower levels of attrition amongst trainees when compared with the levels of attrition in the broader entry level retail workforce.

Outcomes:

- Career progression

It was a generally held view that career progression was best supported when employer career pathways and in-house training programs were integrated with the traineeship system and national qualifications and pathways. In these cases, progression from a school-based trainee to store manager within some companies is now linked to the attainment of national qualifications.

For smaller retailers, RTO staff should take some responsibility for encouraging a career ethos amongst trainees and increasing awareness of options for progression. Indeed, some respondents commented that whilst the major retail chains did a better job at training, the SME sector has always been the problem sector due to inadequate resources, skills and understanding of what traineeships are about and what they require. This was linked to the observation that the retail industry was traditionally 'not very good' with training, and that retail was not necessarily seen as a career option, but rather as one way to earn money until a more appropriate career choice was made. Whilst retention was noted as an issue, it was felt that ongoing expansion of traineeships and an increase in quality would increase career progression in industry.

- Skilled staff for businesses and industry

Retail, along with a number of other industries, was finding difficulty in securing skilled staff. The traineeship system is seen as providing industry with a high quality and well trained workforce. Some respondents also suggested that it also provides a useful way of attracting staff, as it allows employers to make attainment of a national qualification part of the employment offer and traineeships part of the employment package. Whilst funding limitations affect the ability of traineeships to cater for the up-skilling of existing workers, it was strongly argued that traineeships for existing workers should be maintained because the development of a learning culture within an enterprise is made more difficult when only new entrants have access to funding support.

- Staying in the industry

The general view amongst respondents was that at the end of the program, trainees should have the skills and experience to improve their future work choices. It was also suggested that quality traineeships were not just about effective training but about exciting a person to a career and an understanding that the qualification means something and should give them an edge in the marketplace. The view was also expressed that traineeships are a way for employers to reward employees through progression to a higher level program.

Conclusion

The operation of Certificate II in Retail Operations and the Certificate III in Retail Supervision appeared to be well-regarded, generally notwithstanding some concerns surrounding attrition and inconsistent quality. Whilst inconsistent funding and administrative arrangements continued to frustrate effective implementation, key factors were identified that would improve quality if embraced by employers and RTOs and supported by government. Chief amongst these was the need for renewed efforts by employers and RTOs to consider traineeships as a genuine partnership centred on the success of the trainee and added value in the workplace. It was considered that RTOs and other industry stakeholders should work to ensure that each traineeship suited the needs of the employer and linked the trainee's learning to workplace activities and current business needs. Finally, adequate visits, contact and support from the RTO were essential if attrition rates were to be reduced and the career building potential of traineeships in the retail industry was to be realised.

Summary

- Traineeships are successful in the retail industry although some concerns linger over quality;
- A mix of on and off-the-job training is the key, with interaction with peers an important element;
- Programs should be linked as closely as possible to activities in the workplace and provide value to the employer;
- There is no one delivery model imposed on the employer and the training should be delivered by trainers that only train in the retail industry; and
- The key success factor is a strong and supportive relationship between the employer, RTO and trainee.

References

SSA (2002) *WRR02 Retail Training Package*, Service Skills Australia (SSA).

SSA (2007) *SIR07 Retail Services Training Package*, Service Skills Australia (SSA).

Appendix 5 – Application of quality features

Application of quality features in different phases of a traineeship

Recruitment / sign-up / induction

Enterprise enthusiasm / motivation / altruism (H)

Involves a clear and strong commitment to success from the employer and supervisor. It includes a motivation for the traineeship to be of benefit to the trainee and add value to the workplace without a primary focus on the potential financial benefits. Employers initiating a traineeship without this orientation negatively affect the quality of traineeship outcomes. It involves an effective induction so that trainees understand the workplace and also appreciate the commitment of employers to the traineeship program.

Clear expectations shared among parties (H)

Involves a shared understanding of the expected outcomes and processes to be delivered through the traineeship. It includes the establishment of agreed responsibilities and the creation of a micro community of practice for the duration of the program. Clear and shared expectations provide a solid foundation for success in a quality traineeship.

Engagement of RTO with trainee (H)

Involves the extent to which RTO staff engage with trainees to ensure effective commencement of the traineeship. It includes the timeliness of initial contact, timely and professional administration, an agreed and written plan of frequent visits and other contacts, an awareness of the workplace and personal issues that may affect the trainee's progress and a proactive approach to ensuring that the trainee will be supported and monitored during the life of the program.

Engagement of RTO with enterprise (H)

Involves the extent to which RTO and intermediary staff engage with employers and supervisors to ensure effective commencement of the traineeship. It includes appropriate initial contact, awareness of workplace and business issues, an agreed plan for visits that negotiates enough time for training and assessment, and a shared understanding that the traineeship should be established to generate value for the enterprise and trainee alike. Involves a commitment by the RTO to offer appropriate qualifications and elective units that are most suitable for the enterprise and the trainee, rather than those which are most easily or cheaply delivered. Involves a mutual agreement between the RTO and enterprise to monitor each others' performance and communicate any dissatisfaction.

Engagement of intermediaries with enterprise and trainee (H)

Involves the extent to which staff from intermediary organisations engage with employers, supervisors and trainees to ensure effective commencement of the traineeship. It includes professionalism of initial contact, awareness of workplace and business issues, and the provision of correct information that has been checked before discussions.

Careful recruitment and selection of trainees (M)

Involves appropriate recruitment and selection decisions to ensure that the trainee is suited to the workplace and the industry more broadly. It may involve other stakeholders as well as the enterprise. It may involve the provision of pre-employment training, for example in a Group Training situation. It includes the choice of qualification and competencies and the question of what status the traineeship has within broader organisational recruitment and career development pathways.

On- and off-the-job training delivery & assessment

Extent and effectiveness of off-the-job training (H)

The methods and strategies used in a non-workplace setting to develop underpinning knowledge and skills required for a particular qualification. It includes the adequate use of curriculum and learning and support materials, the deployment of delivery techniques that account for different learning styles and provide opportunities to link theory with workplace practice, and the ability to incorporate the workplace experiences of the trainees in discussion. It includes delivery in a training room in the workplace or off-site. Some form of off-the-job training is a necessary component of a quality traineeship program.

Extent and effectiveness of on-the-job training (H)

The methods and strategies used on-the-job to develop workplace skills and build the expertise required by a job role. It includes the appropriate use of learning/support materials, a range of delivery techniques that account for different learning styles, and the provision of an appropriate range of authentic opportunities for learning. It involves a structured plan for different experiences to align with the qualification being undertaken, including particular provisions in highly-distributed organisations and for high-risk trainees.

Qualified staff (RTOs, enterprise) (H)

The nature and extent of training qualifications and experience, and relevant industry qualifications and experience. Experienced RTO trainers and workplace supervisors require technical industry skills beyond the scope of the traineeship as well as knowledge and skills in training and assessment. They also need a deep understanding of Training Packages in general as well as the particular Package being delivered. They update their skills regularly in both the pedagogical and industry arena, and participate in networks of trainers and assessors. They display a passion for the industry area.

Quality and availability of learning resources (H)

Relates to the nature and extent of learning and support materials that provide content and assessment tools to cover the competencies required by the Training Package and the qualification. It includes the range of resource formats and their availability to trainees, their suitability for flexible delivery as required by the circumstances, and how well they can be appropriately customised to suit enterprise requirements and packaging of qualifications. Quality traineeship

outcomes rely on the availability of quality resources, particularly for wholly on-the-job programs, including the provision of sufficient copies so that trainees retain them after the program finishes, to assist with their future practice. An appropriate textbook is a high quality resource.

Assessment rigour and relevance (H)

The tools and techniques used to collect evidence that a trainee has met the standards required by the Training Package. Includes the effective use of examples relevant to the specific workplace and the broader industry. For quality traineeships, assessment must be relevant and should if possible add value to the trainee's workplace. Relevant and rigorous assessment ensures quality outcomes and protects the status of traineeships.

Good work practices (H)

Involves the modelling of good practice in the workplace and the appropriate reinforcement of program content and/or material included in an off-the-job component. Includes appropriate OH&S and other work practices required by legislation or industry quality/regulatory frameworks. Good work practices reinforce delivery and assessment practices and support quality traineeship outcomes.

Opportunities for practice (M)

Involves the range of tasks available to trainees and an adequate allocation of time for trainees to practice on-the-job. It includes the use of authentic experiences and opportunities for learning in the workplace and/or the use of appropriate simulations.

Quality of Training Package (M)

Involves the range and scope of units available through individual qualifications, and the relevance of qualifications to industry and enterprise career paths. It includes the appropriateness of core and elective units, technical and generic skills and the suitability of specific performance criteria to current industry practice and expected trainee job roles in the enterprise. It involves the provision of appropriate guidance about underpinning knowledge.

Contact with peer cohort available for trainees (L)

Involves contact with other trainees within the enterprise or with trainees from other enterprises in the same industry. It includes an opportunity for trainees to understand conditions and challenges in other workplaces, to develop a broader perspective of the industry and likely career options, and to have an informed and critical appreciation of practices in their own workplace.

High quality RPL (L)

Involves appropriate and conservative recognition of previous experience or formal study so as to support trainee engagement and expedite early completion and articulation into further traineeship pathways where appropriate. Rigorous RPL complements quality traineeships when applied through an approach agreed by the employer, trainee and RTO.

Transferability of skills to other occupations and industries (L)

Involves the development of technical and generic skills that are relevant to the wider industry or other industries, and not limited to the trainee's workplace.

Support / Engagement

Enterprise enthusiasm / motivation / altruism (H)

Involves a clear and strong commitment to success from the employer and supervisor. It includes a motivation for the traineeship to be of benefit to the trainee, and add value to the workplace.

Enthusiasm, support, ongoing engagement and celebration of stages achieved from employers and supervisors throughout the traineeship is a key contributor to quality outcomes.

Engagement of RTO with trainee (H)

Involves the extent to which RTO staff engage with trainees beyond the pedagogical issues discussed under the delivery/assessment section above. It includes the frequency and duration of visits, an awareness of workplace and personal issues that may affect the trainee's program, and deployment of a proactive approach to ensuring that the trainee is adequately supported and monitored during the life of the program. It involves awareness of and referral to appropriate support agencies.

Engagement of RTO with enterprise (H)

Involves the extent to which RTO staff engage with employers and supervisors to ensure effective delivery of the traineeship. It includes frequency of contact, sufficient notice of visits to maximise effectiveness, awareness of workplace and business issues, and an ongoing commitment to ensure that the traineeship should add value to the enterprise. It includes a full and frank exchange of views about the performance of each of the organisations with regard to the traineeship, including effective formative monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Structures to support trainees at work (H)

Involves the level of mentoring and other forms of support provided by the employer and/or supervisor to ensure that trainees progress and complete the program as intended. It includes the provision of training for mentors and supervisors and performance management systems that support high quality in these roles. It includes the need for clearly defined job roles and appropriate work organisation arrangements within the enterprise. It includes the provision of peer networks for trainees.

Qualified staff (RTOs, enterprise) (H)

The nature and extent of relevant industry experience. Experienced RTO trainers and workplace supervisors require technical industry skills beyond the scope of the traineeship as well as knowledge and skills in workplace training and assessment. Qualified staff with clear professional capacity encourage trainees and can reinforce engagement with the program.

Clear expectations shared among parties (H)

Involves a shared understanding of the expected outcomes and processes to be delivered through the traineeship. It includes effective communication between parties and the maintenance of a micro community of practice during the program. Clear and shared expectations throughout the program provide a solid foundation for success and facilitate ongoing support and engagement.

Engagement of intermediaries with enterprise and trainee (M)

Involves the extent to which staff from intermediary organisations engage with employers, supervisors and trainees to ensure effective delivery of the traineeship. It includes the frequency and timeliness of contact and a strong ongoing commitment to customer service.

Availability and utilisation of appropriate guidance materials (L)

Involves the availability and use of standardised support materials for employers, supervisors, RTOs and trainees that outline what is required for a quality traineeship. It includes examples of best practice management, support, delivery and assessment, and other tools to encourage quality traineeship outcomes at all stages of a traineeship. Materials may be produced by external agencies or internally within enterprises.

Completion / Articulation

Engagement of RTO with trainee (H)

Involves the extent to which RTO staff engage with trainees to ensure effective completion of the traineeship. It includes appropriate final visits and contact, timely and professional administration of the closing stages, the use of formal evaluation tools, and an awareness of trainee needs and interests in relation to further education and training options.

Engagement of RTO with enterprise (H)

Involves the extent to which RTO staff engage with employers and supervisors to ensure effective completion of the traineeship. It includes appropriate final visits and contact, the use of formal evaluation tools, and discussion of the potential for other structured workforce development opportunities for the trainee and more generally for other workers with the enterprise.

Engagement of intermediaries with enterprise and trainee (H)

Involves the extent to which staff from intermediary organisations engage with employers, supervisors and trainees to ensure effective completion of the traineeship. It includes the frequency and timeliness of contact, awareness of workplace, business and personal issues surrounding completion and/or articulation, and a proactive approach to further education and training options for the trainee and the enterprise.

Pathways to qualifications (L)

Involves the availability of articulation options and/or pathways within the Training Package that allows trainees to continue skills and career development through subsequent traineeship programs.

Attractiveness of graduates to other employers (L)

Relates to the relevance of skills developed and the standard of quality associated with programs involving particular employers and RTOs. Includes the range of skills and work practices covered, the suitability of a particular qualification to the trainee's career path and the ability of trainees and RTOs to appreciate these attributes and to explain them to others.

Appendix 6 – Facilitators and inhibitors of quality features

Facilitators and inhibitors of quality features

Table 5 describes factors that facilitate and inhibit the development of the quality features identified in the main report. The facilitators and inhibitors were either directly observed in the case studies, reported by respondents within the case studies and interviews, or derived by the researchers from the data. It is not intended that they should be regarded as an absolute list; they are those supported by evidence gained during this research project.

The table focuses on facilitators. In many cases inhibitors are the direct converse of facilitators and we have not listed such inhibitors as they can be easily derived by the reader. The inhibitors listed are those which have a different nature from the facilitators. The facilitators should not be regarded as necessary preconditions for the quality features; in some cases it is possible to develop these features without the facilitators. For example in ‘opportunities to practice’ it is not *necessary* to have a large and diverse workplace; but the latter does make it *easier* to provide opportunities to practice. The table is sorted by level of impact, beginning with high impact features.

Table 5 is followed by a discussion of the high impact features and their facilitators and inhibitors, using data from the company examples, and suggestions about how the table can be used as a tool.

Table 5 Facilitators and inhibitors of quality features (sorted by high, medium and low impact)

Quality feature	Facilitators and inhibitors
	High Impact Features
Extent and effectiveness of off the job training	Facilitators (off-site delivery)
	Requirements of Training Package
	Availability of registered training organisations with the appropriate qualification within scope
	Availability of flexible delivery
	Commitment of employer to time release
	Adequate funding
	Inhibitors (off-site delivery)
	Rurality/remoteness/poor transport
	Thin market
	Wide distribution of workers geographically
	Facilitators (on-site delivery)
	Respect of enterprise for underpinning knowledge
	Skills of, and respect of workers for, the trainer
Structured training sessions	
Suitable training room	
Obvious link to job tasks	

Quality feature	Facilitators and inhibitors
	<p>Inhibitors (on-site delivery)</p> <p>Production pressures</p> <p>Supervisor opposition</p>
	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>registered training organisation able to attract and support specialised staff</p> <p>Thick market e.g. metropolitan area</p> <p>registered training organisation of large size – or smaller niche registered training organisation</p> <p>Tradition of training in the industry area</p> <p>On-the-job trainers/supervisors with technical ability and willingness to continue learning</p> <p>Inhibitors</p> <p>registered training organisation too 'generic' and too broad</p> <p>Thin market</p> <p>Skill shortage in local/national VET and/or industry area</p>
Qualified staff (registered training organisations, enterprise)	
Engagement of registered training organisation with trainee	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>High commitment by registered training organisation to quality training</p> <p>Reciprocal commitment by enterprise</p> <p>Proximity</p> <p>Low student-staff ratios</p> <p>Utilisation of technologies as a <i>complementary</i> method</p> <p>Inhibitors</p> <p>Poor negotiation of access</p> <p>Poor forward planning</p>
Engagement of registered training organisation with enterprise	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>High commitment by registered training organisation to quality training</p> <p>Reciprocal commitment by enterprise</p> <p>Proximity</p> <p>Embedding of registered training organisation within enterprises – history with the enterprise and offering of a range of qualifications</p> <p>Inhibitors</p> <p>Poor negotiation of access</p> <p>Poor forward planning</p>
Engagement of intermediaries with enterprise and trainee	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>High commitment to quality traineeships by intermediaries</p> <p>Reciprocal commitment by enterprise</p> <p>Proximity</p> <p>Customer service orientation by intermediaries</p> <p>Inhibitors</p> <p>Poor negotiation of access</p> <p>Poor forward planning</p> <p>Limited intermediary understanding of enterprise and trainee needs</p>
Extent and effectiveness of on-the-job training	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>Availability of on-the-job trainers/supervisors that are ex-trainees</p> <p>Careful recruitment and training of supervisors</p> <p>Support for supervisors e.g. guidance materials</p> <p>Appropriateness of Training Package and electives for the job roles</p> <p>Provision of a broad range of experience within work area</p>

Structures to support trainees at work	<p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry traditions that do not value on the job development On-the-job trainers/supervisors with no formal training in workplace training <p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance management for supervisors that rewards trainee management skills Working hours that allow for easy access to trainees Tailoring training and support sessions to shifts Clearly defined job descriptions that align with the traineeship qualifications Mentoring/buddying systems Valuing of mentoring, buddying roles Public acknowledgement of achievement/merit/progression e.g. graduation ceremonies Excess capacity that allows for learning time and permits mistakes A structured system for review and reflection Paying casual staff to attend off the job training
Assessment rigour and relevance	<p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor work organisation Lack of operating procedures <p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good understanding by registered training organisation management and trainers of industry and workplace High level of skills and knowledge by registered training organisation trainers of assessment theory and Training Packages Availability of time and resources within registered training organisation to develop assessment tasks and regimes Full range of experiences in enterprise and /or registered training organisation to enable assessment in all areas Quality control and good record keeping within registered training organisation Involvement of assessors in professional development and networks
Good work practices	<p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality management Profitability Skilled and well-trained existing staff A culture and commitment that values good training A culture and commitment that values OH&S High quality human resource systems A willingness to change e.g. to seek out and adopt new technology A shared vision among employees <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tendency to 'cut corners'
Enterprise motivation/ enthusiasm/ commitment	<p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of a champion, often idiosyncratic, whose engagement derives from personal beliefs, family or personal circumstances, a commitment to equity, a commitment to the vocation or industry, and /or previous experiences. A shared understanding within the enterprise of its history and values Expertise in VET available within the enterprise A clear understanding of the reason why traineeships are desired and of the responsibilities that accompany engagement Financial incentives from the government or other sources Voluntary rather than imposed participation by branches or departments Internal values-based marketing of traineeships <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too much red tape

Clear expectations shared among parties

Facilitators

- Open and honest communication
- Regular meetings
- Involvement of the AAC beyond sign-up
- Delineation of responsibilities as well as rights
- Greater consistency nationally
- Networking among registered training organisations and/or employers and/or intermediary organisations to share experiences

Inhibitors

- Lack of clear information about traineeships (e.g. 'secrets' held only by AACs)
- Over-marketing
- Mixed messages from different parties

Quality and availability of learning resources

Facilitators

- registered training organisation awareness of industry and enterprise contexts and conditions and work processes
- Tailoring of resources to traineeship cohorts
- Regular review of resources to ensure continuous improvement and currency
- Large customers
- Existence of large industry bodies
- Availability of funds and trained registered training organisation staff enabling the production of sufficient materials
- Recruitment of skilled and highly-qualified staff and availability of professional development

Inhibitors

- Reliance on Training Package support materials and other generic materials
- Lack of established industry body of knowledge

Medium Impact Features

Opportunities to practice

Facilitators

- Large and diverse worksite
- Willingness of employer to rotate among tasks
- Supervisor's ability to train

Inhibitors

- Fast pace of work
- OH&S regulation and/or licensing
- Low profit margin

Careful recruitment and selection of trainees

Facilitators

- Established HR function and/or manager
- Identification of characteristics of potentially successful trainee
- Employer willingness to take risks
- Involvement of other relevant parties e.g. families, committees of industry people
- Recruiting via workers' own networks
- Building on school-enterprise relationships

Inhibitors

- Tight labour market
- Small or medium enterprise
- Lack of enterprise knowledge of traineeships

Quality of Training Package

Facilitators

- A high level of consultation and ongoing dialogue
- Regular review
- Willingness of registered training organisations and enterprises to engage with the Training Package

Inhibitors

Adversarial relationships among Training Package stakeholders

Low Impact Features	
Pathways to higher qualifications	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>Training Package structure that encourages pathways Availability of funding for higher level qualification Industry peak body support High awareness among all parties/promotion Link to job outcomes – within industry and/or within enterprise Availability of school-based traineeships</p> <p>Inhibitors</p> <p>Adversarial industrial relations climate Weight of tradition opposing pathways Churning of workforce</p>
Availability and utilisation of appropriate guidance materials	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>Availability of funding and of appropriate organisations to produce the materials Dissemination networks Processes for utilisation of materials within organisation and/or via intermediary bodies Market segmentation – within industries and to target groups Utilisation of different media</p> <p>Inhibitors</p> <p>National inconsistency of funding and other administrative arrangements Frequent changes to funding and other administrative arrangements</p>
High quality RPL	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>Rigorous assessment design Time and resources Expertise within the registered training organisation and within the enterprise A well established workforce with good skills levels Well structured Training Package and units of competency A 'curriculum' that takes account of RPL granted e.g. structuring of off the job training and on the job experiences that does not just leave 'gaps' for RPL granted</p> <p>Inhibitors</p> <p>An registered training organisation and/or enterprise that is too eager</p>
Contact with a peer cohort available for trainees	<p>Facilitators</p> <p>Identification of trainees with an occupation or vocation A large worksite/organisation Commitment by enterprise of resources to development of cohorts Face to face off the job training or (as a second-best) development of on-line communities A person who is assigned to, or voluntarily assumes, the role of developing and maintaining the cohort An existing tradition of networking within the industry or organisation or a clear need for such networking for industry or enterprise advantage Grouping trainees for workplace mentoring Sharing a common background (e.g. refugees)</p>

Attractiveness of graduates to other employers	<p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality Training Package Industry and public reputation of the registered training organisation and/or the enterprise Reputable national and State VET quality arrangements 'Branding' of the traineeship Embedding of regulatory requirements within the traineeship <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of bad practice especially if widely publicised
Transferability of skills to other occupations or industries	<p>Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of employability skills via pastoral care, self-efficacy development, language literacy and numeracy development, opportunities for teamwork (either through the nature of the Training Package or through delivery methods), valuing of the non-technical skills that are developed A high regard for skills in different occupations Nature of units of competency and the Training Package structure (e.g. common units across Training Packages) Development of high-level technical skills through off the job training, rotation among job roles, involvement of a GTO, deliberate inclusion of alternative electives that widen options <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive customisation

How high-impact features work in practice

The analysis of the quality features of traineeships and the factors that inhibit or facilitate the presence of these factors (Table 5) shows that there are a number of critical, 'high impact' features that need to be present in all the parties to successful traineeships – enterprises, registered training organisations and intermediary organisations. Also, there are a number of quality features of the training in general that are a shared responsibility of each of the three major parties.

For enterprises, a critical high impact feature is motivation, enthusiasm and commitment. This is often generated by a champion in the enterprise. The champion can spread the understanding of the benefits of traineeships in the organisation and will often have a clear grasp of the complexities of the VET system to enable the organisation to take advantage of what traineeships have to offer. However, the presence of a champion may not guarantee the commitment of the enterprise. Other factors such as the availability of financial incentives and the voluntary rather than imposed uptake of traineeships also play a key role. A good example of enterprise commitment and enthusiasm in the company examples is Bank, in the financial services case study. Here, the introduction of traineeships for indigenous students had the personal backing of the then CEO and there was also a traineeship 'evangelist' employed within the organisation that was able to spread the word about the value of the proposed traineeship program throughout the various branches of the Bank. Bank also provides a good example of the importance of work-based support structures to enable the traineeship program to be successful. These support structures include the presence of mentors in the workplace, public acknowledgment of the value of traineeships, and structuring working hours to suit trainees. Here Bank excelled. The organisation had formed a specific traineeship support unit and had appointed trained mentors in those branches that had voluntarily elected to take part in the program. Work was structured around the availability of the school-based trainees who worked part-time in school term but full-time in school holiday periods.

Other critical high impact features relate to the way in which enterprises structure the workplace to support trainees, good work practices and well-qualified staff. Good work practices typically include the presence of high quality managers, a commitment to training and good HR systems to support the traineeship program. A good example of the presence of good work practices can be found in the Family Clothing company example in the retail industry case study. Here the organisation had committed to the traineeship program at a national level and it was strongly

supported and promoted by the HR function in the organisation. Local managers were trained in how to set up and support traineeships. At the Happy Nappies organisational example in the Children' Services case study, the traineeship program was strongly supported by the CEO. In this organisation many of the staff had passed through the traineeship themselves and were thus trained to be able to provide a very high level of support to trainees in their childcare centres. The high impact factors associated with enterprises refer to the 'processes' section of the analysis presented in the previous chapter.

The second major player in successful traineeships is the registered training organisation. Our analysis has shown that the critical high impact features for the registered training organisation are that it needs to engage with both the trainees and the enterprise, have well-qualified training staff and be expert in mentoring and supporting trainees. An example of close engagement between enterprise, trainees and registered training organisation occurred in the Bill Saunders Cleaning example in the Asset Maintenance (Cleaning) case study. Here, the small regional enterprise had developed very close links with the registered training organisation – Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT). BRIT had specialised in supporting the cleaning industry in Victoria and interstate. It employed staff who were well-qualified in the cleaning industry and had, in most cases, worked in the industry. BRIT worked closely with the example company to put existing staff through the first program, that was run exclusively for the enterprise, before running second program for new starts and for two other workers who were not employed by the enterprise. The enterprise was keen to use the traineeship program to build the skills of the organisation and this allowed BRIT to work closely with the enterprise. A key feature of successful traineeships is also the level of qualifications of the staff of the registered training organisation and their ability to provide effective mentoring for trainees in enterprises. Here again, BRIT provides a good example of the skill level required by staff of the registered training organisation. BRIT staff were members of the employers' association and had regular contact with employers through open days held at the BRIT campus. Staff also regularly updated their knowledge of the industry through off the job training and attendance at conferences. This level of expertise and ongoing development amongst the registered training organisation staff enabled BRIT to relate closely to the enterprise and to individual trainees. These features of the quality of the registered training organisation are important 'input' and 'process' factor in the quality components analysis.

Other intermediaries such as Australian Apprenticeship Centres also need to be closely engaged with the enterprises and trainees. One of the clearest examples of intermediary engagement came from the Bank example in the finance and insurance case study. In this case, the traineeship program was run through the Aboriginal Employment Service that co-ordinated the traineeship with Bank and with other institutions in the finance and insurance sector. In this case, AES provided many of the services that might otherwise have been performed through an apprenticeship centre or the registered training organisation. AES recruited trainees for the program through marketing in local schools and through close liaison with the bank. The AES arranged off-the-job induction for all new trainees at Bank and convened regular meetings with the key parties – the enterprise, the schools and the parents of the trainees. AES also ensured that their staff kept in very close touch both with the trainees and with their families to ensure that there was as little attrition in the program as possible. It was the close engagement of the intermediary organisation that enabled the traineeship program to be such a success at Bank. The role of the intermediary was identified under the processes element of the quality components model.

Beyond the role of the three major parties in traineeships, our analysis also identified other key elements of quality training that have a high impact on the success of traineeship programs. These include the quality and availability of learning resources. For good quality learning resources to be available, registered training organisations need to be very aware of the work processes and conditions that pertain in enterprises offering traineeships and have the ability to customise resources to the needs of the enterprises with which they interact. But the resources also need to pertain to wider industry and occupational practices and bodies of knowledge. Resources need to be regularly reviewed and our project showed this is more likely to occur in industries with large organisations offering traineeships and with large and effective industry bodies. A good example of the quality and availability of learning resources was provided by the meat processing industry case study. Here, the Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC) played a key role in developing

learning materials for traineeships in the meat industry. MINTRAC, unlike the Industry Skills Councils, is owned and financed by the meat industry. It is highly respected and very active throughout the industry. This position has enabled MINTRAC to produce very high quality learning resources to support all the qualifications in the meat industry Training Package. MINTRAC has been particularly careful to produce materials that can be used by a relative under-educated workforce with low levels of literacy. These materials are subject to constant review by regional panels of employers convened by MINTRAC. The quality of the learning resources has been a major contributor to the success of traineeships in this sector.

Other high impact factors concerned with the quality of training in traineeships included the presence and effectiveness of both on and off-the-job training. Off-the-job training was found in all the industry sectors in this study, although the extent of the training varied between organisations studied in the research. The cleaning industry provides a good example of a sector where training has only recently taken root and where there has been an emphasis on the importance of off-the-job training from the beginning. The sensitivity of the industry to OH&S issues and the fact that cleaning is generally performed in other companies' premises meant that it was necessary to impart the underpinning knowledge required for effective cleaning in an off-the-job situation. BRIT provided this training for the Bill Saunders Cleaning enterprise. Off-the-job training took place over full days and lasted for about four months. It was arranged in local rooms not necessarily at the TAFE Institute and initial assessment took place after the off-the-job training, before workers moved into an on-the-job training situation. This emphasis on the importance of off-the-job training played a major role in the success of training in the cleaning industry.

On-the-job training also had to be effective. Some traineeships which were investigated in this study were delivered on-the-job. A good example of effective on-the-job training is provided by the Sunny Valley example in the Childrens' Services Industry case study. Here the CEO realised the power of traineeships to deliver practical skills training at work. She claimed that 'on the job training is the only way to go, it's better than tech or uni – sitting in a classroom instead of being on the floor with kids around you'. Face to face visits from the registered training organisation in this example were limited and most of the training was delivered on-the-job. The trainees were given a high degree of support with work structured so that they could complete their studies and log books. Supervisors were available after hours to help trainees and the trainees had weekly meetings to discuss progress. This well-structured on-the-job training component of the traineeship was the key element in ensuring the success of the program at Sunny Valley. The quality of training is a key element in both the 'inputs' and 'processes' components of the quality model described in the previous chapter.

Assessment was a high impact feature. Clearly for a traineeship to be successful there needs to be an assurance that graduates of traineeship are of high quality, are accepted by industry, and can proceed to higher level qualifications with appropriate grounding. While assessment is a 'process' feature in the quality model, it is also a feature that contributes to 'outputs'. Many of the companies and registered training organisations involved in the industry case studies devoted a great deal of attention to assessment practices. The two registered training organisations in the construction case study, for example, utilised respectively project work on site at the registered training organisation and site visits and the use of e-technology for learners in on-the-job traineeships. Some companies and workers expressed their preference for rigorous assessment; 'tick and flick' assessments were not popular, and neither was the over-use of Recognition of Prior Learning. For example the traineeship manager in one large cleaning company said that RPL was not encouraged as she did not feel confident that skills and knowledge that were RPL'd by another company or registered training organisation were truly present.

Using the traineeship lifecycle analysis to reduce risk and improve quality

Table 5 can be used as a tool in a number of ways. The most important way is to assist enterprises, registered training organisations and would-be trainees to identify the likely quality of a traineeship. If a traineeship is seen to have, or to be able to develop, a number of 'facilitators' then it is likely to

be high quality. If on the other hand it exhibits, or is likely to develop, a number of ‘inhibitors’ then it is likely to be of lower quality. The presence of a large number of facilitators in high-impact features will make up for inhibitors in low-impact features. Similarly the presence of a large number of inhibitors in high-impact features should sound alarm bells.

In this way, the table can be used as a risk management tool. If it becomes apparent that the traineeship is high-risk then a great deal of attention needs to be paid to removing some of the inhibitors, and where the inhibitors are outside the control of the players, as many of them are, to finding other ways of dealing with the features which exhibits the worst or most highly-weighted inhibitors. For a would-be trainee it may indicate the need to seek another employer or request a different registered training organisation.

The table may also be used as a continuous improvement tool, where employers, enterprises, Group Training Organisations (where appropriate) and Australian Apprenticeship Centres can work together or separately to identify areas that need to be worked on, in order of impact weighting.

For the most complete picture, the table should be used in conjunction with the ‘resilience factors’ mentioned earlier in the main report. Resilience factors are outside the control of the trainee, the registered training organisation and the enterprise, but provide the environment in which the traineeship could flourish or wither. The presence of a number of adverse resilience factors for a traineeship that is identified through the application of table 5 as high-risk, clearly presents the greatest challenge to the different players.

Appendix 7 – Hypothetical case histories

Hypothetical trainee case histories

The model traineeships outlined above are brought to life in the following case stories which utilise the data gathered during the research to produce descriptions of two hypothetical traineeships: Joanne in the meat industry and Bruno in the retail industry.

These case stories could be useful for a variety of purposes including for staff development of teachers and trainers in RTOs and industry, and staff working for intermediary bodies.

On the job: Joanne

Joanne meets her friend Rachael in the pub on Friday night and they talk about Rachael's job at Munchies Meats. Joanne has been unemployed for about 18 months. She really wants a job but she has no qualifications and she is uncertain about what she wants to do apart from travelling around Australia. For this she needs money.

Rachael tells her about her job and the work she does. Joanne at first is horrified at the prospect of her friend working in anything to do with meat processing. She has images of blood soaked floors, dripping carcasses and extremely offensive odours. After a long conversation Joanne has begun to change her mind. She is particularly taken by the good wages, and her ideas about the realities of the work begin to change as Rachael explains about the OH&S regulations and the standards of cleanliness and hygiene that everyone is required to abide by.

At the end of the evening Joanne decides that, with the help of her friend, she will apply for a job at Munchies Meats. She is still quite ambivalent about the work and the environment but she really wants to travel and this might be one way of getting the money together.

Joanne turns up on Monday to the HR department of Munchies Meats. A young employee helps her to fill in all the necessary paper work for her application. This first hurdle is now behind her. Joanne has had some problems with literacy and in the past she found that she could not get beyond this point. Not being able to fill in the application has meant that many jobs have not been accessible to her.

After she has finished this Joanne meets the Training Manager of Munchies Meats, Greg Tawney. He is a friendly young person who introduces Joanne to three more new employees. Greg explains to all of them that Munchies Meats has a commitment to its entire staff and part of this involves the provision of on the job traineeships to all employees. Joanne has only heard a little about traineeships and so have the others. She is a little worried about this as her literacy problems might really be a barrier. She wonders if she will fail to measure up to the expectations.

Greg takes the group on a tour of Munchies Meats. Joanne has never been inside a Meat Processing plant before and finds it quite overwhelming. It is a huge set of buildings and about 700 people

work here. Greg provides them with the clothing that allows them into the boning room where Joanne is likely to be placed. On go the white overalls, the green gumboots, the plastic gloves, the earmuffs and the face mask. Greg explains that all of this is necessary to guarantee that the meat is processed under the most hygienic of conditions. Any compromise in these standards and Munchies Meats will lose valuable international contracts.

After the tour the group is introduced to the Manager of the Registered Training Organization, Peter, who explains the conditions and operation of the traineeship. He makes it very clear that if Joanne has problems at any time she should contact him to discuss these. Peter also mentions that part of his role is assessment and that another part is to provide any kind of support that is needed. He particularly mentions help with literacy and numeracy. Joanne feels a little more confident although she is still very worried about her reading and writing levels. He discusses the qualification that they might expect to receive and talks a lot about how they can use this qualification to get a job anywhere in Australia. Joanne is beginning to think that this might be an excellent goal to aspire to particularly if she wants to travel.

After all the paperwork is finished Peter talks about the induction and orientation sessions that will take place over the next three days. He explains why this is important and what sorts of topics they are likely to learn about. While Joanne and the other members of her group are quite overwhelmed they feel that Greg and Peter will guide them through the processes.

On Day Four, Joanne and her group members are each assigned a mentor. Peter explains that these people will work beside the trainees and provide assistance, guidance and a friendly ear as the new staff become accustomed to the work and the training. Joanne had mentioned that Rachael had told her about this job and Greg and Peter decide that she is the ideal mentor for Joanne. Rachael has been employed for 18 months in Munchies Meats and has rotated through most of the jobs in the boning room. She is nearly finished her Certificate 2 and has demonstrated excellent progress. Joanne is beginning to feel more confident.

Each of the group meet their on floor supervisor. These people have been carefully chosen based on their ability to guide and include the trainees in their learning. Joanne's supervisor is Alicia, an older woman who has worked with Munchies Meats for 8 years. Alicia is known for her supportive nature and her attention to detail. She has supervised 10 trainees during her time with the company and really enjoys seeing the trainees grow and develop in the job.

Alicia explains her role to Joanne and lets her know that one part of her job will be to train Joanne in the various procedures on the boning room then sign off on Joanne's competency as she learns more about the job. She gives Joanne the materials that support her on the job learning. She also explains that there are Online learning materials with lots of graphics and video clips that Joanne can access if she finds the print base materials a little heavy going. Alicia recognises that Joanne is not confident and discusses this with Peter and Greg. They settle on a training pathway for Joanne, and plan for the kinds of assessments that Joanne will undertake.

After three weeks Joanne is finding her feet. She has learnt, with the guidance and assistance of Alicia, about three stages of the boning room processes and if she has questions Alicia is always there to answer them. Rachael has helped her to navigate her way around this very large enterprise and Peter has scheduled interviews with her to check on her progress and welfare. She feels as though she is part of the place and everyone is supportive of her learning. Her confidence is growing and she is impressed with her pay packet and the flexibility that a good wage can provide. Travelling does not now seem just a dream.

Alicia is now ready to carry out her first assessment. She explains very clearly to Joanne what she has learnt under close supervision and checks that Joanne agrees. Alicia shows Joanne the program of activities that she has completed and will complete over the next ten months and Joanne is quite surprised at the amount that she has learnt. Although assessment has always intimidated Joanne she

feels that because she is being assessed on her day to day work she might have a better chance of succeeding. The assessment is completed and Alicia congratulates Joanne on her success. Although Joanne knows that she has a long way to go she feels very proud of what she has achieved. This is the first time she has felt like this for a very long time. Peter and Greg make a special point of congratulating her and Rachael is proud of her friend's development.

Joanne rotates through the various jobs on the factory floor. Alicia helps her with her workbooks and frequently sends her to the Training Room where Joanne can complete Online-learning modules. Peter checks with her regularly and monitors her journey through this part of her learning. He realises quite early on that her literacy levels are lower than average and he carefully chooses learning materials that suit her skills and capacities.

Greg schedules fortnightly meetings with Joanne where they talk about where the qualification might take her, her workload, her interactions with other employees, her up coming assessments and her overall progress. Rachael and Joanne also talk about all of this over a quiet beer on Friday nights. Joanne never expected to be able to learn on the job and certainly never expected to be well on the way to national qualification. All of this, and a healthy bank balance. Joanne thinks that when she has finished this qualification, with help from Greg and Peter and all the others, she might go on to the next level. She might even enrol at TAFE in literacy classes.

Off the job: Bruno

Donna owns a small chain of four retail outlets selling men's clothing. She is about to expand her enterprise by adding another shop in a town close by to where she lives. She has built up the business, Up Market Gear, over a period of ten years and she has succeeded because she has a keen eye for buying and has managed to create a niche market that caters for the 'top end' of the spending spectrum. She prides herself on the stability and professionalism of her staff who focus on individualised service to customers.

Recently Donna attended a Rotary meeting where Craig Martin from the local Australian Apprenticeship Centre spoke to the group about Traineeships and their potential. Donna spoke with Craig after the meeting and made a time to discuss the operation of the retail traineeship in more detail. At this meeting Craig explained the nature of the partnership that needed to be in place to make a traineeship work for Donna and the staff member. Donna identifies Bruno, an applicant for a job in her new outlet, as a potential trainee. Bruno is 20 and wants eventually to own his own chain of stores. He is enthusiastic and a very willing worker. Craig and Donna both agree that Bruno would be likely to succeed

Craig also introduces Donna to Elizabeth Summers from a local Registered Training Organization, a TAFE Institute, who will be Donna's point of contact in administering and conducting the traineeship. Craig explains that if Donna wants to go ahead with the traineeship for Bruno she will need to release him from the workplace for regular periods for off the job learning. Donna and Elizabeth also talk about the qualification itself and the national training framework. This is quite new to Donna who subsequently calls Elizabeth to set up another meeting. Donna is particularly interested in how this qualification might lead Bruno to further study that would equip him with management skills. Elizabeth explains this and Donna decides to go ahead with the traineeship confident that she has support and a readily available conduit to information regarding the traineeship whenever she needs it. There are still some uncertainties in her mind but the availability of regular communication and the clear guidelines for frequency of visits by Elizabeth provide her with confidence.

Donna employs Bruno and subsequently arranges a meeting with Elizabeth and Craig to discuss the operation of the traineeship. The learning pathways available to him particularly impress Bruno, and Donna is grateful that she had assistance in dealing with financial and administrative matters. Her busy business and its current expansion meant that time is extremely precious. She needs all

the help and efficiency that she can tap into. The regularity of the visits and the meetings mean that Donna can schedule these to fit in with her other work commitments.

Donna then spends time with Bruno in the new store. She clearly points out the ways in which Bruno can progress and what will be a likely outcome to the successful completion of the traineeships. Donna organises an induction session with a long-term employee, Martin, from one of the other outlets. Martin is renowned for his enthusiasm and high levels of sales. He is also known for his empathy and support for new staff and takes great pride in passing on the lessons that he has learnt during his employment with “Up Market Gear”. Donna also suggests that Martin should be Bruno’s ‘buddy’ and that he should help Bruno with any of the day to day concerns that he might have. Since both have mobile phones this is not a problem and they organise to talk over lunch if problems arose. Elizabeth has organised an information pack for both Donna and Bruno and whilst there is a lot to come to terms with both feel confident that the resources will assist them at different stages of the traineeship.

Bruno organises to attend the local TAFE campus one afternoon per week. Donna agrees to pay his enrolment fees for his first year of study. Elizabeth and Donna work on customising the assessments on the job to suit both Bruno and the particular characteristics of “Up Market Gear”. Martin is able to work with Bruno one afternoon every fortnight and Bruno finds this very helpful. Bruno ‘stores up’ his questions and Martin, with all of his experience, can provide training in colour coordination, customer service, employee relations and any other issues that have arisen during the past two weeks. Donna also makes regular visits and monitors Bruno’s progress. Bruno discusses with Donna some of the things he is learning at TAFE and Donna agrees to let Bruno try out some of the particular strategies he is learning for dealing with very discriminating and sometimes difficult customers. Donna encourages Bruno, and Martin is always around if everything did not work according to plan, as sometimes happened.

Bruno enjoys his TAFE training very much. His teacher for the first Units, Sarah, is an excellent teacher. She used a wide variety of teaching and assessment strategies and Bruno particularly enjoys the simulations and scenarios that she uses to reinforce his learning. He also enjoys the project based assessments where he can use his own experiences in “Up Market Gear” to develop case studies and engage in problem solving activities that are directly relevant to his workplace. He learns a great deal from the other trainees on the course in class discussions on various aspects of retailing.

Elizabeth and Craig provide ongoing and regular support, and based on her experiences, Donna agrees to take on another trainee.