

Completion Issues in Industry Training and Effective Learning in the Workplace

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Key Messages

- When defining a successful completion for the industry training sector, the different ways in which training operates for Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and their industries must be considered. Training in the workplace adds a level of complexity because of the many external factors (largely controlled by the employer) which affect the ultimate learning outcome.
- The presence of an effective learning culture in a workplace and having training linked to the strategic goals of the business are the two most influential factors in determining whether a workplace environment is effective for fostering successful learning. Other key workplace elements needed to foster an effective learning environment are:
 1. Having administration processes that effectively monitor and track an employee's progress;
 2. A structured approach to meeting the training needs of the employee;
 3. Providing incentives to learn;
 4. Providing support services;
 5. Allowing time for training and learning to occur; and
 6. Recognition that there is not a one-size-fits-all formula to learning in the workplace.
- Having an effective learning environment in the workplace is most likely to lead to successful completions of learning and training goals, which will lead to positive outcomes for employees and employers.
- Employers are the key group to target when addressing or influencing the barriers to effective learning in the workplace. Industry Training Organisations provide training support to employers which can help to overcome these barriers.
- Further detailed information and analysis of the reasons for non-completions in industry training would be beneficial for the development of initiatives/strategies to increase completions for employers and ITOs.

Introduction

How to increase or maintain high levels of completions in a course, qualification or unit standards is an ongoing issue for Industry Training Organisations. This research examines the issues underpinning why some trainees complete qualifications and why some don't. It sets out to answer such questions as:

1. What is needed for effective learning in the workplace?
2. What is a "successful completion" in industry training?
3. What major factors determine whether a trainee successfully completes a qualification or not?
4. What services do ITOs and employers provide to trainees that assist qualification completions in the workplace?

There is very little published research on issues with completions for industry training in New Zealand, therefore, this information may help to form the basis of strategies/initiatives/policies that ITOs and employers can use to implement and facilitate effective learning and address completion issues in the workplace.

Definitions

Industry Training

The main focus of the research is on work based or on-job education and training as arranged via an ITO. Focusing on training and education in the workplace is the most appropriate angle for this research as this is where the majority of industry training occurs. Moreover, focussed research on learning in the workplace is seen to be most valuable to ITOs.

Workplace learning

Workplace learning is the formal acquisition of skills and knowledge in the workplace. It can be “employer based”, where the learner is an employee working and learning while at their place of work, or “work-based”, where someone who is not an employee of the firm comes in to that firm’s workplace for the purpose of training. Knowledge and skills obtained in the workplace are formalised with assessment and the achievement of units and national qualifications. Workplace learning may be supported by off-site education and training on a regular or occasional basis (Skill NZ, Dec 2001) .

Completion

For the purposes of this research a successful qualification completion in industry training can be understood as:

“The successful completion of all the requirements of a signed training agreement”.

The variables and rationale underpinning this are discussed in the “Completion Issues in Industry Training” section of the report.

Method

This research project was conducted in two stages.

Firstly, a literature review examined:

- What makes for effective learning in the workplace,
- What types of support are needed by employers and Vocational Education and Training (VET) organisations to increase and nurture successful completions in the workplace, and
- How learning styles can affect learning and training in the workplace.

The findings from the literature provided information on what is needed to increase the levels of achievement and foster a positive and productive learning environment in the workplace. This information has been used to support the discussion and is attached as an appendix.

Secondly, semi-structured interviews with Industry Training Organisations were undertaken to provide qualitative information on how they define successful completions, what the key influencers for completions and non-completions are, and how the ITO assists successful completions in the workplace. The interviews with ITOs gradually became less structured and more organic, largely because the information being collected was relatively consistent between ITOs. This allowed discussions to focus on the specific issues that were identified. Staff of ITOs were able to provide significant information on all of these questions and their input forms the basis of the report discussion.

Completion Issues in Industry Training

Challenges for ITOs in Collecting Completions Data

Completions

Completions can be a useful way to measure the rate of qualification attainment in Industry Training. However, there is no concise, clear definition of what a successful completion is in industry training. This research has sought to provide some common language around completions in order to develop some consistency in our understanding of the term “successful completion” in an industry training environment. The question of “what is a successful completion in ITO-arranged industry training” was posed early in the research process and quickly became more complex than anticipated. This was largely due to the diverse training needs and arrangement of the different industries covered by ITOs and the different ways in which ITOs structure their qualifications and assessment processes to meet those training needs.

During discussions with ITOs, several different interpretations of a successful completion were expressed, including:

1. Successful completion of all the academic requirements of a national qualification
2. Successful completion of all the requirements stated in a training agreement
3. Attainment of credits towards a national qualification or limited credit programme

A useful comparison may be the Ministry of Education’s definition of successful qualification for an EFTS funded provider:

*“A student has completed a qualification when all the academic requirements for the completion of a formal qualification during the previous academic year; **or**, in the case of providers which have no academic year, for the 12 months ending 31 December of the reporting year”*

(Single Data Return Manual, Ministry of Education 2003 v 6.2, pg 22)

Some components of this definition are applicable to industry training. It is certain that the time period component would need to be specific for each qualification, as this variable ranges greatly in industry training.

When considering a definition of completions for ITOs, the diverse range and structure of their qualifications and training environments must be recognised. For example, some ITOs will sign trainees up to complete limited and supplementary credit programmes (LCPs or SCPs) instead of a national qualification, and defining an average time

period for the completion of a qualification is difficult as there are many variables which affect the time it takes to complete a national qualification in the workplace. Using the training agreement as a measure of success could prove beneficial here.

In order to be eligible for Standard Training Measure (STM) funding, all industry trainees must be signed into a training agreement. A training agreement states what qualification or LCP the trainee will be working towards achieving over a stated period of time and is negotiated between the ITO, trainee and employer. Therefore, the key determining factor in whether a trainee successfully completes a qualification or LCP is the achievement of all the requirements set out in the training agreement.

An official definition of a successful completion will be developed by the Ministry of Education as part of work being conducted by an independent Technical Working Group on the performance element to tertiary education funding, which includes the Industry Training Fund. Work is scheduled to develop performance indicators for ITOs in order to determine how performance based funding could be applied to industry training. It is likely that the performance indicators will be based on indicators already formulated for EFTS funded providers around completions and retention. This will require a clear and robust definition of successful completion. A specialist Industry Training advisory group will be established to develop this.

Non-Completions

Data on the specific reasons why trainees do not complete training agreements or qualifications is not readily collected by ITOs, although some are beginning to collect this data. ITOs did however, provide anecdotal evidence of the reasons for termination of training agreements. The most common reason for termination of a training agreement is because a trainee has moved jobs to a different employer or industry. It is for this reason that ITOs find it difficult - or often nearly impossible - to track trainees that do not complete. The ITO often hears about a trainee that has moved on well after the event. In most cases an ITO does not have the time and resources to keep track of the employment status of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of trainees. Another possible reason why many ITOs do not collect reasons for non-completions is because the majority of influences on non-completions reside with the employer, and are beyond the role of an ITO.

Because some ITOs are not able to collect the specific reasons for the termination of a training agreement, they cannot track the future path of these trainees. Obviously collecting this information would be beneficial in determining if they entered into another training agreement with a different employer or industry. The adaptation of the Ministry of Education's National Student Index (NSI) to industry trainees could be a way of gathering such information.

More specific information about why trainees do not complete would be useful to inform the development of strategies and initiatives to address these issues. The fact that some ITOs are now beginning to collect this information is a positive step towards helping to address some of the barriers to learning and training in the workplace.

Completion Rates

Another challenge for ITOs in collecting meaningful data around completions is calculating accurate completion rates. A qualification completion rate will tell you the proportion of students that successfully completed a qualification over a certain period of time.

For example, a standard calculation of a qualification completion rate (%) could be a cohort of students that began working towards a national qualification or LCP at a certain time (G) and, after a specific number of years (i), a number of them have successfully completed (C_i), then the completion rate (c_i) for cohort (G) after (i) years is:

$$c_i = C_i / G * 100$$

Source: Retentions, Completions and Progression Ministry of Education, 2003

This calculation poses numerous challenges for ITOs because the nature of learning in the workplace does not lend itself well to prescribed timelines such as a normal academic year as provider based training does.

There are complexities in defining the expected time within which qualifications are to be completed that are worth noting. Making the time to undertake training and assessment in the workplace is the main influence on the completion time of a qualification in the workplace.

That said, for funding purposes, ITOs are required to state the average expected time it takes to complete a national qualification, hence it may be reasonable to use this measure to calculate completion rates. However, the complexities in accurately determining the average time it is intended to take to complete a national qualification should be noted.

Another difficulty for ITOs in calculating accurate completion rates is identifying a cohort of trainees, as trainees are signed onto training agreements throughout the year, rather than twice a year as at tertiary education providers. A possible solution to this could be taking the total number of trainees by quarter, as ITOs currently report to TEC for funding purposes.

Barriers to Completions

As discussed previously, there is a lack of detailed information about the reasons why trainees do not complete. However, ITOs were able to identify the main influences for non-completions, through mainly anecdotal evidence and in their direct interactions with trainees and employers.

Barriers to learning and training in the workplace that ITOs identified were:

- Lack of quality on and off-job training,
- Seasonal influences on labour supply,
- Cost,
- Training that does not meet skill needs,
- Size of enterprise,
- Lack of value placed on qualifications,
- Lack of support and guidance from ITO,
- Unsuitable delivery model, and
- Strained employer/employee relationship.

The quality of training received on and off the job can affect some trainees' ability to successfully complete. If training is of a low quality and not relevant to their skill needs, a trainee's motivation and enthusiasm to complete will be low. ITOs can and do assist in preventing this by maintaining close relationships with tertiary providers, supporting employers to undertake employee needs analysis, developing individual training plans, and arranging or providing training for workplace trainers and assessors.

Many industries, such as tourism, travel, agriculture, sport and retail have seasonal influences in labour supply. Being able to retain staff and provide job security is a constant challenge if a business is vulnerable to sudden seasonal changes in the market. If patterns of change which affect labour supply in an industry are foreseeable, then an employer can plan training around it, however, if changes or down turns come suddenly, (for example, for the travel industry with the SARS breakout in 2003) training can be made redundant, along with the employee.

Many employers still perceive training and learning in the workplace as a cost rather than as an investment (ANTA, 2000). The cost of training and learning in the workplace can be considerable, especially for

SMEs. This includes factors such as time away from work and loss of service or production time. Being able to provide information on the return from an investment in training would be an important tool to changing employer's attitudes and perceptions. The ITF and Business New Zealand are currently working to develop tools in this area.

Retention and non-completions are also an issue for industries which have large numbers of young trainees (15-29), such as hairdressing (94%) and hospitality (77%), where employees tend to change jobs often before they find their preferred employer or career. An example of how one employer is attempting to overcome this barrier in the hospitality industry is by developing training policies that encourage and reward commitment to the job and enterprise. This has been achieved by only permitting employees to undertake training once they have been employed with the enterprise for 12 months or longer. This assisted staff retention, because it helped determine who was committed to working for the enterprise and the industry and willing to invest their time and effort into developing their career in the hospitality industry.

How ITOs enhance completions

Section 10(b) of the Industry Training Act 1992 states that as part of an ITO's activities for which they seek funding for, they will develop arrangements for the delivery of industry training intended to enable trainees to attain skill standards, including arrangements for monitoring and assessing of those standards.

It is around this legislated role that ITOs provide a wide range of services that contribute to successful completions in the workplace. The types of services provided can be:

- Arranging or providing training for workplace assessors and trainers
- Learning resources
- Collection and maintaining of achievement data
- Advice
- Mentoring
- Quality assurance
- Sharing success stories
- Administrative support
- Training subsidy

These services are vital to employers and trainees involved in industry training. Although the majority of these services do not directly contribute to a trainee's successful completion, as most of them are provided through the employer, it is the customised service and industry knowledge ITO staff provide that makes a positive contribution to the workplace and a trainees ability to attain the required skills.

The extent and type of support provided by ITOs is specific to each industry and employer and is based on their individual needs. For smaller enterprises that do not have human resource departments and a large training infrastructure, this support is vital.

ITOs also enhance learning in the workplace by working closely with their respective industries when developing qualifications and assessment tools. This helps to ensure that the types of training and learning occurring on the job are relevant and meet the needs of the industry, enterprise and the individual employers and trainees.

Effective learning in the workplace

If learning in the workplace is effective, it has achieved its purpose. For most workplaces that undertake ITO arranged training the purpose is to attain a relevant national qualification which will provide the employee with the knowledge and skills they need to do their job, and do it well. In order for an employee to complete national qualifications the workplace must be an environment where learning is encouraged and fostered through high quality and relevant training.

In order to fully understand the factors which contribute to completions in the workplace, we must first examine what constitutes effective learning in the workplace. It is reasonable to hypothesise that if employers provide an environment which fosters and facilitates effective learning, they are more likely to have employees successfully completing qualifications or learning goals. There are many factors which influence effective learning in the workplace. The majority of these lie with the employer and their level of commitment to training and willingness and ability to provide a learning culture in the workplace which fosters an effective learning environment.

The key factors which influence learning in the workplace are:

1. The presence of a learning culture;
2. Whether management recognise the value of training and support it with the development of policies and inclusion of training in the business strategy;
3. Administration processes that effectively monitor and track an employee's progress;
4. A structured approach to meeting the training needs of the employee;
5. Providing incentives to learn;
6. Providing support services;
7. Time to allow for training and learning to occur; and
8. Recognition that there is not a one-size-fits-all formula to learning in the workplace.

The presence of a learning culture

Johnston and Hawke (2002, in Dawe, 2003), define a learning culture as 'the existence of a set of attitudes, values and practices with an organisation which support and encourage a continuing process of learning for the organisation and/or its members'. In order to develop and maintain an effective learning culture in the workplace, enterprises should:

- Promote more communicative and collaborative environments;
- Introduce new systems, structure and processes which enhance production or service and increase learning opportunities;
- Increase opportunities for employees to contribute to decisions about practices within the workplace;
- Develop systems and structures that support learning; and,
- Establish partnerships and associations with external stakeholders and other partners to increase learning opportunities and introduce new ideas (Johnston & Hawke 2002, in Dawe 2003).

The Australian Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER 2003) identifies other features that are important in learning cultures such as the role of the workplace trainer in initiating and supporting different types of learning, the role of informal learning to enhance performance, and the importance of fostering generic skills.

It is evident that many of the ingredients of a learning culture can in themselves influence learning, such as good communication practices and having systems and processes in place which foster learning. It is what makes up a learning culture that is at the centre of facilitating effective learning in the workplace.

Management belief in and support of learning

In order for learning and training to occur in the workplace it has to be supported by management. Research has shown that enterprises that have training and learning included in their formal strategic business planning process are likely to have more training occurring in the workplace which improves performance (Smith, 2002). For these types of enterprises, training and learning is embedded in the culture of the business and is seen as essential normal everyday practice.

ANTA states there is still a need to shift employer's mindsets from seeing workplace learning as a cost, to recognising it is actually an investment. This mindset undoubtedly creates barriers to enterprises engaging in and realising the true value and potential return from workplace learning. This perception of employer attitudes toward training was also shared by some ITOs. The negative perception of training from some employers can create barriers to training for

employees, because if an employer believes that training is not beneficial, it is most likely that training will not occur.

Effective administration processes

Several ITOs emphasised the importance of good quality administrative and monitoring processes so that a trainee's progress can be monitored, assessed and credit achievement recorded accurately. This is vital to ensure that learning and training is recognised and formally accredited against national standards. Robust administrative and monitoring processes aid completions through more efficient and accurate reporting and assessing of credit achievement. This in turn leads to more completions, and in some cases, faster completions because trainees are assessed and data is reported to the ITO and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in a timely manner.

The development of learning and training resources such as trainee workbooks and training materials is also important to ensure that training is organised, accessible and user friendly.

Structured approach to training

It is recognised that having structured training in the workplace helps to facilitate quality, value for money and ensuring skill needs are met and relevant. Having a systematic approach to training in the workplace can consist of the analysis of individual skill needs, the development of training and assessment plans, and training policies. All of these elements can assist in staff retention and attracting skilled employees. (Smith, Oczkowski, Noble and Macklin 2002, and McDonald & Fyfe 2002)

Providing incentives to learn

Benefits such as linking pay to skill level or qualifications, awards, fee reimbursements, and bonuses are a common method for employers and industry associations to motivate and retain employees. This also provides recognition for skills and knowledge gained through training and installs a sense of pride and achievement for trainees.

Providing support services

Providing support to trainees in the workplace is vital to their overcoming learning barriers. It also encourages and motivates success in learning. The types of support needed vary greatly depending on the job, industry, individual needs, learning styles, previous experience, and qualifications among other things. Employers that have support strategies and key indicators in place are more likely to provide support that meets the needs of trainees and sustains effective training outcomes (Montague & Hopkins, NCVET 2002). It should also be noted that employers need support to provide an effective learning and training environment. ITOs provide significant support to employers to ensure that all the requirements of a training

agreement can be achieved. ITO support to employers and trainees is further discussed later in the report.

Allowing time to learn

Time is one of the most significant costs to employers when it comes to training, but nonetheless vital for learning to occur. Having scheduled training time can help to ensure that training and learning is efficient and that it reduces the impact on actual work/production time. Obviously, the quality of training and how it suits the needs of the learner will impact on how efficient the training is.

Recognising that one size does not fit all

Finding the right kind of training to suit the needs of the business and the trainee can be a challenge. There is no single formula which suits everyone. Different approaches will be called for depending on the needs of the enterprise and the characteristics and skill needs of the learner.

It is not only the presence of these factors that makes learning in the workplace possible, but also the consideration of the different ways in which people learn.

The common model of workplace trainers dispensing knowledge and workers being passive sponges creates several assumptions about how people learn. This learning model is becoming increasingly obsolete as the need for enterprises to be responsive to the challenges of an ever increasingly complex, competitive, and rapidly changing environment become more important. The new workplace learning model which is growing in popularity is more organic and flexible in structure and stresses the importance of horizontal communication, collective and continuous learning and adaptability (West, G W 1996).

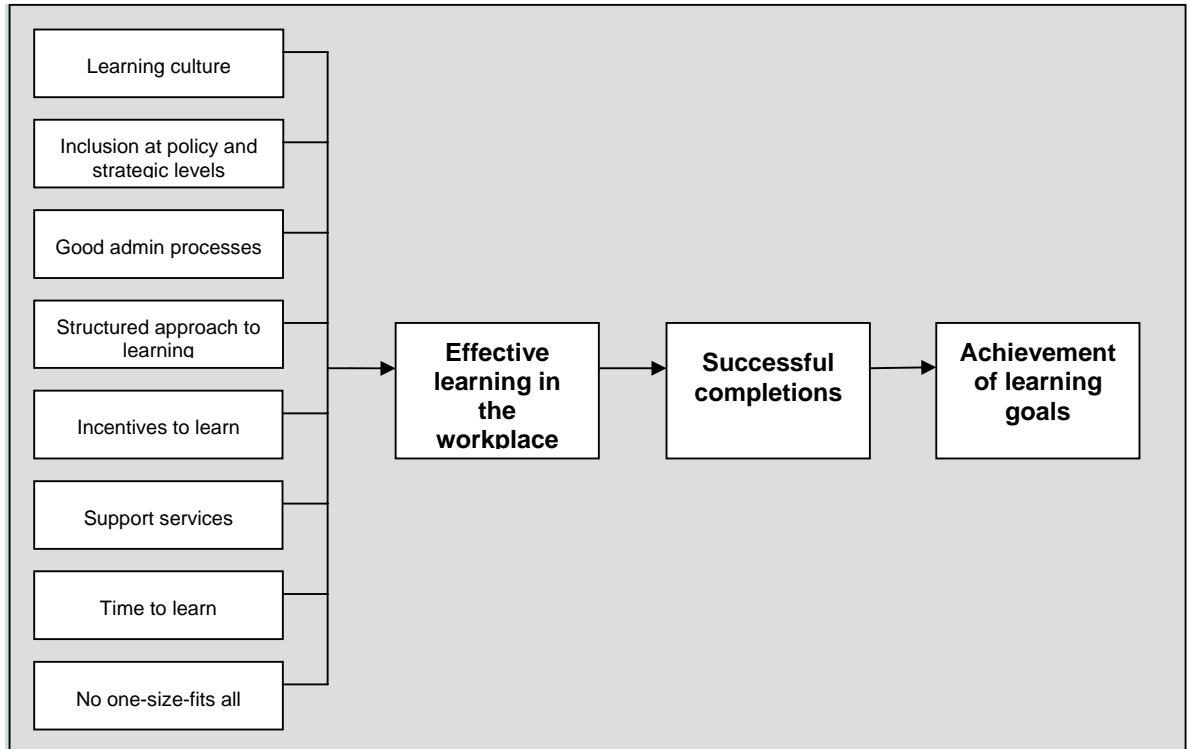
Through examining these issues and drawing on other research in this area, the two most important factors in facilitating effective learning in the workplace are evident. These are:

- having training linked to the strategic goals of the business, and
- the presence of a learning culture.

Fostering and facilitating effective workplace learning is about removing barriers and facilitating learning that meets the needs of the learner and the enterprise.

It is reasonable to hypothesise that the presence of the influences outlined above in a workplace would most likely result in positive learning outcomes being achieved in the workplace such as successful qualification completions. This process is outlined in the research model devised below.

Research Model: Links between effective learning and successful completion of learning goals in the workplace



Conclusion

No single formula can guarantee that learning and training in the workplace will be effective at facilitating successful completions. There are simply too many variables involved. However, there are some fundamental influences which should be considered when an employer wants to foster a positive and productive learning environment and an ITO wishes to contribute to its development.

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APPENDIX

Literature Review

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Introduction

This document is a review of recent literature on workplace learning. The literature chosen for this review consists mainly of publications from Skill New Zealand (became the Tertiary Education Commission in January 2003), and the Australian Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). These are the two most extensive sources of workplace learning knowledge and research in New Zealand and Australia. The majority of the literature is from 2000-2003. Because the literature is recent, it provides fresh thinking about the new and emerging trends of learning and training in the workplace and how it is evolving to become an increasingly important part of life at work. The literature consists of research papers, publications and books.

The literature reviewed focuses mainly on medium to high level strategies, policies and models of learning and training in the workplace. It is acknowledged that each workplace is different and that there can be no one answer or perfect model that could be implemented globally to ensure all learning and training that takes place in the workplace was effective and achieved all the desired outcomes. Instead, this literature review proposes to provide a summary of what contributes to achieving effective learning and training in the workplace.

Key Findings

- The three main drivers that influence the type and nature of training in the workplace are: new technology, quality assurance and change in the workplace
- Linking training needs with business and strategic planning processes is a key influence on the quality and effectiveness of training in the workplace
- To develop an effective training environment in the workplace, an enterprise must link training needs to changes in the workplace, and business strategy and develop a culture that supports learning.
- Informal learning is a very important tool for small enterprises. It enables the specific training needs of employees to be addressed in a way that is compatible with the working style of the enterprise
- Both formal and informal learning can be used effectively in the workplace. Different styles of learning and training suit different types of enterprises, there is no one-size-fits-all formula for workplace learning
- The presence of a learning culture in the workplace is vital to foster a positive working environment that will facilitate effective learning and training
- The workplace trainer plays an important role in supporting and facilitating the learning culture of a workplace.

What is Workplace Learning?

The Tertiary Education Commission (formerly Skill New Zealand) defines workplace learning as “the formal acquisition of skills and knowledge in the workplace” (Skill New Zealand, 2001). This can be employment based, where the learner is an employee and learning while at their place of work or work based, where someone who is not an employee of a firm comes into that firm’s workplace for the purpose of training.

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) defines workplace learning as learning or training undertaken in the workplace, usually on the job, including on-the-job training under normal operational conditions, and on-site training, which is conducted away from the work process (e.g. in a training room).

The Role of Workplace Learning

Each year the numbers of trainees and employers involved in workplace training increase as ITOs work towards achieving government’s target of 250,000 involved in Industry Training by 2007.

In 2000, 22,353 employers and 81,343 trainees participated in industry training. In 2002 that had grown to 24,576 employers and 106,997 trainees, an increase of 24% in the numbers of trainees (Skill NZ 2001 & 2003).

The ever increasing demands for skilled labour require people to enhance their skills throughout their lifetime and the workplace is a relevant environment to undertake lifelong learning.

The International Labour Organisation reports that the need for people to respond to increasing skill needs has emerged as a result of globalisation, new technology and changes in the workplace (International Labour Organisation 1998, in Skill New Zealand 2001). This is consistent with research by NCVET that states increasing technology, changing methods of communications, and the changing nature of products and services demanded are requiring employees to become more skilled, dynamic and innovative in their work. As a result, the workplace has become a major place of learning as a result of the gradual shift in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector from being supply driven to demand driven (NCVER, 2003).

As small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) make up the majority of businesses in New Zealand their role in fostering and nurturing workplace learning is vital. In a study of the factors influencing the implementation of training and learning in the workplace, the learning styles and processes of small businesses differed greatly from larger enterprises. Smaller enterprises tend to engage more in informal training than large enterprises (Ridoutt, Dutneall, Hummel, and Selby Smith 2002, in NCVER 2003). This is because the time and resource pressures on small businesses do not lend themselves easily to formal styles of learning that is structured and process driven. (Smith, Oczkowski, Noble, Macklin (2002, in NCVER 2003) point out that the unstructured nature of learning in small businesses has emerged because of their lack of internal resources. Small businesses must rely on informal learning as a way of achieving immediate business needs (Kearns 2002, in NCVER 2003).

The increasing number of trainees and employers undertaking industry training shows the New Zealand workplace is becoming an increasingly important environment for learning and gaining the necessary work skills. Workplace learning that is linked to national standards can raise productivity. The future challenge for New Zealand is to ensure that we have a skilled labour-force that can meet and maintain the demands of our fast paced and changing economy.

Types of Training and Learning

The types of training within the workplace can vary between: formal and informal, external and internal, and on-the-job and off-the-job.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (in NCVER 2003) defines formal training as “all training activities which have a predetermined plan and format designed to develop employment related skills and competencies”, whereas, informal is defined by “training activities that are instigated by the individual or occur in an ad hoc fashion”. However, Harris, Simons and Bone (in NCVER 2003) argue that informal training is not merely an ad-hoc process, but part of a deliberate strategy which takes into account the work which needs to be done and the skills needed to do the work.

Two issues arise from informal learning’s lack of recognition in the workplace. Firstly, how to make the hidden world of informal training more visible and credible, and secondly, how training/learning can be encouraged more in the workplace. These issues impact greatly on the ability of an enterprise to establish or build on a training/learning culture.

The importance of formal and informal training as effective methods for learning is emphasised in NCVER’s review of what makes for good workplace learning. However, as previously noted, informal learning in the workplace is extremely important to small businesses, and Figgs et. al (2001, in NCVER 2003), suggest that formal and informal learning should be used together, with informal learning amplifying the value of the formal training.

The ways and methods used to help people learn are varied. We all have our own preferred styles of learning and working. Dryden and Vos (2001) state that we learn visually, auditory, tactile/kinaesthetically, through print-orientated material, or group interaction. People of all ages can learn virtually anything if allowed to do it through their own unique styles and by utilising their own personal strengths (Prashing pg 98, in Dryden and Vos 2001). Considering peoples learning styles when designing training packages for the workplace could be beneficial in terms of educational and business outcomes. However, it is recognised that this cannot always be achieved because of the varying nature of businesses, industry and training needs.

Greenagel (2003) states that research into how people learn shows that most job-related proficiencies are learned outside the training room, and suggests that where the learning takes place and how it’s used is inextricably related to how adults learn.

The three main types of learning that most people relate to are:

1. Visual – learning through seeing, these people will commonly need visual props such as power point, charts, whiteboard, hand outs etc to best absorb information, and most will prefer to take detailed notes.
2. Auditory - learning through listening, these people will commonly need to discuss or listen to others talk things through, and may benefit from reading aloud or using a recording device.
3. Tactile/Kinaesthetic – learning through movement, touch or doing, these people prefer to learn though actually taking part or doing the work, and have a need to be active or explore.

It is generally recognised that people have different learning preferences depending on the type of work and the tasks required. A person’s preferred style of learning is influenced by factors such as personality, attitudes, values, physical and intellectual abilities, environment and cultural background. The above learning styles do not exist to put people into boxes, nor do they aim to set in concrete the fact that the use of one style means the exclusion of another. Being flexible and adaptable to a learner’s preferred style or medium can effectively increase positive learning

outcomes in the workplace. Putting in place workplace learning strategies such as job rotation, work shadowing, mentoring and coaching can be beneficial as they take into account people's different learning styles (ANTA, 1998).

ANTA also state that bringing people together and teaching them all in the same way, does not take into account the fact that people have their own pace and style of learning. This notion is also supported by West (1996) who states that a learning model in the workplace whereby trainers dispense knowledge to groups of trainees that are passive recipients makes several assumptions about how people learn such as: everyone is starting with the same base knowledge, listening is the best modality for all learners, and everyone will bridge naturally from theory to application. This model is becoming increasingly obsolete as enterprises need to be constantly responsive to the challenges of an increasingly complex, competitive and rapidly changing environment.

McNamara (at www.mapnp.org) explains that the value of self-directed learning in the workplace is that it is adapted to the trainee's style and objectives, it saves money because trainees help themselves and one another, it increases learning effectiveness as they learn from their own experiences and are able to apply it directly to their work.

Increasingly more research shows that effective learning occurs the most when employees can take responsibility for their own career development, which means trusting individuals to decide for themselves what to learn, why, where and when (ANTA, 1998).

Effective Teaching/Training in the workplace

In the move from off-the-job to on-the-job training, the role of the workplace trainer takes on an increasingly critical role in providing training opportunities (Harris et al. 2000).

The workplace trainer is defined as “the person in the enterprise who helps/guides others to learn the things they need to know and do in order to get their work done” (ibid).

According to Harris et al, workplaces trainers have five main roles:

- Working and learning with co-workers,
- Fostering an environment conducive to learning,
- Structuring and shaping work processes to accommodate learning,
- Promoting independence and self-direction in learners, and
- Linking external experiences learning experiences with work and learning in the workplace.

In determining how best to equip trainers in the workplace to do their job effectively Brookfield states that there cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach to answering the question of 'what is effective teaching?'

Different approaches will be called for depending on the learner's ethnicity, cultural conditioning, and personality characteristics. The demands of the context within which learning is occurring are paramount – in particular, the subject matter and learning domain involved, the varying levels of the expertise and sophistication in a group, and the conflicting motives of teacher and learners. Given this complexity of variables, a degree of ambiguity should be expected as a constant feature of attempts to facilitate learning (Brookfield 1989, in SkillINZ 2001).

Aligned with this view is Cranton (1998 in Skill New Zealand 2001) who states there are no definitive rules or a specific set of special technical skills to follow to become a good teacher. We become good teachers by remaining committed to our discipline by learning more about our subject, thinking about our teaching, caring about our students, gaining experience, and continually challenging ourselves to improve.

Harris et al. (2000) identify strategies for how best to equip trainers in the workplace which are related to the nature of provider-based training, the provision of relevant and high-quality training materials, the making of spaces for experiential learning, and interaction and strategy-sharing within the workplace. Also, off-job training to train the trainers can be beneficial. This could include mentoring, seminars and the sharing of best practice. It is the use of these strategies within a learning culture that can help facilitate effective teaching and learning.

Clearly there is no single set of rules to define what a good teacher or trainer encompasses. Whether in-house or external, trainers must cater to the specific needs of the workplace. The in-house trainer, especially, plays a central role within the learning culture of a workplace by assisting and guiding the learning process.

Factors that influence training

There are many factors that influence training and learning in the workplace. This section discusses the notion of drivers as major factors in determining the types of training provided in the workplace, and the extent to which they steer the learning environment.

ANTA (2002) state there is still a need to shift people's mindsets from seeing workplace learning as a cost, to recognising it as an investment. This mindset undoubtedly creates barriers to enterprises engaging in workplace learning. More work is needed to promote the benefits of learning in the workplace.

Of the literature that identified drivers of training in the workplace, the majority discussed at least three common factors:

1. Changes in the organisational structure or tasks in the workplace;
2. The need to adapt to new technology; and
3. The need for quality assurance in training and initiatives.

In addition to these three key drivers, other factors that influence training in the workplace include environmental factors such as: enterprise size, industrial relation issues, industry effects, occupational structure, ownership, and workforce structure (Smith and Hayton 1999, and Ridoutt et. al 2002).

Aligned with the key drivers of training, Smith (2000, in Dawe 2003) identifies the common reasons for training from a survey of enterprises. The most important reasons given for training were to:

- Improve performance in current job
- Improve quality of goods and services
- Respond to new technology
- Develop a more flexible workforce
- Improve employee safety in the workplace (Smith, 2000)

Dawe reports that the increase in casual workers has had an important impact on enterprise training activity. Data from a study on the experiences of training on casual and permanent employees showed that casual workers are significantly disadvantaged in terms of employer-sponsored training, and commonly undertake external training at their own expense. This supports the notion that more workers are becoming responsible for their own training development and the recognition of a trend towards lifelong learning (VandenHeuvel & Wodden, 1999)

Dawe (2002) found that industry training packages that incorporate Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC) are particularly useful to encourage existing workers to continue learning. This has become particularly important in industries where there are decreasing numbers of young workers (Smith and Hayton, 1999).

What is needed to implement effective learning in the workplace?

Smith et. al (2002), state that the development of formal business strategy is the most important factor in boosting the incidence of training. A survey conducted by Smith et al. showed that the incidence of training is far higher in businesses that have adopted a formal strategic or business plan than those that have no business plan. Training should be aligned to business and strategic planning cycles in order to improve performance and be customised to the level of the employee in order to meet skill needs. Undertaking individual skill needs analysis is useful because it can assist with obtaining value for money from the investment in training (Smith et al. 2002) and it can help to facilitate quality training which can assist in staff retention and attracting skilled workers (McDonald & Fyfe 2002).

The characteristics of a workplace with an effective training environment include:

- Well articulated training policies that identify the value of learning and learners,
- Training structures that give access to internal experts and make time for learning,
- Implementation of training structures that provide access to identified trainers and other personnel,
- Space in the production schedule to enable learning to occur,
- Skilled training staff to support development and management of self-directed learning, acquisition of needed skills and knowledge,
- Engagement in the community of practice in the workplace to support authentic learning, and
- Availability of learning resources - human, physical and courseware (Smith et al. 2002).

Dawe found that successful training practices are strategies that provide tangible and intangible benefits for organisations such as increased skills and knowledge, competitiveness, improved morale and internal working relationships. A study of large Australian firms found that the three most important elements that contribute to successful training practices are:

- An organisational culture that supports learning,
- Mechanisms to link training to the business strategy, and
- Mechanisms to link training to workplace change.

The fact that these elements are closely aligned with the key drivers in workplace learning shows that researchers are finding consistent factors that influence learning and training within the workplace.

Other important elements that contribute to successful training practices are:

- Increasing the diversity of training & learning approaches,
- Sourcing formal training from within the organisation itself,
- Adopting accredited training,
- Increasing the use of informal training (in large firms),
- Decentralising the training within the organisation, and
- Responding to the needs of the individual (Dawe, 2003).

Broad strategies for effective workplace learning involve removing barriers to learning and facilitating learning. The quality of workplace learning depends on the organisation and management implementing enabling strategies to facilitate learning. Strategies provide workers access to pathways of learning activities supported by interpersonal guidance and collaboration to achieve learning goals (Billet 2001).

Creating a Learning Culture in the Workplace

Throughout the literature the importance of establishing and building a learning culture in the workplace has been emphasised as a key element of successful learning. In order for enterprises to survive in a time of increasing competition they must place increasing value on creating or building on a culture of ongoing learning that includes open communication (NCVER 2003).

Johnston and Hawke (2002, in Dawe 2003), define a learning culture as ‘the existence of a set of attitudes, values and practices with an organisation which support and encourage a continuing process of learning for the organisation and/or its members’.

The importance of using a learning culture in the effective development of critical generic skills such as problem solving, communication, teamwork, IT and customer service skills is emphasised by Virgona, Waterhouse, Sefton and Sanguinette (forthcoming, NCVER 2003).

Smith states that there are number of factors which need to be considered when developing a learning culture, such as: management’s attitudes towards training, investment in training as part of the business strategy, and the management of employee relationships (Smith 1997, in Dawe 2003). The extent to which these factors impact on the ability of an enterprise to establish a learning culture will differ for many. Johnston and Hawke state that in order to develop and maintain an effective learning culture in the workplace, enterprises should:

- Introduce new systems, structure and processes which enhance production or service and increase learning opportunities;
- Promote more communicative and collaborative environments
- Increase opportunities for employees to contribute to decisions about practices within the workplace;
- Develop systems and structures that support learning; and

- Establish partnerships and associations with external stakeholders and other partners to increase learning opportunities and introduce new ideas (Johnston and Hawke 2002, in Dawe 2003)

NCVER (2003) identifies other features that are important in learning cultures such as: the role of the workplace trainer in initiating and supporting different types of learning, the role of informal learning to enhance performance, and the importance of fostering generic skills.

Providing Support in the Workplace

Montague and Hopkins (2002) report that enterprises believe that support services have an important impact on their success in learning and in enabling them to overcome obstacles to learning. Support services provided in the workplace can vary greatly in their focus, from personal to academic, by individual or group, formal or informal, structured or flexible. The learner's needs will determine the type of support required, however Montague and Hopkins identify some barriers to providing support in the workplace which can also influence it, including:

- Initial development of workplace trainers does not include much guidance on providing support ;
- Management may lack support skills and the opportunity to gain them support skills;
- Limited training opportunities aimed at providing support in the workplace;
- Enterprises need to create learning environments and a support infrastructure;
- Action needs to happen at the learner level to receive practical support to access, undertake, and complete training; and
- Specialist providers may need to be brought in, to ensure support received is effective.

Much of the research in this area seems to focus primarily on the support needs of the trainee. However, the employer also often requires support in order to provide an effective learning environment. The purpose of ITOs providing support services to enterprises is to assist the employer to ensure that trainees achieve their learning goals. This support all contributes to establishing or building on a learning culture in the workplace. This is essential for an enterprise that fosters training and supported learning in the workplace.

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