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**WAS IT WORTH IT?**

**EVALUATING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WHO  
UNDERTOOK THE DIPLOMA IN SUPPORTED  
EMPLOYMENT.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment for the degree of  
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# WAS IT WORTH IT? EVALUATING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WHO UNDERTOOK THE DIPLOMA IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis evaluates self-reported outcomes from 12 students who enrolled in the Diploma in Supported Employment during the three intakes funded by the Ministry of Social Development (2001-2002). It explores how the content and delivery of the diploma have met student needs and expectations, and assisted them in their practice as supported employment practitioners. The research is conducted within the environment of disability and the vocational rehabilitation sector of New Zealand, where the focus of endeavour is assisting disabled people with their employment aspirations. The sector is predominantly funded through contribution from central government and is in the process of a paradigm shift.

Research indicates that the vocational sector has traditionally operated on the individual or medical understanding of disability, which equates disability with impairment and characterises it as some unfortunate or catastrophic, chance occurrence that has befallen the individual. The emerging paradigm is that disability is socially constructed, having its roots in critical social theory. Supported employment is in keeping with the new paradigm shift and has become a major government strategy in supporting disabled people.

The Diploma in Supported Employment was originally conceived as a way to provide the necessary skills to a largely untrained workforce. Its delivery was the first ever attempt at coordinated training across this sector. The Ministry of Social Development, to further their policy objectives, supported existing vocational sector staff to enrol. The thesis therefore represents a timely and pertinent evaluation of the effectiveness of the Diploma in Supported Employment and will assist future planning for work force development in the vocational sector. A qualitative methodology is employed to explore students' lived reality through six individual interviews and a focus group of an additional six past students. The analysis privileges the student voice and key factors that support the student to complete the qualification and to apply their new knowledge in their work are identified. This project has potential public policy implications and makes recommendations for future practice and research.

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## CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of tables and figures</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Background to study.....	1
Significance of study.....	2
Aims and objectives of the study.....	3
Summary.....	5
<b>Chapter 2 – Disability, Employment and Government Policy</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Language.....	7
Disability.....	9
Supported employment.....	16
New Zealand vocational services policy.....	21
The need for trained staff.....	30
Summary.....	32
<b>Chapter 3 – Open and distance education and learning</b> .....	<b>33</b>
Distance education.....	33
Delivery methods in distance education.....	35
Open and distance learning.....	37
Theories of distance education.....	37
General theories of learning.....	39
Metacognition.....	44
Supporting distance learners.....	45
Summary.....	48
<b>Chapter 4 – Methodology</b> .....	<b>49</b>
Methodological approach.....	49
Evaluation.....	51
Evaluation design.....	53
Interviews.....	53
Focus groups.....	55
Reliability and validity.....	56

The sample.....	57
Ethics.....	59
Analysis.....	60
<b>Chapter 5 – Theoretical basis for analysis.....</b>	<b>63</b>
The critical/ political model of disability.....	63
Learning theory.....	65
Knowles’ theory of andragogy.....	66
Argryis and Schön’s action learning.....	72
<b>Chapter 6 – Factors outside the Diploma in Supported Employment that contributed to the studying experience.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Introduction.....	75
Background.....	75
Student demographics.....	79
Reasons for enrolling.....	81
Summary.....	85
Employer support.....	85
Summary.....	89
Work-study fit.....	90
Summary.....	93
Personal commitments.....	93
Summary.....	95
Personal organisation.....	95
Summary.....	99
Previous study experience.....	99
Summary.....	104
Chapter summary.....	104
<b>Chapter 7 – Factors relating to the course that contributed to the studying Experience.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Introduction.....	105
The learning facilitator.....	105
Running the study group meetings.....	108
Support outside the study group meetings.....	111
Summary.....	114

The study group meeting.....	115
Timing and location of meeting.....	117
Summary.....	120
Interactions with other students.....	120
Summary.....	123
Course content and delivery.....	123
Study guides.....	124
Summary.....	128
Assessment process.....	129
The practicum.....	134
Summary.....	138
Chapter summary.....	139
<b>Chapter 8 – Personal and professional effects, and policy implications from the</b>	
<b>Diploma in Supported Employment: students’ view and researcher’s view... 141</b>	
Introduction.....	141
The students’ analysis of personal and professional effects.....	141
Personal learning.....	142
Personal performance.....	144
Personal satisfaction.....	145
Professional and agency effects.....	146
Summary.....	148
Policy implications from the research.....	148
Supported employment as government policy.....	149
Government investment in the vocational sector.....	153
Contest between supported employment and community placement.....	156
Training and skills development in the vocational sector.....	157
Summary.....	158
Chapter summary.....	159
<b>Chapter 9 – Conclusions and recommendations..... 161</b>	
Factors within the students’ environment that affected their study.....	161
Factors relating to the course process that affected students’ study experience.....	164
Interpersonal aspects of the course.....	164
Material provided as part of the course delivery.....	166
The course content and delivery.....	166

Policy issues.....	167
Summary.....	169
Recommendations.....	169
Future research.....	171
Afterthought.....	171
<b>References.....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>189</b>
Appendix A – Individual stories from the interviews.....	189
Story 1.....	189
Story 2.....	190
Story 3.....	191
Story 4.....	192
Story 5.....	192
Appendix B – Letter sent to individuals requesting their involvement in an interview.....	194
Appendix C – Individual interview information sheet.....	196
Appendix D – Semi-structured interview schedule.....	198
Appendix E – Letter sent to individuals requesting their involvement in a focus group.....	199
Appendix F – Focus group information sheet.....	201
Appendix G – Sample of information from a study guide.....	203
Appendix H – Sample of an assessment task.....	205

## List of Tables and Figures

Table 1 – Student ethnicity.....	79
Table 2 – Student gender.....	79
Table 3 – Student age at enrolment.....	80
Table 4 – Highest secondary qualification gained by students.....	80
Figure 1 – Andragogy in Practice.....	71
Figure 2 – The entwined koru.....	168

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Human service provision requires a workforce that has a range of skills and capabilities to perform the many and varied functions now required and this is particularly true of those who work to assist disabled people find employment (Kendrick, 2000; Reid & Bray, 1997; Rogan & Held, 1999). This introductory chapter introduces the concept of supported employment and positions it within the disability support sector of the broader category of endeavour known as human services. It provides a brief framing and background to the study to contextualise it. The chapter then describes the significance of the study and enumerates the aims and objectives of the research. It finishes by providing an outline of the ensuing chapters of the thesis.

Within the broad field of human services, which ranges from care of the elderly, to deaf interpreters, to respite provision, resides a small grouping of organisations that focus on supporting disabled people into 'regular' employment. The work they do is so alien to the normal work of human services that in the above sentence the word 'regular' had to be added to avoid potential misunderstanding from any who read this and who have a history in human services. What this small grouping of organisations engages in is a service known as supported employment. The reason their work is so alien to traditional service provision is that it intersects with the very genesis of the concept of disability (Connors, 1985; Oliver, 1990; Jolly, 2000). The service challenges many long held views about the inclusion of disabled people into full participation in their communities by assuming disabled people have the ability for direct entry into the labour market (Bennie, 1991). Staff involved in the delivery of supported employment need to develop a whole skill set foreign to typical human service workers. Instead of providing 'care' in generally segregated and very regulated environments, these staff have to deal with business people and translate social objectives into commercial outcomes. To assist in the required staff development, in 1999 the Association for Supported Employment in New Zealand (ASENZ) initiated the development of the Diploma in Supported Employment.

### **Background to Study**

Supported employment sits within a sector known as the 'vocational sector' of disability support. The vocational sector is in the process of a paradigm change where disabled

people themselves are challenging the traditional definition of disability. The traditional view of disability is known as the individual model or medical model and essentially equates disability and any disadvantage relating to it, to the impairment the individual has (Sullivan, 1998; Bennie, 1998; Mercer, 2002). The model of disability that is challenging this previously held view is commonly known as the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990; Finkelstein, 2001b). The social model essentially claims disabled people are disadvantaged by the way society is constructed and are therefore an oppressed minority (Finkelstein, 2001; NZDS, 2001). The potential paradigm shift has resulted in a contested definition of disability where both operate as competing explanations (Hedlund, 2000). The reason the definition of disability is important is that each explanation provides a different analysis about what the 'problem' is and indicates different solutions.

The vocational sector has grown up, like many other forms of voluntary service provision, with some limited support from the state (Harrison, 1998). Over the years, despite the state becoming more prescriptive in what it wanted, the sector has had very little government investment made in it. In particular there has been no coordinated policy developed for training and developing staff. What training that has occurred has been at the instigation of the sector and funded out of the little resources available. This changed in 2001 when the Department of Work and Income decided to respond to the sector demands by offering 200 people free places on the Diploma in Supported Employment over three intakes. This thesis explores the outcome for students who were sponsored to enrol in the diploma. It considers how the delivery of the diploma met student learning expectations, how it affected their practice and what policy implication arise.

The author writes from the perspective of 19 years association with supported employment. During that time I have been part of the small group of people who established ASENZ, who lobbied for changes to government policy, assisted with the development of the Diploma in Supported Employment, and most recently have been employed as the course coordinator for that qualification. It was this involvement in supported employment and in training new staff that prompted the current Master's study as a means of professional development and as a way to evaluate and develop the Diploma in Supported Employment.

### **Significance of the Study**

Supported employment, as with other human services endeavours, is labour intensive. It is through people that services are provided. Therefore whatever core beliefs, understandings,

theories and assumptions these people have, and whatever skills they bring to the job, will significantly determine the character and quality of service produced (Kendrick, 2000). Inside many bureaucracies this view may not be accepted. A more technocratic viewpoint will often see people in human service roles are largely interchangeable. However the consistent reports from people who receive services is that the person they deal with directly is the most important person to them (Fratangelo, Olney & Lehr, 2001; Kendrick, 2000; Milner et al, 2004). The creation of a real relationship with support staff has been noted as one of the most powerful ways disabled people can ensure quality of service and ensure they have a voice (MacArthur, 2003). If one accepts this argument then staff training and development is critical to service quality. Yet there is still no public policy on workforce development in the vocational sector.

This thesis provides an evaluation of the first coordinated training undertaken within the vocational sector and as such represents a significant step towards providing information that may inform future policy development. Not only is the content of the Diploma in Supported Employment and the efficacy of that information considered, but also the process of delivering the diploma through a supported distance education model is reviewed. The notion of using distance education within human services is not new but extensive searches of the literature failed to find any prior studies of the medium in relation to supported employment. As such this current research begins a line of enquiry in the critical area of staff development within supported employment.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The intention of this study is to explore the experiences of students who were funded by the Department of Work and Income, latterly within the Ministry of Social Development, to enrol in the Diploma in Supported Employment. The study considers how the content and delivery mechanisms met the students' needs and expectations. It examines how studying the diploma affects their practice within supported employment. By using student experience the policy context within which the diploma is delivered, is investigated to review areas that support student learning and areas of conflict. The purpose of the study is to consider if the effort of committing to this formal qualification was indeed worth it and suggest possible ways forward for staff development in the sector, and specifically within supported employment.

To accomplish the above tasks the first step was to review the broader context of the training in the areas of disability, vocational policy, learning theory and distance education. The thesis requires a broad range of topics to be reviewed as it explores the intersection between staff distance education and current vocational arrangements for disabled people. To cover this range, the material is divided into two chapters with related information reviewed included in each. The first - chapter two - begins this task with a discussion of disability, supported employment and government policy for vocational services. The debate surrounding the definition of disability is outlined and the position adopted by this research is framed. Subsequently there is a review of supported employment, its development and a definition that will inform further analysis. After the review on supported employment is a survey of government policy as it relates to the disability support services known as vocational services in New Zealand. Finally there is a brief discussion about the importance of staff development for supported employment.

Chapter three reviews literature relating to distance education and learning theory. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the delivery methodology used for the Diploma in Supported Employment and to provide a theoretical platform to consider how students learn. This chapter considers the development of distance education, reviews some of the major theories and notes the debate about delivery methods. Within the discussion on learning theory, processes are explored that assist people to learn and, particularly those that assist distance learners.

The research methodology and the methods used in this study are outlined in chapter four. This chapter considers the efficacy of the techniques used, the ethical framework and summarises the approach to analysis. Chapter five, the theory chapter, draws out some of the theoretical position touched upon in the literature review. These theories form a theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis. The subsequent three chapters provide a discussion and analysis of the results of the study. The first of these three chapters, chapter six, considers those themes that came from the research that related to factors external to the Diploma in Supported Employment. Chapter seven considers themes that participants identified that directly related to the content and delivery of the diploma. The final chapter in this section, chapter eight, considers some of the outcomes participants reported from studying the Diploma in Supported Employment. It also examines policy implications raised by the study. When participants were relating the benefit of the Diploma in Supported Employment for them, most of them used a positive story about a person whom they assisted into employment. These positive stories were too large to use in the main text,

but have been included in an appendix as they provide a useful record of the application of learning.

Finally the thesis closes with conclusions and recommendations regarding the delivery of the Diploma in Supported Employment and for future supported employment workforce development. Suggestions are made about future investments in this area and also for future research.

### **Summary**

This research provides a timely and unique evaluation of the only current sector-specific training offered for those engaged in vocational support of disabled people. The study highlights specific areas that relate to the content, delivery methodology, and the study contexts within which students operate. Recommendations for future training and policy development are made that assist to move the sector into a closer alignment with the New Zealand Disability Strategy.



## **Chapter 2**

### **DISABILITY, EMPLOYMENT AND GOVERNMENT POLICY**

The literature review has been divided into two chapters to contextualise factors integral to the study. This first chapter reviews relevant literature on supported employment to frame the context in which the Diploma in Supported Employment was developed and in which it still operates. There are three parts to this. Firstly, there is a brief description of the term 'disability' and in particular the way it is defined in the Diploma in Supported Employment and in this thesis. Secondly, there is a section defining supported employment and briefly outlining its origins. Thirdly, there is a consideration of how supported employment fits into the overall vocational policy of New Zealand for disabled people. The second part of the literature review – chapter 3 – focuses on processes for distance education, learning theory and student support. It does this because during the time of this study, the Diploma in Supported Employment was delivered as a distance education course to adult students. In order to adequately canvass the literature chapter 3 is divided into sections covering areas relating to the processes of distance education, the way adult students learn at a distance, and processes that support that learning. These combine to inform the discussion about the perspective of the adult learners who made up the students enrolled on the Diploma in Supported Employment.

#### **Language**

Before going further it is important to provide some clarification of some of the terms that will be used. Language is not only the way we transmit ideas, but it is the means by which concepts are created (Freire, 1994). Words can mean different things to different people. These differences depend on the individual's culture, gender, religious beliefs, values and experience. The different meaning words can have is often not recognised, yet these same words can create the reality of which we speak (Foucault, 1977; Derrida in Caputo, 1997). If we understand a word to mean a certain thing then we will act with this as our reality. So, our understanding of a word or concept such as 'disability' will ultimately determine how we see the "problem" of disability, and what we do about it. In the context of this study this means, our concept of disability will predict the nature of the support we offer. With this in mind, there follows a brief definition of some of the terms that will be used in this thesis.

When reference is made to people with impairments that may reduce, alter or inhibit a particular physical, physiological or psychological function, the term “disabled people” or “people who experience disability” will be used. These two terms will be used interchangeably. I use the term “disabled people” in the sense that Finkelstein (2001a) used the term when he quoted from the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS): “Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society” (Finkelstein, 2001a: 1). The same political understanding of disability is reflected in The New Zealand Disability Strategy:

“Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have” (NZDS, 2001:7).

The term “disabled people” was the term of choice, after extensive consultation and debate, for the New Zealand Disability Strategy. It appeared for a time as if this matter had at last been settled. However, within a few months of the release of the NZDS, the Minister of Disability Issues, due to lobbying from “people with disabilities” had decided to no longer use the term “disabled people” but to instead retain the more commonly used, and she claims, understood, term “people with disabilities” (personal conversation with Minister Ruth Dyson at the Pathways launch, 12/9/01). Certainly it is my experience that people with intellectual disability – a significant supported employment user group – prefer the term “people with disabilities.” They maintain they wish to be seen as people first, which is understandable given their years of dehumanisation in institutions and in the community. In fact the self-advocacy voice of people with intellectual disability is called “People First.” In deference to their strongly held belief, and to the equally strongly held belief of the political disability movement, I have opted for the second of the two terms I use “people who experience disability.” This term is also a preferred epithet for those who receive long-term mental health services – the other significant user group of supported employment services.

It is worth noting that not all people with impairments see disability as a political issue. Many, especially those who become disabled later in life, have been socialised to see disability in the individual, medical way. Prominent scientist, Stephen Hawkins, was

recently quoted as approving of the Human Genome project as a good way to eliminate some forms of sickness and disability. Further, he advocated actively modifying genes so that humans could become more intelligent to keep pace with the advances in computer intelligence and thereby avoid a “Terminator”-like future where machines are superior to humans. (NZ Herald, 3/9/01:1).

## **Disability**

The concept of ‘disability’ is inextricably linked with employment, as will be demonstrated soon, so an exploration of this term is required from the outset. The concept of disability is a socially constructed explanation of a way of being. It is not something that exists outside of the definition that is provided it. It is not something that is immutable, permanent or fixed, neither is it something that has always been a part of the human condition, unlike impairment. Disability as a concept came into existence during the development of mercantile capitalism of the sixteenth century. As the old feudal system of living moved towards mercantile capitalism the nature of a person’s economic contribution changed (Connors, 1985; Oliver, 1990). Instead of a “cottage industry” style of economy, workers were now expected to return a profit from their labours for their employer and then live off wages earned. Capitalism as a style of economy was more efficient than the feudal system and so quickly became dominant. In so doing it rapidly created the problem of unemployment for the first time in history. In response, the Elizabethan Poor Laws (1598-1601), among other things, institutionalised disability as a way to distinguish between the ‘deserving’ poor and the ‘undeserving’ poor. Members of the former grouping were considered to be more deserving of charity. People with physical impairments or who were ill were now legally classified as social dependants who were unemployable, unable to look after themselves and therefore required governance from the authorities (Connors, 1985).

People who did not fit the nature of the assembly line were excluded from productive activity as industrial capitalism continued to develop through the Industrial Revolution. “Once time became money...[it became]...less profitable to hire employees who work more slowly than young, able-bodied candidates” (Connors, 1985: 96). People who did not fit into this new order, which was created by and for people without impairments, were disabled, that is, not wanted. People were valued for their productive capacity which they sold in return for wages because capitalism ‘whether free market or welfare, encourages us to view people...as a commodity for sale on the labour market’ (Oliver, 1990:44). The

process of distinguishing those who were disabled was advanced in England with the Poor Law of 1834 (Jolly, 2000). The state called upon the new science of medicine to assist with the sorting of deserving and non-deserving poor, and thus industrialisation and the medicalisation of disability became inextricably linked (Taylor, 1996a). So the concept of disability came out of the reconstruction of the labour market and is intimately linked to economic activity. It is the inability to conform to the ideological notion of the working individual as a rational, utility maximizing, usually male, head of the household that is at the core of disability. However the notion of inability to work is a social invention. Until capitalism started to blossom, everybody, regardless of sickness or impairment, worked. The only people in feudal Europe who were exempt from work were the aristocrats (Connors, 1985). To be considered disabled, that is unemployable, is a relatively recent and contrived development in human society.

The discussion so far has illustrated that disability arose out of a certain set of conditions and tended to be viewed in a particular way. There are a number of authors (Bennie, 1998; Mercer, 2002; Sullivan, 1998) who suggest there are three basic models for understanding disability. These are the scientific model, sometimes called the medical model or individual model, the interpretive model, and the critical model. Each of these models are imbedded in a broader world-view and each model, by providing an explanation of disability, also provides 'solutions' to the 'problem' of disability. These models are not to be understood as necessarily sequential, that is one replaces the next, but have been applied through the years and operate as competitive understandings (Hedlund, 2000). In New Zealand today, all three models operate in society and in the vocational sector. A working understanding of each model is useful because each model or understanding will shape the nature of the service that emanates from it.

The first model is the scientific or individual model and has its roots in the rise of medical science, the puritan ethic, social Darwinism and economic rationalism. The focus of this model is that disability is an individual problem. It equates disability with impairment and characterises it as some unfortunate, or catastrophic, chance occurrence that has befallen the individual. The individual model is the most common understanding of disability and considers people with impairment in terms of deficits and functional limitations, rather than as people who are "a deprived and disadvantaged minority" (Hahn, 1989: 101). The individual model with its 'deficit' outlook has also been described as the personal tragedy theory of disability (Barnes 1992; Morris, 1991; Oliver, 1990). Because of the catastrophic occurrence that has befallen the individual, and resides with the individual, they are to be

pitied and, if possible, helped. Agencies that operate from this paradigm can conclude that prevention of disability, by any means, is of central import as are “effort[s] to approximate the state of the non-disabled majority; and dissociation, or the attempt to reduce the importance of disability on the person’s life” (Hahn, 1989: 102).

A particular framing of the individual model, which has particular relevance to the way public policy is framed, comes from ‘Social Darwinism.’ Arguments taken from Social Darwinism and similar social philosophies, often assume there is a certain inevitability to the position of people who experience disability in society. Each particular philosophy may have its own route to this conclusion, but the result is the same for people who experience disability – institutional exclusion. Social Darwinism likens free competition in human society to the animal world where the principle of “the survival of the fittest” ensures the gradual improvement of the species. Those individuals who succeed in society are meant to for the good of us all, while those who do not, should not (Velasquez & Rostankowski, 1985). Akin to Social Darwinism is the Puritan Ethic, also known today as the Protestant Work Ethic. Essentially this maintains that if one works hard then God will justly reward you with wealth and success. If one is lazy then one will also be justly rewarded with failure and poverty (Velasquez & Rostankowski, 1985). The implication is that if a person is poor, and especially if they are unemployed, then they personally are to blame and that it is not the structures in society that create their situation. These two philosophies are clearly represented in social policy and legislation which permits the discrimination against disabled people and then punishes them individually for their lack of involvement in society by relegating them to benefit regimes and social services which are funded at levels which continue this isolation.

While the scientific/medical/individual model still dominates in most spheres, the interpretive model has a dominant role in disability support services. This second model is based on functionalist sociology and social psychology, and sees society as akin to a living organism (Bennie, 1998). In the interpretive paradigm, social reality resides in the interactions between people and groups and is in a constant state of flux as these boundaries are adjusted and negotiated. When applied to disability, it views disabled people as the victims of the attitudes, misconceptions and misunderstandings of the non-disabled majority, which are rooted in ideological constructs (Gleeson, 1999). So ‘disability’ resides in the interactions between non-disabled and disabled people, and the ‘problem’ of disability is the misconceptions and attitudes held by non-disabled people. The interpretive model therefore suggests that the way to solve the ‘problem’ of disability

is to change the attitudes of the non-disabled population. The other way the interpretive model suggests the 'problem' can be solved is to change disabled people so they do not appear so deviant and are therefore less subject to discrimination. Both processes are aimed at the 'integration' of disabled people into mainstream social life, with specific interventions designed to meet this goal. An example of one strategy is publicity campaigns designed to alter public perceptions. Another example is strategies used on disabled people to train them to be, or at least appear to be, more normal.

The philosophy of 'Normalisation' is one dominant articulation of the interpretive paradigm used by many service providers. Traditionally Normalisation was used by those providing intellectual disability support services, and more recently it has extended into those providing services for people with physical disability and mental health issues. Normalisation has been defined as the "Utilization of means which are as culturally normative as possible, in order to establish and/or maintain personal behaviors and characteristics which are as outwardly normative as possible" (Wolfensberger, 1972: 28). Later on Wolfensberger redefined this as Social Role Valorization (SRV). The redefinition focuses on the endeavour to raise the perceived value of disabled people by the adoption of positive social roles. Normalisation/ SRV has at heart the notion of revalorisation by reducing difference. In other words, if only disabled people would act and look and function more like non-disabled people, then they will be accepted into society. This notion can have the effect of both reducing the individual's worth in their own and other's eyes, and of making it more difficult for disabled people to organise to fight against discrimination. Jenny Morris (1991) makes this point by quoting one of the women she interviewed:

"As Pam Evans says, 'Do we only have value, even to ourselves, in direct relation to how closely we can imitate "normal" appearance, function, belief and behaviour?'...[T]he pressures on us to aspire to be "normal" are huge – 'friends and family all conspire from the kindest and highest of intentions to ensure we make the wrong choice,' says Pam. 'Better we betray ourselves than them!'

One of the biggest obstacles to disabled people coming together to demand an end to the discrimination we face, is the way in which we feel pressure to take on the non-disabled world's judgements about ourselves. This can make it very difficult for us to associate with other disabled people" (Morris, 1991:35).

An example of one of the technologies developed in accordance with Normalisation/SRV, is 'Target Coaching.' This is specific training relating to changing a particular aspect of an individual such as a mannerism, social interactional style, way of dressing or whatever. The underlying message from this process for the individual with disability, even though this is usually carried out with the best of intentions, is often "you are not OK as you are." Carol Gray comments, in a discussion about young people with autism: "Targeted Coaching can diminish self-esteem, especially among a population that may be unaware of the good intentions of adults" (Gray, 2001:14). And even if the individual is aware of the 'good intentions' involved, how does this help? The message remains; " you need to change who you are to be acceptable to us."

Normalisation/SRV has had a hugely positive effect on services over the years by alerting people to the way perception affects outcomes. However, it has also been about assimilating disabled people into the dominant culture in much the same way Maori were expected to assimilate into Pakeha culture until recent times. In both situations the groups are minority groups who, under normalisation and New Zealand's assimilationist practices respectively, are considered better off, by the dominant group, if they are as nearly as possible the same as the dominant group. The service paradigm has been, this client group *is* different; how can this deviance be ameliorated? How can the value of this group of people, who do not have acceptable value as they are, be raised to a level where they are acceptable to the rest of society? That is the same society, incidentally, that devalued them in the first place!

The third way of understanding disability is the political/critical model. This has its roots in critical social theory, and particularly Marxism in its early expression. It views the "problem" of disability as being created through the marginalizing tendencies of competitive individualism (Bennie, 1998). The original articulations of this model were from authors such as Finkelstein and Oliver, quoted earlier, and came from a strong materialist view of society. Oliver (1990) developed the work of Vic Finkelstein, Paul Hunt and the other members of UPIAS into what became known as 'the social model of disability.' The social model views disability as society's inability to structure itself to facilitate inclusion. The New Zealand Disability Strategy, which adopted this paradigm, states its position thus:

Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the

impairments other people have. Our society is built in a way that assumes that we can all move quickly from one side of the road to the other; that we can all see signs, read directions, hear announcements, reach buttons, have the strength to open heavy doors and have stable moods and perceptions.

Although New Zealand has standards for accessibility, schools, workplaces, supermarkets, banks, movie theatres, marae, churches and houses are, in the main, designed and built by non-disabled people for non-disabled users. This is our history of disability in New Zealand.

Disability relates to the interaction between the person with the impairment and the environment. It has a lot to do with discrimination, and has a lot in common with other attitudes and behaviours such as racism and sexism that are not acceptable in our society. (NZDS, 2001:9)

One of the differences between disability and many other forms of oppression is that being disabled does involve some lack of function and can involve some discomfort or pain. There is a personal dimension to the restrictions people encounter as a result of disability that do not exist with, say, race or religion, hence in the above quote the NZDS claims disability relates to the interaction between the individual and the environment. The original articulation of the 'social model', in its attempts to challenge the prevailing medical or 'personal tragedy' models, tended to deny, or at least ignore, the reality of the personal experience of being disabled, except as it related to discrimination.

[S]ociologists of disability, with the notable exception of Jenny Morris, have failed to address the body and the question of impairment...For many people who experience disability, their impairment has medical implications which compels them to adopt certain regimes of care without which the organism will deteriorate and die. (Sullivan, 1996:4)

The denial of an organic basis to disability, noted above by Sullivan in 1996, has become a major area of discussion inside disability academic circles. There are those (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; Finkelstein, 2001b; Oliver, 2004) who maintain that the materialist view originally articulated by UPIAS, and developed in the social model by Oliver, provides sufficient insight to promote social change and to begin to construct theory. Others, while not denying the extraordinary contribution of the original social model, critique it for

various reasons. Postmodernists and poststructuralist such as Shakespeare, 1997; Corker, 1999; and Watson, 2004 comment that the materialist or Marxist thrust of the original social model ignores, or down plays, the import of cultural processes, social relations and lived experience. Feminists have also critiqued the social model for its gendered discourse and anti-experiential perspectives (Corker, 1999; Morris, 1991; Thomas, 1999 & 2004). They have argued that by ignoring the organic nature of disability, the social model is “privileging the ‘restrictions on doing’ dimensions of disability over its ‘restrictions on being’ dimensions” (Thomas & Corker, 2002).

One way the ‘restrictions on being’ affects disabled people is by what Hughes (1999) terms ‘ocularcentrism.’ Ocularcentrism is based on the notion that humans generally privilege our sense of sight above all other perceptions. One implication is that how one looks can essentially determine how one is treated and judged. Since the 1920’s the boundaries of what is considered ideal, or even acceptable, have been increasingly influenced by visual images promulgated through the visual media (Featherstone, 1983 as quoted in Sullivan 1996). The images portrayed have focused on the “body beautiful” as created through the beauty and fashion industries. In the industry’s depiction, beauty relates to a particular, and almost unattainable, ideal of form and function. It involves youth, slenderness, clear skin, uniform features, ‘correct’ proportions, energy, fluidity of movement, sexual appeal and freedom (Sullivan, 1996). The fashion industry’s idealised form is presented as not only ‘good in itself’ but is portrayed as being closely associated with ‘having a good time’. The corollary to this is, as Sullivan suggests, “that only certain types of bodies have panache, fun, are popular, enjoy life, and experience romance, luxury, and freedom” (Sullivan, 1996:53). For all people, the further one is away from the ideal, the less one is perceived as being able to take part in these highly valued states. Disability is often the antithesis of this ideal and so people are devalued because of their inability to equate to this desirable image. Jenny Morris comments, “The prejudice that we experience is often a reaction to physical difference rather than a reaction to physical limitations” (Morris, 1991:23). This translates into all spheres of life including work. Sometimes in business, a person who does not reflect the image of vitality, vigour and robustness a company is trying to project about itself, will be disadvantaged in their employment. In recent times this has become a significant problem for people who are seen as old and is most certainly a problem for disabled people.

To conclude then, disability as a social construct has its roots in the development of capitalism. There are currently competing definitions of what disability means. Each

definition has direct implications for how disabled people are treated. The actual view of disability, the way it is expressed and its definition, is directly related to the economic demands and social values of the defining society (Manion & Bersani, 1987). What is clear though is that disabled people do face discrimination in the workforce and that this is linked to barriers to education, transport, media coverage and the built environment (Crothall, 2004; Jolly, 2000). This thesis will adopt the social relational understanding as first articulated by UPIAS rather than the 'social model' outlined by Oliver (1990). This latter, though pivotal to the disability movement, is the one that is usually the subject of criticism as it equates disability with the restrictions on activity caused by social barriers (Oliver, 1996). UPIAS's definition redefined disability in such a way that the concept of 'disablism' was born and that this was in addition to restrictions caused by impairments. Disability for this study can be conceived of as having three dimensions. Firstly, there is the dimension of impairment. Secondly, the dimension of the social, political and cultural disadvantage or oppression that is experienced when interacting with the social environment, and thirdly, the dimension of identity. Disability is a characteristic of identity in the same way race or gender is, and can be dealt with prosaically or can be a source of pride (Beatson, 2004). With this understanding of disability we now move onto consider supported employment within New Zealand.

### **Supported Employment**

An early and consistent driver for supported employment is the fact that work has such a central role in people's lives in capitalist society. One of the first questions that we ask of each other when we meet is "what do you do?" How this question is answered can have an enormous import in the way we define ourselves and in the way we are defined (Beatson, 2004; Szymanski & Parker, 1996). Being employed is the most common entrée to social validity and financial independence, whereas being unemployed can easily cast the person as welfare dependant, or sometimes as a "dole bludger." In a consumer society, disposable income is a prime indicator of a person's ability to participate in that society. Employment is the typical route to disposable income and inclusion and yet, according to the 'Disability in New Zealand Survey,' two thirds of disabled people are unemployed (Beatson, 2004). Some of the importance of being included in employment for disabled people is demonstrated through studies that have concluded that disabled people in supported employment display greater social and psychological benefits than those in sheltered environments (Saloviita, 2000).

Supported employment is a concept most often implemented through a planned process aimed at assisting disabled people into employment. It grew out of the rehabilitation sector in the USA during the late 1970s in response to the philosophy of 'Normalisation,' the instructional techniques developed by Marc Gold (Gold, 1980) and through university demonstration projects such as those undertaken and described by Wehman (1981) and Bellamy, Horner & Inman (1979). Over time the experience of this new "place and train" version of vocational rehabilitation came to be recognised as providing success where previously there had been none. It also led to a reconceptualisation of the rehabilitation paradigm (Bennie, 1996). Supported employment, as this approach increasingly became called, challenged the view of getting people ready for work by assuming all disabled people have the potential for direct inclusion into regular employment (Bennie, 1991).

The early development of supported employment in the USA was focused on people who were considered too disabled to take part in traditional vocational rehabilitation, and has traditionally catered for people with intellectual disability and multiple disabilities. The motivation for this development was the inability of some disabled people with very high support needs and intellectual disability to even get accepted onto the 'lowest' rung of the vocational ladder - the day activity programmes (Saloviita, 2000; Taylor, 1996b). The conventional wisdom of the time was that from here people would move to pre-vocational programmes and then onto sheltered work. A very few may have then "graduated" into the regular labour market. Supported employment began in the heyday of Normalisation, and as such grew out of an interpretive understanding of disability.

Supported employment made its first tentative steps in New Zealand during the mid to late 1980s. It did this in spite of government policy rather than because of it. There is some dispute over the actual timing as there have always been some people who have moved from sheltered work into open employment. However, the first time that a programme was set up with 'supported employment' as its name and the basic principles to guide it, happened inside the IHC largely as a result of the advocacy of Garth Bennie. Bennie had spent the previous few years in Canada where he had first-hand experience of supported employment. On his return to New Zealand in 1985, he set about establishing it in New Zealand (Bennie, 1996b). The author was one of the first people to be appointed to these newly established positions in early 1987. So in New Zealand, it was people with intellectual disability who were the first ones for whom supported employment was used. From there it quickly moved into the mental health area so that now, in New Zealand,

unlike most other countries, these two groups are of equivalent size and dominate the movement.

Over the years there have been a number of different models of supported employment proposed such as the individual model, small businesses, enclaves and mobile work crews (Mank, Rhodes & Bellamy, 1986). As time has gone on, the underlying philosophy has settled to encompass some reasonably consistent and agreed values. In turn this has disqualified some of the earlier supported employment practices as no longer being as valid, such as disability agency owned enclaves and mobile work crews. Organisations and writers involved in supported employment have generally agreed on the following six core principles as being those that define supported employment (ASENZ 1994; Hagner & DiLeo 1993; Mcloughlin, Gamer & Callahan, 1987; Powell et al 1988; Vander Hart, 2000).

1. **Placement First.** Supported employment does not require people to meet work-readiness criteria. It is about training on the job or specific training required for a particular job (such as nurse or teacher training). This is a vital characteristic because the reality for most people in sheltered workshops and similar vocational training programmes is that they never graduate to employment. The constant focus on people's deficits masks their abilities and some of the real reasons for them not being able to take part in the workforce.
2. **Universal Eligibility.** Literally that – everyone is eligible. There is no one who can be considered "too disabled" to take part in Supported Employment. The only entry criterion is the desire to work.
3. **Ongoing Support.** The support the person receives may alter over time but it must not be time-limited. It should be flexible and available for as long as it is needed or requested. The support can take any form that enables the individual to retain their employment.
4. **Financial Remuneration.** Voluntary work and work experience can be part of the employment process but Supported Employment is concerned with ultimately achieving paid employment.
5. **Integrated Settings.** Supported Employment only occurs in mainstream settings in

the open labour market. "Open employment" and "supported employment" are, in a sense, the same thing: the latter being a process to enable the former.

6. **Career Development.** Supported Employment must promote choices to the individual by supporting them to advance in their jobs, change jobs, take part in continuing education and in anything else to further their careers.

(Adapted from Taylor, 1996a)

In New Zealand this philosophical framework has been increasingly picked up by individuals and organisations so that there are today in excess of 50 agencies providing structured supported employment programmes whereas only seven years ago, in 1994, there were as few as eight (Mannion, 1996). A good deal of this growth is directly attributable to the work of the Association for Supported Employment in New Zealand – ASENZ - and in particular, their conferences. The first of these was held in 1995 and attracted, unexpectedly, 120 delegates (ibid). Now the number is more than twice that with the 2001 conference in Auckland having over 250 delegates for some or all of the three days.

The implementation of supported employment in New Zealand has not been easy. The next section will discuss some of the difficulties, and relating policy confusion, that has arisen with government departments trying to grapple with, and fund, something that is premised on an entirely different world-view from conventional rehabilitation. This difficulty has been exacerbated by the inadequacies of funding levels, the uncertainties of an annual funding cycle (Walton & Gordon, 1996), the small size of agencies, and variable commitment by providers to some of the core principles. Despite this the movement has grown to the point that it is now recognised as a preferred option by the Minister of Employment for Vocational Rehabilitation.

Employment barriers for people with disabilities must come down

Supported employment initiatives will receive active Government support, Steve Maharey said last week...

...In the past, employment for people with disabilities has revolved around sheltered workshops. While these services play an important role there is a danger

that they can isolate people with disabilities, prevent on-going skill development and can be exploitative of the workers.

Government will provide the support people with disabilities need to participate in mainstream employment wherever possible. Partnership with voluntary sector agencies, and with people with disabilities, will be an integral part of the Government's supported employment strategy.

(Maharey Notes, 2000)

Potential users of supported employment are themselves another driver for services at the moment. Many individuals, and their families, who have come through mainstream education, increasingly see employment in the mainstream as the only acceptable outcome, in New Zealand and overseas (Hagner & DiLeo, 1993; Robinson, Bishop & Woodman, 2000; Rogan & Held, 1999). In this way supported employment has begun to move from its interpretive roots towards a more political/ critical understanding of disability. This also means that the future development of supported employment in New Zealand will require staff who are highly skilled and well trained in their craft, and who have a clear analysis of the 'problem' of disability so that their actions are directed towards emancipation rather than assimilation. Some recent research undertaken within CCS underscores these two points. Every disabled person spoken to stated that employment was extremely important to him or her, and they saw it as a critical feature of community participation. Further, having a job was of highest importance to those with more severe or multiple impairments. The major issue facing people in this study was that no one, staff or otherwise, tended to view employment as a possibility for those deemed 'too disabled' and therefore nothing was done (Milner et al, 2004). One woman commented of her experience of not being included in employment:

"I went to...a sheltered workshop where we did menial things like packing pegs...If they thought you were really good they would look for a job for you outside. They never suggested I should do this and I really wanted one...I enjoy what I do and I think I am really lucky, but I do wish I had had the opportunity to get a job. I think it is too late for me now because of my age...it is a big regret for me...I think it really stinks that I had no job." (ibid: 130).

So, supported employment is a philosophy, with a critical analysis of disability, which claims that all people have the capacity to be employed if that is their goal, and that the

place of services is to make that happen. We now move onto an exploration of the policy environment in which supported employment operates.

### **New Zealand Vocational Services Policy**

Vocational policy in New Zealand has developed alongside the need to deal with a percentage of the population who are excluded from the workforce. The nature of the exclusion has generally been understood through the filter of the medical or individual model of disability and overseas analysis and policy. This has then been reflected in the nature of the provision. For example, many sheltered workshops were initially set up in the USA, by families and philanthropists as a way of providing occupation for disabled people, who were seen as disproportionately highly represented in crime and social degradation statistics if left to their own devices (Hagner & DiLeo, 1993). In New Zealand the same phenomenon occurred although slightly later. Below is a brief history of vocational provision, which is relevant in that it provides a framework with which to interpret current developments, and it provides some understanding of the competing paradigms that exist in this arena. Before moving onto the overview of vocational policy development it is worth taking a brief detour to consider the word 'vocational.' It is interesting that this word has been chosen for what has generally been, at best, an attempt to provide occupation, and at worst a warehousing of disabled people in segregated environments. A dictionary definition of vocational is:

“1. a specified profession or trade. 2, a. a special urge or predisposition to a particular calling or career, esp. a religious one. b. such a calling or career.”

(Collins, 1993: 1304)

The above definition implies that a vocation is something an individual could aspire to and work towards. It could be seen as the pinnacle of one's working life where one's skills, talents and preferences combined in a single career one commits to over the long term. Similarly John Dewey is quoted as saying that a “vocation is any form of continuous activity which renders service to others and engages personal powers on behalf of the accomplishment of results” (Armitage et al, 1999: 17). It is difficult to relate either of the above definitions to that which is commonly referred to as 'vocational' within government policy. When applied to disabled people 'vocational' is a misnomer: it is hard to know why people would aspire to a career in a sheltered workshop or activity centre and consider it a calling. It is equally difficult to fathom how packing pegs, shredding paper or doing

macramé could seriously count as ‘engaging personal powers’ to ‘render service to others,’ especially when the choice to do these is not necessarily the disabled person’s. The more likely explanation is that this is another example of words being used to ‘detoxify’ or ‘revalorise’ an inherently devalued position.

Initially the word used for such services was ‘rehabilitation,’ and one of the first times New Zealand considered providing what was to become ‘vocational support’ to its disabled citizens, was with the return of servicemen who had been permanently injured in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Prior to this New Zealand Pakeha, along with the rest of the Western World, had largely considered disability to be a form of social degeneracy that needed to be eliminated or at least controlled. In early New Zealand (1860-1920) this view was particularly formed through the influence of the eugenics movement and through the legacy of the Pakeha pioneering history (Phillips, 1987; Sullivan, 1996). (It is worth noting that historical accounts of disabled people through this period are extremely monocultural.) Pioneer New Zealand placed a very high value on physical strength, versatility, ruggedness and independence. This reflects the fact that Pakeha New Zealand was overwhelmingly male and that the types of work they engaged in tended to demand these sorts of characteristics (Phillips, 1987). As the population grew and more of the population settled in towns, there was increasing concern about the weakening of the Anglo Saxon race that this may precipitate. It was considered likely that men could lose their virility by soft living (*ibid*) and that the whole race was threatened by the increase in social and physical defectives. The threat of this increase was in part through the reduction of the birth rate in middle class New Zealand and the perceived imbalance caused by no such reduction in other parts of the population. These eugenic inspired concerns also led to a general view of disabled people as not being valuable members of society and, more than that, that they posed a threat to society by weakening the bloodlines.

However the return of disabled servicemen severely challenged the popular wisdom of the day. These men had been overseas proving to the world that New Zealanders were indeed the cream of the Anglo Saxon race due to our pioneering and clean-aired lifestyle (Phillips, 1987). They were heroes who had brought glory to the nation in battles such as Gallipoli where the “adulation, the pride and hyperbole attached to the 8,000 New Zealanders...derived from the feeling that they had proved the manhood of their people” (*ibid*: 164). In the face of this service the nation could not completely abandon them and indeed needed to rehabilitate them due to the intense labour shortage caused by the war. The situation eventually resulted in legislation with the enactment of the Disabled Soldiers

Civil Re-establishment Act (1930). This was further developed during World War II with the Rehabilitation Act (1941). These two pieces of legislation laid the ground work for future rehabilitation and vocational services for both returned servicemen and, later, the civilian population (Bennie, 1998). The idea was rapidly growing that disabled people were able to be treated or trained to become productive members of society, or at the very least, employed in useful activity to give caregivers a break. This notion was demonstrated through the development of 'rehabilitation centres' by organisations such as the National Civilian Rehabilitation Committee, which was formed in 1954 and which later became the Rehabilitation League New Zealand Inc, and day activity centres by organisations such as the Intellectually Handicapped Children's Parents' Association in 1949, which eventually became IHC New Zealand Inc. The two philosophies of rehabilitation and providing activity developed side by side and, in time, meant that a number of these centres developed to cater for the needs of people who were not able to be 'quickly made ready' for the labour market. Instead these places attempted to mimic places of work and to shelter people from the inflexible and demanding nature of the labour market (Bennie, 1998). And so the 'sheltered workshop' came into being in New Zealand as it had overseas. In time this situation was recognised in legislation with the passing of the Disabled Persons Employment Promotion (DPEP) Act (1960). This legislation enabled sheltered workshops to be registered under the Act. This registration gave them a blanket exemption from employment related legislation such as holidays, sick leave, union representation and other minimum working conditions. More latterly it has also provided exemption from the Minimum Wages Act (1983).

The DPEP Act was an attempt to provide the legal framework for the rehabilitation of disabled people within a sheltered working environment. The effect though has been to signal to the labour market, and to the rehabilitation industry, that here is a population that is not worthy of legal coverage due to their incapacity. It has led to ever increasing assessment standards that had to be reached prior to gaining the opportunity to try out mainstream employment to the point where people were permanently in training for work. Disabled people in these settings were regularly referred to as trainees (Bennie, 1998) but without any real hope of the training leading to an open employment outcome. In 1975 the Disabled Persons Community Welfare Act was passed. This was an innovative piece of legislation which for the first time recognised the fact that disability was not just an individual problem, although this was still prominent, but that there were also environmental barriers. It provided for a raft of entitlements, many of which were focused on improving the employment possibilities of disabled people. Unfortunately, during the

neo-liberal reforms of the late 1980s and 1990s, many of these entitlements were either removed or made available on an 'assessed needs' basis through the Health and Disability Services Act (1993) and the Health Reforms (Transitional Provisions) Act (1993). In the process, any recognition of environmental barriers evaporated and the sole determinant of service provision was the individual's assessed needs/deficits.

During the same period the ACC was being established with the Accident Compensation Act (1972) and subsequent amendments. The effect of this legislation has been to create a dual system of rehabilitation. Those people who have an accident later than April 1974, are now catered for by funding from ACC. This funding is significantly higher than funding available to others with a congenital or health related impairment (Beatson, 2004). It has also remained far more focused on traditional understandings of rehabilitation. The supported employment movement has had almost no impact on the policies of ACC to date.

Despite all this activity, the actuality was that there was a very restrained investment from government up to the 1980s (Bolt & Heggie, 1982). The late 1980s though, saw a significant shift in vocational services. The developments in the USA over the previous decade were now being written about and began to influence thinking in this country. In addition, the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 had stimulated the creation of the Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA) and there was a comprehensive review by the Director General of the Department of Social Welfare into New Zealand's vocational services provision (Bennie, 1998). The former meant that there was now an organised voice for disabled people, and the latter recommended that rehabilitation should focus more strongly on employment outcomes (Bolt & Heggie, 1982). Up to this point annual reports from the Department of Social Welfare indicated that less than 10% of people progressed from sheltered workshops into employment (Robinson & Bishop, 2000).

In 1990 the government admitted that it had not taken a clear lead in vocational services up to this point. Rather they had responded to specific support requests from agencies and their primary role had been one of income support and social work services (DSW, 1990). The Department of Social Welfare undertook a review of vocational services in May 1989 and decided that "new directions" were needed (DSW, 1990). As a result the Vocational Opportunities Support Programme (VOSP) was initiated in 1990. This became the new vocational funding mechanism under the DPCW Act 1975; it replaced the existing funding programmes from 1 July 1990. VOSP's stated role focused a lot on social and attitudinal

integration through such things as recreation, leisure, training, work-experience, employment and living arrangements. The programme appeared to be driven by the Normalisation philosophy with its strong focus on providing holistic style services that assisted people to lead a “normal” life. Other key legislation and government policies which impacted on the vocational sector during this period include:

- The Minimum Wages Act (1983) which established an ‘Under-rate Worker’s Permit’ as a mechanism to pay people less than the minimum industry rate.
- The 1987 Royal Commission on Social Policy which emphasised the lack of policy and planning plus the need for consumer representation.
- The State Sector Act (1988) which saw the establishment of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) in the State sector.
- The Employment Equity Act (1990) which extended EEO into the private sector. (Repealed by the incoming National government within months of it becoming law.)
- The restructuring of the Rehabilitation League in 1990 into an employment placement agency called Workbridge.
- The 1991 restructuring of the Department of Social Welfare into three business units with the Community Funding Agency (CFA) being responsible for VOSP funding.
- The relaunch of the State employment support programme into Mainstream Supported Employment in 1991. This provides wage subsidies in the State sector and some follow on support.
- The Employment Contracts Act (1991)
- The Accident Rehabilitation and Compensation Insurance Act (1992).
- The Health and Disabilities Services Act (1993), as discussed above.
- The 1994 budget which saw the first allocation of monies specifically for supported employment, even though it was called ‘Employment Support’ and was grouped under ‘Subsidised Employment’ along with sheltered workshops.
- In 1995 the development of the Job Support programme, administered by Workbridge and providing a ‘whatever it takes’ attitude towards supporting the employment of disabled people.

(Adapted from Bennie, 1996)

In 1996 the government made a fundamental policy decision that the appropriate funding agency for disability support services should be the same agency that funds equivalent

services to the rest of the population (Lynch, 2002). This decision was no doubt partly informed by the 'from welfare to work' objective of the government. It was to lead to a significant change of thinking in policy circles as it put the future direction of vocational services out of the 'welfare' realm and into the 'employment' realm. The resulting policy change was implemented progressively. In the first year, 1997, the funding that was clearly for employment was transferred to NZES. This included the funding for 'Employment Placement' and some of the 'Employment Support' funding. There were nine contracts with provider agencies that were included in this transfer. Included in the nine was all of Workbridge funding plus other smaller agencies such as Ascent Supported Employment from Auckland (now called Workforce Supported Employment).

In 1998 further work was completed leading to more supported employment contracts being 'unbundled' and moved across to NZES. By late 1998 NZES was joined with the Community Employment Group (CEG), the Local Employment Committee (LEC), and the Income Support Service to form the Department of Work and Income (later to be branded as WINZ – Work and Income New Zealand). When this occurred, the funding that had been passed to NZES was assigned to WINZ. On 1 July 1999 all of the remaining VOSP funding, being the sheltered work, day activities, and vocational training, was transferred to WINZ. A great deal of the time required to complete this process related to the restructuring of both the New Zealand Employment Service and CFA. With regard to the latter, the decision to put all the remaining VOSP funding with WINZ was only made after the decision was made to join CFA with Children, Young Persons and Families Service (CYPFS) to create a unified funding agency CYPFA, to focus on children and family issues (Lynch, 2002).

In 1999 the Labour/Alliance government was elected. This Government was far more interested in disability issues than previous Governments and was sympathetic to the goals of supported employment. One of the Government's early moves was to establish New Zealand's first Disability Portfolio with Ruth Dyson as the Minister for Disability Issues. She was a minister outside of cabinet and, initially, did not have an administration of her own. She worked out of Ministry of Health who continue to provide much of her support but she now has policy advisors scattered around other departments that affect disability policy. Later Ruth Dyson also became Associate Minister of Social Services and Employment and was delegated vocational services as part of her brief by Steve Maharey, the Minister of Social Services and Employment. With the support of these two ministers there was an immediate improvement in the government's response. Employment

outcomes for disabled people were promoted as the way forward for the vocational sector. With this came the understanding that supported employment represented the 'state of the art' in supporting those most disadvantaged in the labour market. Two early indicators of this improvement were additional funding for supported employment in the budget for 2000/2001, and the application of ASENZ principles in Work and Income contracts with the vocational sector for the same period. More recently, supported employment was given another boost when the Department of Work and Income agreed to fund positions onto the Diploma in Supported Employment as the major part of their workforce development strategy. It is this programme that is the subject of this thesis.

The Public Health and Disability Act (2000) required that the Minister for Disability Issues produced a disability strategy. Further, the Minister was required to report on the progress of the strategy annually to Parliament. This requirement resulted in The New Zealand Disability Strategy (2001) that, in many ways, is a watershed. For the first time disabled people themselves advised government on a comprehensive plan for inclusion. Under the Strategy, government departments are expected to develop annual New Zealand Disability Strategy implementation work plans that will spell out what work they are doing to implement the Strategy. Key departments had to develop their initial implementation work plans for the period 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002. Other departments were then to be brought into this process in the 2002/03 fiscal year. Pathways to Inclusion (2001), was developed as the Department of Labour's response to the directive to have a Disability Strategy implementation plan in place. It was also a prime opportunity to review the way vocational funding was being spent, to evaluate the efficacy of the various programmes and to, finally, provide some direction for the development of future funding priorities. 'Pathways' concluded that the two goals for vocational services should be to assist disabled people to gain employment and/or to assist them to participate more fully in their communities. The government's role is more defined to assist with the funding for these objectives, and developing sector capacity.

'Pathways' has a more pragmatic approach than VOSP did. It is more in keeping with a social model – barriers exist in society, here are some things that can be done to overcome them. This is also reflected in the fact that for the first time the government acknowledges that the sector responsible for effecting many of these objectives also needs looking after. The difficulties inherent in providing an annual funding round were acknowledged. For decades community organisations were expected to operate effectively with funding contracts of one-year duration, and no guarantee as to the level of the ensuing year's

contribution. For many years during the time when CFA was the funding agency, contracts were not finalised until up to three or four months into the relevant fiscal year. In fact the Department of Work and Income moved rapidly to alter this position with multiple year contracts being offered from 2001 onwards. In addition to the difficulties encountered by short funding cycles, the other significant problem most vocational agencies encountered was, and is, with levels of funding. The historical development of vocational services was such that the government's role was never more than to provide some contributory financial assistance. As time has moved on, this role has strengthened, especially with the VOSP policy, to where government has become much more directive of services. It has however, retained the philosophy of contributory funding rather than purchasing services. This has left services very under-funded so that the development of infrastructure and capacity has been neglected in favour of direct service provision. 'Pathways' acknowledges the need to address capacity issues such as staff training, service quality and monitoring, yet reconfirms the government's intention to retain contributory funding. The fact that contributory funding is used in vocational services clearly indicates the government's true priorities in this area. By contrast, for services funded through 'Health,' the arrangements are that the service is purchased. That is, the government decides what is needed and then goes and buys those services from organisations that can provide them. It is understood that, within limits, the organisation is reimbursed for the full cost of providing that service. Even though the original history of many of these services was the government agreeing to assist with funding to community organisations that were already involved, the funding progressed from contributions to full funding. The reason for this was that these services were seen as vital to the nation. People needed to have the security of health care if they got sick. Also, the group of people being served was from the whole cross-section of New Zealand society and not just from a devalued group.

'Pathways' now forms the current Government policy and direction for vocational services. For some, 'Pathways' has gone too far by signalling the end to the status quo, for others, it hasn't gone far enough. However, despite the clear commitment to supported employment, there are also indications that most government policy treats it as the latest rehabilitation 'model' to assist disabled people find employment. As such it is placed on the so-called 'vocational continuum' where services are rated from most restrictive to least restrictive (Bennie, 1996; Saloviita, 2000; Smull & Bellamy, 1991), which has consistently placed the responsibility for employment, or the lack of, with the disabled person. The attempts to promote supported employment as a completely new way of viewing the 'problem' of unemployment amongst disabled people, have not successfully translated into

policy at this stage. In a study done to consider the effectiveness of supported employment in Finland, Saloviita (2000) found that it caused significant legitimisation concerns with established services and conventional vocational wisdom. To reduce this, services and government policy tended to redefine sheltered work as supported employment, to emphasise the non-employment benefits of sheltered workshops and to consistently refer to supported employment as a 'method' (Saloviita, 2000). In doing this supported employment was decoupled from its values base and reduced to a few professional techniques thus placing it on the vocational continuum where its application supplemented, instead of replaced, existing practices. In the UK Thornton & Lunt (1995) noted that policy development also tended to re-establish traditional philosophies in the guise of newer language: "Recent Government policy documents promoting the independence of disabled people have smuggled into the discussions notions of individual responsibility" (p. 47).

This is a remarkably similar picture to that which could be painted of supported employment in New Zealand today. In preparation for the repeal of the DPEP Act, the government strengthened its commitment to the 'Under-rate worker's permit,' which allows for the payment of wages below the minimum wage. This has now been re-branded as "The Minimum Wage Exemption Certificate" and will be available for sheltered workshops to use to potentially retain business as usual. Another policy that indicates government's lack of commitment to the paradigm supported employment represents is the way it only contracts for 'placements.' The word 'placement' implies a top down view of employment acquisition. It implies passivity on the part of the job-seeker, and it denotes a different conceptualisation of disability than that used by either supported employment or the NZDS. It perpetuates the idea that the 'job' is the outcome, rather than viewing it as the necessary vehicle towards the individualised outcomes of each job seeker. This policy makes no distinction as to the fit of the job to the person, nor is there any acknowledgement of labour place reform. Assimilation appears to be entirely acceptable in line with the earlier government policy statement of "from welfare to well-being." This has usually been interpreted as 'getting people off benefits.' So the policy environment in which supported employment operates is divided and contested. The discussion now moves from this to the need to ensure staff working in supported employment are adequately prepared for their work.

## **The Need for Trained Staff**

The challenge to those involved in supported employment now is to retain a radical understanding of both disability and supported employment inside the growing understanding of supported employment as the new establishment. The radical understandings must also be kept in the face of government policy that shapes supported employment after the image of traditional values and conceptions of disability. ASENZ and others have identified staff training as being a key strategy in pursuit of this goal. Through training intended to develop the critical thinking of practitioners, some of the policy inadequacies of government can be challenged, ameliorated, or reframed to better reflect supported employment principles and the emancipation of disabled people. Research has demonstrated that teaching the social model to support staff, and emphasising that it relates to service provision as well as to policy, translates into more informed critical analysis and better practice by support staff (Coles, 20001). It may also protect disabled people from their support staff perpetuating negative stereotypes, which has been commented upon by disabled job-seekers (Crothal, 2004).

There have been numerous calls to develop comprehensive training for supported employment personnel that focus on the particular skills they require (Bennie, 1996; Kregel & Sale, 1988; Reid & Bray, 1997). Lack of training has been identified as one of the areas that can reduce the positive impact of supported employment on disabled people and exacerbate the high staff turnover the sector experiences. Clarke (2001) noted that training and development is widely recognised as a critical component through which employee performance can be improved to better meet organisational objectives. Reid and Bray (1997) noted, in their study of people with intellectual disability in paid work, that all the people they studied required assistance with getting a job. The most successful jobs were those obtained by suitably skilled, paid staff. Never-the-less they found there was significant room for improvement in staff training so that staff's skills matched those required to assist disabled job-seekers. They commented that the future possibility of work for people with intellectual disability depended on the training staff received.

[There needs to be]...professional support staff working specifically in this area. They will need to be staff who have an extensive knowledge of employment law and regulations; who can match workers to positions and provide the necessary ongoing support...who have the skills and networks to focus on employment chances...[However, the]...frequent limitations to minimal part-time work can be

mostly attributed to staff practices that appear to be excessively concerned with avoiding any impact on state-provided income support. (Reid & Bray, 1997:95)

Rogan and Held (1999) found that there was a significant gap between the expectations of professionalism required from supported employment staff and their training, pay and conditions. This led to issues of high staff turnover and corresponding low levels of trained and experienced personnel. They also noted there were several key ingredients required by staff supporting students into work as part of the transition from school process. Two that have specific relevance to the current research are: the need for adequate and appropriate training, and the need for positive and supportive supervision. Both training and supervised practice were particular elements of the Diploma in Supported Employment and so are central to this study.

The need for training has increased for the supported employment practitioner by the expansion of knowledge in the field. Initially practitioners were only expected to 'job coach' in a way that used traditional vocational rehabilitation skills translocated into businesses. In doing so the supported employment personnel inevitably usurped the relationship between the disabled person and their employer, and caused human services practices and jargon to affect workplace culture (Hagner & DiLeo, 1993; Rogan, Hagner & Murphy, 1993). The supported employment role now requires that the practitioner act as a facilitator of 'natural' supports – those that already exist in a workplace - and to work to build a business's capacity for dealing with a diverse workforce. In addition to this more complex understanding of the role of supported employment is the focus on practitioners being generalist rather than specialists. In the original practice of supported employment, staff often held specific roles that required several practitioners to work with each disabled job-seeker at different stages of the process. By dividing up the practice it has been argued that staff can work to their natural strengths and so better support people. However specialist practice has been challenged on the basis that it tends to commodify the disabled person. In the USA the move towards generalist support represents a shift of practice (Rogan & Held, 1999) whereas in New Zealand it tended to develop in this way. The New Zealand situation was largely informed through a philosophy of supporting people throughout a process rather than compartmentalising them. It aimed to promote better relationship building with the individual, their network and with the employer (Taylor & Bennie, 1999). The current situation is that different agencies in both the USA and New Zealand operate either a specialist or generalist service, or a combination of the two, depending on how they view the relative benefits of each style

## Summary

From the discussion outlined in this chapter it can be seen that supported employment staff will operate in an arena where the definition of disability is contested; where government policy does not necessarily support the definition most closely associated with the supported employment philosophy. This thesis will work from a political/ critical understanding of disability where disability can be conceived of as having the three dimensions of impairment, disadvantage or oppression and identity. The definition, which is similar to that promoted within the Diploma in Supported Employment, remains an important first step for staff training because the definition of disability will inevitably lead to the framing of the “problem” and to the possible “solutions.” The history of vocational services in New Zealand reflects the understanding of disability as different policies are implemented to provide solutions based within the current understanding. Generally these have been informed by the individual model and have focused on getting the disabled person ready for employment.

Supported employment enters the vocational services landscape, not to offer another model, but to recreate the landscape through an entirely different analysis of “the problem.” It begins from the starting point that people are ready for a job when they say they want one. From there it is a matter of providing on-the-job training and support, and redesigning the workplace to be more inclusive, rather than merely accommodating those people who can be made to fit in. Supported employment staff therefore need, both the appropriate technical skills and a critical analysis of how disability operates in the labour market to be effective in their role. Research further indicates that unless staff have the appropriate skills, many disabled people will not be able to access and participate in the labour market. The Diploma in Supported Employment was designed specifically to provide both a philosophical framework and the requisite technical skills, to the students who undertake it.

## **Chapter 3**

### **OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION AND LEARNING**

This chapter is the second part of the literature review undertaken for this study. The Diploma in Supported Employment, during the time of the study, was delivered as a distance education course to adult students, so this chapter provides a background for this process. It canvasses literature relating to distance education - its theory and practices, learning theory, and processes for student support. The purpose of this part of the literature review is to inform the discussion about the perspective of the adult learners who made up the students enrolled on the Diploma in Supported Employment and who were the focus of this study. It provides the background to analyse what processes supported student learning and made the study worth it for them.

#### **Distance Education**

There has been increased attention paid to people actively learning and being educated throughout their lives (Foley, 2004; Knapper & Cropley, 2000). In part this has been stimulated by the changing nature of the labour market where people rarely have jobs for life, and frequently have more than one career or occupation. Increasingly people are choosing to, or being forced to, change the direction of their careers (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999). Accompanying such a change there is often the necessity for additional learning, and sometimes, formal education. Sometimes the need to retrain is promoted by politicians and others with slogans such as 'life-long learning,' 'the learning society,' and 'the learning organisation.' In doing so a situation that for many is a necessity becomes a 'societal good' and it tends to align such learning and education with the needs of the economy (Armitage et al, 1999). This view can be reinforced by the 'market' language that is sometimes applied to distance education, such as 'customer care' for student support (Simpson, 2002). Regardless of the purpose or the rhetoric, there has been huge growth in the area, also fuelled by the explosive growth of communication technologies. These have provided enormous scope for institutions to make information available in more and more accessible formats and in more cost effective ways.

It is in this context that distance education has flourished in recent years. The ability of distance education to afford people flexible and focused study while they retain employment and other commitments has proven to be highly desirable to many (Rogers,

2001; Sutherland, 1998). It has enabled many people to re-engage in formal education when their life circumstances may have otherwise precluded it if only face-to-face delivery was on offer. This certainly seemed to be the case for those who undertook the Diploma in Supported Employment. In New Zealand, supported employment agencies tend to be small and scattered across the country. Because of the spread out nature of agencies a distance mode of education was considered more workable than a face-to-face course. It meant it could be more easily accessed while people continued to work in their own location.

However, despite the growth in distance education and with the plethora of books and journals published on the topic, there is still some debate as to the exact definition of what open or distance education, and open or distance learning actually are. What is clear is the literature supports a separation between education and learning, even though in some contexts they are used synonymously (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 1998; Peters, 1998). The lack of precision around terminology can cause confusion. In the context of this study there will be a conceptual separation between 'learning' and 'education' to avoid the potential for confusion. 'Education' is narrower in scope than 'learning,' and can be considered a specialised form of learning, as it describes just those situations that involve formal systems designed to encourage learning. The next section will explore some of the literature on distance education before the discussion moves on to distance learning.

One of the difficulties in providing a definition for distance education that is generally accepted has been the huge diversity of delivery methods by an enormous number of very different institutions (Kaye, 1988 in Santos 1999; Verduin & Clark, 1991). Two parts of the definition that are not contested are that distance education is usually defined as organised study where there is a physical separation between the tutors and the students, and the students are not under continuous supervision (Coe & Elliott, 1999; Hutton, 1998; Petracchi, 2000). In its simplest, and most traditional, form it can be defined as a process that adds knowledge from the institution in the form of teaching material, to the student who in turn absorbs the knowledge and is assessed as to their success. However, the more current models include some form of student support into the equation and are informed by learning theory (Simpson, 2002).

The nature of the student support has become a point of difference between definitions of distance education. Competing definitions attend to different features of student support based on what their authors consider important or which have, in the past, distinguished distance education from face-to-face teaching (Peters, 1998; Santos, 1999). One important

difference between distance education and face-to-face education generally referred to now is the nature of the communication that enables the teaching/ learning processes to occur without face-to-face contact. The focus is generally on both the two-way nature of the communication and the technology used to mediate that communication. In most recent definitions the elements of geographical separation and communication style are present (Coe & Elliott, 1999; Hutton, 1998; Petracchi, 2000). Otto Peters notes that there are other fundamental differences between face-to-face and distance education, such as the teaching tends to be 'written' as opposed to 'verbal,' and the student is involved in 'reading' as opposed to 'listening' (Peters, 1998). One of the most recent definitions, which incorporates most of these features states that distance education is: "institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors" (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2003:28).

Distance education is also referred to as 'open learning' in the literature, or even 'open and distance education.' While many appear to use these terms interchangeably, some argue that there is an important separation between the concepts of 'distance' and 'open.' 'Distance' relates to the interactions between the student and the course or tutor based on the physical separation between them, whereas 'open' refers to institutional features such as flexibility about time, place and entry to study. Some theorists argue that these 'open' features could be offered within traditional face-to-face contexts as readily as they are within distance education. This has led them to conclude that distance education is a subset of open learning (Hutton, 1998; Simpson, 2002). For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'distance education' will be used when referring to features of the organised course, as opposed to student learning.

### **Delivery Methods in Distance Education**

Historically distance education has evolved from correspondence education (Petracchi, 2000). The two earliest recorded examples of distance education are: an advertisement in Sweden in 1833 for "Composition through the medium of the Post" (Simonson et al, 2003: 32), and in 1840 Isaac Pitman commenced teaching shorthand by correspondence via the newly established penny post in England. By the end of that century there were others also offering correspondence education and, as with today for paper-based courses, the relative success of these early endeavours relied considerably on the efficiency of the postal service (Simonson et al, 2003; Verduin & Clark, 1991). Since that time there has been

considerable growth in distance education and the media used to deliver it. D. Randy Garrison, “the Canadian distance-education expert” (Peters, 1998:10) identified three generations of distance education based largely on advances of technology. The first generation is characterised by printed material, independent research, personal communications within university hours, and the use of audio and visual media. The second generation involved various forms of teleconferencing, and the third was heralded in with the use of personal computers and the associated software (Garrison, 1993). These three generations are not solely about changes in technology but also reflect changing conceptualisations of distance education. The generations are not sequential in the sense that one replaces the former, but each one adds to the previous generation. The earlier generations continue to operate, and be useful, alongside or in conjunction with the latter generations. Some theorists such as Holmberg (1995) argue that the newer technologies significantly enhance distance education, especially through the use of electronic databases, the internet and electronic mail. Holmberg argues that these speed up research, provide up-to-date information and reduce the correspondence inertia that can occur between the teacher and the student. Other theorists such as Brown and Brown (1994) maintain that newer technologies are not necessarily superior to their predecessors. They consider that it is the mix between the various technologies that will provide the best result for any particular situation.

Maushak and Ellis (2003) noted that there is a considerable body of research looking specifically at how the delivery media affects student outcomes. They quote Clark (1983) who, based on “hundreds of media comparison studies”(p. 131), states, “the best current evidence is that media are mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievements any more than the truck that delivers our groceries causes changes in the nutrition” (p. 131). More recently this same result has been observed by Russell who in 1999 published an annotated bibliography citing “355 research reports, summaries, and papers” (Maushak & Ellis, 2003:131), from 1928 to 1998 which concludes that there is no significant difference in achievement based on the delivery methods. This has become known as ‘the no significant difference phenomenon’. Russell is quoted as saying: “no matter how it is produced, how it is delivered, whether or not it is interactive, low-tech, or high-tech students learn equally well with each technology and learn as well as their on-campus, face-to-face counterparts” (Russell, 1999, in Maushak & Ellis, 2003: 132). Maushak and Ellis conclude that while ‘the no significant difference phenomenon’ has held true very consistently with regard to achievement, these studies have not looked at other factors such as student satisfaction.

## **Open and Distance Learning**

The above discussion noted that the literature distinguishes between 'learning' and 'education,' even if this is not applied consistently. The following two sections will provide a brief review of theories of distance education and then general theories of learning. The latter will form the basis for the theoretical position adopted for the analysis of data from the research for this thesis. Earlier it was noted that there is a conceptual distinction between 'open' and 'distance,' however as the literature generally places these two concepts together with the phrase 'open and distance learning' (ODL) this thesis will retain that convention for general discussion. Parenthetically, in New Zealand ODL tends to get used with education based out of polytechnics or universities; otherwise the term that has usually been applied to the post-compulsory sector is 'Adult and Community Education (ACE)' or sometimes 'Adult and Continuing Education' (Benseman, Findsen & Scott, 1996).

### **Theories of Distance Education.**

Before proceeding with a brief discussion of some of the theoretical conceptualisations of learning within distance education or ODL, it is important to note that there has been some debate as to whether or not ODL constitutes a discipline in its own right. Some theorists such as Holmberg (1989), Peters (1998) and Moore (1993) argue that it is, whereas others such as Garrison (1993) and Keegan (1990) claim it is a subset or field within general education, with only the delivery media being different. Simpson (2002) states that the debate on the status of distance education is still current and that this debate is a prerequisite to discussion of theories of ODL. He also notes that:

"Hilary Perraton (1987)... maintains that attempts to define a single theory of distance education are naïve and that it is necessary to see distance education as a system of three interrelated elements: teaching, administration and assessment. Each element will require a slightly different approach to the development of theory – teaching from existing theory, administration in generalizations drawn from practice, and assessment from value judgements about quality" (Simpson, 2002:187).

Three influential and early theories are those of Otto Peters, Michael Moore and Borje Holmberg. These will be briefly outlined before moving on to a discussion of the more recent conceptualisations of equivalency theory and constructivism. Beginning in the

1960s, Otto Peters proposed one of the earliest theoretical formulations for distance education. He developed the view of distance education as an industrialised form of education that mirrored the industrialised production of goods or products. Distance education allowed for the mass production of educational material where the various teaching functions were available to be divided into specialist areas. He contended that the success of distance education was based on its compatibility with the industrial society, and further reasoned that distance education would need to evolve to meet the more individualised needs of the post-industrial society that now exists (Amundsen, 1993; Peters, 1998; Simonson et al, 2003).

The second of these three theorists is Michael Moore, who developed his theory of 'independent study' during the 1970s. He maintained that while distance education was education, it was the two key dimensions of transactional distance and learner autonomy that make it stand apart. The first part of his theory – transactional distance – relates to the distance between the learner and teacher. It has two variables: structure and dialogue. Structure refers to the programme's responsiveness to the learner's individual needs, and dialogue refers to how the teacher and learner interact. He hypothesised that the greater the transactional distance the greater the level of autonomy required of the student (Amundsen, 1993, Simonson et al, 2003).

The third theorist mentioned above is Borje Holmberg who also began his work in the 1970s. His theory differs from the above two in that he does not focus on the structure of the distance education, but limits his analysis to the nature of the interaction of the teaching process. His theory is called the 'guided didactic conversation' and he coined the phrase 'non-contiguous communication' to describe the type of communication that occurs when there is a geographical and/ or temporal distance between the teacher and learner. His theory maintains that distance education must establish a personal relationship with the learner as a prerequisite to learner motivation, learning pleasure, and therefore engagement. "Central to the learning and teaching in distance education are personal relations, study pleasure, and empathy between students and those representing the supporting organisation" (Holmberg, 1989: 162 – underlining in the original). He later broadened his theory to include concepts such as students' freedom of choice of time and place, and student independence and control.

These early attempts at theory formation focused on learner autonomy, independence, the industrialised production of material, and the communication processes used in distance

education. Newer theories, such as the Equivalency Theory, state that distance education is not a distinct field of education (Simonson et al, 2003). The Equivalency Theory essentially states that, although face-to-face learners and distance learners operate in quite different environments, the responsibility of the educator is to ensure that they provide a learning experience of equivalent value. In this theory the 'learning experience' is defined as anything that promotes learning, and notes that this will be different for different learners. It is also implicit that instructional strategies and technologies are not of themselves better or worse, it is their match to the student that matters.

The social constructivist approach has more recently impacted on the theory of distance education, and to some extent is a reworking of Peters' imperative of distance education changing to meet a post-industrial age. The constructivist approach believes that the individual gives meaning to the world based on their previous knowledge and experience. When applied to distance education, this concept claims the learner actively constructs their own meaning from the material supplied, based on their prior knowledge and experience, and the teacher becomes the guide or facilitator of this process (Curry, 2001; Simonson et al, 2003). This approach is incompatible with the mass production approach Peters originally perceived, as it focuses on the customisation and construction of knowledge. It is also akin to experiential learning for an adult that begins from the point of past experience (Sutherland, 1998).

So the theoretical underpinnings of distance education continue to be contested and reviewed as the field grows, new technologies are applied, and as the social environment evolves. The next section moves on to look at some of the general theories of learning that have been applied to education and which may also apply to distance education courses such as the Diploma in Supported Employment. The review of learning theory leads towards those theories that will inform the analysis of this research. In particular those areas, such as learning and applicability, relating to what made the study worthwhile while undertaking the Diploma in Supported Employment.

### **General theories of learning**

Kolb (1984) commented that learning is a human being's primary form of adaptation to the environment and is evident in all arenas of life and activity. As such learning is a broad concept encompassing formal and non-formal learning, incidental and structured learning. There are four broad schools or strands of learning theory according to Armitage et al

(1998). These are behaviourism, gestalt theories, cognitive theories and experiential learning theories (Armitage et al, 1999; Sutherland, 1998). Each of these schools is informed by a particular paradigm that influences how learning is understood and the purpose of learning. To provide background for the purposes of considering how students on the Diploma in Supported Employment learned, the four broad schools of learning theory will be briefly considered, before moving onto more specific theories of learning.

The earliest formulation of behaviourism was by Thorndike in the 1920s, known as 'trial and error learning' (Jarvis, 2004). Since then behaviourism has come to be understood as being based on the S-R (stimulus – response) concept. In essence behaviourists posit that people learn to change their behaviour (response) by the reinforcement (stimulus) they receive. There are three basic forms of behavioural learning, or 'conditioning' (Owens, 1998). The most basic is habituation, which is essentially an organism's ability not to respond to every stimulus it is presented with. The second is the linking of a neutral stimulus with one that creates an automatic response from the organism. Over time the neutral stimulus may elicit the same automatic response. Pavlov is most famous here with his experiments on his salivating dogs. He coined the phrase 'classical conditioning' to describe this form of learning. The third, and by far most significant behavioural approach today, is that demonstrated by B.F. Skinner and called 'operant conditioning.' Skinner used rats and pigeons to demonstrate that reinforcement makes behaviour more likely to reoccur.

When used in adult learning situations, behaviourism would emphasise the need for feedback and success, especially in the early stages. The behaviourists' approach has been criticised for its propensity to argue that the only learning that has taken place is that which can be measured. However Owens (1998) argues that this is true only of methodological behaviourists. He states that radical behaviourists, of whom Skinner is a proponent, argue that there are 'private events' such as dreaming, thinking, wishing, etc where learning can occur, without it being observed. In such a case there has been a change in the probability of a change in behaviour. Despite Owens' caveat, behaviourist theories do tend to suggest that the main role of learning is behavioural change with the learner remaining relatively reactive throughout the process (Rogers, 2002).

Gestalt theories introduce the role that perception plays in learning and are rooted in gestalt psychology. 'Gestalt' means 'pattern' or 'form' in German, and gestalt theory emphasises perception in learning. It states that we see patterns as a whole, rather than as separate

learning events, as behaviourists would have it. In adult learning gestalt theory focuses on how people perceive things based on their previous knowledge and experience. This allows people to see patterns that tie the new event into past learning to create a new whole. This new whole is often described as 'insight.' "From a Gestalt perspective, learning is a complex process of interrelationships which occur as a result of engaging with a new problem in the light of previous experiences" (Armitage et al, 1999: 61).

Related to the idea of the insight learning of gestalt theory are those of cognitive theories. These focus on concepts such as understanding, reasoning, thinking, and consciousness, rather than just the observable behaviour of the behaviourists. Piaget is one of the early and best-known cognitive theorists, even though he did focus primarily on the learning of children. An important element of cognitive theory is that knowledge is constructed through interaction with the environment. Existing knowledge is assessed, modified or transformed through the acquisition of new information. This is a cognitive process which then allows the learner to apply the new state of knowledge to new situations, which in turn modify the person's knowledge, and so on. Inside this school of theorists, some have very different ideas as to how this process is best managed. Some, such as Bruner, claim that 'discovery learning,' which is managed by the learner, is the best, whereas others, such as Ausubel, argue that exposition by a teacher is the most effective way to learn (ibid).

Growing out of Piaget's theory of knowledge is the constructivism movement. Piaget is considered the founding father of constructivism even though many important members of the movement have disagreed with his stage theory (Sutherland, 1998). One of the early definitions of constructivism comes from Childs (2003). Childs defined constructivism as the learner being engaged in constructing both the knowledge gained and the strategies used to procure it (ibid). This basic definition can also be restated as the learner constructing "his own version of reality from his own unique experiences. It is this construction he then uses to deal with any new experiences in that field" (Sutherland, 1998:86).

One particular theorist who based his theory development on constructivism is Mezirow (1998). Mezirow proposes the concept of 'transformation theory.' He defines this as a learning theory grounded in the concept that all learning requires interpretation. People create meaning from new situations based on prior experience, and perceptions are filtered through one's frame of reference. Learning occurs through transformations of meaning schema people derive from previous experience and is in two distinctive domains:

instrumental learning (one's ability to operate or control one's environment) and communicative learning (involving such things as values, ideals, feelings, motives, intentions, etc). He claims that transformation theory aims to assist adult educators to "seek to establish a general, abstract and idealised model that explains the generic structure, dimensions and dynamics of the learning process" (Mezirow, 1998:11). Mezirow attempts to push adult learning theory beyond the teaching/learning transaction to include such outcomes as perspective transformation (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005).

The fourth strand of adult learning comes from the humanist psychological school, which is more concerned with the process of learning than behaviourism or cognitivism. In general, humanists emphasise that learning is a total personality experience and is about individual and personal growth. The two best-known theories of experiential learning are Knowles' theory of 'Andragogy' and Kolb's theory of 'Experiential Learning.' Both of these theories have a degree of overlap with constructivism as they both are concerned with the process of learning and with using experience to construct knowledge. Andragogy as a term was coined in Europe to distinguish it from pedagogy – conventional child education - and popularised and developed by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s based on his experience of teaching in American universities. The context for the development of his theory has been pointed out as an essential weakness (Jarvis, 2004), but many still quote Knowles' andragogy as significant in theory development (Rogers, 2002; Sutherland, 1998). Knowles identified six elements in the learning process that distinguish andragogy from pedagogy. These define the differences in teaching adults as opposed to children. They are: the need to know, the learner's self-concept, the role of the learner's experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation. These six elements combine to describe how the adult learner engages in the learning process.

Kolb developed his theory of experiential learning at a similar time to Knowles' work and claims Piaget, Dewey and Lewin as the ancestors of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984). Parenthetically Knowles also acknowledges the debt his theory building owes to these three early thinkers (Knowles et al, 2005). Kolb defines learning as "*the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*" (Kolb, 1984: 38, italics in original). His definition emphasises several key elements of his theory. Firstly, that learning is focused on process rather than outcomes. Secondly, knowledge is constantly being created; it is not an objective reality to be transmitted. Thirdly, that learning recreates or transforms experience, and finally that the way knowledge is understood affects how learning is understood (ibid). Kolb described his theory in terms of

an ongoing cycle where concrete experience leads to reflective observation, which in turns leads to abstract conceptualisation and then to active experimentation, and then back to concrete experience.

As mentioned earlier, how one understands 'learning' depends upon a set of presuppositions about what is available to be learned and the purpose of learning. Marsick (2003) identifies three major paradigms that relate to understanding learning. The first is the technical paradigm that is based on logical positivism. Under this paradigm learning is about the transmission of objective knowledge and skills with the purpose of applying these to tasks and situations. Freire (1994) referred to this as the banking model of education. The second paradigm is the interpretive paradigm, which stems from phenomenology. From this perspective learning is an interactive process where educators may assist the learner interpret the meaning new situations have for them. The third paradigm is called the strategic or critical paradigm and emanates from the critical social science of Habermas. Under this paradigm learning is about mutual understanding of experience and the purpose is to critically analyse how social, historical, cultural and economic influences have shaped that meaning (Marsick, 2003).

Foley (2004) notes that the interpretive paradigm is now dominant in Western adult education with the concepts of self-directed learning and action-reflection being two of the most dominant developments from the interpretive paradigm. Both the interpretive and critical paradigms of learning move away from the traditional transmission model of teaching where information is transferred from the teacher to the student. A greater emphasis is now placed on learners actively constructing knowledge through their own interpretations, prior experience and representational schema.

Mezirow's transformation theory appears to exist within the strategic or critical paradigm and, according to Mezirow (1998), it also links with reconstructive theory. Other theories from the major stands can be informed by one or more of the three paradigms outlined above. Generally a behaviourist theory would be informed by the technical paradigm whereas the theories of Knowles and Kolb would usually be placed in the interpretist tradition. Interestingly both Knowles and Mezirow have been criticised for being too individualistic and not concerned with the social context (Knowles et al, 2005; Sutherland, 1998). In answer to such criticism, Knowles has stated that his theory of andragogy is an individual-transactional model that is clearly focused on the learner and the learning transaction, rather than the outcomes of that learning, as is the focus of critical theory

(Knowles et al, 2005). Knowles' assumptions on which andragogy rests, were intended to be flexible so they could be adapted to different situations, rather than the way they are often interpreted as applying equally to every situation (ibid). As such his theory can be used to understand the student perspective whichever paradigm is used to inform the purpose of the learning. This makes Knowles' theory of Andragogy a useful instrument to interpret students' perspectives. Andragogy will be used to do just that within this research about outcomes for students who undertook the Diploma in Supported Employment.

## **Metacognition**

The penultimate area in learning this literature review will consider is the role of metacognition in the learning process. Dart (1998) defines metacognition as the process of "thinking about thinking" [and it] refers to the knowledge and regulation learners have of their own thinking and learning" (Dart, 1998:32). Cognition is the ability to think and metacognition is the ability to be aware of and control that thinking. So metacognition refers to a learner's ability to reflect upon and control their own learning and to understand what strategies are best employed to learn in different contexts and to learn different material. According to Dart metacognition strategies are becoming more explicit in education and, because self-directed learning and experiential learning are both strategies for constructing knowledge, both require the use of metacognition.

The two main areas of metacognition are awareness and control, which are interrelated (ibid). Awareness refers to the learner's ability to self-interrogate; to do things such as place the new learning task in relation to other knowledge and to assess learning progress. Control refers to the learner's ability to plan, direct, monitor and evaluate. For any given learner, their adroitness at metacognition will vary, and the level of metacognition employed by that individual will influence their learning capacity, particularly in situations where a greater level of autonomy in learning is involved. Cynthia White (1999) found, in a comparative study between classroom learners and distance learners that "distance learners reported four times the use of metacognitive strategies compared to classroom learners" (White, 1999: 37). Of these, the commonly used skill was self-management. In order to use self-management skills, White found the learner needed to know how they learned best and considered there may be a role in distance education course for assisting students to foreground their metacognitive processes (ibid). In a similar study, Hutton (1998) also concluded that strategies should be included to assist the student to learn how to learn. The implication of this in a teaching situation such as the Diploma in Supported

Employment, is that the course of study must assist students to become aware of their own learning strategies, their planning and organisational strategies, and encourage more use of metacognition to assist the student learn at a deeper level.

### **Supporting Distance Learners**

The previous section finished by noting that processes to assist students to use metacognitive skills is one area where distance learners can be supported. In the case of developing metacognitive skills, students may move closer to the 'ideal' Knowles (1980) spoke of with his concept of a 'self-directed learner.' However, as Rogers (2002) and Armitage et al (1999) noted, the one thing that is certain about adult students is their diversity. They are different in their backgrounds, cultures, abilities, motivations, roles, reactions, expectations, learning styles and life situations. Indeed, as was the case for the Diploma in Supported Employment, it tends to attract students who have other demands on their time either through employment or other reasons, and they "tend to be particularly discerning because of the value they place on the learning experience and the potential conflicts it creates with their other commitments" (Rangecroft, Gilroy, Long & Tricker, 1999:17). Somehow these differences need to be accommodated to some extent if each individual student is to be supported, as they need to be. The following outlines some of the main areas of support identified in the literature.

One of the first areas potentially requiring support is that of adult learners' past experience of education. Very often adult students enter adult education with their attitudes, values and feelings about their learning as well as their metacognitive skills based on their experience of compulsory schooling (Evans, 1994; Rogers, 2001). At an academic level, people's experience can lead them to expect failure or expect automatic success. In addition, a lot of the experience people carry from their childhood schooling is related to matters of discipline and control. These are significant areas in the traditional education system and can continue beyond schooling (Evans, 1994). People's experience of school is particularly important when it has been negative and now operates to negate their perception of themselves as mature and autonomous (Rogers, 2001). It can also be a problem for those who enjoyed school as they may have developed the idea that learning only occurs under direct supervision of an authority figure (Knapper & Cropley, 2000). "For many learners in open and distance education, their schooling and, sometimes, their post-school experiences as adults, reflect models of education which are not consistent

with the independent learning required for their open and distance study” (Evans, 1994:67).

The emotional state of the learners is another factor that can influence people’s ability to study. It is important because “...emotions... in adult education... can either impede or motivate learning” (Dirkx, 2001: 63). How a learner reacts to the teacher and the environment can significantly assist or demotivate that learner. If they feel respected, valued and involved they are more likely to want to learn. However there is growing evidence that the learner’s emotional state does not just impact on their motivation, it has also been suggested that “emotion and feelings are deeply interrelated with perceiving and processing information from our external environments, storing and retrieving information in memory, reasoning and the embodiment of learning” (ibid: 68). A very common emotion for adult learners is anxiety (Knapper & Cropley, 2000; Rogers, 2001). Adults typically have more happening in their lives than children and may feel anxious about their ability to fit in study. They can be concerned about what they could lose socially and emotionally through failure. And they can be anxious because of previous negative experience. Unresolved anxiety has been found to inhibit people’s ability to learn. Much of the initial anxiety will dissipate regardless (Rogers, 2001), but processes should assist with any ongoing anxiety.

A third area the literature reports that can be an issue for adult students is in any challenges to well developed beliefs and values. This challenge can also take the form of a threat to one’s sense of adequacy just by enrolling in a course of study. The implicit acknowledgement can be that the student needs to learn and is therefore not competent in a particular area (Rogers, 2001). For many adults a feeling of inadequacy is less likely when the area of learning is outside that which they would usually encounter. The novelty of the situation means they cannot be expected to know the new information or skills. Conversely, the feelings of inadequacy, or the threat to the person’s sense of competence is greater when the new learning is focused in an area where they already operate.

The fourth area relates to the students expectations of the teaching methods employed. Knowles (1980) conceptualised that one of the distinguishing characteristics of adult learners compared to children learners was their desire to be self-directing. The desire to remain autonomous or self-directing can appear to be thwarted by a mismatch between delivery method and student expectations and aspirations. Some studies have indicated that students’ preference to be self-directed is compromised by a highly structured delivery

method (Chesterton, 1988; Stevenson, Sander & Naylor, 1998). They argue that it is difficult for students to develop individualised, meaningful learning when the course material and assessment tasks are firmly prescribed. Conversely, Hutton (1998) found, in a survey of ODL students, that students were not self-directed and therefore needed structure in the course delivery.

“The most significant result of this study... was the high need for structure which is the opposite of being self-directed. The expectation of distance learners is that they are independent and self-directed, yet these results indicate that a significant number of students are not” (Hutton, 1998: 24).

However Knowles et al (2005) claim that many people choose highly directed information when their goal is to learn about a subject they know little about or when they have a need for speed, convenience or it suits their learning style. They comment that selecting, or submitting to, a highly directed learning context does not automatically preclude the notion of self-direction. There are two basic concepts for self-direction that are often confused or not separated conceptually. The first is that relating to the student controlling the mechanics and techniques of self-teaching. In this concept the individual completes the study independently and is the most obvious style of self-direction. The second concept relates to taking control and ownership over the goals and purposes of the learning. In this concept it is entirely consistent for the person to select a highly directed course of study and in no way indicates the relinquishment of autonomy. The key for any course is the match between what is offered and what the individual student wants or needs (Knowles et al, 2005). Matching what any individual student needs highlights again the contextual nature of the learning. Learning happens within the context of a person’s life (Fenwick & Tennant, 2004). In any situation, and particularly in applied situations, the learning is not just something that happens in the head but is shaped by the context, the culture and the particulars of the learning situation (Hansman, 2001). Contextualising the content and skills to the learner’s real life experience is an important aspect for successful learning (Dirkx, 2001). Rangecroft et al (1999) found that despite individual differences such as background, context, gender and age there is a list of generic features that ODL students find important. By knowing these features it may be possible to design distance education in a way that meets students’ requirements and expectations. High on the list of features that they found were important for all ODL students were:

- Opportunity for flexible study
- Access to tutors

- Extent of tutorial support
- Contact with and support from other students in same field of work
- Practical relevance of course
- Up-to-date content of course
- Quality of content
- Quality and timeliness of assignment feedback (Rangecroft et al, 1999).

## **Summary**

The above chapter began by acknowledging the role in modern society for ongoing or lifelong learning. It then noted that education relates to the formal practices of an organised course of learning, whereas learning itself is a broader concept that relates to the individual. A basic definition of distance education was suggested and some of the various theories of distance education were noted, as were some of the practices of distance education. The chapter briefly considered learning theories, some of which will be considered in more detail in chapter 5, with a view to informing the analysis of the students who were the subject of this study. It was noted that there are numerous, often competitive, understandings for each of these areas and each theory is shaped by both its presuppositions and by how it views the purpose of learning. The review also surveyed some of the important supports to students for both learning in general and distance education in particular. It was noted that although adult learning is complex and highly particular to the individual and the context, within this complexity, there are some generic features and processes that the educator must be cognisant of if they are to design and deliver programmes that assist adult students to learn. In the analysis section, the Diploma in Supported Employment will be reviewed against these features.

## Chapter 4

### METHODOLOGY

*“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted”*

(Albert Einstein in Patton, 2002: 12)

This chapter describes the methodology used in this thesis and the research methods that flow from this. The chapter is organised into sections with the first describing the methodological approach and why this is appropriate for the research questions. The next section looks at some basic principles of evaluation. This is followed by the research design, methods used, sample selection, and participant profile. The last two sections consider ethical issues and the process for analysis of the results.

#### **Methodological Approach**

Methodology provides the underlying rationale or justification for the methods or procedures to be used in any research to generate valid knowledge. As such the choice of methodology is indicated by the nature of the research question and provides a philosophical underpinning of the methods used. The choice of methodology should be made explicit to allow for critical examination of the research as a whole (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). With this in mind, there follows a brief discussion of the two main methodological options and why this research has opted for one in particular.

The two pre-eminent methodological philosophies or paradigms are known as quantitative and qualitative. Over the years there has been a great deal of discussion, debate and polemic about the respective merits and status of these two approaches. Often their differing ontological and epistemological positions have appeared intractable. However this debate, which has pitted qualitative against quantitative, has often created a false polarisation of these two positions based on idealised operation (Gliner & Morgan, 2000; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991), and frequently ignores that they both have strengths and weaknesses (Dawson, 2002; Patton, 2002). Each is useful for answering particular types of questions and they can be used simultaneously in a triangulated format to gain advantage

from both. It is the basic research question dictates which methodology is the best in that situation.

Quantitative research has traditionally come from a positivist paradigm where the research begins with a hypothesis and then the research process tests its veracity. In this paradigm there is assumed to be an objective, measurable, observable reality which research seeks to uncover or quantify. It tends to see research as a neutral process, which should be free of values, politics, and researcher bias. It posits an objective methodology that will guarantee this neutrality, and it owes a lot to its genesis in the natural sciences (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Even with a more recent move toward postpositivism and logical empiricism, and the concept of coming to know reality through 'intersubjectivity' (Solomon & Draine, 2001), the basic ontological position of there being an actual true and definable social reality remains. Quantitative research is generally a deductive approach which looks to test a theory or hypothesis. It has the advantage that it uses methods that can give information about large numbers of people who thought or did something about a predetermined range issues. This information, generally collected in some numeric form, can then be easily manipulated for statistical or comparative analysis and "gives a broad, generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously" (Patton, 2002: 14).

The qualitative approach, which encompasses such things as naturalistic or phenomenological approaches (Mika, 1996), tends to be associated with a constructivist paradigm. This has the purpose of describing "a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and everchanging" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:6). This type of research tends to be inductive and allows the data to generate hypotheses and shape the theories and concepts, rather than editing them on the researcher's preconceptions. It assumes that the research is intrinsically political and value laden right from the time the choice of research area is first made (Chambers, Wedel & Rodwell, 1992). Qualitative research typically uses methods that give in-depth information with a small sample. It can be very useful at providing rich information and unearthing unexpected insights (Mika, 1996), as well as coming to understand how people have constructed meaning and made sense of their experiences and their world (Merriam, 1998). Typically qualitative research does not attempt to generalise results, indeed often considering them inevitably contextual (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). Patton (2002) argues that this makes it no less scientific, but the nature of the knowledge is insight gained from being, or observing, inside the phenomenon.

In this research the primary purpose is exploratory. Its aim is to gather the perspective of students and to evaluate the Diploma in Supported Employment and its delivery from their perspective, with the intention that it could be shaped to better meet their needs. It was therefore decided that a qualitative methodology would best suit this purpose. Using methods that are consistent with this methodology will allow for the students' lived reality to be explored. It will provide the opportunity for the student voice to become paramount and will assist in the revelation of their context. The latter is vital to understanding how people view an outcome or make sense of their experience. What one person sees as great, another may find woefully inadequate, and the reason for this is often related to context (Wadsworth, 1991).

There are some difficulties in the qualitative methodology with notions such as validity and reliability which need to be dealt with. In quantitative research, the research instruments, such as a survey form or psychometric test, and the way they are administered become the loci of validity and reliability. Does it measure what it purports to measure and is this done in such a way that the results are replicable? However in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). So "the credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (Patton, 2002: 14). For this reason it is vital in qualitative research to provide evidence that will attest to the credibility or validity of the research. This is further discussed, especially as it relates to this study, in a later section of this chapter.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation research is undertaken to clarify options, assess current status, and inform future decisions. In social services it is unashamedly values-based and proceeds from information that is deliberately contextual and partisan in nature. This could be from a wide range of stakeholders or, as in this case, from only one stakeholder group. The primary purpose of evaluation is action (Patton, 1986). Evaluation is about how well the programme is doing, it is about attending to the difference between what is and what ought to be, what was intended and what actually happened (Waa, Holibar & Spinola, 1998; Wadsworth, 1991). Evaluation does not have to be done by outside, 'non-biased' experts. It can be done by those involved.

In the last 40 years there has been exponential growth in the diversity and application of evaluation. There is now a plethora of evaluation models loosely divided into formative types and summative types. In addition there has been at least four waves or generations of evaluation theory (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). There appears to be some epistemological and ontological dispute in methodological strategy with various groupings claiming primacy (ibid). It is beyond the scope of this section to even summarise these issues let alone enter the fray, rather it is noted that from this diversity, particular approaches of evaluation can be found that are adapted for particular purposes. To make sense of this diversity, Owen & Rogers (1999) suggested a meta-model which divides the various models or approaches into 5 basic categories. This then provides a useful way to navigate through the milieu. In terms of this research, the form of evaluation best suited to answering the stated research questions is in the area of an 'impact evaluation.' These are evaluations carried out to assess the outcomes of a programme and well suited to something such as an adult education programme (Owen & Rogers, 1999). As such it is a form of summative evaluation and is sometimes used to determine whether a programme should be continued, terminated or extended (ibid).

The specific foci of this study are consistent with an impact evaluation, namely to establish people's perceptions, collect information on changes in attitude, beliefs, knowledge or behaviour, assess any unexpected positive or negative outcomes or environmental changes due to the programme and to review processes which may have had an impact on the programme's effectiveness (Mika, 1996; Waa et al, 1998). This study is conducted with the Diploma in Supported Employment programme organiser as the researcher. Rogers (2002) comments that organisers of programmes tend to evaluate "for their own learning and to plan changes" (Rogers, 2002:257). These reasons are entirely consistent with the motivation for this evaluation.

Impact evaluations study mature programmes often after the end point. In this way they can shed light on the effectiveness of the programme. They can also, in their process-outcome form, provide useful information about the extent to which the programme was implemented as intended and how this affected the results. In this sense this piece of research will be looking at what programme delivery mechanisms assisted and detracted from the students' experience, and which of these were intentionally delivered and which weren't. So this evaluation can be described as an impact evaluation with the process-outcome variant included.

## **Evaluation Design**

The evaluation design is the plan of activities or methods used in the evaluation process (Bloom, Fischer & Orme, 2003; Mika, 1996). These methods are the tools used to collect the data that will inform the evaluation and are derived from, and must be congruent with, the research methodology. This congruence with methodology is not just a matter of procedure but of intent and paradigmatic compatibility. As Gubrium and Holstein commented: “Method connotes a manner of viewing and talking about reality as much as it specifies technique and procedure” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997:5).

This evaluation will use a triangulated approach (Patton, 1990) of secondary source information, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group meeting. The benefit of this triangulated approach is that “each method implies a different line of action towards reality - and hence each will reveal different aspects of it” (Denzin, 1989: 235). By using triangulation the result will be strengthened as the vulnerabilities from each particular method will be reduced (Dawson, 2002; Denzin, 1989; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Patton, 1990). Accordingly, in this study the secondary source information has helped set the interview questions, and the themes that arose from the interviews are explored further through the focus group meeting. Parenthetically, it would have been possible to use a quantitative method of a survey to substantiate the results with a wider sample. However, this additional process was beyond the resources of this study, but remains a possibility for the future.

## **Interviews**

Interviews, particularly semi-structured interviews, are a common form of qualitative enquiry and were a central tool used in this research. They mimic, or are drawn from, one of the most basic forms of human interaction – the conversation. However the research interview is not a conversation where each person has equal power – the researcher controls the situation (Kvale, 1996).

As with other methodological forms, the information gleaned through the interview is contested. At the one extreme the positivists or objectivists would argue that the goal of the ‘perfect’ interview is to exactly capture a mirror image of reality. At the other extreme radical constructionists deny that any meaningful information can come from the interview because it is context specific and so “obviously and exclusively an interaction between the

interviewer and the interview subject in which both participants create and construct narrative versions of the social world” (Miller & Glassner, 1997:99). For practical purposes though, the interview can be viewed outside of this objectivist-constructivist continuum. One can acknowledge that it is the construction site of knowledge (Kvale, 1996) and that it reflects something of reality, or at least to the meanings people have attributed to their experience of the social world (Miller & Glassner, 1997). So, the interview is an occasion where people can relate what they have experienced and how they have categorised it (Baker, 1997). It can also provide the opportunity for reflection and fresh insights to arise. It allows the interviewee to transform their experience and knowledge into “a productive source of knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997:121) rather than the traditional, and epistemologically passive, “vessel-of-answer approach” (ibid: 117).

Patton (2002) maintains that for social research it is vital for validity, and therefore reliability, to gain an impression of the social world as it exists for those being researched. The in-depth interview is one method that has shown itself as an important process for doing this. The interview depends for its content, not just on the questions, but also on the interaction between the participants. Each interview will differ based on things such as the nature of the interaction, how the interviewer is seen by the interviewee (especially in terms of shared membership of a group), where the interviewee locates himself or herself in relation to the interview, the time and place of the interview, and what the understanding is of the use to be made of the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; King, 2001; Miller & Glassner, 1997). So building rapport is as important as is being aware of one’s own position or subjectivity in relation to the research. To assist with the building of rapport, interview schedules should begin “with general questions that are easy for people to answer, then move onto more specific or personal questions” (Waa et al, 1998:33).

During the six interviews conducted for this research three processes became evident. The first of these was that people appeared to be genuinely happy to take time to be interviewed. Even though there was nothing tangible in it for them, people were willing to be interviewed with only one person who was approached declining the opportunity. The second finding was that the process gave participants an opportunity to reflect on their experience and to draw meaning from it. A number of times participants would say, during the interview, something like “*Well I never really thought of that until now.*” This indicated that they were learning about their own experience as the interview progressed.

The third process related to the importance of the time, place and personal interaction of the interview. The procedure followed for all interviews, once the potential participant had agreed to take part, was for the researcher to phone them and set up the interview. In every situation but one, the researcher requested that the interview occurred within some very broad time frames and that the interview took place where-ever the participant chose to have it. The five that followed this procedure appeared to work well and rapport was easily established. One interview though, was more problematic. In this instance the researcher could only be available over a limited number of days, so there was less flexibility around the timing. On the scheduled date for the interview the participant was sick. Because of the timeframe involved, the interview could only be altered by two or three days, so this participant was still not well at the time of the interview. The interviewee selected a café as the location for the rescheduled meeting. Unfortunately this venue was very noisy so it became difficult to conduct the interview. The venue was moved but in the process some of the flow of the interview was lost. An additional complicating factor of this interview was that the participant was not happy with their experience of study, needed to make that clear, and had other marginally related issues they wanted to talk about. The net result was that rapport was more difficult to establish in this interview than the others, it was much more disjointed and it was harder to analyse due to the extraneous material being covered.

### **Focus Groups**

The second significant tool to be employed by this research was the focus group. The focus group is also known as a group interview (Frey & Fontana, 1993), and allows for the interviewer to have a conversation with a group of people at the same time rather than individually. This has a number of potential benefits. One of them is that focus groups can produce a lot of data much more efficiently in terms of time. They also offer a different method from individual interviews for the purposes of triangulation. In this study the focus group was conducted after the interviews. Used this way, a focus group can be very helpful in clarifying issues that came up in the analysis of the interviews (Morgan, 1997).

Because focus groups rely on the interaction between participants to produce data this can provide a valuable source of insights into complex behaviours and motivations (Morgan, 1997). This strength is not without its problems though. Group interaction rules apply and must be managed by skilful facilitation. Without good facilitation some people may dominate, other may not contribute, and a few people can shape the information too much, all of which can, potentially, influence the nature of the data produced. To overcome these

potential problems, Morgan (1997) recommends ensuring participants are aware that the function of the group is not to reach a consensus, but rather to canvass the breadth of opinion. He also recommends that people be asked to use descriptions of behaviour rather than opinions. Descriptions of what people have done are a more useful source of data, are easier to interpret, and they produce a livelier group dynamic because descriptions of behaviour are easier to discuss than challenges to another's opinion. Morgan's suggestions are aimed at keeping the focus group on track, and as Patton (2002) comments, "the power of focus groups resides in their being focused" (p. 388).

The original intention was to consider having two focus groups: one of people who had completed the diploma and one of people who had not. Unfortunately it quickly became apparent that this was going to involve people travelling some distance to get sufficient numbers in each group. The result was to run a single group comprising equal numbers of people who had completed and people who hadn't. Some interpersonal issues were considered as having an affect on this group, such as the feelings of those who had not passed when discussing issues in a group of this nature. To reduce potential difficulties, each prospective participant was informed of the makeup of the group and the function of the group, prior to them being asked if they would consider participating. As it transpired, because the group was conducted in an area where most of the participants knew each other through their work, there did not appear to be any negative outcomes of combining the groups. In fact the combination appeared to enrich the discussion and generate conclusions that may not have been possible within the original arrangement.

Two significant issues in the facilitating of the group became apparent. The first is the need for the researcher to be able to manage a free-flowing conversation and to draw agreed points and conclusion from it. The second issue was due to one of the students also being a learning facilitator in that area. When the discussion turned to learning facilitators, this person agreed to leave the group so that their presence would not potentially inhibit discussion. To keep the group flow the discussion of the learning facilitators and study group meetings was left to the end of the focus group. The particular person then rejoined the group for the closing stages.

### **Reliability and Validity**

It is important in all research to demonstrate the credibility of the research. Reliability and validity are prime ways of doing this and qualitative research is sometimes criticised for

failure to demonstrate one or other of these. Reliability refers to the replicability and consistency of the findings (Franklin & Ballan, 2001). External reliability is generally assessed by whether or not another researcher, in similar circumstances, would come to the same conclusions. Merriam (1998) argues that, in this traditional sense reliability is not appropriate in qualitative research because generalisation is not a goal. Rather results should be judged on their dependability and consistency – also called internal reliability. Potential threats to dependability will be reduced by clear statements about the research design, the researcher's theoretical perspective and role, the selection of participants and methods of analysis (Franklin & Ballan, 2001). All of which have been attended to in this research.

The second key area that affects credibility is validity. Validity refers to the accuracy of the findings, that is, did the findings relate to the research question? Reliability is a prerequisite, but not a predictor of validity (ibid). As mentioned earlier, validity is also called credibility in qualitative research, and as with reliability, it is internal validity that is most relevant. A number of ways for increasing the likelihood of validity, as well as reliability, were used in this study including purposive sampling, triangulation, reflexivity, and the use of a structured codebook for analysis.

### **The Sample**

Evaluation research is undertaken to assess current practice, clarify options, and inform future decisions. As previously noted, the information gathered is deliberately contextual and partisan in nature. It can be from feedback from all stakeholder groups or from only one group (Mika, 1996). For the Diploma in Supported Employment stakeholders include: staff, funders, administrators, participants, potential participants, potential staff, other programs or organisations seeking to collaborate, community network and referral agencies. This thesis evaluates the programme from the perspective of one stakeholder group. It will explore how the content and delivery of the diploma have met student needs, expectations and assisted them in their practice as supported employment practitioners. Students on the Diploma in Supported Employment who were interviewed in this study were all people working in the disability vocational sector funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). The MSD has funded 200 places for the diploma over four intakes. The sample for this study was chosen from students on the first three sponsored intakes. These were August 2001, February 2002, and July 2002.

Choosing a sample requires two basic decisions to be made: how will the sample be chosen and what size will it be. Both of these features are important to the reliability and validity of the study. In considering how to select the sample there are two main approaches: probability sampling and non-probability or purposive sampling (Dawson, 2002; Waa et al, 1998). Probability sampling uses such methods as random sampling or systematic sampling (for example, selecting every fifth person). It aims to allow the results to be generalised across the larger population of interest. Purposive sampling, by contrast, selects participants for certain characteristics (such as race, gender, locality, age, socio-economic, knowledge, etc) and is used when the goal is description (Dawson, 2002). The size of the sample is determined by a number of features that include time and resources. For quantitative research, where probability sampling is more likely to occur, the rule of thumb is the bigger the sample the more reliable the outcome, albeit there is a point beyond which reliability increases very little. For qualitative research where purposive sampling is more common, the sample size will usually be much smaller. It is sometimes hard to judge how large the sample should be and this is related to the point where the researcher thinks they are no longer gaining any new information (Dawson, 2002).

This study used purposive sampling as it supports the methodology of exploring students' perceptions in context. Six past students were selected using a purposive sample that included some who passed and some who withdrew from the course or who did not pass. The participants were also selected to provide for a range of disability groups (for example, intellectual disability, physical impairment, and mental health consumers) that these past students work with, to provide a geographical spread and to give some gender balance.

For the interview phase of the research, a Tautoko Services' administrative staff person, using the above methodology, selected the students. This process was used to remove any possible bias on the part of the researcher, or from anyone else who had had regular contact with the students. The other factors used in determining the sample were travel time and cost for the researcher and potential areas for the focus group. This meant that some students in more distant locations were not considered and, the two areas in the country where there were sufficient numbers of past students to run a focus group were also ruled out for the individual interview stage. Once these past students were identified, the chairman of Tautoko Services' Trust Board then wrote to them briefly outlining the nature of the study and including an information sheet (see appendix B). He asked for the students to respond within two weeks to say whether or not they were interested in having the

researcher contact them. In the letter the chairman assured potential participants that a 'yes' to having the researcher contact them did not commit them to the research.

At the end of the two-week period there were only two replies: one wishing to take part and one declining. After waiting another ten days the Tautoko Services' administrative person rang the remaining four people to check they had received the letter and confirm their answer before the chairman wrote to more people. At this stage all four accepted with one saying he had not received the original communication. This person was re-sent the letter, as was one additional person who replaced the one who had declined. The additional person confirmed their availability so the sample remained as three people who completed the diploma, three who did not, three women and three men, all from a variety of organisational backgrounds and a reasonable spread across the country.

Participant selection for the focus group followed a similar format. An area was identified where there were sufficient past students living in a single location to make up the group numbers. Each potential participant was sent a letter requesting their participation, and this was followed up with phone calls to confirm attendance details. As mentioned above, the group consisted of three people who had completed the diploma and three who had not. One person who originally accepted the invitation had to subsequently withdraw due to personal circumstances. They were replaced with another person who kept the overall balance intact.

## **Ethics**

Ethical approval was given to conduct this research by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Wgtn Protocol 04/12) and by the Universal College of Learning (UCOL) Ethics Committee – 21/4/04. The research was guided by the Massey University 'Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants' (revised 23/01/04), and followed common ethical standards to ensure the participants, institutions and the researcher were protected from harm. Key standards to protect participants were to gain informed consent, to assure people they could withdraw at any time, and to ensure anonymity. However, even with careful planning, inevitably the research process involves us in relationships and situations where ethical issues may be raised (Rountree & Laing, 1996). The context of the research, the political climate and the power differentials also define the nature of the ethical considerations (Finch, 1986). In this case one of the main areas was that the researcher was also the person who managed

the Diploma programme. This provided for potential uneasiness when the participants were discussing issues relating to course delivery, particularly if it involved personnel. In these situations it was important that participants were reminded that this was entirely confidential and distinct from the managerial arena. To further ameliorate this, no interviews were undertaken with any person who was still a student on the course, nor with anyone the researcher had had a direct teaching role with, so no advantage or disadvantage to the participant was available from any comments.

Ideally ethics in research are not just about what should be avoided but also what is aspired to (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). One of these areas that this research aspired to was reciprocity. How can the research not only benefit the researcher but also repay the favour of someone giving up his or her time? In quantitative research this is sometimes accomplished with a monetary payment (ibid). However in this research this was both inappropriate and not financially viable. In this research participants were assured that action will result from the study to improve the Diploma course and that what they offered was valuable information. Another was to allow them the space and reflective listening to explore their ideas and feeling during the interview and so come to a better understanding themselves. This is not the same as counselling but could assist with similar outcomes.

## **Analysis**

“Know, then, this:

*The complete analysis isn't.*

Analysis finally makes clear what would have been most important to study, if only we had known beforehand” (Halcolm in Patton, 2002:431.)

The purpose of the research should direct the analysis and, in evaluation research, the analysis is also guided by the original questions posed (Patton, 2002). For this study the research question relates to the experience of the students of the Diploma in Supported Employment. So, the basic analytical paradigm used, in keeping with the overall methodology, was interpretive practice. This describes the way reality for the research participant is understood, interpreted, organised and represented in the course of their everyday life and sits between the positivistic and nihilistic extremes (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). It “encourages the researcher to alternate between questions concerning *what* is going on, under *what* conditions, and *how* that is being accomplished” (ibid: 211). It encourages contextualised analysis and interpretation of data. Much of the literature on

research analysis presents this task as bringing order and structure to collected data so that it can be interpreted and conclusions created (Bloom et al, 2003; Dawson, 2002; Thyer, 2001, Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Sometimes there is the suggestion that this is a controlled and well-organized process, but the experience of this research was much more in line with the rather chaotic approach suggested in the above quote from Halcolm. By beginning the process of analysing data, themes emerge both from the data and from the gaps in the data. The process used in the analysis was thematic and comparative analysis through code mapping (Knodel, 1993). Thematic analysis is an inductive process with the themes emerging from the data. The analysis was not done after all the data is collected but rather, data collection and analysis happened together with background reading forming part of the analysis process (Dawson, 2002). It was used in conjunction with comparative analysis where the answers from different people are compared until no new issues arise, sometimes called cross-case analysis (Dawson, 2002; Patton, 2002).

In this research themes and patterns emerged from reading and re-reading the transcripts of the interviews. As a theme or pattern became apparent it was given a code and then each additional transcript was compared to find if it confirmed or opposed the theme. As new themes emerged the transcripts were re-read to assign the new codes. The codes were then laid out in a grid based on broad relationships. This process began from the very first interview so that subsequent interviews were to some extent informed by earlier information. This allowed for further examination of these themes as the research progressed. As this initial analysis was occurring, useful quotes were also identified for later on. After all the interviews were completed a more thorough analysis was undertaken comparing the themes to the literature and noting thematic overlaps in the data. Conflicting data became particularly important here as it challenged original concepts, classifications and conclusions. This next level of analysis was then checked against a focus group to judge its relevance, to clarify questions and to identify any further or subsequent themes that the original data or analysis had not highlighted.



## **Chapter 5**

### **THEORETICAL BASIS FOR ANALYSIS**

The theoretical basis for the analysis of the research undertaken for this thesis will be twofold. Firstly it will be based on a critical/political understanding of disability, and how that influences supported employment theory and practices as presented through the Diploma in Supported Employment. Secondly it will draw on particular learning theories to evaluate and assess how the participants of the research engaged with the Diploma in Supported Employment.

#### **The critical/political model of disability**

The evolution of the different models of disability was outlined previously in chapter two. This analysis will be based on the position adopted at the end of chapter 2 of disability as having three distinct facets – identity, impairment and interaction with the social environment. In particular the social relational understanding of disability, as first articulated by Vic Finkelstein, Paul Hunt and others through UPIAS, will be used as this aligns closely with the supported employment movement in New Zealand. UPIAS's exposition redefined disability as a socially and politically imposed oppression, applied in addition to restrictions caused by impairments, which limits and negatively categorises people with impairments. The supported employment movement in New Zealand has tended to adopt this critical/political model rather than the philosophy of normalisation that began it in the USA. The reason for this is difficult to discern precisely but is likely to do with the timing of when supported employment was introduced into New Zealand and to the small size of the movement. Supported employment was introduced to New Zealand just prior to Oliver's seminal work on the social model of disability published in 1990. Key players in the supported employment movement in New Zealand were significantly influenced by this work of Oliver's and were able to interpret supported employment to reflect the social model.

The Diploma in Supported Employment was written to reflect the critical/political model of disability and to encourage practices that reproduced this in application. The challenge is to do this within an environment where the social model quite likely holds sway more in the rhetoric than in the performance of government policy. As Saloviita (2000) warned, government policy can well work to disengage supported employment from its values base

and reduce it to a few professional techniques. In so doing supported employment is placed on the vocational continuum where its application supplements, but does not challenge, existing practices. So students on the Diploma in Supported Employment were presented information with a slant towards a critical understanding of disability when they operate largely within an environment with a competing definition. Such a situation of competing definitions is not to be unexpected. Donoghue (2003) contended that the wording of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), known as the 'ADA', is consistent with the medical model of disability. He claims the wording has compromised the hard fought for gains by the disability activists in getting this legislation enacted. Donoghue argues that the wording used in the legislation becomes the legitimate definition of disability; in the ADA this wording is: "the disabled are those who are incapable of performing normal life activities" (p. 207). The result is that the legitimate definition of disability has not moved from the medical one, so there has been no real transformation to a competing paradigm – in this case the constructionist view that disability is prejudice towards a minority group.

The ADA is a very influential piece of legislation and probably has direct relevance to the New Zealand situation. In New Zealand the disability movement managed to bring a critical/political definition into the New Zealand Disability Strategy providing a strong platform for this paradigm to influence policy. On the face of it the NZDS appears to indicate what Donoghue would advance as a "visible shift in the ideological basis of the legitimate definition of disability" (Donoghue, 2003: 207). However, in the vocational sector the principle policy guide is the 'Pathways to Inclusion' document and the language used in this document diverges from the NZDS in a critical way. The term 'disabled people' is replaced with 'people with disabilities.' It could be that the language change between the NZDS and 'Pathways' reflects not just semantics but a bureaucratic and political device to re-legitimise the medical definition of disability and thereby re-assert authority that the NZDS definition was eroding. In so doing the *raison d'être* of vocational services can be confirmed as the amelioration of disability. This would be a powerful force dragging services and thinking away from the supported employment philosophy and placing it within the traditional continuum of services.

Evidence for this view can be found in the wording of Ministry of Social Development contracting documents with vocational sector providers. The key determinant of success is 'placement' into employment. As mentioned earlier the concept of placement implies a top down view of employment acquisition. It signifies a different conceptualisation of disability from that used by either supported employment or the NZDS. It re-legitimises the

idea that the 'job' is the real outcome, and implicitly denies the concept of work being a vehicle towards the individualised outcomes of the job seeker.

So the context in which supported employment and the Diploma in Supported Employment operate is one of contested definitions of disability, and a struggle for legitimacy. The analysis will use this epistemological debate to consider outcomes for those who enrolled in the Diploma in Supported Employment. An underlying question will be: can training influence people's theory of disability in such a way that a critical understanding becomes their theory in use? If this can occur then the goals of supported employment may be met rather than just placing a person in a job.

### **Learning theory**

The literature review demonstrated that adult learning is a large and contested area of endeavour. There are numerous theories on how learning occurs, as previously discussed. Initially the principles applied were derived from teaching children. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century behaviourists and psychologists lead the debate on what learning was and how it was accomplished. From the 1960s onwards it has been adult educators who have begun to explore and theorise about learning, and in particular how this may differ from childhood learning. The process of theory development has not been linear or sequential with each new theory expanding on and/or replacing earlier theories, rather each has remained and they now operate as competitive understandings. Merriam, as quoted in Knowles et al (2005), commented, that probably no single theory will adequately explain adult learning. Each will provide a particular perspective that is likely to lead to a multi-faceted understanding of adult learning. Pratt (2002) researched different teaching styles from transmission to social reform and concluded that all had the potential to be good teaching and all had the potential for poor teaching, depending on the application and the context. Similarly, Rogers (2002) comments:

“There is...no consensus about learning. Different theories are espoused with vigour. For learning is a many-faceted activity which incorporates a number of different processes” (p. 115).

Heimlich & Norland (2002) conclude that the theory or style used by a teacher in any situation is also a function of that teacher's beliefs, values and philosophy. Armitage et al, (1999) warn that there are dangers in accepting any theory as an article of faith and in

elevating process over content. They note that all students are different, they all have different issues and reasons to study, and that each group of learners is different from the next. Rogers echoes the idea of difference.

“The mixed group that most of us face will not only possess a wide range of ability. It will also contain persons of different ages and at different stages of development, experiencing different roles and facing different crises points. And each of them will react in different ways to the varied changes they are experiencing in their own lives...The most important characteristic of adult student participants is that they will be very diverse” (Rogers, 2002:70).

The two theoretical models that will be primarily employed in the analysis of the data obtained from this research are Knowles’ theory of andragogy and Argyris and Schön’s action learning. The reason for selecting these two theories is that they complement each other. Knowles takes the approach of the conditions that optimise learning for adults and Argyris and Schön focus on how critical reflection on experience can be transformed into new knowledge. As such both of these theories fit very well with the intent of this research, which, in looking at the student perspective of an applied programme of study, is interested in whether learning was optimised and the importance of experience and critical reflection in this form of applied study.

### **Knowles’ Theory of Andragogy**

Knowles’ theory of andragogy was mentioned earlier in the literature review as a humanist theory. The following section will expand on this to provide the detail needed for the analysis. The reason for an interest in Knowles’ work is that he focuses on the adult learner rather than the teacher of adults. Knowles identified six elements in the learning process that distinguish andragogy from pedagogy. These define the differences in teaching adults as opposed to children. To recapitulate they are: the need to know, the learner’s self-concept, the role of the learner’s experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation.

1. *Need to know:* Adults need to know why they need to learn something before they engage in learning it. One of the first tasks of those assisting adults to learn is to make them aware of the need to know.

New directions in this understanding have led programmes to increasingly engage students in the planning and facilitation of their courses. (This also appeals to the adult learners self-concept as independent learners.) Research has also indicated that adults need to know how learning is conducted, what is to be learned, and why they should learn (Knowles et al, 1998).

2. *Self-concept*: Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, of being autonomous. This develops into self-direction. Rogers (2002) quotes Knowles as suggesting, “adulthood is attained at the point at which individuals perceive themselves to be essentially self-directing (although this may not be for many persons a single point in time)” (Rogers, 2002:71).

Not all adults will reach the state of self-directedness completely. Its attainment is affected by cultural expectations and opportunities. The lack of full attainment can lead to a gap between the desire to be self-directing and the ability to be self-directing. Rogers comments that in Knowles view, for ‘andragogy’ to be effective it needs to build on the adult learner’s desire to be self-directing. If not, then this can place blocks in the learning process (ibid). Programmes must increase the sense of self-determination, even if the evidence is that not all the students are fully self-directed, to maximise the learning.

However, for some adults returning to education, especially for the first time since school, they may expect to be treated as they were when children. Knowles et al (1998) comments that:

“the minute adults walk into an activity labelled “education,” “training,” or anything synonymous, they hark back to their conditioning in their previous school experience, put on their dunce hats of dependency, fold their arms, sit back, and say “teach me.” This...creates a conflict within them between their intellectual model – learner equals dependent - and the deeper, perhaps subconscious, psychological need to be self-directing. And the typical method of dealing with psychological conflict is to try to flee from the situation causing it – which probably accounts in part for the high dropout rate in much voluntary adult education” (p. 65).

The expectation of being taught in the traditional mode, that is having the information served up, can be strong, and if not met can also compromise learning.

Current research indicates that although the concept of self-direction is a given in adult learning, the amount this is displayed by any particular student on any particular course varies greatly. It is a relationship between where the student is, and where the course is pitched, in terms of self-direction (ibid). Acknowledgement of this relationship acts to ameliorates against Tennant's (1988) criticism of Knowles' andragogy, in which Tennant claimed that because the educator controls the process of learning, while the student only controls the content, the overall procedure cannot be called self-directed (Sutherland, 1998)

3. *Prior experience*: Adults bring a greater amount and quality of prior experience into an educational situation. This means that experiential techniques, which tap into the learner's experience, work well. These include such things as group discussions, simulations, case studies, etc. It also means that learners bring some very fixed notions that may need to be examined. Prior experience influences learning in four basic ways. There is a wider range of individual differences coming into the learning, it can be a rich learning resource to draw upon, there can also be biases against the learning, and it provides grounds for the adult self-identity. The last point is significant in that, according to Knowles' theory, for adults, their experiences serve to determine who they are and help create their self-identity. So if those experiences are devalued or ignored in the learning process, then this could imply a rejection of the person not just the experience (Rogers, 2002). Acknowledging past experience becomes especially important if education is aimed at personal growth or is likely to challenge previously held values.

Previous values and experience can act as a lense through which new learning is viewed. This can distort or reshape that message. It can also be used as a test to see if new learning 'rings true.' Previous learning also provides the framework on which new learning hangs. The role of adult education is to assist these links to be made. If links cannot be made then the new learning is compartmentalised and will not affect the student's attitudes and behaviour (Rogers, 2002). In the context of prior learning, constructivism in learning theory, as mentioned earlier, claims that "learning cannot be separated from the context in which it is used... new information must be related to other existing information in order for learners to

retain and use it” (Knowles et al, 1998:142). And because prior experience can inhibit learning as well as support it, unlearning becomes just as important as learning.

4. *Readiness to learn:* In general, adults become ready to learn as it helps them cope with their real-life situations. As adults move through developmental stages they become ready to learn about what is ahead of them. Because this is more relevant it is more easily learned. The implication here is that timing learning to coincide with readiness can be critical.

Pratt (1988 as quoted in Knowles et al, 1998) proposed a model for readiness to learn which places people on two dimensions: direction and support. Direction relates to the learner’s need for assistance and is influenced by their competence with the subject matter and their general need for independence. Support relates to the learner’s affective encouragement needs from others, and is affected by their commitment to the learning process and their confidence in their own capacity to learn. This creates a four-quadrant model.

5. *Orientation to learning:* Knowles claims that adults tend to be more life-centred or task-centred, or problem-centred in their learning than children or youth. This means they are motivated to learn when the learning is directly applicable to their life situation, and will learn best when the learning is presented in the context of real-life situations. However Rogers (2002) argues that adults come to education for such diverse reasons that it is more useful to talk of them having a collection of ‘intentions’ rather than specific needs (Rogers, 2002). These intentions can relate to practical or opportunity reasons as suggested by Knowles, but can also be more symbolic (such as social recognition). Rogers quotes Houle’s (1961) research to describe the range of intentions. Houle found that his subjects fitted into three groups. The groups were not completely independent but overlapped (Knowles et al, 2005). The groups were the instrumental or operational learner (relating to a current life situation), the activity oriented (who take part because of the process), and the learning oriented (those who learn for its own sake).

6. *Motivation:* Adults are motivated by external things such as better jobs, salaries, promotions, etc, but are even more motivated by internal factors such as increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, etc. Motivation begins with need and

there are many theories of motivation from Maslow's hierarchy of needs and ERG theory to Equity theory and Expectancy theory (McShane & Travaglione, 2005). Of these only Vroom's (1982) classic workplace motivation theory - expectancy theory – will be discussed here. This theory suggests that an individual's motivation is made up of three factors:

- *valence* – the value the person places on the outcome of their effort,
- *instrumentality* – the usefulness of the outcome of their effort to them,
- *expectancy* – the belief the person has that their effort will lead to an outcome or outcomes that will be rewarded.

When this is considered from an adult learning perspective it means that adult learners are most likely to be motivated when they believe that they can learn the new material (expectancy), that the new material or learning will help them with some problem or issue (instrumentality), and that the resolution of this problem or issue is important in their life (valence).

As with Carl Rogers, Knowles moves away from the teacher role to that of 'facilitation of learning.' He comments that as he engaged more with the learning, rather than the teaching process, his role shifted "from content transmitter to process manager and – only secondarily – content resource" (Knowles et al, 1998:200). Associated with this change in his role he developed the key concepts of the 'self-directed learner' and the 'learning contract' as fundamental to the adult learning process.

In Knowles et al (2005) a model is presented to describe how andragogy operates in practice. This is reproduced below.

Figure 1

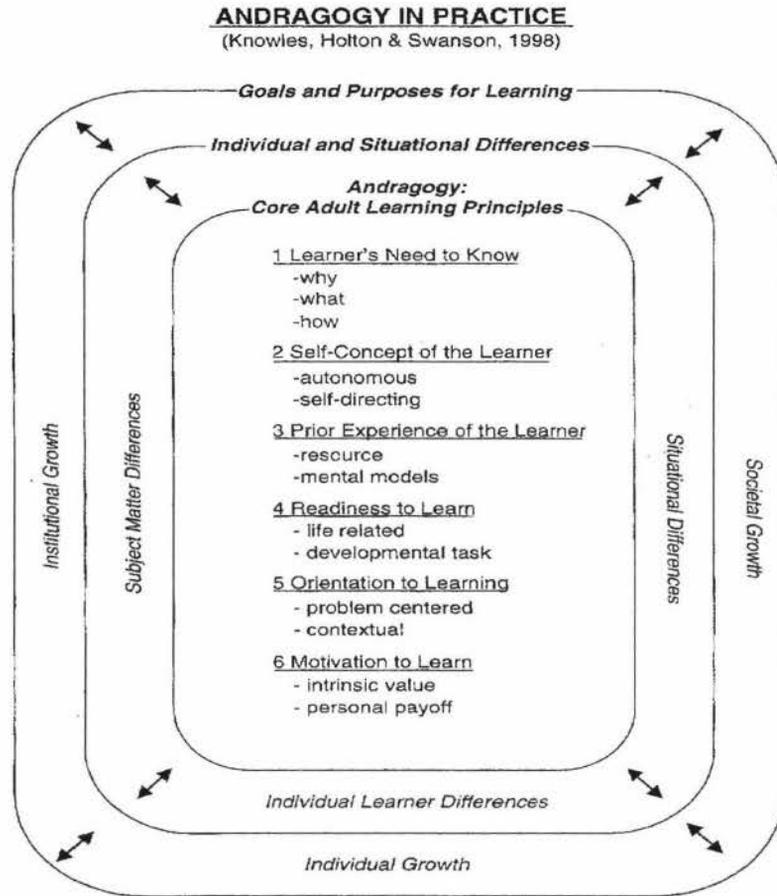


Figure 7-1. *Andragogy in practice model* (from Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 1998).

The model presented above demonstrates how the core adult learning principles interact with individual and situational differences and also with the overall goals or purposes of the learning. In this way Knowles et al (2005) aim to contextualise andragogy and allow for individual learning styles, differences in subject matter and situational differences, as well as the societal or institutional context in which the learning occurs. The model emphasises the conceptual difference between the goals and purposes of learning and the

core principles of the learning transaction, while allowing for differences in the individual situation. Knowles clarified his theory, at least in part, in response to criticisms that andragogy assumes that all learners are essentially the same and is not sufficiently concerned with context. The other criticism of Knowles comes from feminists and people from other cultures who have challenged andragogy, and other learning theories, for biases due to being based on a Western worldview, especially a Western male worldview (Rogers, 2002).

### **Argryis and Schön's Action Learning**

Argryis and Schön have individually and together developed an approach useful for learning in situations where unexpected results are achieved. They critique professions for not routinely explicating what is learned in practice for peer critique and therefore as part of a learning cycle (Argryis & Schön, 1974). They also critique the assumption that problems in real life can all be solved by the application of a theoretical body of knowledge. Such an understanding of professional practice is based on the technical paradigm or 'technical rationality' as Schön refers to it (Schön, 1983). In the real world of practice, problems are unique and must be understood in context. Schön describes the process for doing this as 'reflection-in-action.' It describes the process whereby a learner can engage in problem solving through reflection on the current situation in the light of previous knowledge. In doing this the practitioner keeps the novelty of the new or current situation but is able "to see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one" (Schön, 1983: 138). The action – reflection process towards new learning follows on from theorists such as Freire (1994) and Mezirow (1998). Freire saw education as leading towards emancipation through praxis, a term he coined to mean reflection on action. Mezirow was also concerned with learning changing people's perspectives and used the term critical reflectivity to describe the process towards perspective transformation.

Knowles' schema described the conditions under which adult learners will learn best. Argryis and Schön speak to the issue of people being able to put their learning into practice, which is a significant one in many professions (Jarvis with Griffin, 2003). They comment on the relationship between thinking and acting and state that: "All human beings – not only professional practitioners – need to become competent in taking action and simultaneously reflecting on this action to learn from it" (Argryis and Schön, 2003: 223). They introduce two concepts about learning. The first is what they term 'theories of

action.’ Theories of action are similar to other theories in that they are vehicles for prediction, explanation and control. What is different about them is that they are theories of deliberate human action as opposed to accidental consequences. Theories of action can work at a subjective level, that is, one’s own theories of what to do in given circumstances to achieve certain results. When they work at this level they operate as control theories. Theories in action can also operate as explanatory or predictive theories, such as when someone else is observing a deliberate behaviour in another person and attributes a theory of action to that person to account for the observable behaviour. In a professional practice situation a set of interrelated theories of action combine to produce a theory of practice. The problem being, as Argyris and Schön (2003) comment, that if a practitioner is asked to define their theory of practice it could well be different from what s/he is observed doing. They define what people say they do as their ‘espoused theory of action’ and what they actually do as their ‘theory-in-use.’ Espoused theory can be considered what people are taught is ‘correct’ in professional development programmes. Theories-in-use are what people do to get things done and tend to be informed by their assumptions, self perceptions, values and tacit knowledge of how the world works. Tacit knowledge, as defined by Polanyi (2003) is all those things we know at a glance but could never articulate that we know, nor even be consciously aware that we know. As Polanyi put it: “*we can know more than we can tell*” (Polanyi, 2003: 209). Tacit knowledge is action-oriented and acquired through observation, direct experience (McShane & Travalione, 2005). So learning in complex situations can be seen as a gestalt activity rather than just an instrumental, analytic and linear process.

The second set of concepts Argyris and Schön introduce are the notions of single loop learning and double loop learning. Both single loop and double loop learning relate to the learner’s previous experience or learning. Single loop learning is where the learning fits in with the person’s previous experience and values and is therefore relatively easy, or even automatic. Double loop is where the new situation or learning experience does not fit with the learner’s previous experience and requires the student to change their mental schema in some fundamental way. Argyris and Schön borrow from Ashby (1952) and use the metaphor of a thermostat to describe the difference between single loop and double loop learning. Single loop learning is akin to when the thermostat automatically adjusts the temperature to a preset level. Double loop learning would ask whether or not the preset temperature is the right one for this situation (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Instrumental learning that involves deduction or inference from a hypothesis is akin to single loop learning. It involves the learner refining what they know and does not challenge the basis

of their knowledge. Double loop learning occurs most frequently when unexpected results occur. At this stage the learner is forced to re-examine their suppositions, values and/or paradigms. Through a critical evaluation of one's underlying values and assumption, double loop learning occurs, which is a more powerful type of learning because of the process involved (Marsick, 2003). Reflection upon actions is a metacognitive process that seems to be central to the ability to learn in informal situations. It allows the learner to reflect upon simple cause and effect situations in the case of single loop learning, and to critically analyse assumptions and values in double loop learning (ibid). In situations such as supported employment, the practitioner, as in many other professional situations, can be "frequently embroiled in conflicts of values, goals, purposes, and interests" (Schön, 1983: 17). The ability to reflect on actions as they are occurring provides practitioners with the process to critically examine their practice in the light of theory or new information and to continue to find better ways to operate. Education, according to Argyris & Schön, should build professional competence in continual building of a theory of practice in both the technical and interpersonal areas of practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Combining the approaches of Schön and Argyris with that of Knowles is a powerful basis for developing an educational programme. The two theories encourage the educator to consider how the student engages with the programme and what conditions will assist this engagement. They also alert the educator to develop processes that make clear what the student is actually learning. If the learning is occurring as a function between the new information and the previously held knowledge and experience, it enjoins the educator to seek constant feedback to discover what the student now understands and what new knowledge they have constructed, rather than just assessing to preconceived criteria. These two theories combine well to understand the students' perspectives on an applied course such as the Diploma in Supported Employment. The analysis of the research findings in the following two chapters will use the above theoretical understanding to analyse the Diploma in Supported Employment from the student's perspective. The analysis will consider factors from both outside and inside the course that influenced student learning. The analysis will also consider how any learning was applied to the student's work and whether this is an indication of the development of new theories in action. From the analysis of the student perspective, it may then be possible to glean some understanding of whether or not the Diploma in Supported Employment is an effective method of furthering the supported employment agenda of inclusion of disabled people into the mainstream workforce.

## **Chapter 6**

### **FACTORS OUTSIDE THE DIPLOMA IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE STUDYING EXPERIENCE**

#### **Introduction**

The following three chapters will provide a discussion of the findings from this research. This first chapter will consider factors that influenced research participants' studying experience and which lay outside the Diploma in Supported Employment. The second chapter will consider those factors directly attributable to the Diploma in Supported Employment that influenced their studying experience. The third chapter will consider personal, professional and policy outcomes and implications from the delivery of the Diploma in Supported Employment. Each of the three chapters will be divided thematically to explore the major subjects that came out of the research within the broad grouping that divide the chapters. Each chapter will consider what made the study worth it from the students' perspective. Throughout the discussion the participant's voice will be represented in italics with a two-letter descriptor identifying the individual. The descriptor does not represent their real initials.

The current chapter commences with two sections that set out some background material relevant to the following discussion and analysis. The two sections are: a brief background to the development and delivery of the Diploma in Supported Employment, and some demographic information about the cohorts of students from whom the research participants were recruited. The third section relates to the factors or themes that participants identified as most influencing their studying experience and which lay outside of the diploma programme. These themes are: why people enrolled in the diploma, employer support, work-study fit, personal commitments, personal organisation, and previous study experience.

#### **Background**

The Diploma in Supported Employment was first established by the Association for Supported Employment in New Zealand (ASENZ) in 1999. The process of developing the curriculum was carried out over the proceeding two years. Once the curriculum was developed ASENZ then approached the Universal College of Learning - UCOL (then the

Manawatu Polytechnic) to deliver the new diploma. Prior to the development of the Diploma in Supported Employment, in 1998, UCOL had entered into a contractual arrangement with Tautoko Services whereby Tautoko Services delivered all the human services programmes on behalf of UCOL. As a result of this contract it was Tautoko Services who were assigned the responsibility of developing and running the Diploma in Supported Employment. As the researcher I am also an employee of Tautoko Services and was an ASENZ Board member at the time of the initial conceptualisation of the diploma and was employed by ASENZ as executive officer during the early part of the development of the Diploma in Supported Employment. I have a 19 year history within the vocational sector and in particular within supported employment, lobbying and advising the relevant government officials and ministers through the period of time supported employment was becoming a government funded service. As such I bring a unique interest in developing and delivering the diploma and have taken an active part in both processes to date.

Tautoko Services formed a management group of three people who were initially responsible for the development of the Diploma in Supported Employment curriculum into a distance education programme. The researcher was one of these three people and assumed the lead role as course coordinator. So, this research is both an academic document for consideration as an M. Phil thesis and a process to provide useful insights into my ongoing work related responsibilities. It encompasses both my professional practice knowledge and my personal interest in the areas of supported employment and disability education. I have used my experience and knowledge of the sector to additionally inform the analysis part of this research.

The Diploma in Supported Employment fits within the interpretive paradigm, now dominant in Western adult education, with its focus on self-directed learning and action-reflection (Foley, 2004). The first intake of students onto the diploma was in the year 2000. There were six people who entered the programme. Concurrent with the latter part of the development stage of the diploma, the person who put most of the curriculum together (Garth Bennie) and I, in my capacity as executive officer to ASENZ, were touring the country providing a two-day introduction to supported employment for ASENZ. During these sessions participants were informed of the diploma and the content it was likely to cover. Participants were asked to indicate if the proposed programme would be of interest. Over 100 people indicated an interest with many being very interested.

However, despite the level of interest shown only six people finally enrolled. As a result of the low numbers following through to enrolment the diploma management team undertook to follow-up with people who had expressed an interest, and to whom information was sent, but who had not completed the enrolment process. The follow up process revealed that the most common reason cited by those who did not enrol was the cost of study. This finding was related back to ASENZ who commenced advocating with the Department of Work and Income to assist with funding for staff development. WINZ, as it was then known, was responsible for funding agencies that worked in the disability vocational sector. On October 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 WINZ was subsumed into the newly formed Ministry of Social Development (MSD) where it retains its own identity as Work and Income (MSD, 2005a). For the sake of simplicity and to avoid potential confusion, this department will be referred to as 'MSD' throughout the document regardless of the name it had at the particular time.

Early in 2001 the researcher was approached by MSD officials with the prospect of funding being made available to support people working in agencies contracted to MSD onto the diploma. Processes needed to be developed to allow agencies to nominate employees to enrol in the diploma and then become available for a subsidy wholly covering the student fee charged by UCOL. In addition, Tautoko Services needed to increase its capacity to deliver this programme to 200 people over three intakes<sup>1</sup>. The first intake of students that contained people funded by MSD was in August 2001. The intake almost exclusively consisted of people funded by MSD with only one person paying for their own enrolment. (A further four students were self-funded on the subsequent two intakes included in this research.) The high proportion of MSD funded students can be accounted for by the fact that most people who were involved in supported employment were working inside agencies funded by MSD. The few exceptions to this were people working inside schools which ran a transition to work programme or people who wished to enter supported employment from outside the industry. The current research covers students from this intake and from the subsequent two intakes – February 2002 and July 2002. All of the people who participated in the research were MSD funded.

The development of the Diploma in Supported Employment has been one of negotiation between differing priorities and power relationships. Even within ASENZ there were at least two distinct agenda operating. Firstly there were those who wished to promote the philosophical understandings implicit in supported employment and thereby further the

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<sup>1</sup> There were in fact four intakes. The last intake of just 20 people was made up of places left because some people withdrew from the course prior to any fee being paid.

political agenda of disabled people. Secondly there were those who wished the primary focus to be operational, or the development of practical skills for use by supported employment agencies. The two are related but fundamentally differ in their assessment of outcomes. The former would see structural change in the labour market through using supported employment as one potential outcome, whereas the latter is more focused on achieving individual job placements.

Outside ASENZ there were the competing interests of UCOL, MSD, Tautoko Services and the broader vocational sector to negotiate. The last tension was perhaps the most significant to manage. Supported employment was, and still is, a relatively new response to assisting disabled people with their working aspirations. As previously mentioned in the literature review, it comes out of a completely different understanding of disability than traditional services tend to have and challenges the validity of traditional services. In the context of the Diploma in Supported Employment this became problematic because the MSD offered the diploma to all the vocational agencies it contracted with, both supported employment agencies and those providers that offered a segregated service. By doing this, the MSD was effectively underlining the direction they wished for vocational services in general and which they had already signalled in the 'Pathways to Inclusion' document, namely to work towards employment and increased community participation for all disabled people. The Diploma in Supported Employment then became the concrete expression of the shift in direction. Many agencies embraced this change but some resisted it. Both of these perspectives are represented in comments made by participants in this research.

Freire (1994) first acknowledged that programmes are developed within a political context, and more latterly Cervero and Wilson have built on his work (Sork & Newman, 2004). Cervero and Wilson added to Freire's work by alerting programme developers to the political nature of education at the point of programme planning. They contended that planners should attempt to "place the technical aspects of planning in the background and to foreground power and the process through which interests are negotiated as programs are developed" (Sork & Newman, 2004:113). Within the context of the Diploma in Supported Employment, this was done at the level of the ASENZ debates. Without such a resolution the programme would not have commenced. However the wider context was not considered at this stage. Parenthetically it did become more significant during the course of delivery and was addressed in 2003 with the redevelopment of the Diploma in Supported Employment that included significant interests from outside the ASENZ collective. This is

outside the scope of the present study and is only noted here to highlight that the political environment is important and could have been attended to more fully in the development of the Diploma in Supported Employment. The next section examines the make-up of the students who enrolled in the diploma.

### **Student demographics**

The demographic profile of the students on the three intakes researched comes from the information students completed as part of the enrolment process. The total number of students who completed enrolment was 177. (There were a further three people in receipt of the subsidy who did not complete the enrolment process.)

Below are four tables giving the demographic profile of the three intakes of students used in this research.

**Table 1: Student Ethnicity**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Numbers of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
NZ European/ Pakeha	134	76%
NZ Maori	33	18%
Other	10	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Student Gender**

<b>Student Gender</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	69	39%
Female	108	61%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3: Student Age at Enrolment**

<b>Student Age</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 25	7	4%
25 – 34	37	21%
35 – 44	74	42%
45 – 54	48	27%
55 and over	11	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4: Highest Secondary Qualification Gained by Students**

<b>Highest Secondary Qualification</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No secondary qualification	56	32%
School certificate (1+ subjects)	38	21%
Sixth form certificate (1+ subjects)	17	9%
University Entrance	24	14%
Higher qualification	26	15%
Overseas qualification	16	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>

The demographics collected show a student population who generally did not have a very high level of formal qualification: 32% gained no qualification at all while at school and a further 21% have lower than sixth form certificate as their highest school years' qualification. The demographics also show that many students are studying for the Diploma in Supported Employment in their middle years. Only 4% of students fell into the age group of less than 25 years old when people traditionally studied tertiary education courses (Knowles et al, 2005; Rogers, 2002). A total of 69% of the students were between

the ages of 35 and 54, arguably the busiest and most demanding years for people in terms of family and work commitments (Berger, 1983). As will be discussed later, the age at which people study has implications on their available time and on their previous experience. Both of these will have implications on the individual's ability to attend to the study, their likely success and their level of satisfaction. The next section will consider why participants elected to enrol in the Diploma in Supported Employment. In so doing the section will illuminate some of the motivation people had for continuing with and completing the course of study.

### **Reasons for Enrolling**

The research indicates that there were a number of reasons people enrolled onto the Diploma in Supported Employment, with the outstanding one being that it was offered to them for free. All of the participants in this study received sponsorship onto the diploma. Participants considered free entry very important with all but one commenting that it was a significant reason for them enrolling. Cost of study is especially critical in a field of work that is, and has been historically, undervalued and therefore poorly remunerated. Supporting disabled people is not generally viewed as productive work and suffers from this perception. It has traditionally been 'women's work' and is undervalued and unpaid as are other forms of reproductive, sustaining and nurturing work traditionally undertaken by women (McKinlay, 1992; Waring, 1988). In addition to being undervalued as non-productive work, disability support work is often further devalued by association with a negative or stigmatised view of disability (Munford, 1992). The participants of this research all said they would not have enrolled to undertake this course of study if the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) had not provided a subsidy to cover the fee, and they had been required to fund it themselves. Below is one participant's response when asked if he would have enrolled without the subsidy, which was typical of other participants:

*'No – I couldn't afford it – couldn't afford it and our organisation couldn't afford it. We were very grateful for that opportunity' (NR).*

This response is consistent with the experience of enrolments onto the course prior to the MSD subsidy. The cost of the course was also linked by the focus group to the lack of opportunity for promotion or a wage increase as a result of any study so represented a poor investment for many. Those people who did enrol appeared to be entering into the course

due to a personal interest in supported employment rather than hopes of promotion or pecuniary gain. Personal interest remained an important factor for participants of this research and relates to Knowles' concept of 'orientation to learning' (Knowles et al, 2005). The difference came with the MSD subsidy removing the financial barrier that previously existed. With this gone, participants then typically had a choice as to whether or not they followed through to enrolment. The participants identified a number of factors that influenced this decision including: the opportunity to find out more about supported employment, to understand more about the direction government policy was leading their agency, and for some, it was about very few alternatives in this area of endeavour. Some people, as 'HK's' comments below demonstrate, came onto the diploma because it represented an opportunity to study in an area that they knew something about and wanted to find out more. Typically these people worked in supported employment agencies and had practice knowledge but limited theoretical knowledge. In andragogical terms it indicates a readiness to learn with the subject matter being of immediate interest to their work.

*'It's a field that I was quite interested in because I believe it works – which we know it works. So that's why I chose to do it' (HK).*

For others it presented the opportunity to learn about something that the government had set as the direction for vocational services in New Zealand. In Knowles' schema the individual had their 'need to know' satisfied; the change in government direction provided the explanation for the need for new learning. The course represented both a chance for personal learning and also for organisational development.

*'My boss came in one afternoon and said "there's a course coming up...I'll give you all the information that's come through. Read through it, tell me what you think. If you like the look of what you see, do you want to participate in it?" He said "there's no pressure but I'd like as many people from work to go on it as possible because this the direction that our business is going to go – I think it'd be beneficial – but – it's up to you." So I took the information... home, read over it and had a look at it, went back a day or so later and said "I like the look of it, yeah I'd like to give it a go"' (NC).*

For the above student, the invitation to study based on a new policy direction was encouraging. For others it was less so. The forcefulness with which the government stated

its strategy to move towards supported employment did leave two participants in the research feeling as though they had no real choice about enrolling. One person felt pressure was being applied to their organisation to have staff enrol in the diploma. It was offered to them in response to frequent requests for staff development as the only option that would be funded. He also thought that the funders were forcing his organisation to head down the supported employment path if they wished to continue to be funded. He reported that others shared this experience in organisations that were not specifically set up to do supported employment and were unhappy about it.

*'They [the MSD] were actually charged with both supported employment and community participation and yet they were requiring every organisation to be work focused rather than community participation focused. Over the last few years those organisations that don't really fit the work model have been arguing the criteria they applied to us was inappropriate' (PC).*

The above quote indicates a critical policy context in which the vocational sector operates. The government professes participation for disabled people in their communities, whether in work or not, as one of the goals for vocational services (Pathways, 2001). However in practical terms the MSD, as the government agency responsible, is also charged with reducing the number of people on benefits, or, as they would put it, maximising participation in employment (MSD, 2005a). The policy ambiguity that 'PC' above alluded to, acted to compel him to enrol in the diploma, but also effectively reduced his motivation to complete the course. He did not see it as being relevant to his work and as a result, he didn't complete the diploma. The issue of unclear policy will be investigated further in chapter 7.

A third reason for embarking upon this particular course of study was the paucity of options. This has already been intimated above and was repeated, in one way or another by 5 of the 6 participants. As one person when asked why she enrolled, put it:

*'Because it was in the disability field – there's very little in the disability field to do in the way of study' (HK).*

These views are consistent with the fact that in disability vocational services there had been no government policy developed to attend to the staff development needs of people working in the sector. It had been entirely left over to the discretion of individual agencies.

The complicating factor was that most agencies were funded too poorly in most instances to be able to initiate any structured training for themselves.

*'I mean a number of organisations that had contracts with the Ministry of Social Development were complaining that our grants were so low that we were unable to afford to go to conferences [or] continuing education. And this was the Ministry's response to that: they would pay us to do the diploma' (PC).*

Using Knowles' framework of analysis, introduced in the chapter 4, a number of his core andragogical elements relate to why people enrolled. Readiness to learn and the need to know have already been briefly discussed above in relation to particular participants. A more general element not yet discussed is that of motivation. All theorists from behaviourists (Owens, 1998) to critical theorists (Marsick, 2003; Mezirow, 1998) would presumably agree that motivation is a critical factor in learning, and this has been discussed earlier in relation to Expectancy theory and its three factors: valence, instrumentality and expectancy (Vroom, 1982). From the discussion above it is clear that there are varied motivations for enrolling onto the Diploma in Supported Employment. However, an overriding conclusion is that the MSD subsidy removed one of the most significant disincentives, namely cost. People enrolled for both intrinsic value reasons (valence) and because of the potential for personal payoff (expectancy). Even though few organisations offered direct incentives such as pay increases or promotion to people who completed the diploma, nevertheless there were personal benefits (instrumentality). People could see that the study was in line with government policy and therefore there would be a better match between their abilities and what they were likely to be doing. Others considered it improved their organisation's capacity, and by extension, they became a more significant contributor to, and therefore more valued employee of, that organisation (instrumentality and expectancy).

The second core andragogical principle that applies here, which was mentioned earlier is the learner's orientation to learning. Adults are more likely to engage in learning when the learning is directly applicable to their life situation or a task they are currently engaged in (Knowles et al, 2005). In the situation of the Diploma in Supported Employment it was more that a potentially beneficial and accessible opportunity presented itself. It was then up to each individual to decide whether they would take advantage of that opportunity. To some extent this meant that people who were entering the Diploma in Supported Employment were not necessarily at a point where they were oriented to learn. The lack of

readiness and/ or motivation could well have had implications on people's ability, and desire, to be self-directed and to complete the study. Rogers (2001) comments that without motivation people "will not and cannot learn...Whether coming to learning willingly or not, the truth is that unlike children, they are free to leave" (pp. 15-17). The policy context is relevant here as some people felt obliged to enrol, but that does not necessarily provide a strong motivation to complete.

## **Summary**

Participants reported that there was a wide range of reasons, or 'intentions' as Rogers (2002) would have it, for enrolling. These ranged from personal interest, through to protecting their organisational futures, through to some people feeling compelled to enrol. There is no question that the funding from the MSD stimulated and facilitated enrolments. There were however, some complications with the funding, namely some people felt they had no choice but to do this qualification, and others felt no obligation to continue if it became difficult or inconvenient as they had not personally contributed to enrol. Student motivation then was not necessarily engaged through the process of offering free places and this likely had a consequence, as will be seen later, on both application and perseverance. A comparative study of students who funded themselves may well indicate a difference in this area of motivation to complete the qualification.<sup>2</sup>

## **Employer Support**

Employer support is the first of two issues relating to workplaces that participants related had affected them most when studying the Diploma in Supported Employment. The other was the fit between what they were studying and the nature of their work. Participants reported that both of these issues were critical factors to the outcome of their study. The next section considers how employer support influenced students' study and the following section will consider how the fit between work and study affected participants.

As previously stated, the student cohorts, from whom participants of this study were drawn, had all been sponsored onto the programme by their employing organisation. There were a very small number, less than 3% (5 people), who came onto the diploma as fee-

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<sup>2</sup> Subsequent to this study, 10 people who didn't complete the Diploma in Supported Employment when funded by the MSD, re-enrolled to complete the outstanding work. All 10 were self-funded and all 10 completed their study.

paying students during these intakes. To restate, the reason for this can be largely attributed to the fact that almost everyone working within supported employment in New Zealand was eligible to apply for the MSD subsidy. The only people whose job role might fall outside this were those employed by schools or some polytechnics assisting students into employment, and private citizens. To be eligible for the Ministry of Social Development subsidy, students had to fulfil two criteria. They had to be employed by, or be a volunteer for, an organisation funded by the MSD to provide some form of vocational service to disabled people, and they had to be nominated onto the course by their employer. With this there was an unwritten expectation from the funders, and from Tautoko Services, who ran the programme, that this nomination would translate into support by the employer for the student. This belief was in part based on the notion that employers would support staff who were undertaking training at their initiative, and in part due to various forms that had been signed by employers agreeing to supervise and support the staff member/ student, and allow them access to the opportunities for practical learning and demonstration of skills.

What this study found was that expectation was not always achieved in practice. McShane & Travaglione (2005) suggest that lack of motivation, training and mentoring from employers towards their employees is a common problem. They quote one employment consultant who says “[Employees] are not being appreciated, they can’t use their skills, they are not getting training or mentoring, and they feel frustrated and rejected” (p. 147). When people do not feel that their study efforts are appreciated and valued then that will dramatically reduce their motivation as well as increase difficulties related to the time required to study. Participants in this research reported a wide range of variation in both the amount of employer support offered and the nature of that support. The support offered could be either emotional or practical in nature. However all of the participants reported that access to support from their employer was a critical factor in whether or not they completed the diploma. One participant, who completed the course, often referred to the support he received from his employer throughout the interview. It came up whenever factors affecting his ability to complete the study were mentioned. This was particularly significant for this participant as his previous attempts at study hadn’t been successful for reasons to do with the educational institution. Because of this he was very highly attuned to things that helped or hindered him. When discussing study by distance education mode he indicated the emotional support he received from work:

*'I think it was really important to have that motivation – not just the self motivation but the knowing that my boss was involved and supportive, that I was also part of a group...'* (NC).

This support translated into practical support by way of time to do some of the study during working hours. In turn, the time allowed to study was interpreted as an indication of the employer's support.

*'Having a boss that was as supportive as mine, I found that exceptional, because we didn't have to do all our study outside of work. We studied here during the day once a week for 2 hours, 2 and a half hours with [our learning facilitator]... That was exceptional because had that opportunity not been there, I would have found it very, very difficult to continue it because of all my other responsibilities and obligations and commitments.'* (NC).

Conversely another participant, who did not complete the study, had the opposite experience of support from her employer. She reported that she had to study in her own time and that her employer appeared to be quite disinterested in the course and how she was doing on it.

*'I had a 40 hour job so I had to – if I used the hours that I used for it I had to credit that against my time in lieu...They didn't support the fact that we were doing it...They didn't want to know'* (CJ).

This participant viewed this lack of support as unfair, particularly when compared with what other people in her study group were receiving from their employers. The lack of support affected her both emotionally and practically and appeared to seriously demotivate her through feeling devalued by her employers, as would be expected according to Dirkx (2001). Ultimately it affected her ability to continue with the diploma, as demonstrated in the follow interview extract:

JT     *'...Work wasn't supporting you for studying.'*

CJ     *'No.'*

JT     *'So that made it really difficult then to get through didn't it?'*

CJ     *'That's why I withdrew.'*

The third area of employer support could also be categorised or regarded as an issue of personal organisation. One participant spoke of the fact that her employer supported her to undertake the diploma and was interested in the outcome. The issue for her was to do with a lack of practical support in the workplace to make the study more possible. She commented that her employer had said that she could study '*whenever I wanted.*' The issue was though, that her employer also wanted her to be involved in some organisational restructuring so that her workload increased during the time of study, making it impossible to implement her employer's offer of being able to study at any time. This resonates with anecdotal reports received from other students. During the period of the course, other students often cited this same issue as problematic, that is, permission was given to use work time to study but no accommodation was made with regard to the workload.

*'The environment [I was in] was very supportive, it was just time that [was an issue for me]...If I needed to I was able to [study at work] whenever I wanted to. [But my workload] got larger...I was getting more involved in the organisational side of things' (HK).*

In the above situation another interpretation is possible. It is not clear that this student was correctly interpreting her employers' intentions. It could also be that the obligation she felt to complete all of their regular workload and to study could have been her own internal drive. However it seems reasonable that outside of a concrete amount of time offered to use for study, and given the fact her role increased in scope, at least some of her time constraints were related to the employer being unaware of her study requirements.

It has been argued that in the modern competitive business environment, up-skilling and cross-skilling staff is critical for employers (Blaxter et al, 1998; Pillay, 1998). This general principle applies to social service situations equally, although the need to increase or broaden people's skills may be related more to differing social policy expectations rather than technological developments. Given the government led policy shift towards assisting disabled people to gain employment rather than remain in sheltered workshops, it is remarkable that there was such variation in employer support for students on the Diploma in Supported Employment and that employer support was not universally evident. In a study by Reid and Bray (1997) they concluded that increased training was important if the necessary skills for supported employment were to be realised in support staff. Rogan and Held (1999) added to this and commented that for this to be effective, skill increases needed to be supported by the employer or staff would become dissatisfied and leave.

From this one may conclude that not all of the employers of people who enrolled on the diploma acknowledged their role in supporting the student/ staff person. Or indeed it may be that some employers were not thinking strategically about the potential benefits the programme could offer their agencies in terms of an increase skill resource.

Employers may have felt forced into sending staff in the same way as participant 'PC' described earlier. Yet other employers may actively disagree with the direction of government policy towards a greater emphasis on supported employment. In either case then their staff's attendance on the Diploma in Supported Employment may have merely been a tugging of the forelock towards their funders, rather than a serious attempt to convert their service to supported employment. In any given situation the employer may not have seen a close fit between what their agency professed and the skills and values taught by the Diploma in Supported Employment. The amount of fit here may have influenced the employer's enthusiasm for the course in much the same way as it influenced individual student's study outcomes. Another explanation for this is the possibility that the support from employers was compromised in some situations through the lack of financial stake, in the same way as this appeared to affect student commitment.

### **Summary**

Employer support was a critical issue in participants' recollections of their study. What this study found was that that support varied considerably across organisations. For those who felt supported by their employer it translated into a more achievable task due to time allocated at work. The emotional support assisted with motivation so that participants were more likely to want to study. The support was more likely to occur when the study was seen as valuable to both the person and the organisation. The situation is well summarised by Evans (1994):

*"Although work and study can be mutually beneficial, there are many tensions which most adult students have to resolve as they try to complete their studies and earn a living. Balancing work and study can be relatively easy if employers have policies for supporting study and put them into practice" (p. 88).*

## **Work – Study Fit**

The second area relating to people's working situation that participants in the research indicated affected their study, was the fit between what they were studying and what their day-to-day work entailed. Participants reported that their success was affected by both the nature of the working environment and the type of work being done by the employing organisation. Those people who were working within a supported employment agency found it much easier to acquire resources and to have incidental conversations relating to what they were studying than those who were working in other forms of vocational service provision. They also typically found their employers more enthusiastic and supportive of what they were studying. Furthermore, those in supported employment agencies found the material more immediately relevant and found the practical tasks fitted better with their day-to-day commitments. They did not have to fit tasks into their schedule as they tended to arise as a natural part of their routine. The theory sections were also more immediately applicable and therefore appeared easier to apply and incorporate into their learning. These factors appeared to significantly advantage supported employment personnel over students who were from more traditional vocational providers. When asked what helped with the study, one participant, who worked inside a supported employment agency, had this to say:

*'What made it possible? A good workplace that allowed you time which was great. For me pretty easy access to reading materials through work – that was helpful. Yeah and just having someone to talk to' (OL).*

By contrast, this same participant noted that some of the other students in her study group did not have access to that form of support. This was especially true for those working in traditional vocational centres such as sheltered workshops. When discussing issues people had with the content of the course, this participant noted that her peers on the course were disadvantaged in that:

*'A lot of what they couldn't understand they couldn't get the information from in their workplace...they also struggled to find people for the practicum' (OL).*

Another participant exactly echoed the above sentiments. She added that some of the processes described in the diploma were easier to learn because of the supported employment background, or because they already used them. What was being presented was not always new to them. This meant that those in supported employment had a mental

framework on which the new learning could hang. They also had the advantage of being required to learn less overall than those completely fresh to the field. One participant who was not in a supported employment agency spoke of how much more difficult that made it for him.

*'I didn't actually do the practical things, they were irrelevant [to our agency]. ... Yeah the academic stuff was easy for me but getting around to doing the practical stuff – I mean some of that took quite a lot of work, the practical stuff and that was a struggle if you weren't working in supported employment regularly. If you were working in an organisation like [agency A] or [agency B] and that where the focus was on work placement and what have you, you should have no problem doing the practicals' (PC).*

For this participant, the lack of fit between the diploma and what his organisation does was a significant factor in his decision not to complete. When this was combined with the practical problems he described above and a lack of study time, he considered that it was not really worth the effort. Other people interviewed at the focus group meeting agreed with this participant's assessment. They also reported that working in situations outside of supported employment made it more difficult to have access to the information, the processes, the procedures, and the necessary experiences for practical tasks.

It is clear from the above discussion that the context of the learning was critical to the outcome for each student. Those who found the learning was directly related to their working life were more motivated to learn and found the learning easier. They reported it was easier because the learning was more readily applicable and because they already had some of the required knowledge to fully understand what it was they needed to learn. In Argryis & Schön's (1974) theory, the person working for a supported employment agency is likely to be involved in single loop learning. That is, the material being presented through the Diploma in Supported Employment would have resonated with their experience and values and so learning could proceed relatively automatically. The learning for these individuals would have been much more instrumental and caused little challenge to their existing knowledge.

Those working within a more traditional, or at least non-work focused, enterprise, were far more likely to find the information and values expressed new to them. Some of which may have been in direct conflict with established values or knowledge. In this case these

individuals would have needed to engage in what Argyris & Schön called double-loop learning. For this to happen the individual will need to re-examine their theories-in-use based on a different paradigm being presented. This may come about through what Argyris & Schön call a 'dilemma of incongruity.' Such a dilemma arises when there is a "progressively developing incongruity between espoused theory (on which self-esteem depends) and theory-in-use" (Argyris & Schön, 1974: 30). In the Diploma in Supported Employment students are presented with a clear values base, a political/critical model of disability and a set of practices that attempt to coherently operationalise both. Students need to espouse these to a certain extent to pass the course's assessments. In so doing it may cause a dilemma of incongruity for those who do not or cannot reflect upon theories-in-use which are at odds with the material being presented. Students are placed in the position of having to re-examine their underlying assumptions or dismissing the principles taught through the Diploma in Supported Employment as unrealistic or overly idealistic. It is difficult to see how the latter course of action would be consistent with remaining in the course and completing the diploma.

Drawing on Knowles' model of andragogy there are three principles that are evident in the above discussion on the work-study fit. Knowles' comments that the context of the study is critical and helps provide the readiness to learn, the orientation to learning and the motivation to learn (Knowles, 2005). Knowles states that adults become ready to learn as their life situation creates a need to know. The need to know could come about through some development stage or through a specific situation (ibid). Clearly people who worked within supported employment agencies, or for organisations keen to take on supported employment, the need to know was more likely to be evident and supported. The second principle - orientation to learning - is closely associated to the same context creating a need to know, and addresses the notion of adult learners generally preferring a problem solving, rather than just a subject-centred orientation. That is, adults are more likely to learn if the information presented is contextual and applicable. Again, those in supported employment agencies had a clear advantage with meeting this need.

The third principle from Knowles' schema is motivation to learn. Vroom's (1982) expectancy theory elucidates this point particularly well. As mentioned earlier, Vroom maintained that in the workplace, and because of the way the Diploma in Supported Employment was funded this was essentially workplace training, there are three factors that motivate people. The three factors are: the value to the person of the outcome (valence), the usefulness the outcome has for the person (instrumentality) and likelihood of

being rewarded for the outcome or outcomes (expectancy). It seems highly probable that people within supported employment agencies, or with significant employer support, would score higher in these three categories than others. When the work-study fit enables a person to value their study, use the information immediately and provide the opportunity reward, either intrinsic or extrinsic, then they are likely to be motivated to weather the difficult times that accompany the study.

## **Summary**

From this discussion it can be seen that the fit between the participants' work and their study impacted significantly on their studying experience. Those who operated within the supported employment context were advantaged by both a prior knowledge of the subject and by more ready access to supports. Creating the links between the student's work, or experience, and their study could be regarded as vital to success. By creating those links the context of the study becomes more immediate, more relevant and has greater potential for reward. Learning happens within a context and is shaped by that context, so contextualising the content to the learner's experience is important for learning to occur (Dirkx, 2001; Fenwick & Tennant, 2004; Hansman, 2001). Acknowledging that the learning doesn't just happen in someone's head places the student in the position of translating espoused theory into theory-in-action.

## **Personal Commitments**

The third area highlighted in this research is about personal commitments. The literature review signalled that the area of personal commitments is a key one for adult students. Adults who study do so in the context of otherwise busy lives, with people aged between 35 and 55 usually having the most calls placed on their time (Berger, 1983; Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 1998; Knapper & Copley, 2000; Rogers, 2001). The background information on demographics presented at the beginning of this chapter demonstrated that over two thirds (69%) of the students who enrolled in the Diploma in Supported Employment were aged between 35 and 54. The participants of this study, both those who were involved in individual interviews and those in the focus group, fitted this profile very closely with almost all people within the 35-54-age range. It is no surprise that the sample of participants closely fits the profile, even though it was not randomly selected, given the huge proportion within that age range. All the participants of this research spoke of having numerous commitments outside of their work that competed for their discretionary time.

All participants spoke of the issues involved in balancing working, for most this was full-time, studying a course that was also full-time, and continuing with family and other commitments.

Each person's ability to manage this extra demand upon their time was influenced by both their own ability to manage their time and the support they received from their workplace. As discussed in the previous sections, not all students required the same amount of personal time to study, and not all students had the same amount to study. These were dependent on their employer's support and on the fit between the study and the job. So some students had a definite advantage in their studies in these regards. The area of personal organisation, which was a decisive factor in each person's ability to succeed, will be dealt with in more depth in the next section.

Regardless of how people responded to the extra demand being made on their time, it remained a challenge to them. One participant had this to say about his experience:

*'At times, yes, being married, having children, and working, I found it quite difficult, some nights I was up until 2 o'clock, studying, swotting – but that was... I had to put in that time...Whereas had I been an 18 year old student who wasn't working fulltime, and had 8 hours a day, 5 days a week where I could maybe do it a lot differently, spend more time studying. [If] I didn't have the issues of home life and wife and children, mortgages and things like that, then maybe the way it's set up would most probably suit me more – I don't know, I'm generalising' (NC).*

The idea that people were expected to do a full time course of study on top of working was an issue for most in this research. Another participant, who had studied extramurally while working before, thought the solution was in extending the timeframe so that people had longer to complete the requirements.

*'The study part was fine; it is the lack of time. I think the time restrictions [made it difficult]. We were only given the same year as a full time student. Most of us were studying part time and trying to fit it in around other responsibilities. That was quite difficult. [Other courses were] spread over a longer period' (PC).*

The views reflected above were confirmed at the focus group meeting. Participants of the focus group agreed that the managing of life outside of study was challenging and could

sometimes be overwhelming. Some of the examples given of increased difficulty in successfully managing this balance were: doing the study while coming to terms with starting new with an organisation, one's job role taking one out of direct service provision, and leaving jobs or other changing circumstances that reduced motivation to complete the diploma. The participants' view of having to juggle study with other commitments led to a degree of expressed anxiety, which is also consistent with literature on adult learners (Knapper & Cropley, 2000; Rogers, 2001). Those who are either young adults or older, retired adults experience less anxiety and generally have more time to study than those within the age group that made up the bulk of the students enrolled on the Diploma in Supported Employment (Blaxter et al, 1998).

### **Summary**

The pressure on time means that the student must be sufficiently motivated to make the necessary sacrifices. They will need to perceive the personal payoff as commensurate with the effort expended. But even so, Blaxter et al (1998) comment that the additional pressure study places on a person's other roles requires the development of time management strategies if they are to negotiate this successfully.

### **Personal organisation**

The above view that time management was essential to successful study leads into the fifth theme that emerged in the area of factors outside the course that affected students. The third theme was about personal organisation. The concept of how people organised themselves - how well they managed their time and their commitments - came up in nearly every interview and was a significant theme in the focus group. It emerged as one of the most critical factors for success. As mentioned in the above section, all of the participants in this research were of an age where they had numerous commitments both in their work and in their personal lives. All of them commented on how adding a study regime to that mix was challenging. A key finding from this research was the different way those who completed the diploma managed their time, compared with those who did not complete the diploma. This relates to Dart's (1998) view of the control function of metacognition. That is, being able to plan, structure and evaluate one's learning. Without exception, both individual interviewees and focus group participants who successfully completed the diploma had all made a conscious decision to put aside a certain amount of their time to do

the necessary tasks. For some this was time they were allowed at work, supplemented by some of their own time, and for others it was entirely their own time.

*'At times I found it a real challenge – work was a killer – trying to do my work and my study – you had to become very structured in your day...I couldn't take time off... I structured my day very clearly...and I put in the homework in the evenings... Absolutely – if I couldn't regiment my day I wouldn't have done it – and also I put time limits on myself... – if I don't stick to times I don't succeed'* (NR).

The attitude demonstrated in the above quote is typical of the people who succeeded in the diploma. They did not necessarily find it easy, but as with NR above, they were quite deliberate about how they approached their study. They were also quite prepared to sacrifice some of their other activities, or at least their free time, to ensure they completed the work.

*'I found it quite difficult, some nights I was up until 2 o'clock, studying, swotting – but I had to put in that time... And I still struggled – but I sort of figured if I put in as much effort and time as I could – the graft - even it was just Cs that I was getting, as long as I was getting it, as long as I was passing, and as long as I was understanding and retaining what it was that I was learning, then I was going to be gaining, not just the qualification at the end, but myself I was going to be a better proponent of supported employment'* (NC).

This decision to put in the effort was not a one-off decision either. Participants spoke of how it had to be reaffirmed at different times depending on what was happening in the study or in other areas of their lives. There sometimes came critical times when each student had to reassess their commitment and decide if they could continue with it.

*'I would say – I think it's about [module] 7 I hit a brick wall...You hit a brick wall and that was really the - that's when you say – have I got the snot or not – that was the brick wall one'* (NR).

The constant re-evaluation this student reported of his commitment to the course is consistent with Kember's (1989) notion of a recycling loop. He maintains that students are constantly involved in an ongoing cost-benefit analysis of their study where they decide

whether the potential benefits of remaining on the course outweigh the immediate actual and social costs. Based on that analysis students decide whether to continue or discontinue their study (ibid). By contrast, those who did not complete the diploma tended to leave the study to 'just happen,' or were distracted by the other pressures in their lives. This was not necessarily through lack of discipline, it could also be because the person did not consider the study important enough to them to pursue beyond a certain threshold of discomfort. One person who was involved in an individual interview had this to say when asked how she organised herself:

*'I'm never organised – I'm the most unorganised person I know. Yes very ad hoc [study methods]! I try to have good intentions of being organised I just never quite manage to organise myself to get organised' (HK).*

The other two people interviewed who did not pass the diploma both had degrees, so had a good idea about the study requirements. One of these two found that the self-directed nature of the course was too difficult for her style of study.

*'I'm a focus learner. Feed it to me, I will swallow it whole because I am going to get to that. My time is valuable. [Studying the Diploma in Supported Employment] you needed some really strong motivation to keep you going, and you had to be self directed...I had all this stress in my life, it was unbelievable... I didn't fail, I withdrew' (CJ).*

The second person withdrew also because he didn't see any point in continuing. He had felt the diploma was forced on him and when it became difficult just didn't see the point in persevering. He already had a Master's qualification relevant to the field.

*'Do I need another piece of paper to plaster my wall with?' (PC).*

Personal organisation was a key point of discussion at the focus group meeting. A very interesting debate occurred around this issue and group members' different positions. The group essentially divided into two, with one grouping consisting of those who thought that it was OK to just let study happen whenever, and the remainder who thought that one had to be organised and structured so that one had time to complete the requirements. As the discussion unfolded it became clear that everyone in the latter group had successfully completed the course of study, and all those in the former group had failed to complete the

diploma. The people who maintained they needed to be organised reported they did so to reduce the enormity of the task to a manageable level. The people who were more ad hoc in their approach also reported that the task was overwhelming or impossible to fit into otherwise busy schedules.

Blaxter et al (1998) noted that overburdened students are highly likely to withdraw from courses of study and that “most adults are likely to have seriously considered the option of withdrawal if they engage in education over a lengthy period of time” (p. 144). This observation was confirmed in the current research. The participants all reported feeling overburdened at some stage and had to make a conscious decision to continue or to withdraw. That decision was affected by the value the student placed on the course, by their own level of motivation to complete, and by their ability to be self-directed. There is also the complicating factor of people who are engaging in double loop learning as opposed to those engaged in single loop learning. The latter are at a distinct advantage in their time management as, almost by definition, they have less to accomplish. Those engaged in double loop learning have to deal with the enormity of some of their foundation paradigms being altered. This will make the task appear much larger than to those more familiar to the basic values and techniques of supported employment.

Motivation and valence are two of Knowles’ principles that affect learning, which have been briefly discussed above. One of the attributes not yet discussed that Knowles ascribes to adult learners, is the ability and desire to be self-directing. There is still considerable debate about what this means for adult education but the notion that adults do undertake self-directed learning is now generally accepted (Knowles et al, 2005, Nesbit, Leach & Foley, 2004). In the later section on course content and delivery, self-direction will be discussed more fully, but for the present discussion certain characteristics need to be noted.

Knowles et al (2005) state that the degree of self-directedness exhibited by any learner varies depending on the learning situation. In general people prefer to have greater autonomy in circumstances where they are experienced with the subject matter, and may be intimidated by a self-directed learning situation if they are inexperienced with the subject matter. In the cases of interview participants ‘CJ’ and ‘HK,’ both appeared to struggle with the expectation to be self-directed and to take charge of their own learning. For both people the subject matter was relatively new and both had a preference to be guided in their learning. Participant ‘PC’ also showed a preference to be provided with direction but more for reasons of disinterest in the subject matter. By contrast, ‘NC,’ ‘NR’

and 'OL' all took a high degree of responsibility for their learning. They were self-directed in the mechanics of the learning as well as in the goals or purpose of the learning. As a result they appeared to have ownership of their learning, which may have provided greater impetus to complete the course of study.

### **Summary**

Being organised about study was possibly the most significant indicator of success revealed in this study. The personal organisation may be prompted by individual preference or by motivation to complete the course. Either way it aligned across all 12 participants - those in the focus group and the individual interviews – with those who became organised in their study completing the qualification, and those who were not organised, not completing. The contrast between the two groups indicates an important issue for adult educators: to find processes that reveal student preference and motivation; connect that to delivery style, and account for people's starting differing points in areas such as metacognition. This is important because the same subject material, presented in the same fashion impacts on different students in quite separate ways and with different effects on retention. In a similar finding, Shin & Kim (1999) found that student study habits were highly related to retention. They found that those students who invested the most time in study tended to remain in the course of study, and that this was more influential than either face-to-face activities or social integration.

### **Previous study experience**

The last of the themes that affected student performance on the Diploma in Supported Employment was previous study experience. This relates directly to Knowles' concept of 'prior experience.' As the course coordinator, the researcher noted this very early on in the course delivery. The previous study experience of individual students exhibited itself in students' expectations of the required workload, how they managed the assignments, work completion rates, standard of work, and general comfort with studying.

Every student who enrolled in the diploma intakes that are the focus of this research, was individually interviewed by phone. The interview was to both establish their eligibility and to provide them with some realistic information on what would be required of them to successfully complete the diploma. During this phase of the intake only 5% of people who had expressed an interest in studying the Diploma in Supported Employment, reconsidered

and withdrew their application. There was an expectation from UCOL - the governing academic institution - that if people fulfilled the entry criteria then they should be encouraged to enrol. However, this has caused some reflection among staff in charge of the Diploma in Supported Employment given the lower than expected pass rates. It seemed clear to the two staff members who conducted the student interviews prior to people completing enrolment that some people's limited experience of study meant that they could not understand the requirements they were signing up for.

From the first three intakes of the Diploma in Supported Employment there was only a 29% completion rate from the entire programme. This may increase to about 36% with current re-enrolments, but is still lower than hoped for. The experience of Tautoko Services conducting similar programmes, such as the Diploma in Human Services, is that typically 60-70% of students pass (Tautoko Services' student records). A literature review from ODL (Open and Distance Learning) institutions from around the world completed by the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand commented "that successful programme completion for ODL students ranges from less than 10% to around 35%" (Grote, 2000:5). Dreaver (2003) noted that there were a number of variables that could lead to student withdrawal; one that related to this current theme was student preparedness. If students were not prepared for the study in terms of their background knowledge of the study area and their metacognitive study processes, then that is an important factor contributing to the likelihood of dropout.

A particular feature of staff working in the vocational sector of disability support, and indeed of many workers in disability support services, is their low participation rates in tertiary study. Many who entered the diploma had not studied since leaving secondary school. Indeed 32% of people enrolled in the Diploma in Supported Employment gained no qualification at secondary level and a further 30% had no higher secondary qualification than sixth form certificate. Participants of this research definitely stated that an individual's academic background affected their study. It either made it easier or harder, depending on what they had previously done. Members of the focus group thought that previous study had the same level of beneficial effect on a person's performance in the Diploma in Supported Employment, as did their background knowledge of supported employment, that is, they contributed equally. Individual interview participants in this research reported that it wasn't so much the academic level that was challenging to them, but the whole mindset and discipline of formal study.

*'It was a major challenge actually having to sit down and actually really think about what I was doing... Once you start working you tend to not, and later on you go back to it and that's when it becomes really hard because I think people get into a mind set – it's Ok when you're fresh out of learning – you've been in that mode for so long – then suddenly you're not any more – you've got to go back into it – it's difficult' (HK).*

People also commented on the techniques of study. If one had these then it facilitated learning, but if one did not then one had to learn the techniques at the same time as learning the substantive topic.

*'I hadn't done any studies at that level. At first reading everything word for word and trying to absorb everything on every page. As you go on you get more disciplined at looking at what the questions are... what you are required to furnish and then being a lot better at skimming though to find it... I think if you haven't done any tertiary study, to look at what you're being asked to furnish by way of answers for your essays. It's important for your essays to understand what's going to be required to go into that to get a pass, was the hardest thing for me to get my head around' (OL).*

For others the volume of reading required was an issue. As for the above person, techniques to ensure the reading was well directed were important and some found they improved over the period of study but two did not. One participant thought that she got worse as the course progressed and as she was under more pressure from work. Another, who had studied at a tertiary level, still found the quantity of reading daunting.

*'I had done a degree a couple of years earlier...[but]...I found there was a huge, enormous amount of paperwork to read which...sort of choked you' (CJ).*

Two of the participants interviewed, who had done significant amounts of previous tertiary study, commented on how hard the course would have been without that background. This was not because of the level of study per se, but because of all the other factors that also impacted on one's potential to succeed. Given that these were going to make the course difficult enough, lack of study skills was an additional burden. As one commented:

*'I don't think you could have done it. I think you would be really struggling without having had some previous academic study' (PC).*

The other person was even more direct. He considered that this was such a significant part of success that it should be considered a prerequisite to entering the course of study.

*'I think you're going to have to be cruel to be kind and say look, unless you've done this amount of study, x amount of study, I'm sorry but you're not compatible or you will pay the price for it through frustration' (NR).*

This realistic expectation of what was required, based on previous study experience, stimulated two other participants to think very carefully before they committed to the Diploma in Supported Employment. Both of them reported unsatisfactory experience of previous study. Subsequently, one participant found the Diploma in Supported Employment to be a great, if difficult, experience and passed the course. The other found that her issues with the organisation of the course of study were largely repeated and withdrew. Members of the focus group were in accord with the people who gave individual interviews about the beneficial effects of previous study. They were clear that previous study experience critically affected students' performance on this course, as did a good general knowledge of supported employment. This background knowledge meant people who had it were not struggling with both the broad concepts being presented as well as all the academic requirements and processes. One of the suggestions that came from the group was that there could be some sort of study workshop that ran prior to the course for those without the necessary background. This workshop could focus on study skills, metacognition and the fundamental supported employment concepts. This could begin to move the course away from the mass production approach towards an individualised social constructivist approach (Curry, 2001; Peters, 1998; Simonson et al, 2003). One of the interview participants also considered this possibility:

*'Maybe a practice run. I was just thinking, you know, of the thing about – what's being asked of you? And you producing an essay...and then had your supervisor sit with you and say "look they asked for this, you haven't put this here"' (OL).*

Participants considered that there were three key areas where previous study affected students: previous tertiary study could provide the necessary study tools, it could provide a realistic expectation of what study would be like and, if negative, the past experience could

leave people feeling anxious or concerned. The view expressed by participants in this research of feeling unprepared for formal study is a common phenomenon in adult education (Bash, 2005; Rogers, 2001). For many it stems from lack of experience in tertiary or continuing education, and for others it reflects feelings of past education, especially of school. Feeling of inadequacy can be particularly acute for those students who did not achieve academically at school or who found school a disappointing environment (Rogers, 2001). Given the previous academic background of the majority of Diploma in Supported Employment students in the cohorts used for this study, it is understandable why participants expressed concern or anxiety about their ability to perform as a student.

In Knowles' theory the adult learner's prior experience and their self concept as a learner both play a part in understanding how previous study experience can affect adult students. Adults come to the new learning situation with experience of many things, one of which is their past study experience. If this past experience was enjoyable and successful then the individual is likely to approach the new situation feeling in control and wanting to be self-directing. But if the individual's last educational experience was at school, and particularly if this was unsatisfactory, then they can bring those feelings and mental models of childhood learning with them to the new situation and expect more of the same. In the last quote above from 'OL,' the suggestion was made for a practice run. The idea being that this would provide students with the skills necessary to do the study rather than having to learn these as well as learn the subject matter. In fact, according to Bash (2005) this is now recommended best practice for educational institutions providing for adult learners. It allows the institution to "provide these incoming students with an introductory course that is designed to provide adult learners with tools, skills, and systems that will enable them to succeed" (Bash, 2005: 83). Such a process could enable adults to take charge of their learning, shrug off negative learning experiences and be the self-directed learners of Knowles' schema.

A fourth area of potential anxiety for adult learners is the potential that enrolling in learning is tantamount to admitting incompetence or a deficit in knowledge (Rogers, 2001). Senior or long-standing personnel are more likely to experience these feelings and they can sometimes lead to people believing what they are learning applies to others but not to themselves. Also senior staff nearing retirement may see themselves as having less time to apply new learning and knowledge in relation to the investment needed to learn it. Adults have a sense of being autonomous and most come to education with well developed social

roles that affirm their self-concept. Outside of the educational arena people may be parents, spouses, business people, coaches, teachers, professionals, etc. All of these denote degrees of competence and social standing. Finding themselves considering a role that is new to them, or worse still, one where they have memories of experiencing difficulty, could cause some to resist the challenge to their self-concept that a new learning situation may pose. Interestingly there was only one senior practitioner who enrolled in the Diploma in Supported Employment out of the 177 students.

### **Summary**

Participants in this research identified previous study experience as an important factor in their studying experience. They noted that a lack of formal study could leave them with a low self-concept as a learner and could deprive them of vital metacognitive and study tools. Concomitantly there was an increased likelihood of anxiety due to the lack of experience and to the fear of the unknown. Conversely, those who had studied previously entered the diploma with a more realistic expectation of the workload and with study tools to assist them. Useful suggestions for improving the course included setting higher entry criteria or having a pre-entry practice paper to teach necessary skills and to potentially assist people to self-select.

### **Chapter Summary**

The participants of this research related a number of areas that affected their study that were not directly related to the Diploma in Supported Employment, but influenced their experience. All of the participants spoke of struggling to make the study fit into otherwise busy lives. Those factors that assisted them most in their study were: employer support, a close fit between study and work, previous study experience and, most crucially, personal organisation. Those factors that opposed successful study were: feeling compelled to enrol, lack of employer support, little or negative previous study experience, competing commitments and not becoming organised or structured in the study routine. Each of these factors positively or negatively contributed to whether the individual student found the Diploma in Supported Employment met their expectations, whether it supported their practice and whether it was worth it for them. In the next chapter we move from factors outside the course to those factors within the course that affected the participants studying experience.

## Chapter 7

### FACTORS RELATING TO THE COURSE THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE STUDYING EXPERIENCE

*'People say you can't teach old dogs new tricks, but I think if you've got a really good trainer and a very receptive old dog, you can' (NC).*

#### Introduction

The following chapter outlines and analyses the second group of themes that came out of the research. This group of themes relates directly to the way the course was delivered: to its content and to the processes used. It was these areas that the research was specifically established to discover, so each of the following themes is of central import to the overall research. From participant reports there were five major areas that related to the Diploma in Supported Employment that helped or hindered their study. Each of these will be examined in subsequent sections within the following chapter. Throughout the analysis I will add insights gained through my role as coordinator for the Diploma and based on my experience and knowledge of the vocational sector. The first section will cover the theme of the role and style of the learning facilitator. It will consider those aspects of the role, and the way it was operationalised, that assisted or detracted from the participants' studying experience. The second section reviews comments made about the study group meetings and the impact these had on participants. Section three examines how interactions with other students on the course supported or hindered participants as they studied the Diploma in Supported Employment. The fourth section investigates the content of the course and the way information was delivered, in particular the study guides and the material they contained are reviewed. The penultimate section considers the assessment methods used within the Diploma in Supported Employment. It looks at issues that arose through the assessment process and considers processes that may improve this aspect of the course. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the implications for the Diploma in Supported Employment from the research.

#### The Learning Facilitator

The first of the themes that this chapter will consider is the role of the learning facilitator. In the context of the Diploma in Supported Employment the learning facilitator had a

defined role as a person who was there to support the student. The learning facilitator was there to coach and mentor the student rather than to act as a tutor per se. There was a minor role in assisting people to understand the content of the course. But because the Diploma in Supported Employment was offered as self-directed study, the expectation was that students would be provided with most of the information they required, along with recommendations of where to find additional information. The learning facilitator was there to facilitate the study group meetings, mark assignment work, and field queries people had about the course. If the nature of the query was about supported employment practice then the learning facilitator could provide an answer if they knew, refer the person to the appropriate section in their book of readings, or pass the query to the course coordinator. In this way the role was to operate in a similar way to that advocated by Knowles et al (2005), although little consideration was given to the individualised learning contract Knowles promoted.

The learning facilitators who were employed for the Diploma in Supported Employment were generally senior supported employment practitioners sourced through the ASENZ network. In those situations where there was no senior supported employment practitioner who could fulfil this role then other networks were used to find suitably qualified people with experience in disability. The learning facilitators met before course delivery and again in moderation meetings where their role was defined, explained and discussed. Based on these meetings most learning facilitators appeared to be reasonably clear as to their role, and operated, or attempted to operate, on that understanding. Where they reported a difficulty was in explaining and operating in that role when it was at variance with the students' expectation and expressed need.

The role of learning facilitator as outlined above was novel to many students, and to most of the individuals contracted to be learning facilitators. As a result people initially tended to understand the role based on their previous experience of study or school. They often appeared to expect the learning facilitator to be a tutor or teacher. In addition, the role of learning facilitator was relatively new to those organising the delivery of the course. This resulted in organisers having numerous discussions about the comparative merit of contracting learning facilitators whose primary skill was supported employment, as opposed to learning facilitators whose primary skill was facilitation. The conundrum was resolved, in most cases, in favour of people who knew about supported employment. It was settled in this way because the diploma was a new course and the thinking was that having experienced practitioners facilitating it would be more politically acceptable and would

provide more credibility to the course. It is possible this decision led to an increased probability of role confusion. By selecting people who knew about supported employment the implicit message might well have been that there was an expectation learning facilitators would act as tutors.

Prior to this research, the anecdotal information passed back to those running this course, including the researcher, was that the learning facilitator was critical to the students' success. For example, in a survey conducted by UCOL in August 2004, 18 out of 26 people from the Diploma in Supported Employment listed the learning facilitator as one of the aspects of the course they found the most helpful (UCOL, 2004). The assumption made was that the learning facilitator was an important source of support. However the current research, while not contradicting that notion, has offered another interpretation. All of the participants of the current research spoke of the role of the learning facilitator and how it affected their study. However the nature of their comments tended to portray the learning facilitator role as a potential obstacle if done poorly, rather than as a primary source of support. One form of evidence for this conclusion is the amount of time individual interview participants spoke about their learning facilitator. Those four who thought the person did a good job and helped them tended to gloss over the role, whereas the two who did not have such a positive experience, went into the area in much more detail. Another factor pointing towards this conclusion is that those who were unhappy with their experience tended to rate the role as more critical. As one person who struggled with her learning facilitator's style commented when considering the importance of the role:

*'I guess for the group...the whole thing sinks or swims on the [learning facilitator]'*  
(OL).

To a degree the participants' reaction to their learning facilitator could be explained by their emotional state. Dirkx (2001) noted that the way the student reacted to their teacher had a very significant impact on their motivation to learn, their ability to learn and their perception of the learning process. In this case if the learning facilitator was experienced at putting people at ease and ensuring their emotional needs were met, then they were more likely to assist the students to be successful than if they simply attended to the course content. The learning facilitator's ability to manage challenges to the students' established beliefs and values could be another important factor. Rogers (2001) pointed out that the potential for people to feel inadequate or incompetent is greater when the study is in an area in which they operate. All of the participants of this research were studying within

their work context so any unresolved anxiety relating to feelings of inadequacy could certainly inhibit the perceived value of the study (Knapper & Cropley, 2000; Rogers, 2001).

For the Diploma in Supported Employment programme, the learning facilitator had four major roles to fulfil. These roles were: running the study group meetings, providing a first point of call for queries, pastoral care, and marking assessment material. In the following discussion about the students' experience of the learning facilitator, the first three of these are considered. Reference to the learning facilitator's role in marking is considered later in the section on course content and delivery.

### **Running the study group meetings**

The most obvious role that the learning facilitator fulfilled was that of running the study group meeting. In this role, participants spoke of the learning facilitator's style and ability to maintain the group's focus and cohesion. As with any other group there are certain tasks to be accomplished, such as forming, developing trust and negotiating the rules of operation if the group is to work together well (Bens, 2005; McShane & Travalione, 2005; Rogers, 2002). Some found this was done very well and others were less satisfied. At the focus group, participants recorded that the learning facilitator was critical to the success of the study group meeting. Some members of the focus group had a learning facilitator who was very good in terms of the content but didn't manage the process as well, and generally those individuals thought that the study group was not very useful to them. Other members of the focus group had a learning facilitator who knew less about content but was very good at managing the process. Here they all thought that their study group meetings were valuable and that the time was well spent. In discussion, the focus group resolved that it is better to have a learning facilitator who is more process oriented than content oriented. This view was echoed in the individual interviews. One person whose learning facilitator was selected for their experience in supported employment commented:

*'Meetings did tend to be a bit disorganised with this particular person. They would waffle on and I know it was missing...the bottom half of the class' (OL).*

The above participant considered that much of the discussion was too technical for many of the study group members, especially those new to supported employment. When asked whether, based on her experience, she favoured a learning facilitator who knew about

supported employment as opposed to one who knew about group facilitation, she commented:

*'I think they are both very important. I actually lean slightly towards group facilitation...because I'm sure that if an issue came up you would have, now, access to expert opinion on supported employment. But running a group is an ongoing day to day thing.'* (OL).

Her experience has led her to believe that managing the process of assisting people to work together and to explore new learning is more important than just having the answers. Another participant, who had a different experience of the study group meetings, considered them quite differently. This participant also had a learning facilitator contracted for their supported employment expertise; however it appears this learning facilitator also attended to group process very well. When asked if her learning facilitator assisted the study group meeting process this participant said:

*'Oh yes. They were cool! It was really good... We had quite a large study group...and [the learning facilitator] is easy...'* (HK).

In her case this participant found the process was dealt with well and so the meetings were worthwhile. She also commented, as did two others, that having someone who was local was especially useful because they were perceived to be more accessible and to know the local issues better. These three participants reported that because their learning facilitator was local they felt more at ease about contacting them and thought the learning facilitators would have a better understanding of the participants' particular circumstances.

For one participant, having a local learning facilitator who worked in supported employment was not necessarily seen as a good idea. Reference was made to a specific situation where the participant thought that there was the potential for the learning facilitator, who was also the manager of a supported employment service, to gain some business advantage from their facilitation role. The concern stemmed from the fact that, as the diploma is an applied course, there is a significant amount of information provided for marking which details the operations of the agency in which the student works. This particular participant, while acknowledging the usefulness of local information and the obvious skills the learning facilitator brought to the job, had concerns about protecting organisational information from someone who works for a competing agency. The

participant pointed out that this concern did not come out of his own experience with the diploma, but had been reported to him from others in another intake.

*'You'd have to be very careful how you chose your [learning facilitator] as well... In [our area] that did flow through to a lot of other people working on the course because there was a reluctance to hand over certain information which actually propped up [the learning facilitator's] own business' (NR).*

An incidental point from the above comment is the way in which students from different intakes of the diploma did talk to each other and 'compare notes.' No work has been done as to what extent later intakes benefited from the work or experience of earlier intakes.

In general then, participants of the research consider that one of the key skills for a learning facilitator to possess, given the way the diploma is organised, is that of group facilitation. Without an adequate ability to manage the group, learning opportunities were lost and people became more likely to be frustrated with the process. The dissatisfaction could easily spill over into general feeling of dissatisfaction with the course. Evidence that this may have happened comes from the course completion rates of students in different groups. There were many reasons why in some groups of students, more completed the diploma than other groups. One of those reasons could be related to the facilitation skills of the learning facilitator. In four regions there were two learning facilitators contracted to deliver the Diploma in Supported Employment. In two of those regions one of the learning facilitators had little experience with supported employment but was experienced with group work. The other learning facilitator in each region was more experienced at supported employment but less so at group work. In each case the learning facilitator more experienced at group work had significantly more students complete the diploma than the latter. By way of example, the completion rates in one of the regions were: the learning facilitator with group work experience had a 50% pass rate, while the learning facilitator with supported employment experience had a 16% pass rate (Tautoko Services' Graduate List, 2004). This evidence is in no way conclusive, but does align with the students' comments from the current research. It may relate to the concept of social facilitation which states that individual performance can be affected by the group performance for better or worse (Guerin, 1993).

However, any such conclusions remain tentative, particularly in light of evidence enumerated by Nesbit et al (2004). They state that research on teacher attributes or

behaviours affecting learner outcomes is ambiguous. They quote particular studies that argue there is little evidence to claim teaching behaviour relates to learner outcomes. They note other research that indicates that some factors, such as class size and teaching style, do have different learner outcomes. They conclude that common sense knowledge is that there is a relationship between the way teachers teach, and what students learn, but that “teaching and learning are such complex and context-specific activities that teacher effectiveness research can only offer the most general conclusion” (p. 76).

### **Support outside the study group meetings**

Two other roles that learning facilitators fulfilled were to be available to students to field queries about the course content or delivery between meetings, and to provide some pastoral care. The student queries could range from asking for extensions on due dates for assignments, to assistance with understanding some piece of content, to checking where an assignment was that was due to be returned to them. The pastoral care was an ad hoc extension to the study group meeting and where individual students sought advice on work related issues, or even employment and personal issues. The parameters for pastoral care were set very loosely so learning facilitators worked this to suit themselves. As a result, participants in this research reported a range of experiences with the support role of their learning facilitators. For some the learning facilitators fulfilled the role as they expected, were readily available and were approachable. For others support outside the study group meetings was problematic.

One of the issues that came up, which has been discussed earlier in a different context, was having a local person as the learning facilitator. Three participants spoke about how having a local learning facilitator greatly improved accessibility and noted that this would not have been as good for them had the person had to travel from out of town. Another participant spoke of his frustrations with the accessibility of a learning facilitator who was from another area. His frustration remained until appropriate technology was used to mediate the contact. He then reported there was much better access and he felt more supported. From these two different perspectives, it may be that the issue is not so much about location as about availability, or perception of availability of the learning facilitator. One participant reported his experience of support from his learning facilitator was very beneficial to him, and explained how his learning facilitator went beyond what many would have expected.

*'We studied during the day once a week for 2 hours, 2 and a half hours with [the learning facilitator]. That was exceptional because had that opportunity not been there, I would have found it very, very difficult to continue it because of all my other responsibilities and obligations and commitments' (NC).*

This person had the level of accessibility and one-to-one support that he needed to remain engaged and successful in his study. Another participant alluded to the same level of support as something she saw as a potential improvement for the role of the learning facilitator. She identified this from her experience of her learning facilitator.

*'Probably another difficult thing was our [learning facilitator] wasn't fantastic at returning phone calls...I think that maybe it would have been good to have more regular one-to-one review meetings with [the learning facilitator]' (OL).*

The above participant identified both a support issue with her learning facilitator – lack of follow up around phone calls, and the potential for more support through one-on-one meetings. She went on to comment how those one-on-one meetings would assist people know how they were doing, keep them on track and provide instruction for those who were struggling with the course content. The previously mentioned participant (NR) who reported having difficulty contacting his learning facilitator (who was from another geographical location) spoke of his experience and commented on the difference it made to him once his learning facilitator became more contactable.

*'I actually felt very isolated, very alone – and so – what makes it harder is when you put your work in for marking, you don't know if you're even within cooey – or you hit the mark...I mean once [the learning facilitator] come on line, a lot better – we e-mailed, communication was better, I'd send stuff down and say, hey, what do you think? And she'd critique it and she'd say, yes, or - generally it was yes – it was generally supportive – but I think you need to look into this area here... Yes [feedback was] especially vital. If you've got faith in your tutor, which I was lucky to have, and I think she had faith in me – that was the other side of it which was nice – reciprocal...but no, absolutely critical, your right tutor, independent, and the ability to be able ask questions without feeling that you were fishing for answers or being patronised or actually being put-down – yes, no, I have to compliment [the learning facilitator] and I really have to do that because she took quite a good attitude – I'd like actually to pass that back to her' (NR).*

From the above discussion it can be seen that accessibility was critical to participants' experience of support from their learning facilitator. Knowing that the learning facilitator would respond to queries in a timely fashion was important to students particularly if they were lacking confidence in their work. With accessibility came the possibility of feelings of mutual respect as also indicated in the above quote. This same individual had earlier spoken of his frustrations and doubts in his learning facilitator's competence based his experience of her being unavailable. So accessibility and group facilitation are the two learning facilitator' skills research participants identified as those that affected their experience the most. These findings concur with Moore's (1993) model of distance education and his concept of transactional distance that has two variables: structure and dialogue., and with Knowles' concept of remodelling the nature of teaching in adult education. Knowles considered it vital to change the role of the teacher from the traditional understanding of this role. Knowles et al (2005) portrayed the traditionally understood role of teacher as one of content transmitter, student controller and assessor. He advocates that the teacher role be abandoned in favour of a new role, for which he coined the term 'learning facilitator.' The learning facilitator moves away from content planning to process design, from content transmission to linking students to learning resources, and from student control to encouraging students to take initiative and to claim ownership of their learning. All of these changes point towards a role where process is the critical area for the learning facilitator to apply their expertise.

Heron (1993) asserted that there are two basic ways a teacher can intervene to teach. They can use 'authoritative interventions' that are aimed at directly controlling the student or students, or 'facilitative interventions' which indirectly influence the student or students. Heron maintains that skilled teachers can move from one to the other as the situation demands, but that the most effective functions or interventions (that is those that contribute most to student learning) are the indirect ones. Heron's notion of facilitation as being the most effective intervention concurs with a central tenant of Knowles' thesis of how adults learn best.

From the earlier discussion on how the role of the learning facilitator for the Diploma in Supported Employment was defined, it can be seen that the intent was to have the role support the students through self-directed learning. However the application of the role was less clear due to two significant planning issues. Firstly, and most significantly, the course was planned in a conventional way. The curriculum was tightly organised, the subject

material to be covered was provided and the assessment activities prescribed. All of these can mitigate against the student feeling ownership over their learning and therefore could reduce their ability to actualise self-direction. The second planning issue was that the role of supporting student self-direction was not clarified sufficiently for learning facilitators. They underwent training but this training did not frame their function as one of encouraging the students to take control of the learning. Instead it suggested that their role was to support the student to follow the teaching provided in the written material. The difference is perhaps subtle, but significant. Facilitation in an adult learning situation implicitly acknowledges a sharing of power, that no one has all the answers and that it is important for each person to own their opinions (Rogers, 2001). Done this way, facilitation will encourage self-direction in learning. In the Diploma in Supported Employment the two issues of course planning and the function of the learning facilitator combine and interact. The planning provides guidelines that people, unfamiliar with the learning facilitator role, then feel compelled to reinforce. Together they may have operated to reduce the individual student's autonomy, or at least to fail to encourage it.

## **Summary**

The research indicates that the role of learning facilitator was central to the studying experience of the research participants as would be predicted by Holmberg (1989). The role was broad, involving study group facilitation, mentoring and assessing. Of these, the ability for learning facilitators to facilitate individual and group learning situations was considered the most important. There were clearly some structural issues in the way the Diploma in Supported Employment course conceived and practiced the role. To act as a learning facilitator, as defined by Knowles, the role would have involved much more negotiation with the individual learners about the process, the objectives of the learning, and the evidence of accomplishment. In Knowles schema this was done by way of a 'learning contract' (Knowles et al, 2005). Without such input it was perhaps unrealistic to expect students to shrug off their previous learning conditioning and be fully self-directing. Without the learning facilitators being aware of these issues it is unrealistic to expect them to operate outside of their own experience of education and to offer students the opportunity to become self-directed. However, despite such limitation the role was generally fulfilled well and participants were generally appreciative of their learning facilitator.

## The Study Group Meeting

The second theme to be explored in this chapter was the participants' experience of the study group meeting, and how this affected their study. The study group meeting has been used by Tautoko Services in its training delivery since it first became involved in providing certificate and diploma courses by distance education in 1998. The study group meetings had three major intended functions. They were to provide students with a forum to check their progress, they were an opportunity for the learning facilitator to clarify content and assist people as required, and they were an opportunity for some assessment activities. In general, this research indicates that these functions were adequately performed. Initially study group meetings were held monthly by Tautoko Services, but experience has shown that students do better if these meetings occur more frequently. With the Diploma in Supported Employment the expectation was that, for most, the study group would meet fortnightly. The exceptions to this were if people had long distances to travel, or later on in the programme if the majority of the group elected to meet less often. In these situations the group might meet monthly. Of the people who were individually interviewed, four found the study group meeting very beneficial and two did not. Those who found the meetings beneficial showed real enjoyment of them, as indicated by these participants' responses to the question: "did the study groups help you?"

*'They were cool! It was really good' (HK).*

*'They did. They were brilliant. The fact that there were 3 or 4 of us, we were quite lucky in some ways. That is it was quite personal, but it wasn't one-to-one. And it wasn't 15, because that would have become quite cumbersome' (CN).*

The level of satisfaction in the study group meeting was consistent with the findings of the UCOL survey mentioned earlier. In this survey, 23 of the 26 respondents considered the study group meeting as one of the most helpful aspects of the course. Respondents to the UCOL survey were very clear that they valued the interaction of the study group meeting, to the point that when asked if they would study this course on-line, only 11 said yes. A further 15 people commented that the lack of potential interaction with an on-line course would either reduce the value of the course or make the course completely unattractive (UCOL, 2004). During the two 2002 intakes students had web based support through UCOL that offered on-line chat, discussion groups, notice boards and links to additional material. No students used this resource, although when questioned through the learning

facilitators, a very few - less than 10 - did report having looked at it. Anecdotal comments indicated that students received all they wanted through the resources provided and through the study group meetings, which is in keeping with Brown & Brown's (1994) comment that it is the appropriate technology for the group that is important, not whatever is the latest on the market.

In a similar study to this research, Petracchi (2000) evaluated two distance social work courses that were mediated through computer and multimedia technology. She found that although students appreciated the sense of control over their study the technology offered, "these same students also indicated that the course fostered a sense of isolation and passive learning (i.e., they couldn't ask questions, couldn't discuss material or issues, or tended to watch [videos] alone" (p. 374). In other words, the technology appears to have created exactly those conditions students of the Diploma in Supported Employment feared they would, but were avoided through study group meetings.

Individual participants in the current research commented on a number of aspects that made the study group meetings beneficial other than the performance of the learning facilitator which was discussed above. The first of these was that they provided some structure for study by providing a regular timeframe for completion of work. The fact that every two weeks there was a deadline of sorts helped some participants manage the size of the task. Without this structure the course requirements could easily have appeared too large to be managed. The second area participants found useful was the learning facilitator checking up on people's progress, both in terms of where the group members were up to in the study, and their understanding of the content. Checking people's progress helped the participants to have an idea of where they were and how they were progressing, while assisting with motivation and providing support.

*'I think it was really important to have that motivation – not just the self-motivation but... that I was also part of a group. That I had other people that I was also going to be responsible with and to... I think a lot of people would find a lot of opportunities or excuses not to complete things if they weren't motivated' (NC).*

At the focus group, participants concurred with the above view and suggested that the study group meetings also allowed students to monitor their progress against other group members. The comparison with other students could help to motivate them through a sense of competition, or at least console them that they were not the only person struggling with

time or the material. The other two key themes about the study group meetings were not anticipated prior to the research. As such they are dealt with in more detail in separate sections below. These two themes are: the timing and location of the meetings, and the effect of other students. The latter will be considered as part of the section considering how other students contributed to the studying experience.

### **Timing and location of meeting**

Holmberg (1989) suggested that freedom of choice about where and when to study were important aspects of distance education. Potentially this could be compromised with group even though the study group meetings were arranged to occur at a time and place that suited the majority of the group. In theory they could occur at any time of the day or the week that people choose, and in any place. In practice though, the timing of the meeting was often determined by the availability of the learning facilitator or by the willingness of people's employers to give work time off for these. The location was usually the most central point or the most convenient place for the learning facilitator. About a third of study group meetings happened after hours and the rest at some time, usually the afternoon, during a working day. Of the 6 people interviewed 5 had their study group during working hours and one had it after hours. Most people were satisfied with the timing and location of their study group. When reflecting on this aspect, some participants commented that had the organisation of the study group meeting been different then it may not have suited them as well.

*'Had we had to travel to [X] or [Y] or somewhere else, or do it maybe late at night, that may well have impacted' (NC).*

Three participants spoke of other members of their study groups who had to travel some considerable distances to attend these meetings and the difficulties that could pose. They commented on the inequitable time and resource the travel represented, and that sometimes students who travelled were tired on arrival. One participant recalled that on one occasion the main part of his study group travelled two and a half hours to allow the meeting to occur in the locality of two other members. They did this to support those members and share the travelling load. At the focus group meeting, participants observed that the timing of the study group meeting was important. If the meeting happened outside of normal work hours it meant that people wanted to get it over and done with and get on with the rest of their evening. If it happened inside work hours people were more relaxed about the

time taken - provided they were allowed the extra time by their employers. Generally the individual interview participants' comments were in agreement with the above observation. However, one participant commented on the difficulty of daytime meetings and managing a busy workload.

*'I had enough stress with work, flicking it all off at 1 o'clock, someone would turn up to see me at the door so I would have to flick out...'* (CJ).

Another participant spoke of the difficulties he encountered in the location of his study group meeting. This student was meeting on one of the campuses of the sponsoring academic institution. The participant thought that because of this, finding a venue for the meeting should be automatic however, this was not their experience. In the end this group got tired of always looking for a room and met at one of the student's places of work.

*'We got no support from UCOL really...Initially when I went to the library they denied we were on a course...It's little things like that have made it hard'* (PC).

For this participant, the fact that the study group meeting appeared to be unwelcome at the campus of the academic institution that ran the course was both unsettling and demotivating. The difficulty in finding a venue, and the attendant feelings of not being valued, created a culture of resistance between the students and the course administration. There developed a feeling of 'us' and 'them' that worked against the students feeling committed to the course requirements. Study group member found the unsettling experience of not knowing where the group would meet combined with the evident lack of concern to create a sense of powerlessness. Evans (1994) commented that the issue of power can be overwhelming for some students. It takes a lot to confront a teacher and even more to confront an institution. The issue of not feeling welcomed by the institution did not only apply to those who were trying to establish a study group meeting there. It leads on to a broader issue of how distance education students are supported by their institutions.

Anecdotal comments from others indicated additional areas of concern, much of which centred on the fact that the Diploma in Supported Employment was done by distance from an institution unaccustomed to this form of delivery. This meant the institution's processes were not geared towards students who studied off-campus. One frequently cited example is the student identification cards. People were expected to present themselves at the campus for their photographs but there was no system in place for those who could not. The card

was necessary for access to the library and other services. Students found that this was a very unwelcoming experience, and was usually their first encounter with the institution. Petracchi (2000) commented:

“Questions regarding resource availability should be paramount to schools of social work contemplating the delivery of courses to remote sites. Instructors must be mindful to ensure comparability of the learning experience for remote students with on-campus students” (p. 369).

The more general question can now be asked: were the study group meetings a useful tool in assisting people with their studies? Most of the people in this research thought the meetings were constructive. Mowatt & Siann (1998) cite research both for and against the benefits of learning inside small groups. They conclude the general consensus to be, for adult learners, that the benefits of group learning far outweigh the disadvantages, especially when the group operates within a cooperative ethos. Some of the specific advantages commented on include: moving students away from a passive stance to being more actively engaged in their learning, increased social and communicative skills, enhanced creativity, and a reduction of the dominance of the tutor. The learning context is a significant feature in determining the utility of employing groups in adult learning. Pratt (2002) outlines five perspectives of teaching and comments that any one can be effective or ineffective depending on the context and the quality of application. He states that for teachers interested in social reform, discussion can assist students move towards a critical stance on a societal issue. Certainly with the Diploma in Supported Employment the intent was to assist students to critically reflect on the nature of disability in society and particularly the nature of disability in the labour market. Pratt's view that discussion could be helpful in such circumstances is reflected in the comments made by participants in this research.

In a similar vein, Cranton (2002) maintains that critical reflection is assisted through talking to others, “exchanging opinions and ideas, receiving support and encouragement, and engaging in discourse where alternatives are seriously weighed and evidence brought forth” (Cranton, 2002:65). This research confirmed Cranton's view as demonstrated by comments provided above, especially those quoted from ‘OL’ and ‘HK.’ The effectiveness of the small group in assisting people to critically explore new ideas is perhaps a challenge to the growing fashion of on-line courses for social service qualifications. As previously noted in the literature review, Brown and Brown (1994) comment that newer technologies

are not necessarily superior to older styles of delivery, it is how the mix interacts with the subject that is important. It may be that there is an important place still of interaction in social services training, and indeed in any training that requires critical reflection. The people who had studied the Diploma in Supported Employment and who responded to the UCOL survey previously mentioned, certainly appeared to hold this view.

## **Summary**

The research indicates that participants reported the study group meeting to be a primary tool for success in the Diploma in Supported Employment. It notes that these groups must be well run for students to gain maximum utility and enjoyment from them. The meetings assisted students by offering a studying structure, support from other students, clarification of learning material and the development of networks. The time and location of the meeting were important for participants with this needing to be negotiated so it was acceptable to all, if possible. One participant raised the necessity of attention being paid to the details of how students encounter the course; distance students can easily become disenchanted if they perceive that they are not as valued as on-campus students.

## **Interactions with Other Students**

The following section combines participants' thoughts on how other students affected their study, both within the study group meeting environment and without. Participants commented that interactions with other students on the course had a significant impact on their own study. Most talked about this in the context of the study group meeting. Three also noted that being in work environments where other people were either currently studying, or had previously studied this course, assisted them. A comment by one participant, as she was talking about support from other students in general, is indicative of this view.

*'Probably I think though the most helpful was being alongside, you know, in a working environment, with somebody else who was doing the diploma so that we could [support each other] a lot. I think that if it had been [study] groups only I would have really struggled' (OL).*

This again indicates the collegial nature of study that can develop, as referred to in the section on the learning facilitator. This collaboration was not a planned for outcome but

was very much in keeping with the networking approach to supported employment being taught. The focus group participants agreed with the notion of developing collegial relationships and noted the networking opportunity that this represented. Members of the focus group commented how they had made useful links through the study group meetings that they had maintained after the course finished. The sense of collegiality was evident in the way people spoke of the interactions they had with other students at, or as a result of, study group meetings. For most this was a positive experience and improved their level of satisfaction with the study group meeting, regardless of the person's perception of their learning facilitator's effectiveness. One person, who incidentally did not think their learning facilitator was particularly effective, had this to say about their study group meetings:

*'What worked were our focus group meetings – our support group meetings. Hearing what other people were doing, hearing what was going wrong for them, what was going right. And people were really good about supporting each other and sharing information. It was not a competitive environment' (OL).*

The support and sharing students had together were clearly important outcomes of the study group meetings for some and, in this case, appeared to ameliorate the perceived ineffectiveness of the learning facilitator. It allowed for a collegial environment in which people from other organisations could talk and compare notes on the process of supported employment.

*'Probably the most [useful] was when we break and talk – you know the small talk and the banter that went on... having the people – just bouncing ideas off people – this seemed to give different perspectives – it was really good' (HK).*

Peer learning has consistently been found to be more important than time in formal classes in universities (Knapper & Cropley, 2000). They observe that there are many roles for the peer learning including tutoring, problem solving, counselling and collaborating. All of these allow for invaluable support, information and advice, usually offered in a very grounded way. Coe & Elliott (1999) also found that there were high levels of student socialisation and cooperation between distance students when they met as a group. Not all groups offer these potential benefits however. For the two individual interview participants who found the study group meetings unhelpful, their difficulties related to the make up of the group, not necessarily the learning facilitator. One of these two participants, who spoke

very highly of his learning facilitator, found that the compatibility issues in the study group meetings were not helpful to him.

*'There were only four people in our group and... I felt there was a huge difference. I mean although I really got on well with [X] we didn't communicate on a similar level – and that didn't help because I come from maybe an academic line of thinking whereas hers was coming from more of a humanitarian type of thinking. I'm not critical I'm just saying we weren't study compatible. I like study partners – it works for me. And the guys in [Y] were out of their...depth' (NR).*

The other participant also had compatibility issues but of an almost opposite nature. For her, the members of her study group meeting appeared to over-identify with each other's problems. When reflecting on her study group meeting she commented:

*'And I wondered if that was because it got too personal, I don't mean too close knit sharing, but we were actually sharing the stresses of our work loads and we were sharing, sort of, "I find it really difficult to do that module because of..." and to me, that became a little bit time consuming and a little bit taxing' (CJ).*

Both of these participants also spoke of the difficulty encountered in their groups when people would get behind in their work. It meant that at the study group meeting people would be trying to work on different modules, which became problematic. For one participant these difficulties were due to the group members not performing. This could have been because they were reluctant to 'show their ignorance' in a group setting (Rogers, 2001). Or it could be due to the concept of 'social loafing' – where some group members exert less effort in a group than they would if working or studying alone as discussed in McShane & Travaglione (2005). Social loafing tends to be more common where people are less interested in the task and believe that their individual performance is less likely to be noticed. It can also be an indicator of poor group cohesion (ibid). The other participant who was dissatisfied with her group thought the learning facilitator was partly at fault for not managing the process better. As previously described, the facilitation of the group was critical to its perceived success and value.

Interestingly, the two people interviewed who were dissatisfied with their study group meetings were both part of study group meetings that met monthly. The four who indicated satisfaction in their meetings were all involved with a fortnightly meeting. This could be

coincidental, or perhaps an indication that frequency of meeting is significant in terms of the opportunity for the team building needed to run a successful study group. If so, it certainly concurs with Rogers (2002) who comments that one of the critical stages for group formation is to facilitate the group to emerge from the gathering of individual learners. He suggests that frequent face-to-face meetings with shared, cooperative tasks are two effective methods to achieve this.

### **Summary**

Other students were a useful ongoing resource to the participants of this research. The connections made through the study assisted with emotional and practical support throughout the study. They also provided ongoing networks for when the participants left the formal study environment. The support during the study and the ongoing networks were important to the participants and are aspects of the course that should be encouraged and facilitated. The former increases the probability of students completing their study and the latter develops a strategy in keeping with the nature of supported employment as it is taught on the Diploma in Supported Employment.

### **Course Content and Delivery**

The following section considers the way information was provided on the course and then briefly considers the general structure of the course itself. The first section overviews the process. This is followed by a more in depth look at the primary tool for presenting information – the study guide.

The Diploma in Supported Employment was delivered to students as a supported distance education programme. The academic and practical requirements were set out in each module, respectively, in theoretical and practical workbooks. These outlined essays and tasks the students had to complete for their assessment. Each workbook had a due date published with it for when assessment material had to be returned, and a process for how this was to happen. Material was then to be assessed within a three-week period and returned to students with any re-submit requirements as appropriate. In addition to these workbooks, each of the 10 modules came with a study guide that provided the bulk of the information required to complete each module. In the first three modules, sufficient information was included in these study guides such that the students need not seek any other information to complete assignments. From module four onwards there was an

expectation that students would increasingly search out information for themselves. The course coordinators designed the course in this way to provide more support to students in the early stages, and to allow them to learn and utilise research skills in the later stages. One such support was that for the first four modules, after each section in the study guide, there was a prompt to students to direct them towards answering those worksheets that related to the information just covered. After this point, because students were being asked to locate more information themselves, these prompts ceased to be used.

### **Study guides**

A team of people from both Tautoko Services and ASENZ collated the material included into the study guides. At national ASENZ meetings, senior practitioners working in the area of supported employment were asked to participate in collecting material that they knew of, or could research, for the various study guides. The material that was identified was then vetted for relevance, currency and scope. Once it was considered by the course coordinators that there was sufficient material to adequately cover a topic, the study guides were compiled. Over the three years of the MSD funded positions onto the diploma programme, the process of updating the study guide continued so that the material was as current as possible. Those who were involved in the process of compiling the study guides noticed two features of the material they were including that later became significant for students. The first was that there was very little written about supported employment within the New Zealand context. Most of the material available from books, articles, or from websites, was North American. This is perhaps not surprising given that supported employment, as an organised programme, began there. However, it did provide a particular flavour to the material, and a lot of the detail about government programmes and supports contained in articles was not relevant.

The second feature noted was that a lot of the more general material on topics, and almost all of the New Zealand material, was from the early to late 1990s. This was the period of time in which supported employment was being defined and shaped. The material that originated from this period tended to provide the best 'broad brush' coverage of the topics. Later material tended to focus on more technical aspects and tended to assume knowledge of the basics. This posed a real difficulty in finding material that provided sufficient coverage and that was less than five years old. The exception to this was information about working with people who are mental health service users. Supported employment developed out of intellectual disability services and moved across to mental health services

at least a decade later. Consequently it was only during the 1990s that the first information emerged about mental health and supported employment. It was over this same period that supported employment was being applied to mental health in New Zealand. Here it has become a very large part of the sector, in contrast to other countries, where it remains a more 'boutique' option. The result was that the material available locally as well as internationally was much more current than general supported employment information.

The people interviewed for this research commented upon concerns relating to lack of local content and currency. However, generally speaking the people who were individually interviewed found the study guides very useful. One participant's comments recorded below, represents what many seemed to be saying when discussing the study guides.

*'Overall some of it was great... Yes I did actually get some good, good stuff out of there... I can't think of anything that should be left out. In fact overall I think the areas it was grouped under were really useful and gave you a good coverage of everything that happens in an agency. I've got no changes that I would think need to be made' (OL).*

In general this person found the study guides provided her with lots of useful information, especially on some topics. The information challenged her in some areas and confirmed her current practice in others. Her view was consistent with reports from other participants and the members of the focus group. Another participant was more specific about the type of material included that she found useful:

*'I enjoyed the reading part of it – that was really good that bit – it helped a lot...the information, especially. The things I really enjoy is when they do the examples of the actual true life things that are happening to other people – that I tend to learn the most from because it's something I find very interesting... it's very good examples of what you've been reading through in the theory side' (HK).*

The above quote indicates that for this participant concrete examples assisted her to make sense of the theory, and to make the learning more accessible. Providing more of the case study or scenario examples was recommended at the focus group as a useful improvement in the content. Rogers (2001) also made this point and concluded that: "Human beings love narrative. Dry facts do not engage people's attention" (ibid: 108). However, despite

generally liking the study guides, the lack of local content did concern people as represented by the quote below.

*'A lot of it appeared to be - there was a sense of it being rather Americanised. It had to be I guess, supported employment being fairly new in New Zealand. But you could easily sit back and say, "Oh you know it's not like that here". I guess broadly it is the same the world over, it's the way it's expressed in Americanese' (OL).*

The paucity of local content, and the “Americanese” used in many of the articles included, was a negative aspect of the study for some of the participants. This was confirmed by the focus group. Members of the focus group commented that many of the articles included were too American and many of them appeared to be old. It could be that the “Americanese” criticism arises because the participants found it difficult to engage with articles from another country as ‘OL’ indicated above, or it could be a reaction to the hegemony of North American culture. The age of some articles could also be about relevance and certainly caused people to question the currency of the course. Interestingly, the point about currency was not made in the individual interviews, but it was certainly made by other students in the regular feedback that was collected about each module. Literature more than 10 years old is not necessarily out of date and, as commented before, can be seminal articles that cover areas not included in more current writing. What emerges from this research though is that perception about currency is at least as important as the validity of the actual content.

Another comment frequently made was about the quantity of work required in general, and in particular, the amount of reading. One participant put his feelings on the matter quite clearly:

*'I think the amount of material you threw at us was bloody unreasonable [for a part-time course]... I mean to have done justice to the material you needed to have read at least some of the recommended readings. You had one month to read those, do the readings, do an academic assignment, practical assignment and perhaps try and get some of the recommended readings, like books and what have you. I mean to do that amount, part time, in a month!' (PC).*

This again raises the problem with the course being a full-time course but offered to people who were working, usually full-time, with the expectation that the timeframe would remain that of a full-time student. For the student intakes considered for this research, full-time study was a requirement of the funding. The MSD did not include the option of people studying part-time. One participant commented on this difficulty and the ambiguity about the course requirement present for some students.

*'We actually thought we were doing it part time and we found out we ended up doing it full time. We thought part time would allow us to do it in the work environment, I didn't have the work support to do it [full time]'* (CJ).

The above participant suggested that one way around the issue of the quantity of reading material was for there to have been more attention to what was selected.

*'There was so much to read and some of it was – to me it could have been a little bit refined... you didn't need to use four [articles], when in fact two would have given you... an understanding of the overview'* (CJ).

The focus group members corroborated the above view and commented that some of the articles appeared to unnecessarily repeat ideas that were in previous articles. Conversely some participants commented that they were interested to find out even more than was offered. Two participants stated that they appreciated the references made to other places where they could research information.

*'I really enjoyed your statements in the back of each book where you could research stuff – I really liked that – they were really good prompts'* (NR).

Both of these participants spoke about their interest in researching things for themselves and both were people who had studied at a tertiary level before. One did make the point that this was all right for him but that it didn't suit everyone. In this regard, he spoke about the way the structure of the course changed slightly after module three. He specifically refers to the prompts used after each section of information in the study guide directing the student to the relevant workbook exercises.

*'I think one of the things is the process you went about the first couple of modules...you could actually follow a system and after that you couldn't. You had*

*a structure where you could relate to this page, which related to that section – then after that it lost it – it didn't happen any more. So the whole process changed and I think people might have read some of those things and thought 'so I can follow up to that stage and wow now I've got problems because now I've actually got to think for myself in a different dimension.' I actually like the way you started it – if you kept that way all the way through people would've been more easy to maintain on the course, I believe' (NR).*

Students who had enrolled on the Diploma in Supported Employment indicated through the UCOL survey that they were not particularly in favour of this course being delivered on-line. Their comments, as already mentioned, appeared to be largely referenced to the potential lack of face-to-face interaction that may attend an on-line course delivery. It may also be that people, or at least some people, prefer to access information through the print medium. 'NR' above indicates this possibility in his comments above. 'NR's' comments could also refer to a need for expediency in the study, particularly for people studying and working full-time. It is not uncommon for adult students to seek out courses that provide clear guidelines if they are seeking to expedite the study due to other commitments. It may result in the person choosing a more directed course of study to accomplish this goal (Knowles et al, 2005). By doing this, the student does not necessarily dispense with the ability to be self-directed. They retain the ability to control many aspects including purpose, place and application, even though on the surface they are not controlling other areas such as the mechanics and pace of study (ibid).

### **Summary**

Based on the feedback of participants in this research, it can be considered that the Diploma in Supported Employment did provide a good mix of information for people. The principal improvement those interviewed recommended was for the information to be more accessible. To achieve this they needed less to read, the articles to be better targeted and, because most had enormous time constraints, they needed the information provided for them in the study guides rather than being expected to search websites or libraries. There is no evidence that a more technologically mediated process would have assisted. The literature, as noted earlier, remains ambivalent about the processes used (Brown & Brown, 1994; Holmberg, 1995; Maushak & Ellis, 2003) and student feedback tends to favour the direct face-to-face contact provided through study group meetings.

## Assessment process

*“The old saying that practice makes perfect is not true. But it is true to say that it is practice the results of which are known which makes perfect”*

(F.C. Bartlett in Rogers, 2001: 37)

The last major theme about the course itself that affected participants experience relates to the process of assessment. The discussion will be divided into two sections. The first will deal more generally with assessment processes, and the second will review one specific assessment activity – the course practicum.

The Diploma in Supported Employment, as it was delivered during the period of research used two assessment methodologies. The first was competence assessment and the second was achievement assessment (UCOL, 2001). Half of the modules used competence assessment and the other half used achievement assessment. Competence assessment is based on the behavioural approach to learning and dates back to the 1960s (Hervey, 2003). The application of competency assessment involves the student reaching the required level of performance capability expected for the occupational area the teaching unit was designed for at which time they then receive a pass grade (Jarvis, 2004). If the required level is not reached then they are graded as incomplete. If a student does not reach the required level of competence the first time, then under the assessment protocol for the Diploma in Supported Employment, they had the opportunity to re-submit their work once for reconsideration (UCOL, 2001). Achievement assessment is essentially that by which a student receives a percentage grade of how well they achieved against an assessment template. With achievement assessment there is no opportunity to re-submit – the mark given, including a fail, is final, except in exceptional circumstances (ibid).

The original reason for the two distinct assessment protocols within the single qualification is unclear. It needed to be implemented this way because that was how the approved curriculum document was written by ASENZ. Using the two processes did provide some difficulties for some students. Many appeared to be unclear which modules was assessed in which way, and anecdotally, appeared to never quite come to an understanding about the two different assessment methods. Others though were very clear about the differences and used these to their advantage. For example, some students would choose to leave some tasks uncompleted in achievement modules once they had attained enough marks to pass.

There were five assessment tools or methods used. The first two occurred at the study group meetings where assessments were conducted by learning facilitator observation and by peer assessment. The second two methods were accomplished through workbooks: one assessed theoretical knowledge and the other assessed the student's competence at tasks. The final form of assessment was through a work placement that required the student to demonstrate the integration of theory into practice; this was called 'the practicum.'

The workbooks were the primary method of continuous assessment with students submitting assessment material within certain timeframes, after which it is marked and returned. Generally students had a month to complete theoretical work and negotiated the timeframe for practical work. The specified time for submitted work to be marked was three weeks. In this time the learning facilitator was expected to have marked the work and sent it through to Tautoko Services' main office for the mark to be recorded. From there the work was usually forwarded directly onto the student. On occasion some work was retained for moderation purposes and the student informed that this had happened.

As mentioned above, there were two types of workbooks that students received. The first was for demonstration of theoretical understanding and contained assignments, written exercises and essays. The second type consisted of practical tasks to demonstrate applied competence. The course was structured in such a way that various timeframes were applied to assessment activities. In general theoretical assessments allowed students one month to complete, and practical tasks were negotiable. The latter were negotiable because they typically involved recording real work done with real people. The rationale was that they should be performed in a timeframe that did not force students to create completely false circumstances just for assessment purposes. Both workbooks were available in electronic format allowing people to record their responses on a computer and email the workbooks back for assessment. This was not used as frequently as course organisers expected. Of those interviewed no one commented on using this option. One person did type her work but still used the hard-copy workbook.

*'I personally didn't use the workbooks very much at all, I would sit down and do a Word document. And then I would just staple it into my workbook' (OL).*

Of the six individuals who were interviewed, all but one reported that the layout of assessment work into the above schema was generally useful and the assignments and tasks were relevant to the topics.

*'They were good. [They] were very easy to follow – because it sort of went in sequence, it wasn't very difficult' (HK).*

The focus group confirmed this view with members commenting that the way the workbooks were presented was very helpful. They commented that by having different books for practical tasks and theoretical work, it helped them organise what they were doing. However, one fairly consistent comment that was also made was that by dividing the assessments into two workbooks, separate from the study guide, meant that each month three books arrived. People spoke of the difficulty this could present in terms of the need to be organised to cope with the quantity of books.

*'I thought the way they were delivered was excellent, and I'm not, I don't think I'm being pedantic here, but I would like to have seen them colour-coded. A theory book and a practical book: 2 different colours. And for me, I'd started to get quite ordered as I did the course, and it would've been good that they weren't all the same colour and looked all the same – because once you started to get a lot of them, it became quite an exercise to try and keep everything separate. And then sometimes when you're on module 4 or 5 then you're having to maybe look back at module 1 and 2, or you might have got module 8 in advance. All of a sudden, it just made a difference, or it would've made a difference had they been colour-coded – so I actually colour-coded my own. It's a little thing that may well, for some people, just make it that little bit easier. It's just a recognition thing and also [assisting them] to order themselves in their work' (NC).*

The person quoted above clearly found some difficulty with the delivery but constructed a method to organise himself. His experience appeared similar to the participant who stated she did not appreciate the delivery method involving workbooks. She found it confusing especially at the study group meeting where she was never quite sure which book was being referred to.

*'Too many books! ...It [could] be simpler. If you forgot one book [at the study group meeting] you were bugged. You went along to class and you forgot one book and "who's got ..." "Oh we are talking about the practicum!", while I am still getting my head around the theory...' (CJ).*

Clearly the mechanics of the workbooks was not as helpful as it could be, causing confusion or frustration for some. Similarly, the experience of the students was that sometimes the assessment process worked well for them and sometimes it did not. Whether their experience was positive or negative was not so much related to the grades people got as to the mechanics or administration of assessment. Most importantly it related to the timeliness of the feedback and the way work was marked.

The focus group commented on the way marking criteria was used as being generally helpful to them. Members of the group observed that at the early stages of the course students were allowed greater leeway in their presentation of material, which assisted them to settle into the study mindset. As the course went on requirements became more prescriptive. One of the individual interview participant's comments summarises this point.

*'I think maybe on my first 5 or 6 [modules] I had to use the extra 3 weeks or 4 weeks on every module on those first ones – but having that opportunity there and just saying "look due to family and work commitments I'll be getting it in over the next 2 weeks,"... it made a heck of a difference. But if [the course organisers] had been really to the letter of the law, and there was no flexibility there, then I think maybe in the end I would have failed, or not passed some of the modules, or done as well as I did' (NC).*

Rogers (2001) comments that focusing on gradual improvement through only responding to or commenting on a few aspects at a time is likely to lead to greater and faster improvement as it allows people to absorb what is being said. It also avoids overload or the potential of damaging someone's self-esteem by the appearance of too much ground to make up. The main negative comment about marking came from research participants who found that there was a significant time delay between submitting work and receiving it back as marked. Feedback for participants in the research indicates that the timeliness of assessment notification may have been related to the particular learning facilitator involved. Some participants found their learning facilitator was very responsive and timely in their feedback while others did not. Below is one person's experience where this participant thought marking was not handled well.

*'There were demands that come in to achieving the modules and I just felt we started to get [out of step with the marking. We were told] "oh yes I think you have passed, but it still needs to go to [Tautoko Services' office]" and it would be*

*forever and a day before you get it back. We needed to know that we passed that with a certain level of understanding, despite [the learning facilitator] saying "yes, you have met the criteria," If you didn't it is a bit late when you come back five months later to tell me you needed to do this or that... to pass... Timeliness was a huge concern...for... your own learning abilities. You want to know that you have got [module] two sorted out because two feeds in to three and if you are off into three and then they say "oh no, there is a component of two [not completed]," you are lost' (CJ).*

The participant indicates that the delays meant she did not gain the confidence that she was meeting the course requirements. As a result she found the delay in receiving marked work back was quite demotivating and confusing for her. Rogers (2001) claims that: "Not giving the right quantity or quality of feedback is one of the main reasons why adult learning fails" (p. 37). She continues by saying that for feedback to be truly effective it needs to be prompt, encouraging and specific. In this way the student knows, as soon as possible after the task so they are still engaged with the task, what about their attempts were positive, why it was positive and what they need to do next time to make improvements. The reason timeliness and specificity are so important, according to Jarvis (2004), is partly because of the nature of assessment. Even though the assessment is about the learner's work, it can be frequently received as an assessment of the learner as a person. This personalisation is a factor of the humanistic nature of assessment and education in general and needs to be accommodated sensitively to ensure the adult learner's sense of autonomy and competence is not compromised.

Assessment, or evaluation, of learning is a vexed question with debate about how one adequately assesses the validity of any particular tool used and the usefulness or purpose of assessment (Jarvis, 2004; Knapper & Cropley, 2000; Rogers, 2001). Knapper & Cropley (2000) comment: "The area of student assessment is characterized by a massive discrepancy between stated goals and actual effects of teaching and learning activities" (p. 196). Despite this it remains important for an academic qualification to assess whether learning has taken place, if for no better reason than to ensure that the investment by the student and the various sponsors was not wasted. The debate is beyond the brief of this research, beyond the succeeding few comments.

Rogers (2001) and Knowles et al (2005) propose four levels of evaluation: individual enjoyment of the course, personal learning, applied learning and long-term impact. The

Diploma in Supported Employment's assessment processes set about judging the middle two: personal learning and applied learning. Individual enjoyment was informally assessed and long-term impact is very rarely the subject of assessment as it is so problematic to separate the course effects from other factors (Knowles et al, 2005; Rogers, 2001). Knowles (2005) advocated that the adult learner, if they have controlled the learning process to this stage, will want to design the evaluation of what they have learned. He does however concede the difficulties of this and suggests that in most cases, for reasons of validity as well as for expediency, the adult learner will seek to do this through formal tests or expert judges.

The next component of assessment to be discussed is what could be considered the most significant tool used within the Diploma in Supported Employment. It was specifically designed to assess applied learning and was called 'the practicum.'

### **The Practicum**

"Action learning is not new; like all organic growth, it depends more upon the reinterpretation of old and familiar ideas than upon the acquisition of new cognitive knowledge."

(R.W. Revans, in Dilworth & Willis, 2003:172)

The Diploma in Supported Employment was established as an applied course. At the time of its original conception the members of ASENZ, who were responsible for initiating it, were very clear that they wanted a course that taught people how to 'do things,' not just to 'know things.' They were seeking graduates with practical skills, not just theoretical knowledge. As a result practical tasks are threaded throughout the course but the major assessment tool for a student's practical ability is the course practicum. The practicum is a piece of work where the student has to demonstrate their ability to apply the theory and the tools they have learned about into an integrated practice. The practicum requires that the student assist two disabled people into employment under the supervision of their learning facilitator and a senior practitioner. Two people are worked with so the results demonstrate the student's ability in keeping with Attribution theory, whereby the higher the frequency with which a behaviour is demonstrated, the more likely it can be attributed to that person's skill set (McShane & Travaglione, 2005). There are a number of requirements to be met before a practicum is approved. The first group was to ensure the student was

supported in their learning by the organisation in which they were doing their practicum. Dilworth & Willis (2003) pointed out that having top management's support was critical to successful action learning. The second group of requirements were aimed at ensuring that the job seekers are clear what they are agreeing to, that there will be ongoing support after the end of the course and that it is a real, paid job of the job seeker's choice that results. These requirements were to safeguard the rights of disabled people, to protect them from being used merely for the sake of the qualification.

Because of the complexities of the practicum students are allowed one year to complete this piece of work. The practicum is nominally module number eight of ten modules. Each module is delivered one month apart resulting in the total time allowed for the course being 20 months. Despite this the Diploma in Supported Employment remains officially a one-year course - 1200 hours of learning time (UCOL, 2001). For those who wished to, the practicum could be started about the time of module four. It could not be started prior to this, even though the practicum workbook was provided at the time of module one. The reason for delaying the start was to ensure people had enough information to apply from the course before they started their practicum.

Of the six people interviewed individually three spoke of their experience with the practicum and three did not. This divided exactly into the three people who completed the qualification and the three who didn't. Those who didn't complete the diploma all withdrew before they would have been expected to commence the practicum. The three remaining participants reported quite different experiences of the practicum. The difference appears to be largely related to their working context. According to Dilworth & Willis (2003) this is entirely unexceptional. They note "a favourite saying: "No two action learning experiences and no two action learning sets are ever alike"" (ibid: 33). All three indicated the value of the practicum but two of them considered it could have been modified to accommodate their particular circumstances. The first of these three worked in a supported employment agency so reported no difficulty in the work of the practicum. For her the practicum, and indeed the whole course, was an ideal match to her working reality.

*'It was excellent to be able to study for something that I was working in and had an opportunity to practice on a daily basis' (OL).*

For this participant the issue around the practicum was not so much to do with the nature of the work, as this was her everyday job, but to do with expediting the process as quickly as possible.

*'I was wondering whether it would have been useful to, rather than do a diary on your [practicum], or maybe as well as doing a diary on your [practicum], you do hands on stuff throughout the diploma on certain aspects... You could perhaps demonstrate hands on knowledge, demonstrating tasks with more complexity, all the way through...It would be easy if you were working within a [supported employment] agency' (OL).*

Because the tasks of the practicum were essentially her job description, this participant was suggesting that for students in her position, there might be another, quicker way to have the requirements of the practicum assessed. This would allow the course to be completed in a shorter timeframe for those students who do supported employment work daily. The second participant also wanted to commence the practicum earlier but for slightly different reasons. This person did not work in a supported employment agency but did have a significant history of working in the vocational sector.

*'[The practicum] may have been delivered a little bit differently to have accommodated that I work in the field of people with varying abilities or disabilities. I have access to people that I could place, [and] because we deal with people who have mental health issues and the like, trying to place someone at the end of our course [was problematic]. If they became unwell it negated the fact that we were then trying to implement that as a final component for [the practicum]. That was really difficult, because I actually had to place 4 people, [but] one was laid off due to the work environment and one due to other issues. I then had to go and place 2 more people and that put a burden on me that seemed to be, not insurmountable, but twice as much as it was previously. Had I known in advance that module 8 was going to have that component and I'd started that in my module one, being in the area of working with people with disabilities and having access to those people, I could've actually utilised the placement or the opportunity of a placement, the skills I was learning through the other 7 modules and implementing them as I went' (NC).*

The issue here is to do with the amount of time required, and the difficulties that can be presented during the practicum, such as the availability of people to work with. This person felt under pressure to complete this task because of the particular issues he encountered. He also considered that because he had a sound knowledge of disability issues he could have started earlier than someone new to the field, or at least could have been identifying potential candidates to work with towards employment. The third participant appeared to accept the process as it was presented to him. He spoke particularly of the learning he did through the practicum supervision, which allowed him to reflect on his practice.

*[My supervisor] assisted me to say how I can prove things, or she challenged [my thinking]. A very good example was, I wasn't coping very well with one of my placements coming up with a [visual prompt] chart, you know, because I initially saw it as very childlike. So I mentioned it [in supervision]. And I got told "well, don't look at it that way, you got to look at it as the pathway for this person" and, it actually changed my thinking... that... was some valuable debate' (NR).*

During the focus group there was a discussion on whether the practicum could be changed to better accommodate people from diverse backgrounds. In particular, the discussion related to those who struggled to complete the requirements because they were not from a supported employment agency. In the end there was no resolution. Group members could understand the difficulties but most people maintained the position that the applied nature of the diploma was essential to retain. The feeling was that the current practicum, by demonstrating that people could actually do supported employment, gives the whole diploma value in the sector. What the response from participants has shown is that the intention of the practicum has not been fully understood – or at least accepted. The practicum was designed to encourage experiential learning and reflective action learning. What participants articulated was that the prime purpose of the practicum was to assess people's ability to do supported employment. Only one reflected upon the learning process during the interview. That said, five of the individual interview participants did comment on their learning by way of a success story (these stories are attached as appendix A.)

Experiential learning is derived from Kolb (1984) as described in the literature review, and reflective action is based on Schön (1991) as described in the theory section. So an exercise such as the practicum looks to convert new theories of action into theories-in-use. In this way the theory provided in the book of readings is really information about practice or new theories of action, as is the information gained through discussions and study group

meetings. It is not practical knowledge and will not become so until it has become embedded in a practitioner's way of doing things (Jarvis, 2004). At this stage it becomes theory-in-practice. Jarvis (2004) states that the preparation for gaining practical knowledge is information, which cannot occur within the classroom. It occurs through reflection on that information in practice and through exposure to expert practitioners. Parenthetically, Jarvis warns that the process can also lead to learning bad practice through learning other's mistakes. In other words the 'expert' used for modelling needs to be one who does operate in a way that is congruent with the desired learning outcomes.

The practicum offered participants the opportunity to apply their learning to real life situations. In this way the uniqueness of each situation becomes evident and solutions are found in context (Schön, 1983). It is the process of doing, and reflecting on that doing, that is at the heart of Schön's concept of reflective-in-action. In this way, knowledge is created by doing and reflecting, with theory informing the process rather than becoming the process. For any given individual the extent and complexity of their learning depends on their starting point. Employing Argyris & Schön's notion of single loop and double loop learning mentioned in the theory chapter is useful here to explain why some people found the practicum more taxing than others. It may also account for why some enjoyed it more than others. Those people already employed in supported employment, or with an extensive history of working with disabled people within an emancipatory, or critically orientated way, may have been involved in single loop learning. That is they may not have been challenged to alter their world-view but rather to add techniques to accomplish that which they were already working towards. In the above interview excerpts both 'OL' and 'NC' appeared to fit within this criteria. By contrast, 'NR' spoke of how his views and ways of operating were fundamentally challenged and changed. For him the practicum may have represented double loop learning where his basic assumptions altered leading to new theories-in-use.

## **Summary**

Participants of this research found the assessment processes used in the Diploma in Supported Employment to fit with the content and were generally satisfied with them. It was noted that, as with the study guides, there was often too much work and some participants reflected on whether some of the processes could be expedited. Processes employed in the Diploma in Supported Employment to assess student learning did encounter some problems of timeliness and quality of feedback. People took direction from

their assessments and if these did not occur within a reasonable timeframe, then some felt unsure as to their learning and lost confidence. The processes also employed such practices as students assessing their own work and doing peer assessments. Extra marks were available for material not taken directly from the study guides, real-life examples were asked for to illustrate points and often assignments required the integration of concepts from previous modules. All of these are identified by Knapper & Cropley (2000), as processes likely to promote lifelong learning rather than the simple retention of facts. The course practicum did provide the opportunity for people to engage in action learning and to reflect upon that learning. Although only one participant articulated this view, others implied it through success stories based on their practicum.

### **Chapter Summary**

During the three student intakes researched in this study the Diploma in Supported Employment was delivered as a distance education programme. The research found that past students who were interviewed identified both useful processes within the structure of the programme and others that were considered unhelpful. One of the most useful aspects of the course was the opportunity to interact, face-to-face, with others. Research participants noted the importance of the learning facilitator in assisting with personal interactions as well as ensuring group and individual learning processes were attended to. The ability of the learning facilitator to manage group processes impacted on the usefulness of the study group meetings for participants and, to some extent, impacted on their overall satisfaction with the course. Generally the research participants reported that the information provided within the course study guides was useful with two possible caveats. Firstly most people found that there was too much information and secondly people often questioned the currency of the information. As with the information provided, generally participants reported being satisfied with the assessment processes used. It was also noted that sometimes the assessment tasks were onerous in term of the time required to complete them. Participants thought there was a good fit between the assessment tasks and the content but that sometimes the delays in the assessment process reduced the learning value to them. Overall, participants found the learning involved in the Diploma in Supported Employment was worth the effort of studying and, this was true even for those who did not complete the course. The next chapter explores more areas of worth reported by participants.



## **Chapter 8**

### **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EFFECTS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS FROM THE DIPLOMA IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT: THE STUDENTS' VIEW AND THE RESEARCHER'S VIEW.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter considers personal and professional outcomes, as reported by participants, from studying the Diploma in Supported Employment. The chapter also considers policy implications that arose from the research. Both of these areas are central to the purpose of the Diploma in Supported Employment when it was originally articulated. ASENZ had in mind that it wished to increase the skill base of staff and to further advance the Diploma in Supported Employment agenda. In terms of the current research, these outcomes particularly address the final part of the research question, that is: how has the Diploma in Supported Employment assisted students in their practice? The first section will examine what participants considered they gained from their study and in what ways they considered the effort of studying worth it. The key areas of this will be what participants reported as areas that supported their professional selves and areas that assisted them personally. The second section will review some policy implications that arose from the research and affect the Diploma in Supported Employment, in particular, how the course relates to the vocational sector and any influence it may have had in furthering a political or critical understanding of the issue of disability and employment. As with the previous two analysis chapters, I use my own experience in this field as additional information in the analysis.

#### **The Students' Analysis of Personal and Professional Effects**

All of the people individually interviewed for this research, and all of the people in the focus group, spoke positively of what they had gained personally and professionally from the diploma. Even those who withdrew from the course and had become frustrated by some aspects of it, or by their employer's lack of support, considered that they had gained knowledge from the study that they did complete. The main areas people thought they had personally gained from doing the diploma were in their personal learning, improved performance, and increased satisfaction and confidence. Many also considered that the diploma had assisted their organisations through their own improved performance by:

providing a best practice guideline; offering different tools for the agency to use; and providing an environment of discussion and mutual learning. Five of the six people interviewed used a positive story about an individual they worked with to explain what they learned from the diploma. Each of these is a testament to the people's ability to engage with the learning and to apply it to their own circumstances. They were an unexpected response to the interview but graphically demonstrated an important aspect of learning for each individual. These stories, which range in length from just a couple of paragraphs to over a page, will be referred to on occasion during the discussion and have been included in their entirety in appendix A.

### **Personal learning**

The first area participants spoke about when saying what they gained from the course, was to talk about how it affected their thinking. All six individual participants did this almost as an introduction to the other things they gained from the diploma.

*'It gave me ideas, or perspectives that I'd not considered or thought of'* (NC).

*'Well, it changed my views altogether'* (NR).

*'It cleared my thinking'* (OL).

*'I think all theory is useful in a sense. I don't know I just enjoy the ideas'* (PC).

*'It actually gave me a lot of insights into some of the [ways] that we work with clients'* (HK).

*'I loved the historic stuff,...the knowledge and the overview... I found that hugely beneficial because I [realized] "oh my god, it is about being political and where we have all been, and have worked in the field"'* (CJ).

The information provided was also noted by the focus group as being something that everyone considered they had gained from the diploma. For some people this was against expectations and challenged long held ways of thinking. Two of the individual interview participants who completed the diploma and who have worked for many years in the sector

in more traditional settings, commented particularly on this change. The first one quoted below notes how his thinking changed as the course progressed.

*[The diploma] gave you the insight. When you started module 1, when you went back from module 5 and looked at module 1, you could actually sit there and say, "well, wait on, I was thinking this then, I can't remember what I said then, but it's written down – and here I'm writing this down," and, man, the difference is amazing! ...You could actually sit and say to yourself, "well, I wrote that but that's not really what I should have written – that's not right, this is." And it did indicate [growth]' (NC).*

This person's position moved significantly over the course, and because that thinking was recorded in his work, he was able to track his learning. The second person was equally self-reflective but in a different way.

*'I think [what changed was] the processes, you know, your thinking, your planning. Whereas before it was often hotchpotch – what it did for me is instead of just designing a plan for everybody you designed a plan for the individual... Because that's what the diploma taught me – get to know your subject first, before you start doing things, otherwise you make assumptions or you actually find out they're doing what you want to do' (NR).*

In both of the above quotes the individuals could be considered to be involved in double loop learning in that some of their basic assumptions were challenged and changed (Argryis & Schön, 1974). Both were people who had a long history in the vocational sector but had little direct experience of supported employment. Implicit in the second quote is acknowledgement of the huge difference that can exist between supported employment and traditional forms of vocational support. The rhetoric of the sector is about individualised plans and individualised outcomes, but the reality for many who work in congregate settings is that programmes are designed for groups. This is done for convenience of time and resources at one level, and at another level it is done because that is how staff are conditioned to think about their work. As demonstrated in the above quote, often people's thinking is shaped towards group or organisational outcomes, rather than based on the individual.

## Personal performance

Participants spoke of their increased ability to apply their learning to their job and how this improved their performance. One participant, who was leading a team of people assisting disabled people to access recreational activities in the community, speaks of how the Diploma in Supported Employment assisted in this role.

*'I'm very glad I did [the diploma] because it... helped a lot with community participation and getting our head round how that would work. You support the same as you would in supported employment – you support the client. Just because it's a voluntary organisation that they're in, or a club or whatever, you still support the same – so that helped a lot. We're using natural supports – most of it we've used natural supports for - and of course that helped a lot seeing how that actually worked – explained it all – so we went in with prior knowledge because of that' (HK).*

She clearly thought that the knowledge gained by doing the Diploma in Supported Employment assisted her to do her job better. And this was the case even though she was not directly involved in supported employment. The feeling of increased competence was also evident in others who were involved in supported employment and was recognised as a major outcome by the focus group. Increased competence can lead to increased confidence as commented on by one participant. He thought that his learning allowed him to talk better to employers and to others about disability issues and to advocate better for people.

*'For a lot of people, what was in those modules that we did, gave people the opportunity, the skills, the rhetoric, and the knowledge to be able to deliver those things competently and confidently, in a professional way, and also in a way that they would be doing it for all the right reasons' (NC).*

In a sense this participant is reflecting on applying theory into action. He believed the theory he learned both allowed him to talk more confidently and to be clearer about what courses of action to undertake. His comments imply a certain amount of reflection upon his

actions. In turn this can lead to a critical examination of practice informed by the theory and reflection which assists in finding better ways to operate (Schön, 1983).

### **Personal satisfaction**

Most of the participants whether they had completed the diploma or not, spoke of the sense of satisfaction they got from being able to implement what they learned. This was related to a sense of improved performance and being able to assist individuals to reach personal goals. One participant represents this well in the following quote as she is talking about one of the people she worked with during the practicum.

*'He went from being a kid with the tongue ring and the bright flouro-coloured hair standing on end, to wearing the suit and tie: the computer nerd boy. And it's just fantastic. We're still in touch and I think doing the diploma, just having that whole process in place – it was good, [tremendously satisfying]. Seeing someone's life change. And he just came to me after and he said "my brother did a degree and it took him 18 months to get a job. I'm leaving [here] with full time employment. How good could that be!" And the neat thing for this guy too is that it's his success, he did it. "I wasn't handed this job. I had to go out and get for myself."' (OL).*

As an aside to the participants' sense of improved performance, one person who completed the diploma spoke of increased job options that come from the qualification. This person left the area of supported employment and considered that the diploma assisted her in getting her new job.

*'I would hope that I can use [the diploma] in the future, you know, it is something I can use in selling myself as an employee... Certainly it helped me get into [my new] job' (OL).*

The perceived portability of the diploma is significant because, for people who remained in the vocational sector, their opinion was that there was little or no recognition of qualifications. Several commented that having gained the Diploma in Supported Employment they didn't see how it could advance them in their organisations due to the

small size of most agencies, and nor were they likely to gain any financial reward by way of a pay rise. This issue will be considered further in the policy implications section.

### **Professional or Agency Effects**

Participants frequently commented on how their involvement with the diploma assisted the agency they were employed by. For some this was serendipitous and for others it was a primary motivator for enrolling on the programme. There were two key ways reported that assisted agencies: through workplace discussions and through having new tools to use in their work. At the focus group, participants rated the discussions that occurred in the workplace as a result of people attending the diploma as being significant for the organisation's growth. Group members commented on how doing the diploma helped stimulate discussions between the students and their colleagues. The resultant conversations gave the whole agency a learning opportunity and created the forum for issues to be examined that may not otherwise have arisen. One of the individuals interviewed summed this up well.

*'I think we brought fresh ideas and certainly fresh energy [into the agency]. And because everybody within the agency, apart from X, was new to supported employment, there was a sense of "well here are people who are studying," and it was good for discussions, staff discussions. [We'd say] "here's an idea," or we used to do discussions about how it was going for people, and it was useful as a problem solving method. – "Oh look I read about doing this, this way – try this." Yes, it had a really good practical application' (OL).*

The above participant judged that by undertaking the diploma the general learning inside her agency was assisted. Discussions ensued and tools were examined for their applicability to their particular context. In the above quote tasks and tools used on the course were discussed and used as they arose. In some situations though, the Diploma in Supported Employment deliberately involved students in tasks that would likely assist their agencies. The next quote is from a student who commented on one such task. The task in question involved creating a directory of agencies and services in the community that may be able to assist with specific needs job seekers may have.

*'The one where we did the directory - oh we used that! We made a binder up with a whole directory – so it actually helped the organisation a lot. So now when*

*people come in and they say “is there such-and-such a place?” we can go straight to it. So that helped a lot – that was cool – I enjoyed doing that one – [even if it didn’t] actually do much for [my work]. But it did give us a good idea on how to do research for what’s in the community’ (HK).*

Here the participant describes both a direct and indirect outcome from this task. The actual task was shared and discussed with her colleagues, and assisted them and her organisation in its general business, even if not directly applicable to her work. The process of doing community research that she learned from doing the task however, was of ongoing usefulness to her work. For most participants of this research, the Diploma in Supported Employment was said to bring value to their agencies through the resources provided for their personal study. There were three main ways that were commented upon. The first of these was by providing a benchmark for what could be termed ‘best practice.’ This could be for the individual or for the agency.

*‘[The diploma] connected me with best practice. It demonstrated best practice, which is good, and then it gives you yardstick to measure your own performance by. I found that really useful’ (OL).*

When the practice was shown to be successful at an agency level, then for one participant, it meant that the agency should do more of it. This participant was advocating for changes to accommodate the new learning.

*[Our organisation] will put [supported employment] into practise. I think it’s such a good idea because it changes your thinking, it has definite merits to what it wants to do – it’s sad that the sector hasn’t kept up with the concepts of it’ (NR).*

The second way that people from the focus group noted the resources assisted them, was that it offered agencies and individuals new forms and documentation for their work that they may not have otherwise had access to or previously encountered. These new forms provided different ways of doing supported employment as well as tools for record keeping. Finally, for some participants, the course provided information that enabled them to understand supported employment agencies better and to translate this into the way agencies interacted. One participant was able to advocate better for a client, who was looking to get a job through a supported employment agency, as a direct result of having a better understanding of how supported employment agencies worked. The following quote

is in answer to a question about whether the information in the course was applicable to what he did.

*'Maybe not so much for this organisation but it would be applicable whenever I may refer a client, say, to [agency X]...[Knowing the process] I [could advocate] in such a way that it didn't threaten whoever was doing it. You have got to be careful! (PC).*

'PC' above was not particularly interested in applying the supported employment information into the practice of the agency he worked for, as he did not consider this was the direction they wished to go. He did, however, still consider the learning useful in terms of inter-agency cooperation. By understanding how supported employment agencies worked he would be able to ensure his clients' needs were better met if employment became one of their goals.

### **Summary**

Participants all reported positive effects from studying the diploma, regardless of whether or not they completed it. The diploma provided students with information that either changed their perspective or confirmed them in the direction they were headed in their practice. By having more information participants reported increased levels of confidence with correspondingly increased satisfaction. The diploma also helped provide new tools for individuals and agencies and stimulated agency-wide reflection on practice. An additional, and unexpected outcome was that the diploma assisted some with interagency cooperation. This was done through a better understanding of how supported employment operated and therefore allowed practitioners to 'talk the same language.' All of these outcomes provide evidence of the diploma assisting people to translate theory into practice, and assisting people to reduce the gap between espoused theory and theory-in-use.

### **Policy Implications from the Research**

The following section considers policy issues that arose from the research within the interviews conducted with students who studied the Diploma in Supported Employment. I have drawn on my own knowledge of the policy arena of vocational services in New Zealand in the analysis of the issues raised, to provide further exposition of each policy

implication. My hope is that in doing this, light will be shed on ways to advance training in this sector to further the employment aspirations of disabled people.

The delivery of the Diploma in Supported Employment to students sponsored by the MSD arose through a policy decision by the MSD to improve the sector skill level. The selection of the Diploma in Supported Employment was in line with policy decisions to increase the amount of supported employment offered to disabled people (Bolt & Heggie, 1982; Maharey Notes, 2000). The policy to increasing disabled people's workforce participation was probably as much to do with fortuitous timing as anything else. At the same time as disabled people themselves were demanding employment inclusion, general government policy was being informed by the objective 'from welfare to work' (DPA, 1992; Lynch, 2002). The move towards supported employment has not been easy and the sector remains deeply in conflict about its philosophical imperatives and *raison d'être*. The policy environment and the contest between paradigms of disability implicit in some policy changes have influenced students studying the diploma. They have felt the effects through direct experience in their places of work and through reflecting on the implications of their learning. The following section will briefly consider policy issues raised during the research and the implications these could have for the future. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore these policy issues in depth but the following section will provide an outline for further research. The issues that will be covered are: the move towards supported employment as a significant government policy, government investment in the vocational sector, the contest over funding caused by the MSD funding both supported employment and community participation, and finally training and skills development in the sector.

### **Supported Employment as Government Policy**

The first area of policy raised by participants relates to the direction of vocational services, and specifically to supported employment appearing to be a major policy objective. The literature review provides a summary of how supported employment was introduced into the New Zealand vocational sector and how the sector has operated over the years (Bennie, 1996; Bennie, 1998; Bolt & Heggie, 1982; Lynch, 2002; Robinson, Bishop & Woodman, 2000; Taylor, 1996a). It signals that including supported employment into the vocational mix is contested and is not a linear progression. The Diploma in Supported Employment fits into this picture because it was chosen by the MSD as the first sector specific training it contracted and paid for as the sector funder. By doing this, the MSD sent out a clear

message to all agencies that they were interested in advancing the objective of assisting disabled people to acquire employment. Some of the participants in the research noted the change in policy and commented on some of the issues that arose for them out of it. One participant felt there was, at the time the Diploma in Supported Employment was offered through the MSD, too strong a push towards supported employment at the expense of other equally valid options.

*'I think it is that there is a role for some organisations where our clients are not [seeking employment]. I mean they are still in pre-employment. I mean the self esteem and those sort of mental health issues in particular that have to be addressed before you can move them on to work. I think [the MSD] are slowly starting to come to that realization whereas before I think they wanted all organisations to be very much focused on pushing people to get employment. I think it was a government belief that all those that were disabled on benefits should be pushed into work, every one of them. The government didn't have a role in supporting people who may not be able to work. I think they have softened with that' (PC).*

As indicated in the above quote, the adoption of supported employment is, and has been, highly problematic because of the very different philosophical positions adopted by supported employment as compared with those implicit in the vocational sector. Supported employment is not just another service option but an entirely different way of viewing the relationship between work and disability (Bennie, 1996a). It focuses attention on seeking to understand where an individual wishes to work rather than entering into dialogue about whether they can work. Supported employment considers the 'problem of employment' to lie with the construction of the labour market rather than to reside within impairment (ibid). It also asserts that supported employment is the same thing as regular or 'normal' employment in mainstream or ordinary settings (ASENZ, 1996). The philosophy of supported employment, as outlined in the literature review, clearly states that supported employment is no different from ordinary employment except that it may require an external agent to facilitate the types of supports a particular employee may require. In this way it is a difference of degree, not of type.

Traditionally, the vocational sector has operated out of a very different paradigm and has either struggled to understand the difference inherent in supported employment, or reframed it to avert a legitimacy crisis. For the first few years that supported employment

was funded by the government as a vocational service option the confusion was stark. The funding agency of the time was the Community Funding Agency (CFA). Each year the CFA would report on its funding decisions as to which organisation received funding for what purpose. The following was typical of many contracts quoted for services to disabled people:

“Provision of Supported Employment in a Sheltered Workplace Opportunities for People with Disabilities” (CFA, 1995: 87).

Funding of this nature demonstrated the policy ignorance about supported employment in two ways. Firstly, it was revealed by funding provision of supported employment services within an environment that totally precluded the possibility of supported employment. Secondly, agencies that had no desire to provide supported employment services anywhere at any time, were contracted in a similar way to the above quote. ASENZ, as the body coordinating policy advocacy for supported employment, vociferously debated policy interpretations with only limited success (ASENZ, 1996). The CFA appeared to still be unclear as to what supported employment was even in its final years of any funding responsibility within the sector, which was gradually transferred to the Department of Labour from July 1997. In one of the CFA’s final contracts with the sector they were funding organisations to support individuals to “enable entry and participation in pre-vocational training, supported employment or the workforce” (CFA, 1999: 151). Supported employment had been separated out from sheltered environments but was somehow different from taking part in the ‘workforce.’

It is highly probable that the policy confusion above is related to attempts at fitting supported employment into policy informed by an incompatible paradigm. In this case it would be conceivable for there to be little, if any, understanding of the agenda supported employment promoted. As mentioned earlier, supported employment grew out of SRV and, more recently in New Zealand, is informed by the social model of disability. The vocational sector has been informed by the medical model until the advent of The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001. From this period onwards the official understanding of disability has been the social model, however it is the contention of this thesis that the new paradigm has not really changed the perspectives of those who drive policy. The lack of change could also suggest a legitimisation battle (Saloviita, 2000; Thornton & Lunt, 1995). One example, already given, is the change in language used in the MSD document

'Pathways to Inclusion.' Since the MSD declared its strategy to assist more disabled people into employment there have been several more indicators of a paradigm slip – or reversion to earlier understandings of disability. An obvious example is contained within the wording of the MSD contracts for purchasing services. In the latest contract with agencies providing supported employment services the MSD states:

“The primary aim of the service provided under this agreement is the placement of people with disabilities into open paid employment and the provision of ongoing support to assist them to remain in employment”

(MSD, 2005: 3)

A goal such as the one above succinctly places supported employment within the vocational service continuum and thereby reduces it to a method. The contract document does go on to describe the service as needing to adhere to principles similar to the ASENZ ones, but payment is based on the “Total number of individuals that will be placed into open employment...and be supported to remain in open employment for at least 6 months” (MSD, 2005: 12). The use of the words 'placement' and 'placed' denotes a very 'top – down' view of what occurs in supported employment and is a strong indicator of the underlying inequity in power advanced through purchasing of this type.

Two more examples of the lack of real traction the social model has had are contained in the proposed repeal of the Disabled Persons Employment Promotion Act (1960) and the most recent MSD research on employment for disabled people. The 'Pathways' document promised the repeal of the DPEP Act in 2002 because it provides for registered agencies to be exempt from paying the minimum wage or from providing minimum legislated holidays. By repealing the DPEP Act 'Pathways' sought to honour the commitment made in the NZDS to increase the participation of disabled people in employment (Pathways to Inclusion, 2001). The 'Pathways' document was launched on 12 September 2001 and the commitment to repeal the DPEP Act was reiterated with the budget on 6 May 2002 (Dyson, 2002). As of September 2005 the Act has not been repealed. Rather than being relatively straightforward the repeal has been highly contested by agencies wishing to retain a sheltered environment.

The second example is the most recent research on employment and disability conducted by the MSD. In this research they state that: “In the present paper, people with limitations or impairments...are referred to as “people with disabilities”” (Jensen, et al, 2005: 134).

The authors acknowledge this definition is different from the New Zealand Disability Strategy and that the language used is not the NZDS language. They go on to “endorse the utility of distinguishing impairments from the socially determined consequences of the impairments” (ibid: 134), thus seemingly acknowledging a difference between impairment and disability. However the very next line asserts: “This paper is centrally concerned with examining the extent to which having a disability affects the likelihood of being in employment” (ibid: 134). In so doing the paper declares it is informed by a medical or individual understanding of disability. Some participants of this research noticed the lack of policy clarity. One participant commented:

*‘The “Pathways to Inclusion” doesn’t quite align itself with [supported employment]... And I think that’s another thing that annoys me... I actually wonder if WINZ actually knew what the diploma was about... I think their management should have... done it...especially in Wellington where decisions are made. I think actually it should be made compulsory for some. Because, you know, that’s why I took it – because how am I going to expect people to know what I want them to do if I don’t know what to do?’ (NR).*

So the situation currently is that supported employment continues to exist inside an environment where the definition of disability is highly contested. It is not at all clear that the MSD has bought into the understanding of disability as outlined in the New Zealand Disability Strategy. There is some evidence to suggest that in New Zealand, as Saloviita (2000) noticed in Finland, supported employment is being decoupled from its values and thereby reducing the challenge it represents to the status quo. In this case it is more likely that the motivation for the MSD to fund the Diploma in Supported Employment was to promote more job placements than to promote a new way of viewing the relationship between disability and employment.

### **Government Investment in the Vocational Sector**

The second area of policy that came out of this research concerns the financial investment made by government in the sector. The feeling from participants in the research was that this investment is very low and therefore limits organisations, and only allows for inadequate reimbursement to staff. At the focus group meeting, participants commented on the lack of recognition for training and career advancement in the sector. It is hard to see a change since Bolt & Heggie (1982) commented on the government’s restrained investment

in the sector. Since the very earliest provision of vocational services the government has not considered these core services. There has been a history of contributory funding that persists through to today. The rationale of contributory funding is that organisations collect a certain amount of their revenue from other sources and the government assists with the shortfall. The model was established in the 1890s across a range of voluntary and charitable endeavours (Harrison, 1998). One example was in 1885 the Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act set up hospital boards with 50% government funding and the rest to be raised through philanthropic donation (ibid).

The specific history for funding vocational services was the development of a range of subsidies towards staff and buildings for voluntary agencies (Social Security Department, 1970). The Disabled Person's Community Welfare Act (1975) provided legislative entitlement to funding for specific services and led the way for a more coordinated approach to funding vocational services. Through the process of creating a more structured funding response, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) – which was the funder during this period – began to set funding priorities rather than just responding to organisations' requests. Over the years the requirements for funding have become increasingly more prescriptive and targeted to government policy. A key feature throughout is the retention of the model of contributory funding rather than purchasing services. The only exception to this in the vocational sector was the Rehabilitation League. The League was fully funded and remained so through to 1991 when its sheltered programmes were disestablished and it was renamed Workbridge. In the new role, Workbridge, which has remained fully funded, focused on placing disabled people into the workforce with short-term support. Workbridge has endured a lot of criticism over the years from the vocational sector because of its role. The government has consistently expected very high numbers of people to move through Workbridge's services which, for many in the sector, has precluded it working with people with the same level of disability as others in the vocational sector. The criticism has focused on the use of disability support funding for an organisation essentially working with a different client group (ASENZ, 1996).

Implicit in the policy of contributory funding is reliance on voluntary labour. In the caring services, voluntary labour has typically been provided by women in New Zealand as elsewhere (Tennant, 2001; Lunt, 2003). A special feature of New Zealand is that the women never had the political power in the colonial welfare structure due to the lack of a 'spinster culture.' Adult women were in short supply and tended to be busy raising their own families rather than investing in leadership in welfare (ibid). It can be argued that the

restriction of female organisation in the welfare area has left the sector more vulnerable to disparity in funding. The work done fits into the realm of family responsibility – which usually falls to women to perform (Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1988) – and there is a reduced female political voice. In a similar vein, Munford (1992) argued that women caring for disabled children were central to organisational efforts. The women included both mothers and caregivers, with neither group being able to significantly influence policy.

An additional area of funding shortfall surfaced during the research. One participant commented on the unfairness of having been encouraged to do the Diploma in Supported Employment and then not being able to get a contract for his organisation to practice supported employment. This is based on MSD's policy of only wanting to fund a single agency in any locality for supported employment, and is consistent with a view of supported employment as part of a continuum of service options.

NR *'I am angry with WINZ for allowing us to do [the Diploma in Supported Employment], and fund us to do it and then not allowing us or funding us to do [supported employment]...We are not allowed to do any supported employment here, we had to send our people over to [agency X].'*

JT *'Oh, I see what you mean, so you got to the point now where you've developed the infrastructure to do supported employment but you're still not allowed to do it.'*

NR *'Exactly, and we've told them that...What's the use of funding us to do the [Diploma in Supported Employment] and not allowing you or funding you to do [supported employment]. So we've picked up the challenge, we've learned all about this stuff that you asked us to do and then you say tough luck, you can't do it anyway!'*

Funding to the vocational sector then is characterised by a model and underlying assumptions that precludes appropriate state investment. In the environment as it stands organisations are not funded to provide outcomes, but are provided with a contribution to assist them in their work. At the same time the funding has become more specifically linked to government objectives so that voluntary organisations are much more clearly undertaking state goals rather than setting their own pathway.

## **Contest between Supported Employment and Community Placement**

A third area of policy raised by the research was the difficulty of working within an environment where there were competing outcomes. For a least one participant it was difficult to reconcile the purpose of his organisation with the objective of supported employment. 'Pathways to Inclusion' provides two key outcomes the government will fund from vocational services. They are:

- “1. to increase the participation of people with disabilities in employment
  2. to increase the participation of people with disabilities in their communities”
- (Pathways to Inclusion, 2001: 11)

For the participant mentioned above, his organisation was centred on developing community participation for disabled people. The agency was not interested in providing supported employment yet they felt some pressure to enrol in the Diploma in Supported Employment. Coupled with this was the lack of any other funded options.

*'They [the MSD] were actually charged with both supported employment and community participation and yet they were requiring every organisation to be work focused rather than community participation focused. Over the last few years those organisations that don't really fit the work model have been arguing the criteria they applied to us was inappropriate' (PC).*

The policy issue that is raised is the adequacy of a single department to fund two very different, potentially opposing, outcomes. As mentioned earlier, it is possible that the drive towards supported employment is fuelled as much by the desire to move people off benefits as it is by any philosophical change. In these circumstances one could expect organisations that do not provide employment outcomes to be pressured to do so. Evidence from the research supports this conclusion. The question this raises is about the current compatibility of community participation as an outcome within a government agency - Work and Income – focused on reducing welfare payments.

## **Training and Skills Development in the Vocational Sector**

The fourth significant policy issue that arose out of this research relates to training and skill development within the vocational sector. Earlier it was noted that the Diploma in Supported Employment was the first coordinated attempt at training for staff in the sector. Additionally the Diploma in Supported Employment was the only sector specific qualification available. The issue of lack of training options relates to the funding issue and denotes the traditional expectation that support services do not require specific skills, but simply the interpersonal and care skills assumed to naturally lie with women. As one participant explained when asked why she took the Diploma in Supported Employment:

*'Because it was in the disability field. There's very little in the disability field to do in the way of [training]' (HK).*

Despite the lack of training and resources invested in the sector, there has been an increasing expectation of the skills people will bring to the job. In traditional vocational services, staff were working within a team and a primary role was to watch over and tend to disabled people. Traditionally, despite the rhetoric, there was a very low expectation of teaching disabled people skills and personal interactions tended to be within a controlled environment. With the advent of supported employment the skill set expected of staff dramatically changed. Staff were now expected to provide for career planning, job development and to present themselves to employers in a highly professional manner. There has now developed a significant gap between expectations and the investment in development (Rogan & Held, 1999). Since the intakes onto the Diploma in Supported Employment that were funded by the MSD a number of issues have arisen. The first of these is the issue that prompted this current research. The MSD invested a significant amount of resource into assisting people to enrol in the Diploma in Supported Employment but required very little analysis of outcomes. The only contractual obligations upon Tautoko Services were to report on the numbers enrolled and the numbers who completed. No other information was gathered that might inform a training and development policy or assist in decision-making about future investment.

A direct result of delivering the Diploma in Supported Employment has been the development of the National Certificate in Employment Support. During the delivery of the diploma it became clear that many people who enrolled would have done better on a less demanding course. The notion of the certificate had been part of ASENZ's original training

concept, so it was now acted upon. A reference group was brought together with industry representatives and coordinated by Te Kaiawhina Ahumahi (TKA) – the social services industry training organisation. That certificate has now been registered with NZQA. However NZQA was unable to fully process the qualification in time for the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding deadline. The result is that a qualification desperately sought after by the sector (VASS, 2005) cannot be delivered until 2007.

Subsequent to the funding of the Diploma in Supported Employment, in 2004 the MSD then invested a similar amount of money with the Federation of Vocational and Support Services (VASS) to fund training across the sector. The money allocated was to pay for courses that organisations considered would assist their staff in furthering the objective of ‘Pathways to Inclusion’ (VASS, 2004). There were two other parts to the fund. The second part was an allocation for VASS to consult with the sector to identify training gaps and to contract providers to rectify the deficiency. The third part was to contract some research relating to training and development that would benefit the sector (ibid). On the surface the contract with VASS suggests the first steps towards developing a coherent plan for sector training and development. Unfortunately this is unlikely to be the case. The MSD has only asked for reports on the numbers of people attending courses and which courses they attended. They have not specifically requested information on gaps or requested specific research on what the sector needs (VASS, 2005). However it is VASS’s intention to provide information on gaps to stimulate better training and development planning for the future (ibid).

The vocational sector then is beginning to organise its own training and development, with some support from the MSD. In many ways this is an appropriate response and lessens some of the control exerted over the sector by funders in recent years. The challenge now will be to use the fledgling impetus to create a dialogue with government so a coherent policy for training and development can be formed and funded.

## **Summary**

The government and voluntary or not-for-profit sector have been in partnership in the provision of services from the earliest times of colonial New Zealand. In the ensuing years the development of those services has relied on both parties working together. Initially the impetus for service types was the voluntary sector, which the government supported through contributory funding. Over the past few decades the government has played an

increasing role in determining the type and mix of services by targeting what it will fund and what it will not fund. The medical or individual model of disability has traditionally informed the policy framework within which services developed. In recent years this model has been challenged by the supported employment movement and more strongly by the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

The vocational sector is suspended between these two quite different paradigms and is influenced by traditional ideas about what the sector needs for its support. There appears to still be an underlying belief that the skill set required of staff is low and therefore little is done to promote skill development. In addition the contributory funding leads to low wages and poorly resourced organisations, which in turn leads to high staff turn-over and exacerbated skill shortages. Currently decisions about training and development are being left to organisations with little or no resource provided as if government policy has no role in assisting. However government or public policy is premised on the belief that what governments do does matter (Kendrick, 2000). As things stand, the lack of investment in staff development of the sector will have implications on both the outcomes for disabled people and stated government objectives.

### **Chapter Summary**

Those students who took part in this research have reported sufficient, positive, personal and professional effects from their study for the Diploma to have been worth it. This holds true from those who completed the programme of study and for those who did not. However, applying their learning in practice has been complicated by the policy environment in which they operate. The contributory funding model, low wage structure, lack of investment in staff training and development and high staff turn-over all make working in the sector problematic. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of direct philosophical connection between supported employment as it is taught on the Diploma and the way government policy interprets it.



## **Chapter 9**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter reflects back on the research and outlines conclusions and recommendations arising from the research. The chapter is divided into five broad themes to facilitate the discussion of the specific areas that arose from the research. The five themes are: first, factors within the students' environment that affected their study, second, factors relating to the course process that affected student study, third, issues involving content and assessment of the course, fourth, policy issues that arose from the research and finally fifth, suggestions for future research.

#### **Factors within the Students' Environment that Affected their Study**

The first theme relates to those circumstances that contributed to the studying experience that did not directly link to the diploma course. The areas that participants identified as most significant were: support from their employer, the fit between their study and their work, personal commitments, personal organisation and previous study experience. There is a degree of interconnectedness between these areas, which is why they are discussed together in this conclusions section.

Over two thirds (69%) of people who were sponsored by the Ministry of Social Development to enrol on the Diploma in Supported Employment were aged between 35 and 54 years old. People within this age range typically have very full and busy lives so the addition of what is essentially full-time study requires careful management. Each individual's ability to manage the extra demands made by the study depended on their personal organisation, how much support they received from their employer, the fit between their work and the study and their previous study experience. The willingness for each individual to maintain the commitment to study depended on an ongoing process of re-evaluation of the immediate cost to the individual compared to the potential gain. This was not always done consciously by the person and was influenced by such things as whether the employer appeared to support the study, whether the study was likely to be relevant to the working situation and whether the student's other commitments increased.

Employer support was critical to student success in two key ways. The first way related to whether or not the employer appeared to value the training. If interest was demonstrated by

the employer in the training the employee/ student was undertaking then that student felt more supported in their study. If the employer appeared to be disinterested in the training then that was likely to demotivate the student in their study. The second aspect where the employer affected study was in terms of practical support. Clearly this overlaps with the above issue and it could also have a significant affect on the manageability of the study. Employers who gave students clear permission to include the study in their working hours not only indicated support, but also reduced the size of the task. The latter impacted on the degree of personal organisation required to complete the course. For some, the support, or lack of it, extended to costs relating to travel to study group meetings, postage and the like. Employers were additionally able to support students through other resources such as information, encouraging workplace discussion and supervision.

Alongside employer support, participants reported the other key workplace feature that affected their study was the fit between the diploma and the nature of their work. There did appear to be a relationship between employer support and a close fit between the diploma and the organisations' everyday work. Working within a supported employment agency meant students found the study more immediately relevant, and it could also mean higher levels of employer support. There were three main areas that participants reported a close match between work and study helped them. The first was to do with the immediate relevance of the information. Students found that if the information could be used immediately then it was both easier to learn and to retain. Related to this is the second area: if the information was more immediately relevant then that fact increased people's motivation to learn. Once motivated, learning also became easier and retention more likely.

The third area where a close fit between work and study assisted students was in the amount to learn. Participants reported that if their work was within supported employment, then they already knew a certain amount of what was being taught. By having this information already they were potentially advantaged by the amount and the nature of the learning. Some information they would know and new information would tend to relate to their current theories-in-use and therefore only require single loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Correspondingly, some students from organisations who did not have any history of supported employment struggled to find the necessary information, to do assigned tasks and often had their fundamental values challenged. As a result, for them the diploma was a much larger undertaking.

Another area that could affect the size of the undertaking was previous study experience. Those participants who had studied at a tertiary level previously, noted that they mostly found this advantageous, due to the prior acquisition of the requisite metacognitive skills, study skills and techniques, and a more realistic idea of the amount of work likely to be involved. By knowing how to study they were better able to plan that study and pace themselves appropriately. There were two participants whose experience of previous tertiary study caused some anxiety due to issues of administration and structure. One of these participants found that experience repeated in the Diploma in Supported Employment and the other found the Diploma in Supported Employment met his needs.

Those participants who had not studied at a tertiary level previously all noted how they had to learn to learn at the same time as doing the study. A few indicated the anxiety they experienced through engaging in an activity not done since school. Some of these participants found the learning and/ or anxiety overwhelming and withdrew. The image distance students have of themselves, as learners, is a significant predictor of their academic performance (Kumar, 1999; Schmeck, 1998). The higher their sense of self-efficacy the better learning processes they employ, and conversely the lower their self-efficacy the more likely they are to employ processes that only allow surface learning or rote memorising (Schmeck, 1998). In the latter case this increases the chances that they will not pass adequately. During the research there was a suggestion raised to rectify the lack of previous study. It was to provide a 'dry run;' to provide a short course to outline basic principles and to teach the necessary study skills.

The final issue within the theme is one of the clearest findings that came from this research. It has to do with personal organisation. All of the twelve participants, both individual interviewees and focus group members, divided into two groups. The group that completed the diploma had all made a determined effort to structure their time to include study. The group who did not complete the diploma all spoke of doing the study in a more ad hoc fashion. The decision as to whether one decided to structure one's time could relate to the valence one places on the qualification, one's motivation or some other reason. Regardless it is hard to escape the conclusion that the decision to do 'the graft' was pivotal to the outcome.

From the above summary about factors within the students' environment that affected their study there are a few key conclusions that can be drawn. In a course such as the Diploma in Supported Employment, which is essentially aimed at increasing the skills of people

already in the sector, it is going to involve adults who have busy lives. To increase the likelihood of these adults successfully completing the course the three following features of their environment will be hugely beneficial. The first is employer support, both emotional and practical. The second is early assistance with study techniques. And the third is to work with individuals to determine what processes, level of motivation or support is required for them to get a study structure in place.

### **Factors Relating to the Course Process that Affected Students' Study Experience**

The second theme relates to processes that were involved in the delivery of the diploma. Specifically, this section considers issues to do with the learning facilitator, the study group meeting, the delivery of the study guides and workbooks, and the practicum. It also looks at a less structured process that participants referred to, namely interactions with other students. The theme will be grouped into two clusters: the first will consider the interpersonal aspects of delivery, and the second will consider the material provided.

#### **Interpersonal Aspects of the Course Delivery**

Knowles' et al (2005) concept of the learning facilitator as a guide, a process designer and a link to learning resources held true in this research. Participants commented that the learning facilitators who truly facilitated their study were not necessarily the ones with the most content knowledge. The learning facilitator needed to be able to run a study group meeting effectively so that all who took part felt they gained from the experience and where challenges to student beliefs were dealt with constructively. They also needed to be able to create rapport with the students so there was developed a feeling of mutual trust. Acts that built rapport included timely feedback on assignment work, availability, approachability and perceived independence. Alongside being independent, participants expressed the view that local knowledge was also advantageous. Participants identified, either through experience or through reflection, that individual meetings between the learning facilitator and each student were an effective strategy in providing feedback and problem solving. These meetings could be face-to-face or mediated through the telephone or email. The individual meetings would supplement the study group meetings, not replace them.

The second area in this current theme related to the study group meeting. What was clear from the research was that generally participants found these meetings useful, as did most

of the respondents to a UCOL survey. Some of the aspects of the study group meeting participants commented on that assisted them were: the cooperative spirit that was fostered, the collegial nature of support between students and fact that it was an opportunity to check on one's progress. Even when the participants did not think the learning facilitator ran the meeting as well as they would have liked, they still considered it valuable because of the opportunity to work with other students. The meeting presented the chance to share resources, share the trials of study, give and receive support and to create networks with people from other organisations.

There were two participants who, on balance, did not enjoy their study group meetings. By examining their situations, other issues that assist the meetings function well were illuminated. Two key issues that arose were the make-up and facilitation of the group. Both of the groups these two participants were members of, had an extremely divergent group of people in terms of backgrounds, study ability, and supported employment experience. The combination made it a very difficult task for the learning facilitators to manage. The third factor that may have impacted on these two groups was that they were the only ones in the research that met monthly instead of fortnightly. The frequency of meeting may have impacted by not allowing enough time for good group dynamics to form and, when they did come together, there was more pressure on the time they had. In addition, if group members were not getting more regular checks on their progress, this could well have exacerbated the incompatibilities.

Collaboration between students is the third issue in this theme, and occurred not just in study group meetings as mentioned above, but also outside of those meetings. Participants spoke of the learning they had from each other and of the value in checking out information and progress with others. The ability to do this was most evident in those situations where there was more than one student doing the diploma from the same organisation. Perhaps the single most useful occurrence between students outside the study group meetings was the networks formed. People spoke of the ongoing usefulness these networks were for their work and for support. At the focus group meeting this was particularly evident as people generally knew each other, felt comfortable with each other and that these bonds had been formed through the study. The bonds existed both within a single group and across groups.

## **Material Provided as Part of the Course Delivery**

The next three areas under discussion relate to the study guide, the assessment workbooks and to the practicum. The content and assessment dimensions will be discussed in the next section. At this stage only the delivery process will be considered.

A frequent comment from participants was that there was a lot of paperwork received. The study guides tended to be large and contain more than was required. The process of prompting people to complete worksheets after sections of readings was considered useful and some noted that when it no longer happened it made the study more difficult to organise. Similarly, the two workbooks focusing on theoretical tasks and practical tasks respectively were reported to be constructive. However, it did add to the overall quality of paperwork and was further complicated by a lack of colour coding in some instances.

The practicum was universally regarded as an important process for people to undertake though not always for the same reasons. Typically participants did not fully appreciate the intent of the practicum as an exercise in supervised theory into practice. Generally the practicum was considered as a tool to give the Diploma in Supported Employment credibility by ensuring graduates could do supported employment, not just provide the correct theory. The two goals are not incompatible but are very different. Because of the view participants held that the practicum was largely about credibility, a certain amount of conversation during the interviews and focus group centered on expediting the outcomes through other processes. Most of these options would have shown that people could assist disabled job seekers into employment but would not have provided the practice learning opportunity.

## **The Course Content and Assessment**

This section makes some conclusions about the course content and assessment processes. Participants made a number of observations about the course content and assessment process that do not fit into the above section. These areas are covered here. Firstly, the course content, as it arose from this research, refers to the information contained within the study guides that were issued with each module. In general people thought that the information was useful, relevant and assisted them in understanding supported employment. Participants also commented that much of the information supplied appeared a little dated and too much of it was from the USA. The age of some of the material caused

a few participants to question its currency, and by implication, the currency of the course. Others found the lack of local content a weakness and were put off to an extent by the 'Americanese' of much that was included.

The second area to consider in this section is the assessment. A number of issues raised have already been discussed above such as timeliness of feedback, the structure of the assessment books and the nature of the practicum. The other comment made by participants about the assessment was to do with the way work was marked. Participants both noticed, and appreciated, that there was an escalating expectation for marking. It allowed them more time to settle into the study and develop tools before they were strictly assessed according to the rules. An example used by one participant was about flexibility with submitting material for marking.

### **Policy Issues**

The following section draws some conclusions about the policy issues that were raised during the research. As mentioned earlier, one of the significant features that influenced the context of the Diploma in Supported Employment is that the policy environment in which the vocational sector operates is contested and often confused. There appear to be multiple understandings of disability operating, with each one generating a different analysis of the 'problem' and the potential solutions (Bennie, 1998). Within this mix supported employment has been nominated as a preferred direction for vocational services. The definition of what supported employment is remains in contention. ASENZ has set out six principles, outlined in the literature review, that they say underpin supported employment (ASENZ, 1994; Taylor, 1996a). The notable feature of the ASENZ description is that they define supported employment as a philosophy of support rather than any particular techniques or methods. Once it reached the governmental policy arena this distinction appears to have been largely lost and it has since been described as a model within a continuum of support options. Some of the language of 'Pathways to Inclusion' and of recent MSD publications and contracts seems to be reinterpreting the intent of the New Zealand Disability Strategy into the traditional individual understanding of disability. This gives the impression of a reaction to legitimisation concerns with traditional services and service wisdom as Saloviita (2000) found in Finland. The result of this is that supported employment must continue to develop despite some of the government policy rather than because of it. This state of affairs is depicted in figure 2 that follows.

The photograph to the right of this page is an original piece of sculpture done by the author to describe the intertwined nature of the supported employment movement with government policy. Supported employment is represented by the koru. It has only the very small roots of voluntary endeavour to sustain it. Over time it has become supported by government policy, represented by the large base that wraps around the koru finishing just below the koru frond. Without the government support supported employment would struggle to grow and maintain itself. However the price is that it has been constricted and deformed by that support. The hope for the future is that the frond will outpace the wrap-around support.



Figure 2: “The Entwined Koru”

The remaining policy issues, relate to the disability analysis operating within government, and can be broadly grouped within the framework of resource allocation. It is hard to escape the conclusion that disability support in general, and vocational support in particular, is assigned a lowly status for funding based on the history of provision by voluntary effort – often by women. There has been a pattern of inadequate contributory funding and, until the Diploma in Supported Employment, little or no state funding into coordinated staff training and development. The funding issues raise serious questions about the ability for agencies working in supported employment, or more generally in vocational support, to assist their staff to reach a level of competency in their practice whereby they can operate as they are expected to. The training opportunities are scarce, and those available are beyond the reach of both individual employees and of the agencies themselves. It indicates the clear need for a coherent policy to be developed in this area.

### **Summary**

The over-riding conclusion from the research is that students did find the study was worth it. They struggled with other commitments, had employers who demonstrated various levels of support, sometimes their jobs didn't match the learning closely and for others it did, many had very little preparation for the course by way of previous study and only half of them enacted the level of organisation and structure that resulted in completing the qualification. While doing the study the students had varying levels of support from their learning facilitators, reacted differently to the content and assessment processes and generally found the other students supportive. Yet with all this variation, all participants expressed the opinion that they learned a lot and all but one considered that their practice had benefited from studying the Diploma. However, the ongoing issues relating to the policy environment remain and will continue to impact on the participants endeavours.

### **Recommendations**

There are eleven recommendations and suggestions relating to the delivery of the Diploma in Supported Employment that emerge from the above analysis and two policy recommendations. The recommendations for the diploma are listed first:

- Strengthen processes to ensure employer support for students. As part of this process, employers should be made aware of the size of the task and things they can do to facilitate the study.
- Provide a process for the acquisition of metacognitive and study skills for students. This could be done through an additional module at the beginning of the course or through extra information over the first two modules.
- Students should be provided with methods for organising themselves. These may not be implemented but they would at least raise the issue of the need for personal organisation.
- Employ learning facilitators who have facilitation skills and/or develop this skills base within those who are supported employment practitioners. Training can be provided to the learning facilitators in such things as marking, the need for prompt attention, and some basic skills in adult education.
- Rationalise the amount of reading included in the study guides.
- Attempt to have more recent, New Zealand content included. This may well mean contracting some to be written.
- Workbooks and study guides should be colour-coded in some way to assist the management of the course material.
- Continue to provide prompts to complete assessment activities at the end of sections to help students manage the reading.
- Retain the study group meetings whenever possible. If these are not possible then find other mechanisms that link student together for support and collaboration in the study.
- Retain the practicum and clarify for students the nature of the learning that is undertaken through the practicum process.
- Retain the process of escalating expectation in the marking whereby students are provided with more leeway in the early stages of the diploma and where the marking becomes more rigorous later on.

Following on from the specific suggestions relating to the structure and deliver of the Diploma in Supported Employment are two specific recommendations relating to vocational policy. These are:

- That the government departments who are responsible for vocational funding reconsider their theory-in-use of disability. It appears from the policy and procedural outcomes that there is a significant discrepancy between the espoused theory and what happens. Policy needs to move more in line with the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

- That there is a more significant investment in the vocational sector and that there is developed a coherent policy of staff training and development. By implementing these two mechanisms organisations will be better able to meet government outcome objectives relating to the employment of disabled people through staff with more skills, and by retaining staff once they have reached a level of competence.

### **Future Research**

The focus of this study was on the affects studying the Diploma in Supported Employment had on the students who enrolled in the course. That focus was necessarily narrow in terms of considering training for the vocational sector. The perspective of other significant stakeholders has not been canvassed, and will need to be if a comprehensive understanding of the training needs for the sector is to be developed. Future research could build on the ‘CCS Community Participation Analysis Project’ (Milner et al, 2004) to further uncover what disabled people themselves want from vocational services and how they wish them to operate. Research also needs to occur at the organisational level to find out what agencies need from their staff and what training will build a culture that enacts the New Zealand Disability Strategy. There is indicated the need for further research into methods of training delivery that will deliver what is needed by the sector. Finally research is needed on how to develop policy that does not obscure the important philosophical positions through inappropriate language and outcome measures.

### **Afterthought**

The research journey embarked upon for this thesis has been immensely helpful to me. I have worked in the disability sector for a significant period of my life and this has helped me frame the research question and assisted in the analysis. But as with all reflective processes, I have learned an enormous amount by being able to consider those things that are everyday business from the many different perspectives offered by the participants in this research and by the authors I have read. I have also been able to relate the information gathered to my own experience of doing this very piece of study and have had many moments when I exclaim “yes, me too!” I look forward to being able to enact many of the findings from the research, and again offer my thanks to those who gave their time to participate. For me this learning process has certainly been worth it!



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## APENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Individual stories from the interviews

Five of the people interviewed for this research used an individual story to describe an aspect of what they had learned from the Diploma in Supported Employment. These are reproduced below with minor alteration for grammar and context in square brackets.

##### Story 1

'I've got a little boast to tell [about] a student from [X -where I work]. I was having a moan about how supported employment agencies [aren't] really available to pick up my students and change their work experiences into paid employment. But this lad, he'd come, he was only young, he'd come into [our organisation] for a first year and he'd been an absolutely typical teenage lad. There for the social side and he was actually very able in certain directions – loved computers. Got into all sorts of trouble around the place for hacking into systems. He was a 'tear your hair out' kid.

Because he was able to travel and was very keen and eager, we actually got him an external work experience in the first year, which is quite unusual because most of the students have an on-site work experience. But he got one cleaning eft-pos terminals and he was really good at it and he was offered him full time employment by [the employer]. But he thought about it and he said, "No I don't want to. I'm going to come back [to study]." I actually worked very hard at saying "don't come back, you know you don't need to come back here. This course is about helping you get jobs. You've been offered a job, why don't you go for it." But no, he was getting quite a lot of pressure from home, "no we don't want you out there yet, go back to [X]." He came back and I thought "right it's going to be a fun year with this guy because there's very little for him to learn in terms of curriculum so he's going to be up to all sorts of mischief."

So I got him his first work experience and he said he wanted to work in a butchery. And I said "why not? OK." Well I got him a job in a butchery. He did brilliantly there but he sort of had a habit where, the moment you told him he was doing something really well he would think "ah I must be trying far too hard" and he would really pull his efforts back. And this is what happened with his butchery work experience. When that came to an end I said "well I'm not going to find you another one you're going to find your own." I mentored him through the process of getting a CV up to date, going through the yellow pages, and first thinking about "what do I want to do, what's the big job that I want if I had a choice." And it was working with computers. So I made him identify who might employ him in the future, then [to make] a hit list of who [he] might ring up, [then] ringing them up and finding the names of people [to talk to]. [It was] the whole process of job-hunting, with me with [alongside him], sitting on my hands and just letting him make mistakes. Letting him review those, letting him go back and try it again.

Well he got himself a work experience. He wrote the letter, he sent out [our] blurb on how we support students on work experience, and I just went in there and supervised it. [It turned out that] he was actually known to the company. It was a company that was just down the road from where he lived and he used to pop in there anyway.

A couple of weeks into the work experience, the manager pulled me aside and he said “I didn’t realise that this lad actually had a disability. What’s his disability?” But he did figure it out after a few weeks that there were gaps in this lad’s knowledge and what he could do. Long story but to cut it short, at the end of it [the work experience] turned into full time employment with an incredibly supportive employer who knows this lad well and is quite paternalistic, but in the best possible way. So he’s learning and I hooked Workbridge in which I think is the best support for this lad. This lad saw himself as just one of the guys. He doesn’t need an agency breathing down his neck. So he’s been mentored into getting all sorts of computer skills, [and] his own driver’s licence because he will be driving the company car.

‘He went from being a kid with the tongue ring and the bright flouro-coloured hair standing on end, to wearing the suit and tie: the computer nerd boy. And it’s just fantastic. We’re still in touch and I think doing the diploma, just having that whole process in place – it was good, [tremendously satisfying]. Seeing someone’s life change. And he just came to me after and he said, “my brother did a degree and it took him 18 months to get a job. I’m leaving [here] with full time employment. How good could that be!” And the neat thing for this guy too is that it’s his success, he did it “I wasn’t handed this job. I had to go out and get for myself.”’ (OL).

## Story 2

‘[The supported employment process was] not so [applicable] for our organization but it would be applicable whenever I may refer a client, say, to [supported employment agency X] An example [of this is] a client of mine who had gone to [agency X]. I hadn’t sent him, [he went] because [the agency] had seen a job for a fork lift driver and saw he had a license for driving a fort lift and pushed him into the job. He came back and said “I would love the job except I have never driven a fork lift.” It started to get him worried that [agency X] may give him the job and discover that. No one had asked him but they had a copy of his license. Apparently he got a forklift driver’s license years ago when he applied for a stationary steam engine license or something ridiculous like that.

He had never driven a fork lift. So I sat down with him and we had a chat about it and I said “would you still like the job?” and he said “yes.” So I said, “go back to [agency X] and explain to them that it was 15 years ago you got the license and you haven’t driven anything since then, but you would like to drive the fork lift. [Then ask if] there are forklift courses here in [this city] that they know of and maybe [agency X] could get you on one of those courses first.”

He went back [to them] and came running back to me the next day, “hey that was a great idea, yeah, they have agreed to find me a forklift driving course.” [This process] increases his self esteem before they get him a job. I mean they could have got him a job as a

forklift driver but he wouldn't have lasted. Not because he couldn't drive a forklift but [because of] his low self esteem. He wants to work but it is like...[So through doing this course I had an idea of the process that people follow to help get someone a job and that helped me to advocate on his behalf to make sure it worked properly.]' (PC).

### Story 3

'[This is about] a gentleman, who had been working in a forestry unit, and he started to get into his late forties so was no longer capable of lugging chainsaws round, and climbing hills and ladders and things. [He] became unable to go out and participate and this was around the same time that we started doing our diploma. We looked at [this as] an opportunity for putting him into an area that he would like to do, [and] the area he would like to do was car grooming.

We tried various places and there were no openings, even though there were always ads in the paper, until we found a very receptive boss not far from where we were. [He] owned a car yard and said "by all means – bring him down – we'll give him a 2 week trial."

I sat down with this gentleman and said, "look this opportunity's there, would you like to take it?" He said "yes," [and] he went down on a two-week trial. After his two-week trial, we went down and a meeting the boss of the business. I said to him "what are your opinions?" and he said "my God, where's this man been all my life!" He said, "he turns up early, he is punctual, he is keen, he is motivated." He said, "Have you got another 20 people like him." That, for me, actually left me with quite a lump in my throat.

[The gentleman] has been where he was placed now for over a year. He is now at times sole charge. When the chap who he works with isn't there, or his boss or supervisor is away, he will run that area or that department by himself. He will open up the building in the morning, put the flags out, [and] he will be there half an hour before anyone else. He is an indispensable part of their business. A while ago he's also doing a course up at the polytech. They rang me from his business and said, "we hate to ask this but could you please not send him to his polytech course because we require him at work today – we have a job that needs doing and there is no person here who could do it better than him." And by doing that job, he turned over something like \$20,000 for the company he's working for and secured [his] long term employment further still, because of his labours, his endeavours, and his commitment.

That for me, all the late nights, the work days, the tripping to and from where-ever to where-ever paled into insignificance, especially when he came to work one day and slapped a piece of paper in my hand and said, "I just got a raise!" Yes, that made it definitely worthwhile; for him and... I sat in the background patting myself on the back and taking a lot of, not credit, but just a lot of satisfaction. Yes, satisfaction from what I was seeing and what I'd helped to implement – to see what it meant to someone else.' (NC).

#### **Story 4**

*This story was used to explain how the Diploma in Supported Employment had assisted this individual in their work with assisting people to access the community in non-work settings.*

A lot of people have no idea what [community participation] really is. We're not saying that our model's the best one to use. It's only one model, but at least we think we've figured out what it actually means. [I think that the supported employment style of support matches this really well. Just take away the employment piece.]

We have one young lad, who is a really good example, who has Down's syndrome. I won't let him go and cross the road [on his own], which is nothing against choice or anything, [but] because he has no road sense. Now he does meals-on-wheels! He goes with a lady who comes and picks him up. Now she can just stay in the car - he gets the meals out and he goes in [to deliver them]. If he's not there the people he delivers the meals to get most upset. He's doing all that on his own which is something he'd never be able to do before, and that was just with support. And now the support's not there. Support has been withdrawn because there's no need for it any more - he's quite happy and the lady who takes him is very happy. If he's not there then she has to do it all herself! Now [they both win].

That's a really good example of someone doing something that's almost like employment but is not employment, but using the same thing. Even for clubs, clients who belong to clubs in their community participation, support is exactly the same as if you were supporting into a job. I think [the Diploma in Supported Employment] would help a lot of people who are a bit lost or who have no idea what they are meant to be doing. There are some organisations that still think community participation is out in groups, and it's not. It's the same as employment, [which] is not [people] out in groups - that's called an enclave.

#### **Story 5**

[In one situation] I looked to merge [the Diploma in Supported Employment] with the Certificate of Adult Teaching. Because [they're] really complementary. They're complementary because we've got a guy who everybody had the view that didn't have lots of abilities - so, we looked at a scenario of doing a key-break-down task analysis for him. [We] sat down with him and did the assessment side of things with him, and then we did a physical photograph, step-by-step key tasks. [This meant] we looked at the person's learning style.

Now in the past people don't look at that. Some people are kinaesthetic or audial or visual and so I saw that was a challenge. So we put together a package where we could do an assessment with his statements: what he wanted to do and how he wanted to achieve it. It gave him an option and identified how his best learning [happened]. And his [result] was he needed to see the picture but he was more kinaesthetic. So we had to actually have

hands-on and we also found that we had to get him to repeat things back. It was a repetitive-type training and there were a few hitches in there that had to be addressed. From that he ended up taking over a production role, and achieving it! [He was] doing it accurately every time, so we set up [that] he got involved with employment within his own field. So from somebody who was not deemed to be [employable], we merged a whole lot of ideas and now [he is]. It really it's made us look at the person and what was realistic for them with guidance. You have to come outside the square and think, "what solutions can you offer them that may involve what they want?"

I think you become a coach, rather than [just] a job coach. I think that's something that people mis[understand]. They think you have to be a job coach [but] that's not first. You've actually got to be their coach and mentor first to get to know them. Because that's what the diploma taught me – get to know your subject first, before you start doing things, otherwise you make assumptions or you actually find out they're doing what you want to do.

## **Appendix B**

### **Letter Sent to Individuals Requesting their Involvement in an Interview**

Dear

I write to you to ask if you would consider being part of some research undertaken by John Taylor into the Diploma in Supported Employment. John is undertaking an evaluation of the Diploma in Supported Employment as his thesis for a Master's programme at Massey University.

The purpose of the research, besides fulfilling his academic requirements, is to find out what past students have thought about both the Diploma and the delivery method to continue to improve how Tautoko Services provides for this programme.

If you are interested in being involved, then the commitment would be to a 60 to 90 minute interview with John or being part of a focus group for a similar period of time. The results of this interview will be strictly confidential and any material used will ensure this.

Attached to this letter is an information sheet providing more information about the research. If you are willing to be involved then please return the attached form in the enclosed envelope by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2004. (Please note that if you initially decide to be involved you may change this decision at any time if you then choose not to be involved.) John will then contact you and clarify any further questions you may have, and arrange a time to meet.

Thank you for your consideration

Yours sincerely

Garry Coburn  
Chairperson - Tautoko Services Trust Board.

*(Included individual information sheet – see appendix C)*

*Was it worth it? Evaluating outcomes for students of the Diploma in Supported Employment.*

Yes I agree to John contacting me to discuss my involvement in this research. I understand that I may withdraw from this process at any stage.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### ***Was it worth it? Evaluating outcomes for students of the Diploma in Supported Employment.***

#### ***Individual Interview Information Sheet***

This information sheet sets out some of the things you will need to know about this Masters study before you agree to take part in it.

**Researcher:** John Taylor

**Contact details:**

Tautoko Services, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Supervisors:** (These are the people who are overseeing the work I do on this study)

Michelle Lunn PhD and Monica Skinner  
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University, Private Box 756, Wellington  
Ph 04 801 2794 x 6945

#### **About the research**

Since the year 2000 there have been some significant governmental policy developments and statements relating to the disability sector and to the vocational rehabilitation sector in New Zealand. Among these have been the release of the New Zealand Disability Strategy (2000), Pathways to Inclusion (2001) - which is the new vocational rehabilitation strategy, additional funding for supported employment services, and comments from the Minister for Social Development and Employment about wanting more disabled people to be supported into employment (Maharey Notes, 2000 & 2001). Most people in the vocational rehabilitation sector consider that these signal that government has identified supported employment is the preferred direction for vocational services in New Zealand.

Because supported employment is still relatively new and not well understood in the vocational sector, the Association for Supported Employment in New Zealand (ASENZ) developed a diploma course called the Diploma in Supported Employment. This was designed to counter the perceived knowledge and skills gap that existed in the sector. ASENZ then negotiated for this diploma to be delivered throughout New Zealand by a partnership between UCOL and Tautoko Services. Over the past three years this diploma has been delivered in a distance education mode.

So this research is to evaluate one part of the Diploma in Supported Employment programme. It will explore how the content and delivery of the diploma have met student needs, expectations and assisted them in their practice as supported employment practitioners.

### **What will you have to do if you participate?**

If you agree to take part then you will be involved in an interview with me. This will last between one and one and a half hours. It will cover a range of information about how you found studying the Diploma in Supported Employment, what you found useful, what could be improved, and how you think it may have helped you in your practice in supported employment.

The interview will be recorded on audio tape. This will be transcribed so we can read them, and you will be offered the opportunity to review any information that you have provided and edit it to your satisfaction. (If there are substantial changes I may ask if we can do another interview for clarity.) All material will be kept entirely confidential and will be destroyed, or returned to you, once the study has been completed.

### **Will it be confidential?**

The presentation of the findings of this study will be done thematically which will ensure individuals cannot be identified. In addition, all the information you supply will be kept completely confidential. Any references that could lead others to identify you will be removed and if anything you say is quoted I will use a pseudonym. (The only exceptions to this will be if practices discussed are illegal or place people in significant personal danger. In the unlikely event of this occurring, I will alert you that I may need to approach someone else with the specific information.)

Once the interview is completed I will provide the tape with a number that will be the unique identifier from then on. The only people who will have access to any of the interview information you provide will be you, the transcriber (if I use one), and me. A transcriber will sign a confidentiality form.

### **What are your rights as a participant?**

You have the right to:

- Decline to participate even after you have initially accepted
- Have a support person present if you wish
- Ensure that the setting is comfortable for you
- Refuse to answer any question
- Ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview
- Withdraw from the study at any time
- Ask any questions about the study at any time
- Expect all information provided to be completely confidential
- Be provided with a summary of the findings

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee WGTN Protocol 04/12. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Mr Jeremy Hubbard, Acting Chair, Massey University Wellington Human Ethics Committee, telephone 04 801 5799 ext 6358, email [humanethicswn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicswn@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix D

### Was it worth it? Evaluating outcomes for students of the Diploma in Supported Employment.

#### Semi-structured Individual Interview Schedule

##### Interview questions/ prompts

1. Which Diploma in Supported Employment intake were you in and in which area did your study group meet?
2. Tell me how it was for you to study the Diploma in Supported Employment?
  - i. How did you feel prior to starting?
  - ii. What caused you to feel this way?
  - iii. How confident were you of success?
3. What were some of the things that helped?
4. What were some of the things that made it difficult or had to be overcome?
5. What were the hardest bits?
6. How did you find the material that was presented?
  - i. What were some of the key concepts introduced?
7. What comments can you make about the way the course was delivered?
8. What could be changed to make this course better?
9. What should be retained?
10. How would you say your practice in supported employment has been affected by doing this course?
11. Is this similar to what you have heard from other students?
12. Do you have anything else you would like to say/ comment on?
  - i. Do you have a story to tell from your experience?

## **Appendix E**

### **Letter Sent to Individuals Requesting their Involvement in a Focus Group**

Dear

I write to you to ask if you would consider being part of some research undertaken by John Taylor into the Diploma in Supported Employment. John is undertaking an evaluation of the Diploma in Supported Employment as his thesis for a Master's programme at Massey University.

The purpose of the research, besides fulfilling his academic requirements, is to find out what past students have thought about both the Diploma and the delivery method to continue to improve how Tautoko Services provides for this programme.

If you are interested in being involved, then the commitment would be to a 60 to 90 minute focus group meeting that John would facilitate. The results of this will be strictly confidential and any material used will ensure this.

Attached to this letter is an information sheet providing more information about the research. If you are willing to be involved then please return the attached form in the enclosed envelope by Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2004. (Please note that if you initially decide to be involved you may change this decision at any time if you then choose not to be involved.) John will then contact you and clarify any further questions you may have, and arrange a time to meet.

Thank you for your consideration

Yours sincerely

Garry Coburn  
Chairperson - Tautoko Services Trust Board.

*(Included focus group information sheet – see appendix F)*

**Was it worth it? Evaluating outcomes for students of the Diploma in Supported Employment.**

Yes I agree to John contacting me to discuss my involvement in this research. I understand that I may withdraw from this process at any stage.

The time of day that would suit me best is (please number in order of preference):

	Ranking		Ranking
11am to 12:30pm	_____	12:30 to 2pm	_____
2:30pm to 4pm	_____	4:30pm to 6pm	_____

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### Was it worth it? Evaluating outcomes for students of the Diploma in Supported Employment.

#### *Focus Group Information Sheet*

This information sheet sets out some of the things you will need to know about this Masters study before you agree to take part in it.

**Researcher:** John Taylor

**Contact details:**

Tautoko Services, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Supervisors:** (These are the people who are overseeing the work I do on this study)

Michelle Lunn PhD and Monica Skinner  
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University, Private Box 756, Wellington.  
Ph 04 801 2794 x 6945

#### **About the research**

Since the year 2000 there have been some significant governmental policy developments and statements relating to the disability sector and to the vocational rehabilitation sector in New Zealand. Among these have been the release of the New Zealand Disability Strategy (2000), Pathways to Inclusion (2001) - which is the new vocational rehabilitation strategy, additional funding for supported employment services, and comments from the Minister for Social Development and Employment about wanting more disabled people to be supported into employment (Maharey Notes, 2000 & 2001). Most people in the vocational rehabilitation sector consider that these signal that government has identified supported employment is the preferred direction for vocational services in New Zealand.

Because supported employment is still relatively new and not well understood in the vocational sector, the Association for Supported Employment in New Zealand (ASENZ) developed a diploma course called the Diploma in Supported Employment. This was designed to counter the perceived knowledge and skills gap that existed in the sector. ASENZ then negotiated for this diploma to be delivered throughout New Zealand by a partnership between UCOL and Tautoko Services. Over the past three years this diploma has been delivered in a distance education mode.

So this research is to evaluate one part of the Diploma in Supported Employment programme. It will explore how the content and delivery of the diploma have met student needs, expectations and assisted them in their practice as supported employment practitioners.

#### **What will you have to do if you participate?**

If you agree to take part then you will be part of a focus group with no more than 6 participants. At the focus group we will have a discussion about the Diploma in Supported Employment. The

areas we will cover will be the content of the course, the style of delivery and how you have found this course affects your work in supported employment.

Notes will be taken of the discussion and it will also be audio taped. This tape will be transcribed to capture anything important missed in the note taking. The tape and notes will be kept entirely confidential and will be destroyed once the study has been completed.

Once you have agreed to take part, a copy of the Focus Group Ground Rules, this information sheet and a confidentiality form will be posted to you. Please sign the confidentiality form and return in the attached self addressed and stamped envelope.

Once the membership of the group has been determined a time and place for the focus group will be set and you will be notified of this. If you are unable to make this meeting for any reason please contact the researcher.

### **Will it be confidential?**

The presentation of the findings of this study will be done thematically which will ensure individuals cannot be identified. In addition, all the information you supply will be kept completely confidential. Any references that could lead others to identify you will be removed. (The only exceptions to this will be if practices discussed are illegal or place people in significant personal danger. In the unlikely event of this occurring, I will alert you that I may need to approach someone else with the specific information.)

### **What are your rights as a participant?**

You have the right to:

- Decline to participate even after you have initially accepted
- Ensure that the setting is comfortable for you, including having a support person
- Refuse to answer any question
- Ask for anything you say in the group not to be recorded
- Withdraw from the study at any time
- Ask any questions about the study at any time
- Expect all information provided to be completely confidential
- Be provided with a summary of the findings

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee WGTN Protocol 04/12. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Mr Jeremy Hubbard, Acting Chair, Massey University Wellington Human Ethics Committee, telephone 04 801 5799 ext 6358, email [humanethicswn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicswn@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix G

### Sample of Information from a Study Guide

#### Setting the Scene

Welcome to Module 6 of the Diploma in Supported Employment. You are now well on your way to completing this qualification.

You will notice that there is only one workbook with this module. You will need to negotiate the timeframe with your Learning Facilitator for the work, **but** don't put this off for too long as it will put more pressure on you at the end.

This module is an achievement assessment so please remember to read pages 2 - 4 of your workbook carefully for vital information relating to the marking of your work.

#### What are "ongoing supports"?

In your last module (Mod 5) you looked at ways to introduce a supported employee to a job, ways for them to learn that job and ways to develop initial support strategies. All of this sets the scene for how that individual can be supported on an ongoing basis. The more we use and facilitate/develop "natural supports" the better the outcome is likely to be for the person we are supporting.

If we go into a workplace and tell the employer that we are the experts in working with "the disabled" and offer to do everything to ensure the supported employee "fits in", then we are likely to be expected to always be there to deal with that employee. If on the other hand we look to support and, when necessary, supplement existing workplace processes, then the supported employee will be considered as one of the team and our role becomes the consultant who facilitates and problem-solves with the company team. This relationship may develop to the stage where the employer views us as a useful resource for ideas around general workplace culture, workflows, etc and as a source of future employees.

So "ongoing support" flows on naturally from the initial support and development that we have done, and is limited or enhanced by that first stage. Ongoing support is not something different in kind to initial support, it is just that support which needs to be organised to continue over a longer period of time - perhaps indefinitely.

Ongoing support is not necessarily limited to the place of work. Some people may need some form of assistance to travel to work, prepare for work or to de-brief about situations that have arisen at work. Others may live in some form of supported accommodation, in which case it will be essential to liaise with the support people there on an ongoing basis.

In this module we have presented some information on developing and supporting "natural supports" as this is the current area of best practice in ongoing support. It is important to remember though that "natural supports" are not just those that are already there in a workplace, often we have to create them. This may sound contradictory but it isn't! Natural support simply refers to those supports that occur without any ongoing intervention from outside the workplace. So if Mary needs to be reminded to start back on the job after morning tea, then one form of natural support would be to organise that one of her co-workers reminds her. For Mike who is unsure about the order for parts to go together to build a 'widget' we may develop a pictorial flowchart or reorganise the workflow so it is sequential. This also becomes a natural support.

As you work on the assignment for this module you will find it useful to re-read the section entitled "Ongoing Job Support" which begins on page 302 of your Module 5 Study guide.

All the best,  
John Taylor

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## Appendix H

### Sample of an Assessment Task

#### Module 7 -Task 1

*Design a short resource book for the Agency that you work/volunteer within.....*

The resource book that you design will provide team members with information necessary to provide a supported employment service that is safe and relevant for people with different impairments and from different cultures in your area.

Your resource will need to include:

- A brief description of specialist support services and resources available to people with disability (including all groups listed in PC 1.1) in your area.
- Provide information on how to access each of these services
- Whenever possible include brochures or information sheets from the organisations

NB: Remember that information you include should be concise and easy to read/access - both for marking requirements and for ease of use by your colleagues.

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