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**THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS:
A Patch of Evaluation in the Seamless System**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilments of requirements
for the degree
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ABSTRACT

Education sectors have been grappling with the controversial National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for nearly a decade. Unlike other sectors, the majority of private training establishments (PTEs) have chosen to adopt the unit standards-based qualifications of the NQF. Although responsible for only a small percentage of all tertiary enrolments, PTEs have awarded more NQF qualifications than any other educational sector. This study sought to explain this remarkable record through evaluating the extent to which the NQF was compatible with the organisational context of PTEs.

Three PTEs situated in greater Auckland were selected for a collection of case studies evaluating compatibility of organisational context with the NQF. In each PTE administrators, tutors and students were interviewed and surveyed, and documents were reviewed. Following a framework developed by the researcher, compatibility of organisational context with the NQF was evaluated in terms of assumptions, objectives and approaches.

The study found there was general readiness for change in the PTEs studied, and that PTE organisational assumptions and objectives were highly compatible with assumptions and objectives of the NQF. However, investigation of approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment revealed gaps between NZQA intentions for the NQF and the realities of implementation. Gaps were particularly apparent in the areas of curriculum and assessment. Concerns were expressed about the increase in tutor

workload caused by the lack of clarity in unit standards and by managing standards-based assessment, as well as by the difficulty of achieving reliable judgement.

The study concluded that compatibility of the organisational context of the three PTEs of the study with the NQF, enhanced by a general readiness for change, was highly likely to have been responsible for success in its implementation. It suggested that most concerns could be addressed by more effective internal and external moderation systems supported by NZQA. It further suggested, however, that NQF implementation might have less success in organisations that did not share significant features of the context of these three PTEs.

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My family and friends have accepted the presence of this study in all our lives with commendable tolerance. At every stage they have been there to listen or talk or read over. I look forward to rediscovering leisure time with them. I hope that this thesis is a worthy tribute to the goodwill of all these people.

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INTRODUCTION

This study arose out of the researcher's experience as a private training establishment (PTE) provider of qualifications based on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). As both tutors¹ and directors in our own PTE, Information Technology Learning Centre (ITLC), my colleagues and I made the decision to change to NQF qualifications in 1995. The change was traumatic. It had far-reaching effects on fundamental aspects of our organisational life: administration, curriculum, teaching approach and teacher workload. Despite the upheaval, ITLC survived and prospered. We were aware, however, that at the same time as we embraced the NQF, other educational providers were deciding to abandon or restrict its use. This experience prompted me to question what factors could have contributed to ITLC's ability to survive and manage the change effectively, while others gave up. I wondered about the part played by funding constraints and by our organisational context. I wondered what we had in common with other PTEs which could be said to have successfully managed the changes. I was also aware of the costs and benefits we perceived in our ongoing use of the NQF, and wondered how these compared with the perceptions of other PTEs.

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of the research, then, was to uncover factors and perceptions in PTE implementation of the NQF, in order to provide some useful insights to share with other NQF stakeholders. I expected that these insights would be of interest to those involved in refinement and implementation of the NQF, particularly the New Zealand

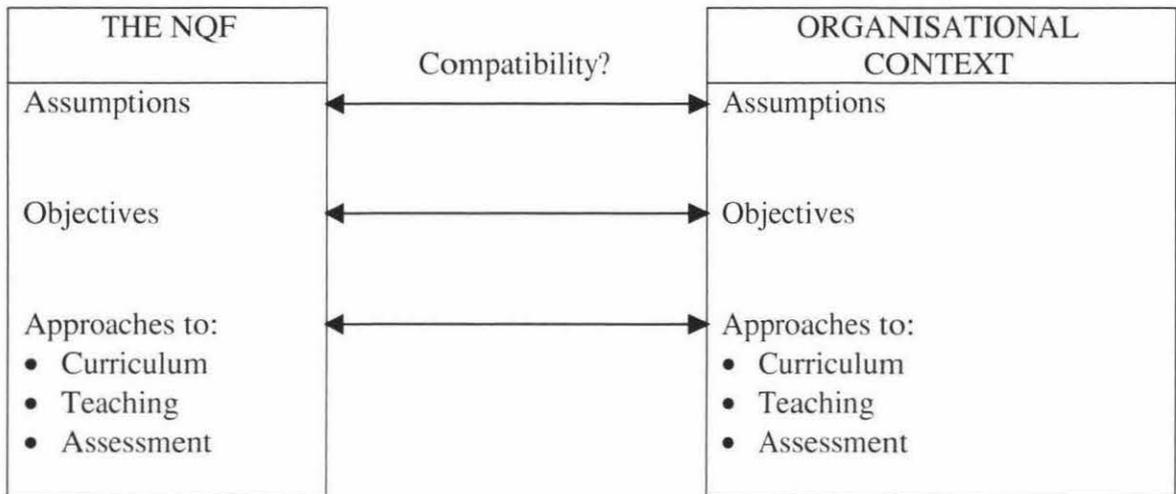
¹ PTE staff and students usually refer to teachers as tutors.

Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the Crown Entity established under the Education Amendment Act 1990 in order to develop and maintain the NQF. I expected the findings would also be of interest to Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), established under the 1992 Industry Training Act in order to set standards and arrange industry training for the sector they represent, as well as to other educational organisations considering implementing the NQF. Anticipating that both the NQF and PTEs would be characterised by certain assumptions, objectives and approaches, I developed the following questions to guide this exploration:

1. What are the assumptions and objectives of the NQF?
2. What approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment are implicit in the NQF?
3. What features of organisational context are significant in implementation of the NQF?
4. To what extent is the NQF compatible with the organisational context of PTEs?
5. What recommendations can be made for refinement and implementation of the NQF?

I investigated the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF, and developed a framework based on the simplified version at Figure 1 (p. ix) to evaluate the extent to which these were compatible with the organisational context of each PTE. I examined the experience of ITLC and two other PTEs that could be said to have succeeded at implementing the NQF. I then highlighted significant differences and commonalities in the PTEs. I went on to suggest generalisations about organisational factors that impact on NQF implementation, and made recommendations for the refinement and implementation of the NQF.

Figure 1. Simplified framework for evaluating compatibility of the NQF with organisational context



RATIONALE

Both the NQF and PTEs are contemporary, controversial and under-researched phenomena in New Zealand education. Although fraught with debate, implementation of the NQF has been rapid, and every year since its inception the small PTE sector has been responsible for awarding more NQF qualifications than any other educational sector (see Figure 2, Chapter 1). Despite the significant impact of the NQF on New Zealand qualifications there has been little critical examination of the experience of training providers in its implementation. Government publications on the NQF appear highly self-congratulatory in tone, while the critical literature tends to highlight weaknesses of the system without specific reference to existing programmes.

Studies in New Zealand and abroad recommend further research into implementation of the unit standards-based assessment system employed by the NQF. Croft's recommendation (1994, cited in Irwin, Elley, & Hall, 1995, p. 11) notes that unit standards-based assessment is a move away from achievement-based assessment, which is the form of standards-based assessment most researched and experienced in New

Zealand. The PTE-based Sir George Seymour Research and Consultancy group notes, “Research particularly needs to be conducted on how implementation of the Framework has affected PTEs” (1998, p. 1). In the United Kingdom, Wolf identifies a gap in research on the “actual experiences and practice of competence-based assessment” (1995, p. 107).

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The introduction and first four chapters furnish a practical and theoretical framework for this study. The introduction has outlined the aims and the questions that guided the investigation, and provided a rationale for it. Chapter 1 creates a practical context for evaluating the compatibility of the NQF and PTEs, supplying background information on NQF implementation and profiling the PTE sector. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 review relevant literature. Chapter 2 investigates the assumptions and objectives of the NQF, and highlights the controversial nature of its standards-based assessment approach. Chapter 3 examines the approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment implicit in the NQF, with particular reference to PTEs. Chapter 4 explores the significance of organisational context in implementation, and identifies features of organisational context that are significant in NQF implementation. It suggests a framework for evaluating compatibility of the NQF and organisational context.

Chapter 5 describes and justifies the methodological approach adopted in the study. Guided by the intent to explain the record of PTEs in implementing the NQF, the inquiry is in the form of a collection of case studies. In order to examine the extent to which NQF assumptions, objectives and approaches were compatible with the organisational context of PTEs, three PTEs were selected. These PTEs were diverse,

easily accessible, prepared to participate, and recommended by the Skill New Zealand advisor as having implemented the NQF successfully. The study employed a range of data gathering techniques: individual and focus group interviews, two surveys, and document analysis. This procedure is outlined and defended, issues of reliability and validity addressed, and ethical considerations noted.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings. Data from the interviews, surveys and document analysis are reported according to their relevance to key areas in each PTE. Chapter 6 reports on assumptions and objectives in each PTE, while Chapter 7 reports on approaches to teaching, curriculum and assessment in each.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings and draws conclusions based on them. Commonalities and differences in the PTEs are highlighted, and the compatibility of PTE context and the NQF is evaluated. Although certain features of organisational context facilitated successful implementation of the NQF in all three PTEs studied, this success was threatened by the workload entailed in its implementation. Chapter 9 discusses the implications of this for PTEs and other educational organisations implementing the NQF. Recommendations are made for NQF providers, writers of unit standards, NZQA and ITOs to consider: in particular a broader approach to moderation. Finally, further research examining NQF implementation in the light of organisational context is recommended.

In the following chapter, Chapter 1, a practical context is provided for investigating the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF and PTEs, and for evaluating their compatibility.

CHAPTER 1

EVALUATING NQF AND PTE COMPATIBILITY:

THE PRACTICAL CONTEXT

Both the NQF and PTEs are significant yet under-researched phenomena in New Zealand education. This chapter is intended to provide a practical context for evaluating their compatibility. Statistics revealing the nature and extent of NQF implementation are examined, with particular reference to the PTE sector. This sector is then profiled.

THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK: IMPLEMENTATION

Since its inception, and despite controversy surrounding it, the NQF has been steadily and rapidly implemented in New Zealand. The annual 1999/2000² report of NQF statistics records a constant increase in levels of NQF activity (NZQA, 2000d, p. 12). This report focuses on two types of key indicators of NQF activity: those that indicate readiness for NQF activity, and those that indicate actual level of activity in terms of results received. Readiness indicators are unit standards, qualifications and learners registered, whereas activity indicators are unit standards and qualifications awarded. The number of registered NQF unit standards, qualifications and learners has risen cumulatively and sometimes dramatically every year since the NQF began, indicating continually increasing readiness for NQF activity. By June 2000, 15,397 unit standards and 697 qualifications were registered on the NQF (NZQA, 2000d, p. 1). Learner

² This report uses the convention that "1999/2000" represents the financial year 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000, while "2000" represents the chronological year beginning 1 January and ending 31 December.

registrations rose by nearly 30% in 1999/2000 (NZQA, 2000d, p. 12). By June 2000, 523,811 learners were registered, representing nearly 18% of all New Zealanders over 15 years of age (NZQA, 2000d, p. 5). Increases in unit standard, qualification and learner registrations are of little consequence unless they are accompanied by increases in results indicating use of the qualification system. The NQF is clearly in use: by June 2000, 1,563,689 unit standards and 40,227 national qualifications had been awarded, and this represented a 24% increase over the previous year (NZQA, 2000d, p. 9). Continuing this steady upward trend, in the year to 1 August 2000 the number of NQF qualifications awarded doubled on the previous year (NZQA, 2000e, p. 1). Such statistics are consistently interpreted by NZQA as evidence that:

the (NQF) system is working ... the promises and claims made by the Authority in its early years are being borne out (NZQA, 1999, p. 8).

It cannot be overlooked, however, that since the mid 1990s much of the impetus for implementing the NQF is likely to have come from the availability of public funding.

As Smithers warns in his report on the NQF:

The availability of public money is such a succulent carrot and the prospect of its withdrawal such a big stick that it is not always easy to disentangle reactions to the NQF itself from the funding aspects (1997, p. 19).

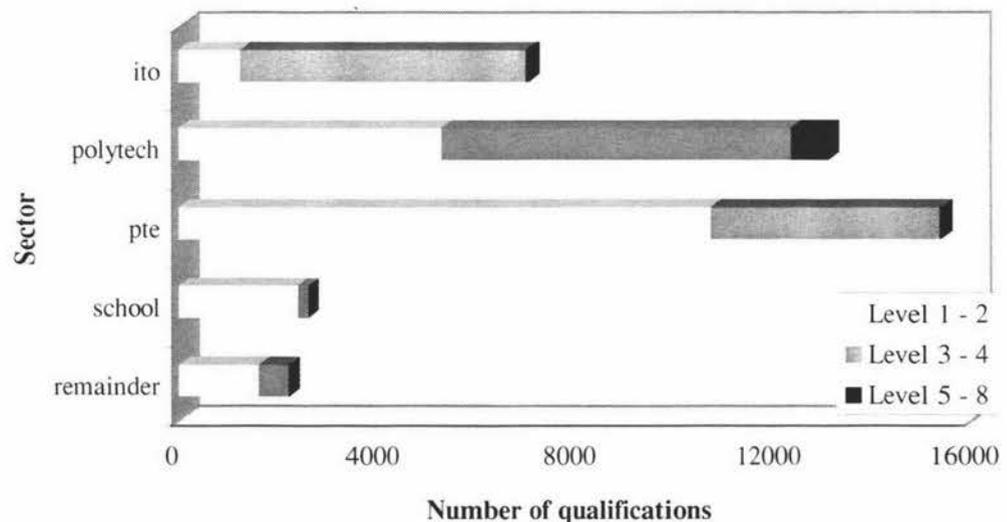
From 1996, education providers proposing Training Opportunities (TOP)³, Skill Enhancement⁴ and ITO programmes increased their chances of receiving government funding if they offered NQF qualifications. By May 1998, 85% of TOP trainees attended PTEs (Ministry of Education, 1999b). Not surprisingly then, by that date 65% of PTEs were accredited to offer unit standards-based qualifications (NZQA, 1998a).

³ Government-funded, workplace-focused, second chance education and training for disadvantaged groups, including school leavers and long-term unemployed with low school qualifications. From 1999 called Training Opportunities (TO) and Youth Training (YT) Programmes.

⁴ Government-funded training programme for students of Maori and Pacific Islands descent aged 16-21.

Although responsible for a disproportionately small percentage of all tertiary enrolments, between January 1993 and March 2000 PTEs had registered a surprising 27.9% of all learners on the NQF, and awarded 39.2% of all NQF qualifications (NZQA, 2000b). In the year to June 2000, PTEs awarded 39% of all National Certificates and Diplomas gained, compared to 32% awarded by polytechnics and 20% by ITOs (NZQA, 2000d, p. 9). As Figure 2 shows, in the years to June 2000, PTEs have been responsible for awarding more NQF qualifications than any other educational sector.

Figure 2. NQF qualifications achieved by sector by level to June 2000



(NZQA, 2000d, p. 11)

PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS: A PROFILE

By June 2000, 841 registered PTEs provided education and training for 13% of all tertiary learners (NZAPEP, 2000, p. 5). To gain registration they had met various stringent financial, educational and management quality requirements set by NZQA.

From 1999 these requirements included providing evidence of financial robustness if a private tertiary provider wished to be eligible for government resourcing such as tuition subsidies. Forsman (2000) compares the stringency of NZQA requirements with the “in house” equivalents used to quality assure state providers, and notes the negative financial state of many universities and polytechnics. Although their students include high numbers of educationally disadvantaged learners, PTEs have not limited their operations to vocational training. In April 1998, 12% of total PTE enrolments were for diploma, degree or post-graduate training (NZ Institute of Economic Research, 1998, p. 23). Despite their significance both as providers of tertiary education and implementers of the NQF, PTEs remain little known and under-researched. The Ministry of Education reports that “PTEs generally have a low public profile, and there is little ... published research or data available on (their) characteristics” (1999b, p. 10). They are frequently ignored in articles on the tertiary sector (as in Cassie, 2000). Guerin and Baker’s (1997) study on the role of private providers in tertiary education, prepared for The Treasury, is still the most comprehensive available.

The forerunner of the PTE in New Zealand was the “private college”, an educational establishment that could be Government registered only if it offered post-school education of a vocational nature, or involving English language training (Guerin & Baker, 1997, p. 30). Students at a private college received no government subsidies for course costs. The Education Act of 1989 provided much broader recognition of the private college: it was renamed “private training establishment”, and defined as “an establishment, other than an institution, that provides post-school education or vocational training” (Ministry of Education, 1999b, p. 2). The Act enabled PTEs to engage in a process of registration through the new NZQA, assuring their ability to

provide a structurally sound and financially stable learning environment. It also allowed PTEs to gain accreditation, assuring their capability to deliver programmes and/or assess against unit standards. These processes enabled PTEs to offer nationally recognised courses on the same basis as other tertiary providers. As they did not have the established reputation of state institutions, this ability to participate in a quality assurance process was extremely significant for PTEs. For the first time they had a benchmark of quality that could be used by both Government agencies and individual students in their purchasing decisions. In addition, the Act affected funding by enabling PTEs to receive grants from the Ministry of Education. This opened the door for PTEs to receive a restricted form of EFTS⁵ funding for higher level courses, and to engage in competitive tendering for government-funded targeted training programmes such as TOP and Skill Enhancement. By 1995, 66% of PTE courses were TOP-funded (National Research Bureau, 1996, p. 29).

PTEs are mostly limited liability companies and trusts owned by private individuals or organisations. The PTE sector grew rapidly from the establishment of NZQA and the NQF in 1990, with 46% growth between 1990 and 1995 (National Research Bureau, 1996). This rapid growth was in large part due to the fact that PTEs could offer nationally recognised qualifications for the first time through the NQF. Growth was also facilitated by the increasing use of contracting models by government agencies, and PTEs' ability to compete with polytechnics because of their flexibility and low tendering prices in meeting TOP purchasing criteria (Guerin & Baker, 1997). Although TOP funding has declined in real terms since 1995 (NZAPEP, 1999), a cautiously

⁵ A funding formula based on an equivalent full-time student (EFTS) unit. 1.0 EFTS was defined as the student workload that would normally be carried out by a full-time student in a single academic year.

supportive environment for PTEs has continued. From 1999 the EFTS funding system was replaced by the Universal Tertiary Tuition Allowance (UTTA), “paid to approved tertiary education providers (including PTEs) for all domestic students on approved courses of study” (Ministry of Education, 1999b, p. 57). Although PTEs cannot receive the capital grant component of UTTA funding available to public institutions, PTE students are eligible for UTTA funding on exactly the same basis as students at public institutions.

PTEs are educational establishments characterised by a highly focused curriculum and small classes, fewer than 20 students per programme (Ministry of Education, 1999b, p. 34). The majority of PTEs provide education in industry or subject niches, as varied as carpeting and computing, hospitality and horticulture, electricity and equine, with a view to enhancing employment and further education opportunities for their students. For many of their students, PTEs provide a second chance at education, an alternative to a secondary school system that failed to provide them with qualifications. These students consistently report the differences between PTEs and school as significant factors in their educational success, particularly the vocationally focused curriculum, small classes and personal approach (AC Nielsen, 1999; Kerr, 1999; Lucas, Fitzsimons, & Beckford, 1997).

SUMMARY

The NQF appears firmly entrenched in New Zealand. Despite the resistance of significant sectors, students are being registered on the NQF, unit standards are being written for it and qualifications are being awarded from it at a rapid rate. PTEs have always been and remain highly significant providers of NQF qualifications. In their

publicising of indicators of the success of the NQF, however, NZQA does not seem to acknowledge that organisational context is highly significant in implementation of change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; McKinnon & Shute, 1995; Parlett & Hamilton, 1977). Particularly in the implementation of assessment systems, which directly impact on processes of teaching and learning, innovations are more likely to succeed when they are compatible with the organisational context in which they are delivered (Bell, 1993; Hood, 1998; Wolf, 1995).

The next chapter begins a review of literature exploring these issues. Chapter 2 focuses on the assumptions and objectives of the NQF, outlining the political and economic context for the development of the NQF, and the process by which it emerged. It exposes standards-based assessment as a significant factor in resistance to the new system.

CHAPTER 2

ASSUMPTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NQF

This chapter investigates the assumptions and objectives of the NQF through exploring its origins. The political and economic context for the development of the NQF, and the process by which it emerged, are outlined in a review of NZQA papers and critiques commissioned by the Education Forum⁶. Standards-based assessment is then compared to norm-referenced assessment, the system traditionally used in New Zealand, and is exposed as a highly controversial feature of the NQF.

A NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR NEW ZEALAND: ASSUMPTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

In the mid 1980s, concerns over New Zealand's economic decline and low-skilled workforce prompted the government to fund five years of inquiry into the possible contribution of educational factors to the situation. Having concluded that the problems were in part attributable to an incoherent and inconsistent qualifications system, the government put in place a new qualifications system: the NQF.

Towards the National Qualifications Framework: political and economic context

Up until the 1980s New Zealand had enjoyed a comfortable standard of living without the need for a highly skilled innovative workforce. However, this was a situation that

⁶ This body describes itself as "an association of individuals who have a common concern for the future direction of New Zealand education ... formed to contribute to education policy through research and debate ... at all levels of New Zealand education" (Irwin et al., 1995: Appendix A).

could not last. By the early 1980s New Zealand was lagging behind comparable OECD⁷ nations in annual growth:

In the decade to 1984 New Zealand's economic growth rate averaged 0.9% - half the OECD average. Inflation averaged 13.3%. Government expenditure rose from 28% to 39% of GDP. Net public debt had multiplied six times over, and debt servicing had mushroomed from 6.5% to 19.5% of total government spending (Lythe, 1995, p. 2).

The United Kingdom's entry into the European Union in 1973 had caused New Zealand to lose its preferential trade agreements with that country. This was forcing New Zealand to diversify its markets and its products, and compete in a global market place demanding highly developed technological skills. The call for economic reform became urgent.

Economic reforms designed to improve New Zealand's ratings had brought about the complete restructuring of the state and all economic activity in New Zealand by the mid 1980s. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the theory of economic rationalism behind these reforms⁸. It is sufficient to say that even government sources (see for example Lythe, 1995) acknowledge that the social consequences of adopting an "enterprise culture" (Lythe, 1998, p. 1) or "market model" (Codd, McAlpine, & Poskitt, 1995, p. 39) were severe, particularly for low skilled workers. Unemployment rose dramatically. The number of registered unemployed was 25,000 in 1978. By 1988 it was 100,000; three years later in 1991 there were over 200,000 unemployed (Department of Statistics, 2000, pp. 8-9). Government was forced to recognise that

⁷ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has 29 member countries, including Europe, North America, Australia and Japan as well as New Zealand. Together they produce two-thirds of the world's goods and services (OECD, 2000: 1).

⁸ There is an extensive literature on the effect of this theory on educational administration (see for example Codd, 1995; Fitzsimons & Peters, 1994; Middleton, Codd, & Jones, 1990).

economic policy of itself was not a sufficient basis for national recovery (Lythe, 1995). It seemed clear that New Zealand needed to compete internationally and in the information age by diversifying markets and products, and focusing on high value-added goods and services as a way of competing with countries with low labour costs. A highly skilled workforce was imperative if these objectives were to be achieved. In 1984 it could no longer be acceptable that:

a third of school-leavers left with no formal qualifications, while 18 per cent went on to university. Only 11 per cent graduated. Out of every 100 fifth formers, only nine went on to get technology-related qualifications, four at degree-level and five in technology-based trade certificates or technician certificates (Smithers, 1997, p. 3).

Such figures were interpreted as indicating that links between industry and training, and between senior secondary school, industry and training, were inadequate. Acting on the assumption that improving the performance of education and training systems would improve the skills of workers and thus automatically improve the economy, the government translated the impetus for economic reform into a spur to educational reform (Mersi, 1996, p. 2, in Roberts, 1997, p. 166).

Towards the National Qualifications Framework: the process

A process of five years of government-commissioned research and consultation in all sectors of education ensued. This led to widespread educational reforms including the establishment of the NQF. The emergence of the NQF over this period can be traced in a series of reports, policy papers and discussion documents on post-compulsory curriculum, assessment and qualifications. These are outlined in NZQA papers (Barker, 1995; Lythe, 1995; Lythe, 1998; Waters, 1996) and Education Forum critiques (Irwin, 1994; Smithers, 1997).

Assumptions and objectives of the new system

The five years of government-commissioned research and consultation involved the Departments of Education and Labour, the Treasury, a wide range of other government departments and ministries, and thousands of respondents in education, industry and the academic population (Waters, 1996, p. 5).

During this period, further educational factors in New Zealand's economic decline were identified, and various strategies for addressing them considered. There was a bewildering array of certifying and examining agencies. Links between qualifications, educational organisations and industry, as well as between education and training were unclear. This incoherence and inconsistency in the qualifications system was held responsible for the unacceptable number of low skilled workers and for discouraging people from continuing learning (see for example Departments of Employment and Labour, 1986; Probine & Farghar, 1987).

The chief objective of the new qualifications system was thus to overcome incoherence and inconsistency. The aim was to improve links between industry and training, the performance of education and training systems, the skills of workers and ultimately the economy. This was to be achieved through streamlining and broadening qualifications into a coherent system, increasing their flexibility, accessibility and responsiveness, and ensuring quality and accountability. Table 1 (p. 12) shows the development of various strategies considered in order to fulfil these objectives.

Table 1. Development of strategies leading to the emergence of the NQF

Intent of strategy	Paper/Event	L&A 1986	GP 1986	P-F 1987	McC 1987	HR 1988	LFL 1989	EA 1990	TF 1990	DF 1991
Overcome incoherence: streamline and broaden; increase flexibility, accessibility, responsiveness	Standards-based assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	National Certificate	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
	Credit transfer		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓
	Eliminate academic/vocational distinction				X	X			✓	✓
Overcome inconsistency: ensure quality, accountability	National Authority			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓

KEY

L&A	Learning and Achieving (Department of Education, 1986)
GP	Green Paper (Departments of Employment and Labour, 1986)
P-F	Probine-Farghar Report (Probine & Farghar, 1987)
McC	McCool lecture tour
HR	Hawke Report (Hawke, 1988)
LFL	Learning for Life: Two (Ministry of Education, 1989)
EA	Education Amendment Act 1990
TF	Towards a National Qualifications Framework (NZQA, 1990)
DF	Designing the Framework (NZQA, 1991a)

Note: ✓ indicates inclusion of a strategy in a paper or event; X indicates a strategy was specifically discounted in this paper or event.

Table 1 indicates that standards-based assessment of qualifications emerged as the single most recurring strategy in the research. Other recurring strategies intended to overcome confusion and incoherence included National Certificates, and credit transfer between courses and educational organisations. The elimination of the academic/vocational distinction was a controversial strategy at first rejected and subsequently recommended. It included integrating traditional forms of education with

work place training, and using indirect evidence of achievement for assessment, a strategy which would come to be known as “recognition of prior learning” (NZQA, 1996b, p. 7). The appointment of a quality assurance body for national qualifications was repeatedly recommended as a strategy for overcoming inconsistency and ensuring quality.

Learning and Achieving (Department of Education, 1986)

Moves towards streamlining and broadening the qualifications system at senior secondary school level were first signalled in this report. In addition to suggesting standards-based assessment as an internal form of assessment, and some form of National Certificate, the report recommended a wider curriculum. A significant change in direction for New Zealand education, this was intended to address the problem of senior secondary school students⁹ who were leaving school with low qualifications, or were staying on but without the intention of going to university. Problems in post-compulsory education and training were addressed in two subsequent reports.

Green Paper (Departments of Employment and Labour, 1986)

This paper identified New Zealand’s lack of a structured training response to the changing needs of the economy and society, and lack of a streamlined approach to co-ordination of qualifications and educational organisations. It recommended criterion-based¹⁰ as opposed to norm-referenced qualifications and some form of National Certificate with credit transfer between courses. Inconsistencies and the haphazard

⁹ In this study, “student” denotes a person undertaking any form of study; “learner” denotes a person undertaking or likely to undertake NQF studies, as in the NQF literature; “trainee” denotes a person involved in TOP programmes or similar. There is some overlap in the use of these terms.

¹⁰ See Appendix A for definitions of assessment types.

nature of qualifications in post-compulsory education and training were examined further in the Probine-Farghar report.

Probine-Farghar Report (1987)

The report identified multiple bodies responsible for qualifications in the post-compulsory sector, including individual industries, government departments and other providers. It noted the inflexibility of the qualifications system, where there was minimal opportunity for transferring either skills gained in on-job training between occupations, or qualifications between learning environments. In addition, learners were reported as facing many barriers making qualifications inaccessible. They were not encouraged in ongoing learning and tended to perceive qualifications as “one qualification for life” despite international research promoting a contrary view (Waters, 1996, p. 7). As one of the booklets introducing the NQF described the pre-NQF qualifications system:

... in some areas of learning there have been no nationally recognised qualifications at all. People have often found it hard to work out how or where to obtain the skills necessary for their chosen career. Often too, the knowledge and skills people have already gained have not counted as they should towards a qualification (NZQA, 1991b, p. 1).

The report also expressed concern that the qualifications system appeared inconsistent in quality. A strategic manager for NZQA described the situation thus:

... the value of some qualifications was in doubt; holders of qualifications were not always as proficient as their qualification suggested; there were no consistent regulations in place to establish and stabilise values on a systems-wide basis (Barker, 1995, pp. 15-16).

The report therefore suggested the formation of a National Validation Authority, whose purpose would be to examine and moderate courses and qualifications in all sectors (except the university sector) with the aim of rationalising and standardising nationally recognised qualifications. It also advocated a more flexible system of credit transfer which would recognise prior learning and link all sectors.

Links between a confused, inconsistent qualifications system, a low skilled workforce and economic decline were also being made internationally. In most Western countries the 1980s were characterised by educational reforms that favoured stronger central intervention, with an emphasis on accountability (Fullan, 1998, p. 672). Despite Waters' claim that "overseas qualifications models were thoroughly investigated" (1996, p. 5), international qualifications models reported on in New Zealand during this period appear to be limited to the Scottish 16+ Action Plan. This was the system of vocational qualifications introduced in Scotland in the mid 1980s (Irwin, 1994, p. 72) by the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC). Irwin (1994, p. 73) calls this limitation to one system "unfortunate", citing other systems, particularly those operating in Europe, as enjoying a better reputation for vocational and technical education and training than that operating in the United Kingdom. In considering a system favouring standards-based over norm-referenced assessment, however, New Zealand was falling in line with trends in a number of other Western countries, including Australia and the United States of America (Roberts, 1997). New Zealand turned to overseas systems for some direction.

The influence of SCOTVEC

In 1985 the Minister of Education and a senior Education Department official had visited Scotland to investigate the SCOTVEC system. Seeing this as a possible model for overcoming incoherence and inconsistency in its own qualifications system, the New Zealand government invited the Chief Executive of SCOTVEC to introduce it to New Zealand in 1987. The concepts of the SCOTVEC system were introduced to a wide cross-section of educational and industry personnel in an intensive two week programme of formal presentations and informal briefings in New Zealand's four main centres. These included such concepts as modular programmes of study, National Certificates, performance criteria for assessment, and credit accumulation (see Appendix B). The Scottish system provided a model for combining these concepts in one system of vocational qualifications; however, it did not address the issue of academic qualifications. This issue was addressed in the Hawke Report, which was intended to bring together the findings of the previous reports.

Hawke Report (1988)

This report noted that, in their focus on creating a single coherent qualifications system, previous reports had not distinguished between qualifications recognising academic education and those designed to recognise vocational training. By contrast, this report maintained a distinction between educational subjects which stimulate students' imagination and vocational subjects which develop directly useful capabilities (Smithers, 1997, p. 5). The report found that employers required workers with a broad based education, and suggested transferring vocational training programmes from the Labour Department to a Ministry of Education and Training, a move that would facilitate increasing the range and location of senior secondary courses. It

recommended maintaining a distinction between the sectors in coordinating qualifications, however. The report suggested the formation of a National Educational Qualifications Authority (NEQA) to replace the University Grants Committee, the Vocational Training Council and the National Council for Adult Education. The new body was to co-ordinate three distinct sub-agencies for vocational, school and degree levels of learning.

While the establishment of NEQA was to be endorsed by the Government, niceties distinguishing academic and vocational qualifications were ignored. Following consultation on the Hawke report, and clearly influenced by the SCOTVEC model, the Government advocated sweeping changes to education and training.

The establishment of NZQA

The report *Learning for Life: Two* (Ministry of Education, 1989) endorsed the coherence in qualifications enabled by a competency-based qualification system and by the establishment of NEQA. The role of NEQA would be to co-ordinate all nationally recognised qualifications, “thereby establishing and maintaining links among the different education sectors, to facilitate credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning” (Waters, 1996, p. 9).

NEQA was formally established as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) under the Education Amendment Act 1990, concluding five years of research, analysis and consultation. NZQA represented New Zealand’s first unified approach to the recognition of qualifications. It was given powers to develop a coherent and consistent system to replace a system of numerous examining and registration bodies that worked

in an often unco-ordinated and confusing manner. The new system was to be known as the National Qualifications Framework, and was to encompass national academic and vocational qualifications in secondary schools and post-school education and training. NZQA intended that the precise nature of this Framework be discussed and debated widely, and to this end released the following two discussion documents early in its life. These were disseminated widely for consultation.

The National Qualifications Framework emerges

Towards a National Qualifications Framework (NZQA, 1990), released in October 1990, proposed two options. One was to build on existing qualifications and fit them into the new Framework, retaining some separation between school, vocational and university qualifications and providing for limited credit transfer. The other was to introduce a Framework with one central award, the National Certificate. This would replace all existing qualifications below degree level, and be divided into levels or stages to indicate increasing competence. Assessment would be standards-based, not norm-referenced. This system would, NZQA claimed, facilitate credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning, and eliminate the artificial academic/vocational distinction.

The more than 250 submissions received in response to this document were generally supportive of the second option, encouraging NZQA to release its second discussion document, *Designing the Framework* (NZQA, 1991a), in March 1991. This provided more detail on the second option proposed in the first document and included questionnaires and an opportunity to provide additional submissions on education and training in academic and on Maori participation in the Framework.

There were over 1600 written responses to the 35,000+ copies of the document, representing a cross-section of interested parties, including Maori, secondary schools, tertiary institutions, students' associations, government departments, trade unions, employer groups, and individual industries (Waters, 1996, p. 11). NZQA interpreted these responses as demonstrating widespread support for the proposed unified Framework. Smithers (1997, p. 7) points out, however, that submissions expressed significant concerns. Echoing those expressed in regard to the SCOTVEC system, the issues included the place of competitive examinations, and whether assessment should be achievement-based, and therefore graded, or competency-based, and therefore judged either competent or not yet competent (see Appendix A for definitions of assessment types). In addition, 82% of respondents wanted excellence to be recognised in standards-based assessment (Waters, 1996, p. 11).

Despite such concerns, NZQA forged ahead with its ambitious plan to create a qualifications structure that was "seamless". The term "seamless" was coined in 1993 by the then Minister of Education, Dr Lockwood Smith, to denote the Framework's "uniform approach to attaining qualifications based on equivalent systems of assessment and the recognition of prior learning across all learning institutions" (Olssen & Matthews, 1997, p. 21). Central to the concepts of the NQF finally adopted by the NZQA Board in 1991 was the notion that:

All learning, whether academic or occupational, and wherever it took place, was to be organised into units described in terms of outcomes (Smithers, 1997, pp. 8-9).

Units were to be assigned to eight levels ranging from Form 5 to postgraduate, and logged on a national database. Qualifications were to be obtained by the aggregation of modules, which later became known as unit standards.

The NQF was officially launched in November 1991, and since then every government initiative relating to education or training has continued to promote it as a cornerstone of economic revival. It had a pivotal role in the “Skill New Zealand” strategy promoted in the 1992 Industry Training Act (Education and Training Support Agency, 1998). This strategy, to be implemented by the Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA)¹¹, aimed to increase the quantity and quality of industry training to national qualifications standards. It made funding available for initial development and promotion of industry control, rather than state control, of industry training. It established ITOs to administer workplace training leading to NQF qualifications, giving them a key role in setting standards and developing qualifications. The government’s 1993 strategic plan for education and training in New Zealand developed these ideas further (Ministry of Education, 1993). Aiming at a highly skilled workforce at enterprise and industry level that would enhance New Zealand’s international competitiveness, the plan established ambitious targets for the recognition of ITOs, the setting of unit standards, the registering of National Certificates and Diplomas and the availability of on-job assessment. This paved the way for funding both structured “on-job” industry training, and “off-job” training delivered by educational organisations which provided unit standards-based qualifications of the NQF.

THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AND CONTROVERSY

Although its fundamental tenets have not changed, since its inception the NQF has been a source of spirited debate and controversy in every educational sector. By 1997 the Chairman of the Education Forum was saying, “It has been evident for several years

¹¹ Called Skill New Zealand from September 1998, since 1990 this agency’s brief has been to support training in industry, and work with training providers to provide tertiary education and training for people with low or no qualifications.

that the National Qualifications Framework is not performing to its original high expectations” (Raffills in Smithers, 1997, p. ix). The resistance of every university and many polytechnics and secondary schools indicated that the NQF was far from being all-inclusive, and that there were serious problems with some of the key assumptions underlying it. Perhaps most controversial of all issues associated with the NQF was the use of standards-based assessment for every kind of qualification.

Standards-based assessment

Standards-based assessment represents a radical change from norm-referenced assessment, extensively used in traditional New Zealand qualifications. Standards-based assessment originated in vocational education. It was first developed in military training and then teacher education in the United States in the 1960s, re-emerging in that country in the 1990s; it appeared in vocational education in the United Kingdom (UK) and Scotland in the 1980s. New Zealand was the first country ever to attempt to apply standards-based assessment across the board to both vocational and academic education.

Government policy papers do not distinguish “standards-based” (Department of Education, 1986; NZQA, 1990) assessment from “criterion-based” (Departments of Employment & Labour, 1986) and “competency-based” (Ministry of Education, 1989) assessment. While each of these forms of assessment emphasises different technical aspects, their purpose is always to compare a learner’s performance against a measurable standard, rather than to sort and select learners for employment or further education through comparing one performance against another. While the NQF does not abandon the norm-referenced written examination as a valid source of evidence for

assessment, it relegates it to just one of many possible forms of assessment; the intention is to emphasise other forms of evidence. Table 2 (p. 23) compares NQF unit standards-based assessment with norm-referenced assessment.

Advocates of standards-based assessment in New Zealand claim its greatest strength is that it is fairer (NZQA, 1991c, p. 4). David Hood, first NZQA chief executive, was one of the early advocates of standards-based assessment in New Zealand. In his view, shared by many in English-speaking countries, traditional norm-referenced assessment models have been damaging and a waste of talent. He asserts that they have made schools “factories of failure”, because they label half the population “below average” (Hood, 1998, p. 98). Standards-based assessment, on the other hand, “recognises that the vast majority of students can learn, given the right environment and the right tools” and provides “certainty about what a student has learnt and can do as a result of learning” (Hood, 1998, pp. 99, 100). Because it deliberately sets out to be applicable to both vocational and academic education, it is touted as free of the issues of status and economically harmful attitudes brought about by such polarising (Barker, 1995; Hood, 1998). The system is claimed to enable many more people to gain qualifications, because it is more flexible and accessible, and easier to understand. Even critics of unit standards-based assessment concede that a system based on standards not comparisons, emphasising mastery learning and avoiding scaling has the potential to improve validity of assessment and flexibility of delivery, and have a positive impact on learning (Irwin et al., 1995; Smithers, 1997).

Table 2. Comparison of unit standards-based assessment and norm-referenced assessment

FEATURE	UNIT STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENT	NORM-REFERENCED ASSESSMENT
Judgement of learners	Against collections of learning outcomes or statements of knowledge or skill called unit standards.	Against the typical performance of a large cross-section of an age or grade group on a standard set of tasks.
Purpose	To “certificate”, or confirm that a learner has reached a particular standard.	To rank and therefore be able to “select” one learner over another for further opportunities, usually further education or employment.
Method of gaining qualification	Demonstrate competence in entire range of knowledge or skills required in the cluster of unit standards that make up the qualification.	Achieve passing grades in external examinations which measure knowledge and understanding by sample testing on the basis of selected knowledge and concepts.
Time and organisation-bound?	No. Evidence of mastery may be collected, and credit for it granted, over an unstipulated period of time and via a variety of providers. ¹²	Yes. If a learner fails an examination, the whole programme has to be repeated.
Method of securing consistency of assessors and assessment	Moderation processes, both internal and external to the provider organisation, and managed by NZQA..	Some form of scaling, a technique by which grades are awarded in set proportions with reference to normal distribution.

Despite its positive potential, the change to standards-based assessment, with its concomitant blurring of the academic/vocational distinction, required radical change on behalf of education providers. Irwin et al. go so far as to call reliance on standards-based assessment the “basic fallacy” of the NQF (1995, p. iv). Indeed, rejection of standards-based assessment has been the chief reason the universities and many secondary schools have resisted joining the NQF, and many polytechnics have been reluctant. This debate has raged since the earliest days of the NQF (see for example

¹² NZQA defines a provider as “an individual or organisation supplying education and/or training and/or assessment services” (NZQA, 1996b: 7).

Codd et al., 1995; Codd, 1995; Codd, 1996; Fitzsimons & Peters, 1994; Grace, 1991; Middleton et al., 1990; Roberts, 1997; Tuck & Peddie, 1995).

The debate about standards-based assessment

In spite of the controversy over the standards-based assessment system of the NQF, there is little New Zealand research on its implementation in workplaces and in educational organisations other than schools. Even NZQA does not appear to have carried out any significant research into this area. In reply to a personal enquiry about NZQA-funded research into unit standards in the PTE context, NZQA Communications Manager Bill Lennox explained that NZQA has “not had research funding for a number of years ... any research was well before PTEs converted to unit standards” (e-mail communication, 14 June, 2000). NZQA literature admits to weaknesses in standards-based assessment, but continues to justify the model on the basis that there was widespread support for it in the consultation process, and that:

While standards-based assessment was not perfect, there was in fact no perfect assessment instrument and, for all its difficulties, a standards approach was an advance on the previous system of norm-referenced assessment (Barker, 1995, p. 24).

In her analysis of competence-based assessment in the UK, Wolf notes a resigned acceptance of a similar model despite the difficulties. She points out that, although the new system appears to have as many or more problems than the old, the approach is “likely to be with us for many years to come” (1995, p. 128).

There is a small body of New Zealand literature on the impact of standards-based assessment on schools. Priestley (1997) undertook a study of unit standards and assessment of academic school subjects in four Christchurch high schools representing a range of socio-economic and other conditions. This study suggests that standards-based

assessment is highly suitable for “activities where performance is being judged” (1997, p. 389), but much less suitable for “the whole gamut of assessment situations” (1997, p. 379). Priestley cites its inappropriateness for activities where, for example, knowing “that” (rather than knowing “how”) is being judged. A majority of the 131 senior high school students surveyed for this study perceived the unit standards as requiring more than the minimum work from them, and disadvantaged students in particular welcomed unit standards as having made qualifications more accessible. However, the majority of students surveyed for this study also indicated they would be more motivated to work towards unit standards if excellent achievement were recognised. Elley (1992) also acknowledges the suitability of standards-based assessment for judging “skills and basic knowledge” (in Codd et al., 1995, p. 48), and Sutton reports “greater learning and improved effort” by some school students using unit standards (in Hotere, 1996, p. 11).

Reports on the impact of standards-based assessment appear limited to promotional publications by Skill New Zealand and NZQA (see for example AC Nielsen, 1999; Lucas et al., 1997; NZQA, 1998b). Predictably, in view of their role in marketing the NQF, these focus heavily on positive impacts of standards-based assessment. The NZQA publication *Flexible Pathways* “showcases some of the innovative programmes that are emerging as the result of the changes (to unit standards-based qualifications)” (Lucas et al., 1997, p. 1). Case study subjects in this publication include PTEs and workplaces, all of which sing the praises of standards-based assessment. Typical comments include that by the head tutor of a PTE specialising in construction:

Builders have responded better to the new system than the previous system which didn't really tell them if the trainee had acquired the skills or not. Now they know that at the end of the course, the trainee is competent to national standards in those skills (in Lucas et al., 1997, p. 24).

A pilot project undertaken by NZQA explored “ways in which the NQF can be useful to companies within their existing human resources procedures” (NZQA, 1998b). Apparel and Textile ITO chief executive Derek Thompson, commenting on one of two case studies included in the project, noted that use of unit standards-based assessment showed that:

the new standards and qualifications are an integral part of improving quality and promoting best practice ... (and that) there may also be significant cost benefits for manufacturing firms in terms of less downtime and waste, increased levels of staff motivation and the need for less supervision of staff (NZQA, 1998b).

Such positive findings are borne out by less biased studies of competence-based assessment in UK workplaces. Wolf (1995, p. 125) notes that, when it can be implemented reasonably easily, this form of assessment is often praised highly by both employers and learners, and in fact is perceived as raising standards.

SUMMARY

In this chapter the underlying assumptions and objectives of the NQF have been revealed through an historical account of its origins and development. The NQF was developed in response to a theory of economic rationalism, which assumed incoherence and inconsistency in the qualifications system were partially responsible for New Zealand’s economic woes. It aimed to improve links between industry and training, the performance of education and training systems, the skills of workers and ultimately the economy. This was to be achieved through streamlining and broadening qualifications into a coherent system, increasing their flexibility, accessibility and responsiveness, and ensuring quality and accountability.

In this chapter standards-based assessment has been exposed as a source of controversy, and a significant factor in resistance to the NQF. The following chapter explores approaches implicit in the unit standards-based system of assessment.

CHAPTER 3

APPROACHES IMPLICIT IN THE NQF

This chapter argues that NQF reliance on unit standards-based assessment entails certain organisational approaches that are largely compatible with those found in PTEs. The choice of assessment system affects the core processes of, and therefore approaches to, teaching and learning. As Wolf asserts, “assessment is the most powerful single influence on the classroom or training workshop” (1995, p. 90). This chapter therefore reviews literature on the approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment implicit in the unit standards-based assessment system. Specific reference is made to implementation of standards-based assessment in PTEs.

Standards-based assessment and curriculum approach

The term “curriculum” refers here both to educational programmes and to courses within those programmes. The following discussion concerns the design, goals and content of educational programmes and courses, where a “programme” is the combination of individual “courses” of study which a student must complete successfully in order to gain a qualification (definitions in Hall, 1995, pp. 155-156).

NZQA takes pains to distinguish unit “standards” from unit “delivery”, pointing out that unit standards are intended to “spell out agreed standards of required performance”, not to be “training manuals or curriculum statements” (NZQA, 1996b, p. 2). The curriculum used and the method of delivery are intended to be left to the discretion of

the training provider, thus providing for considerable flexibility in curriculum delivery.

However Codd argues that in fact:

most so-called *unit standards* are not performance standards at all, but *standardised statements* describing components of a curriculum (1996, p. 60).

Similarly, Irwin et al. argue strongly that most unit standards set outcomes in terms of the content and skills to be covered, rather than performance standards (1995, pp. 3-4). These views are shared by a number of writers (see for example Irwin et al., 1995; Middleton et al., 1990; Peddie & Tuck, 1995b; Roberts, 1997; Wolf, 1995). That unit standards may not actually spell out standards and may effectively act as curriculum statements can be seen in Performance Criterion 1.1 of Unit Standard 9677. This states: "Contributions made are relevant to the subject matter under discussion by the team". No mention is made of how many contributions must be made to the discussion, or of what length these should be, whether they are audible, and so on. Such judgement statements are left to the moderation process, itself problematic and not well researched by NZQA. The separation of educational standards setting from curriculum delivery is in Codd's (1996, p. 63) opinion fundamental to the market view of education.

A curriculum approach based on unit standards is clearly in accord with the "objectives" or "behavioural objectives" model of curriculum (see Eisner, 1979; Posner, 1988; Skilbeck, 1984). First developed by Frederick Taylor in the early 1900s to increase the level of productivity in workplaces, this model was advocated by educationists such as Bobbitt in the 1920s, and Tyler, Bloom, and Popham in the 1950s. According to this model, curriculum objectives are closely linked with the requirements of the workplace and based on a detailed analysis of tasks leading to more efficient methods and procedures and ultimately higher production and profits (Foster, 1986, pp. 37-39). A

curriculum objective is stated as a particular learning activity or outcome, rather than a general statement of teacher intent. This approach was widely adopted in technical and vocational training programmes for young adults in the USA in the 1950s and 60s (Skilbeck, 1984, p. 211). In New Zealand, unit standards have been most widely taken up in ITO-based apprenticeship training and vocational education for learners with low or no qualifications, such as TO and YT. While clearly seen as suitable for such programmes, the approach has been criticised as inhibiting of flexibility and spontaneity, giving undue weight to preplanned decision making and unsuited to capturing nuances and complexities in learning (see for example Posner, 1988; Skilbeck, 1984).

Curriculum design

That unit standards may act as curriculum statements and in some cases training manuals is a strong possibility, given the well-researched link between test content and curriculum. As Wolf points out, "Educational research in general is united in finding that test content has an enormously important effect on curriculum and teaching" (1995, p. 86). NZQA literature makes it clear that unit standards are designed to "allow the accurate targeting of the training dollar" (NZQA, 1998b:). Case studies show that, although in the first instance providers design their programmes around the perceived needs of affected employers and learners, unit standards have a key role to play in this process. One employer described his company as "looking for a training provider who could deliver ... courses based on the standards we wanted", and saw unit standards as "a selectable menu that allows for on-job specialisation in key areas of your business" (Lucas et al., 1997, pp. 19-21).

Curriculum goals and objectives

As has been noted, the NQF was adopted to remedy the confused qualifications system held partially responsible for the low skilled workforce and hence the economic decline in New Zealand in the 1980s. Unit standards-based qualifications were advocated enthusiastically by government sources, who, in line with their international counterparts, saw them as a significant contribution to economic development, capable of enabling the country to “make much more effective use of its human resources” (Jessup, 1991, p. 131, in Wolf, 1995, p. 127). Unit standards¹³ are thus industry-driven. They are written by standards setting bodies, such as ITOs, made up of representatives of the interests of all major user groups including industry and professional associations as well as education and training providers. The goals of education programmes using standards-based assessment are thus intimately connected with the goals of these groups.

PTEs involved in a pilot of the NQF undertaken by NZQA, for example, were able to provide skilled staff trained to the employer’s specifications. One employer applauded the pilot in these terms:

I commend those involved in pushing unit standards to the stage where I as an employer can comfortably put people trained to the new standards into the workplace. We ... are proof that the system works (in Lucas et al., 1997, p. 21).

Similarly, the General Manager of Skill New Zealand noted, in a letter to training providers following his New Zealand-wide investigation into the progress of TO and YT programmes, “ a strong focus on ensuring that training is directed towards the needs

¹³ See Appendix B for definitions of unit standards terminology.

of individual employers and enterprises” (Kerr, 1999, p. 1).

Irwin cautions that, while such an approach has the advantage of ensuring that standards are set by those in the workplace, there is a danger that unit standards may focus on the immediate training concerns of industry rather than on the longer-term needs of the student (1994, p. 92). This concern does not appear to be borne out in PTEs, however. There is strong evidence that unit standards are fulfilling students’ longer-term needs by enabling them to access further tertiary education. A number of participants in the Skill New Zealand study of longer term outcomes of TOP had completed unit standards and then, particularly if the unit standards were in an industry sector that was of interest to them, gone on to further education. All of these had enrolled in diploma or degree courses and successfully completed their first year of study at a tertiary institution (AC Nielsen, 1999, p. 14).

Curriculum content

In a “behavioural objectives” model of curriculum, the emphasis of the course content is on “what the student knows, understands, values, believes and can do” (Skilbeck, 1984, p. 219). Irwin cautions that in unit standards-based curriculum, that has effectively narrowed so that the focus is on what students can do rather than what they know or understand (1994, p. 87). Because the learning objectives are so specific, course content may become limited to what is easily assessed. The concept of “mastery” in fact tends to limit what students learn (Elley, 1996, pp. 75-76; Priestly, 1997, pp. 145-146). The focus of the course becomes outcomes which can be measured, to the exclusion of those that are not readily measurable (Irwin, 1994, p. 91). Studies in the UK have shown that the result of the emphasis on what a student can do, rather than

what they know and understand, has led to a “considerable decline in emphasis on knowledge and understanding as matters to be specified and assessed separately” (Irwin, 1994, p. 88).

The other drawback of the approach is the necessity for highly detailed preplanning. When the goals and objectives of a curriculum are laid out very specifically, the teacher must spend a great deal of time planning learning activities that cover every aspect of the unit standard rather than letting the course content arise out of the teaching-learning dynamic. As Eisner points out, such detail can act as a constraint on teachers, teaching, and what students may learn, inhibiting the possibility of teaching or learning anything that “cannot be reduced to measurable forms of predictable performance” (1979, p. 98). It discourages an acknowledgment of the possibility that problems may have many solutions, that potential answers may not be known beforehand, and makes it easy to overlook the fact that:

Teachers operate with thousands of objectives in the form of aspirations for the students with whom they work – implicit and contextual rather than explicit and prepared prior to the specific context in which they are to teach (Eisner, 1979, p. 107).

In addition, Irwin has suggested that the small size of unit standards can lead to “the arbitrary compartmentalisation of learning and fragmentation of the larger domains of knowledge” (1994, pp. 92-93). Unless qualifications are designed as an integrated package of unit standards, this fragmentation can mitigate against the delivery of coherent programmes of learning. This point needs to be made to teachers, who are in danger of being left to believe that a standards-based approach requires a “piecemeal” curriculum (Hager, 1993, in Peddie & Tuck, 1995a, p. 203).

The less than satisfactory nature of the piecemeal approach is reflected in Skill New Zealand's (1999) study of TOP trainees. Those who had obtained disparate units rather than working towards a National Certificate had less understanding of how unit standards would benefit them in seeking employment or further education (AC Nielsen, 1999). On the other hand, for some trainees the experience of gaining unit standards was "their first experience of educational success" (AC Nielsen, 1999, p. 7). The need for setting attainable goals, and for early and regular experience of success, particularly in youth training, is mentioned in Max Kerr's (1999) letter to training providers of TO and YT programmes. NZQA always intended unit standards to have the capacity to provide the student with "frequent tastes of success" (NZQA, 1992).

Standards-based assessment and teaching approach

Standards-based assessment affects not only curriculum, but also teaching itself. Given its tightly specified objectives, standards-based assessment might be expected to pressure a teacher into approaches that are teacher-dominated rather than learner-centred.

Teacher role in standards-based system

Eisner takes issue with the ideas implicit in the objectives model, that "goals should be specifiable in advance and that success in teaching consists primarily of bringing about predictable outcomes" (1979, p. 103). He argues that a great many experienced teachers are most comfortable and effective with an "emergent" model of curriculum planning where objectives "grow out of action rather than requiring them to precede it" (1979, p. 41). In this model, where curriculum goals are created in process, the teacher's activities resemble the work of a painter or poet. By contrast, the teacher's activities in

a standards-based or “objectives” model, where both programme and course goals and objectives are set in advance by an external body, resemble those of a pianist interpreting the composer, a builder interpreting the architect. Peddie and Tuck warn that a standards-based assessment system can lead to the teacher feeling like a “technician”, there to “provide the means to the realisation of the objectives of others” (1995a, p. 202). Kerr’s (1999, p. 4) observation that tutors are taking on the role of workplace assessors, especially when employers are unwilling to provide this service bears this possibility out.

Conversely, Hood argues that standards-based assessment enables teachers to put into practice the best findings of educational research. He argues that standards-based assessment enables teachers to “facilitate” rather than “control”, to take account of individual learning styles and to provide learning activities that are collaborative, and connect content and application (1998, p. 63). He concedes, however, that in the school setting such achievements necessitate fundamental structural changes.

Learner-teacher relationship

There is some evidence that the positive potential for teacher role and learner-teacher relationships envisaged by Hood (1998) is being realised, in vocational settings anyway. Studies by NZQA and Skill New Zealand note the trusting, respectful nature of the learner-teacher relationship in vocational education carried out by PTEs and other organisations implementing standards-based assessment. TOP trainees noted the support and encouragement they had received from tutors as highly significant in their success in these organisations (AC Nielsen, 1999, p. 18). Class size is likely to be significant here. Research shows that class size has a greater effect on pupil

achievement than teaching approach: “small classes produce ‘dramatic improvements’ in learning ‘irrespective of the pedagogy employed’ ” (Glass, 1982, in Adelman, 1988, p. 14). Classes with fewer than 20 pupils show:

improved pupil attention, interest in subject matter, school attendance and self-concept ... (as well as) improvements ... in the teacher’s morale and attitude to school work ... With smaller classes teachers can spend more time on each pupil (Adelman, 1988, pp. 14-15).

Although this research is school-based, similar outcomes are evident in PTE-type training, catering for recent school-leavers and teaching unit standards of the same level as senior secondary school. In its submission to the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC), the New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers (NZAPEP) notes PTEs are characterised by “a willingness to try different approaches and work with different students compared to the rest of the tertiary education sector” (NZAPEP, 2000, p. 2). PTE students are typically involved in second-chance education, and thus are likely to have low prior achievement in education and negative attitudes towards education. The submission identifies small class sizes and teachers with strong pastoral and subject skills as strengths of the PTE approach. In keeping with these claims, recent studies of PTEs and other training providers using unit standards-based assessment show that school-leavers report that these educational organisations are able to provide a learning environment that is fundamentally different from school. School-leavers have commented that the personal approach of tutors, the relevance of the learning to the workplace, and the supportive learning environment contribute to their high levels of attendance and achievement in PTEs (AC Nielsen, 1999, p. 7).

Standards-based assessment and assessment approach

Standards-based assessment is a fundamentally different approach to assessment from the norm-referenced approach traditionally used in New Zealand. Experience in New Zealand polytechnics and secondary schools, and United Kingdom workplaces indicates that implementing standards-based assessment increases teacher workload (Doyle, 1994; Elley, 1996; Fitzsimons, 1997; Goodwill, 1998; Meldrum, 1999; Peddie & Tuck, 1995a; Priestley, 1997; Wolf, 1995). As Peddie and Tuck note, changing to standards-based assessment requires from practitioners “increasing commitments of money, time and energy” (1995a, p. 202). Teachers, they warn, are unlikely to give this willingly unless they are convinced of the system’s capacity to improve learning and teaching. NQF implementation requires teachers to be trained in the principles and methods of standards-based assessment. As NZQA guidelines point out, unit standards-based assessment begins with “assessor training”, because “quality assessment calls for professional expertise” (NZQA, 1996a, p. 60). Managing this form of assessment and ensuring its validity further increases workload.

Managing assessment

Managing standards-based assessment involves gathering evidence, reassessment, and record keeping.

Gathering evidence

Standards-based assessment allows for a mix of assessment methods, intentionally eschewing a heavy reliance on the written examination. The aim is to gather evidence about a learner’s abilities and NZQA assures that this may be done through “any event or artefact that establishes the nature of a learner’s skill, knowledge or understanding”

(NZQA, 1996a, p. 19). Suggested evidence includes “products” such as reports, accounts, a chair, drawings, a negotiation, as well as “processes” such as observation by the assessor, audio or video recording, photographs, and learner explanations. Learners may be assessed on the job, in authentic settings, as well as through specially created assessment tasks in the classroom; as long as it is “valid, authentic and sufficient”, any evidence is acceptable (NZQA, 1996a, p. 20).

NZQA defines “valid” evidence as demonstrating “what the unit standards specify and not something else” (1996a, p. 41). For evidence to be valid, the learners should not have been hampered by a lack of resources or time. “Authentic” evidence is that which is clearly the learner’s own work and not someone else’s, while “sufficient” evidence is enough evidence to give the assessor confidence that the learner has met every single requirement of the unit standard (NZQA, 1996a, pp. 43-44). Standards-based assessment in New Zealand thus demands 100% competency. A learner must show competency in every one of the performance criteria across the entire range statement in order to achieve the credit.

New Zealand studies of unit standards-based assessment show that the attempt to gather evidence of 100% competency can lead to assessment practice in workplaces and educational organisations that are often “excessively rigorous and burdensome” (Capper, 1996, in Meldrum, 1999, p. 5). Teachers have no way of prioritising assessments, significant in ensuring validity, and find themselves assessing continuously. School teachers investigated by Fitzsimons found implementing the NQF not so much a change of assessment system as an increase in the frequency of assessment (1997, p. 25). The necessity of providing evidence for a plethora of range

statements has led many education providers to fall back on the written test, in spite of NZQA intentions to the contrary (Fitzsimons, 1997; Goodwill, 1998; Meldrum, 1999).

Meldrum (1999) suggests that, despite its promotion of other forms of assessment, NZQA guidelines for assessment provide no encouragement or modelling of “indirect” or “diverse” evidence. Goodwill’s (1998) study in the polytechnic sector notes that teachers implementing standards-based assessment spent more time on assessment and less time on preparing for and facilitating learning. She suggests a number of ways of keeping assessment manageable and straightforward, including the use of peer and self assessment as well as the teacher’s own “professional judgement” in assessment. Other efforts have been made to cut down on the amount of time spent in assessment. ITOs provide common assessment tasks (CATs), at a price, so that providers do not have to write their own. However, these are often very unwieldy. Meldrum (1999) expresses polytechnic resentment of the power of ITOs to purchase training off-job, and suspects ITOs of deliberately imposing unwieldy assessment practices in order to control education providers. Forsman (2000, p. 7) suggests that this resentment may be based on some polytechnics’ loss of ITO contracts to private providers.

While studies of training providers other than schools and polytechnics do not mention specific methods used to gather evidence, much is made of the amount of time students spend in authentic workplace situations. Setting these up is time-consuming and involves the teacher in close negotiations with the community. Although this reality may be recognised and allowed for (see examples in AC Nielsen, 1999; Lucas et al., 1997), the need to provide authentic assessment situations can lead to unworkable systems (see Wolf, 1995, pp. 114-115).

Reassessment

A key principle in standards-based assessment is that “one-chance assessment is not appropriate in this kind of assessment” (NZQA, 1996a, p. 40). Every student is to be given ample opportunity to provide evidence about what they can achieve, and the same opportunity to provide further evidence if they do not succeed first time but improve later (NZQA, 1996a, p. 41). Goodwill (1998) notes the very heavy teacher workload engendered by the demands of this kind of reassessment. Although she has experimented with Computer Aided Instruction and CD-Rom methods of reassessment, it is clear that this is a feature of standards-based assessment that is not easy to manage. Fitzsimons (1997) notes that problems of fairness, validity and standardisation also arise in reassessment.

Record keeping

The need for evidence of mastery learning makes paperwork and administration a vital part of the standards-based assessment system. Not allocating sufficient time for this is seen as a pitfall to avoid by many of those implementing the NQF in New Zealand (Lucas et al., 1997, pp. 12, 27). Similarly, Priestly in the UK criticises the amount of paperwork, and “the necessity to tick boxes”, both of which have been a constant feature of the record keeping required by this model of assessment (1997, p. 145).

Apart from manageability, other problems likely to be encountered in the implementation of standards-based assessment centre on the question of validity. Clarity and reliability of judgement are recurring themes here (see Irwin et al., 1995; Meldrum, 1999; Peddie & Tuck, 1995a; Priestley, 1997; Smithers, 1997; Wolf, 1995).

Ensuring validity of assessment

Valid assessment is consistent and fair. NZQA says valid assessment is possible because “the unit standards make it obvious what is to be assessed” (NZQA, 1996a, p. 40). However, this claim to perfect clarity is challenged in the literature.

Clarity

As noted earlier, a criticism frequently levelled at unit standards is that the “standard” itself is not in fact clear, but buried in assessment guides and the moderation process. It is very difficult to state learning outcomes with the kind of precision necessary to ensure reliability of interpretation (Irwin et al., 1995, p. 7; Peddie & Tuck, 1995a, p. 202; Priestly, 1997, p. 147). In the UK, Wolf reports that the competence-based assessment system has reached the point where it is “flawed” because it “strains after unattainable levels of precision in the definition of outcomes” (1995, p. 112). NZQA intends range statements to “minimise variations of interpretation” (1996a, p. 58), but these end up growing in length and complexity in the desperate effort to both cover everything wanted by the industry and to state the learning outcome precisely. Smithers (1997) goes so far as to recommend abandoning unit standards as the common currency of the NQF for this very reason. In his opinion it is simply not possible for unit standards to be written so precisely that teachers and assessors can be perfectly sure of what they should be doing. He points out that inconsistency is therefore inevitable, and that “Attempts to rectify this through layer upon layer of moderation leads to an insupportable workload” (1997, p. 71).

Official NQF documents ignore this issue completely. The White Paper of 1999 does not address issues of clarity or assessment at all, emphasising instead issues of quality

and credit transfer (Ministry of Education, 1999a). Such documents repeatedly assert that the unit standards and the qualifications developed from them are perfectly clear (see for example Ministry of Education, 1999a, p. 9). At least one NZQA Manager has attempted to address the issue, however. He accepts there is difficulty, and cites Wolf's argument that the only route to clarity is:

The use of exemplars and the building up of case law; the socialisation of assessors and their constant resocialisation; the monitoring of marking reliabilities (Wolf, 1993, p. 3, in Barker, 1995, p. 27).

As Smithers (1997) and Elley (1996, p. 73) point out, this foreshadows moderation processes that potentially involve huge teacher workload, costs and difficulties in timing.

NZQA further points out that validity includes ensuring that a learner's performance "should not be constrained by unfamiliar language or conditions, obscure instructions or poorly expressed instructions" (NZQA, 1996a, p. 41). In view of the evidence that unit standards are likely to be used as training manuals, it is ironic that the terminology of unit standards has been criticised as confusing (Irwin et al., 1995, p. 25). Performance criteria, in particular, are written rather obscurely in the passive voice. NZQA admits this is "a stylistic device that can take some getting used to" (NZQA, 1996a, p. 58), but offers no reason for its use. It is not at all clear why "Contributions made are relevant to ..." (Unit 9677 version 4, performance criterion 1.1) is preferable to "Make contributions that are relevant ...", for example. Surprisingly, then, the majority of New Zealand secondary school students in the study by Priestley (1997) perceived the performance criteria of unit standards as clearly worded and easy to understand, and the unit standards themselves as helpful in knowing what was expected of them. However,

Priestley's study does not consider what effort teachers of these students had put into interpreting unit standards so that the requirements were clear.

Reliability of judgement

The validity of standards-based assessment is heavily dependent on the reliable judgement of assessors. Reliable judgement is that which is consistent both externally, across individual providers, and internally, across assessors within institutions. Achieving consistency of assessment is notoriously difficult, however, particularly for teachers from an education system which historically has relied almost exclusively on norm-referenced assessment. The Executive Director of the Association of Polytechnics of New Zealand probably spoke for many in the system when he warned that, without externally set and administered examinations, "consistency of assessment across several hundred providers for some subjects is a task of mind-boggling complexity" (Doyle, 1994, p. 8). This is borne out by Wolf's findings in UK vocational settings using competence-based assessment, where there was evidence of "enormously variable judgements regarding the level of performance at which a student should be judged 'competent' ", despite highly prescriptive assessment criteria (1995, p. 122).

Codd goes so far as to assert that, to be reliable, "so-called 'standards-based' assessment can't avoid 'norm-referenced' judgements" (1996, p. 60). This assertion may be particularly pertinent to the question of whether overall competence equates to the sum of numerous individual competencies. In her study of assessment in a community and health setting, Shaw (1998) found that standards-based assessment could sidestep an assessor's professional judgement of a student's competence. A student could demonstrate individual behaviours without necessarily having overall competence. Unit

standards which reduced assessment to observing and signing off prescribed behaviours were not suited to a situation where students were to be assessed “in complex environments, interacting with people and using affective skills” (Shaw, 1998, p. 21).

Such difficulties indicate scant awareness of the report to NZQA by Sass and Wagner (1992) addressing the reliability of unit standards. This report proposed strategies for achieving consistency in unit standards. Sass and Wagner acknowledged the key role of clarity: “the key to uniform interpretation of performance standards is clearly worded and interpretable unambiguous statements” (1992, p. 23). However, they recommended the use of “consensus panels”, where subject teachers come to agreement on the interpretation of these statements, as the primary strategy for achieving uniform interpretation. They argued that moderation by such panels working at a local level would be preferable to moderation by statistics or inspection. Consensus panels would give participants a sense of responsibility for unit standards, and enable competency criteria to be brought into line with unit standards directly by the users of the system. The panels would also be cost-effective. Sass and Wagner went on to argue that the consistency achieved by the panels could easily be enhanced by the use of accessory methods such as item banks, regional panels and national bodies. Such procedures would not be in conflict with current NZQA intentions. The NZQA website, for example, suggests:

Moderation methods can include assessor training, regional panels, moderator visits, examples of learner work, common assessment tasks, meetings of assessors and moderation of assessment activities before they are used with learners (NZQA, 2000g).

In practice, however, there appears to be little evidence of the use of a broad range of moderation methods.

In a standards-based system then, processes of moderation are supposed to provide the checks and balances necessary to avoid variable or inaccurate judgements. Reliability is held to be achievable because of the clarity of the standards themselves. However, this clarity is itself dependent on moderation processes. In the light of the crucial role moderation has in ensuring the validity of standards-based assessment, it is perhaps not surprising that in New Zealand the necessity for it has spawned an entire bureaucracy, Moderation Services NZQA. This “business unit” of NZQA is responsible for “administration, training and contractual arrangements for all moderation coordinators as well as review and improvement of moderation systems and processes” (NZQA, 2000c, p. 7). It ensures that “Every published unit standard is accompanied by a moderation action plan that describes the moderation process required for that standard” (NZQA, 2000c, p. 4). Every educational organisation assessing to unit standards is thus involved in both external and internal moderation processes, all of which appear to increase teacher workload.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, NQF reliance on unit standards-based assessment has been shown to entail certain approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment. Although there was an extensive literature on approaches implicit in standards-based assessment, and NZQA papers clarified the approaches of unit standards-based assessment, there was little independent research on unit standards-based assessment implementation in New Zealand. Government-funded reports, however, indicated that the approaches implicit in the NQF unit standards-based assessment system were largely compatible with approaches employed in PTEs.

The potential for narrowing of curriculum as a result of standards-based assessment did not seem to hamper workplace-focused education. Restrictive effects of standards-based assessment on teaching approach could be outweighed by the positive effect of small class size typical in PTEs. Of most concern in implementing standards-based assessment appeared to be the greatly increased teacher workload it entailed, partly as a result of undertaking professional development, but mostly because of the demands of managing assessment and ensuring validity through moderation. New Zealand studies concurred with overseas research showing that assessment and moderation processes placed excessive demands on teachers.

The following chapter reveals that, just as standards-based assessment has been a significant factor in resistance to the NQF, business incentives have been a significant factor in PTE acceptance of it. It reviews literature that suggests organisational context must not be ignored if a new qualifications system is to be implemented successfully, and identifies features of organisational context that may be significant in implementation of the NQF.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND THE NQF

This chapter argues that implementation of the NQF required significant attitude change on behalf of educational providers, and that those responsible for its implementation took little account of this. It exposes business incentives, rather than any philosophical position, as a significant factor in PTE implementation of the NQF. It reviews literature suggesting assessment innovations are more likely to succeed when they are compatible with the organisational context in which they are delivered, and identifies features of organisational context that are significant in implementation of change and indicate readiness for change. The chapter concludes that compatibility of the NQF with organisational context appears to be crucial to its successful implementation, and suggests a framework for evaluating this.

IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The vision of the NQF was effectively for a “qualifications revolution” (Smithers, 1997, p. 6). It went far beyond that of any other similar plan internationally and depended on fundamental attitude changes in the educational community. Whereas the SCOTVEC model had only sought to rationalise vocational qualifications, leaving universities and schools to their own qualification structures, the New Zealand system aimed to coordinate vocational and academic qualifications at all levels from senior secondary school upwards. New Zealand’s ambitious model was to be harshly criticised. It appeared to be the result of a small powerful lobby group rather than the initiative of a committed government. As Foulkes, Kyrke-Smith, and Laking point out:

At the political level this vision was largely the inspiration of one Minister (Lockwood Smith), with the committed support of the (NZQA). ... at least some Ministers had expected rather less than a total learning revolution and rather more of a vocational reform... (1996, p. 14).

The NQF was accused of being at best the result of shallow analysis of the problems with the previous New Zealand systems (Irwin, 1994, p. 71). At worst it was seen as a dangerous strategy to “control the production of knowledge ... and suppress the social criticism that arises within (universities)” (Codd, 1996, p. 65).

Even advocates of the change to unit standards-based qualifications admit that it represented a revolutionary approach requiring significant and rapid attitude change, especially on the part of teachers. David Hood asserts that, “The Framework is about cultural change for New Zealand society and about requiring cultural change within educational providers” (1998, p. 106). The NZQA team leader for customer information defends the speed with which the change was expected to be implemented. He quotes the Minister of Finance who oversaw New Zealand’s extensive economic reforms of the 1980s, Roger Douglas:

... if you don’t do some of these things overnight they don’t get done. You reach a stage in evolution where some revolution is needed (Lennox in Hotere, 1996, p. 11).

Ignoring organisational context: consequences

As noted in Chapter 2, NZQA consistently justified the adoption of unit standards-based qualifications by referring to positive feedback to the idea received in the process of consultation (see for example Hood in Barker, 1995; NZQA, 1991c). As in the UK, the process of implementation was treated as a matter of disseminating information, “essentially a technical affair” (Wolf, 1995, p. 131). A series of information booklets

was used to introduce the NQF to the various education sectors¹⁴, and a subsequent consultation package concerned quality management of national qualifications (NZQA, 1992). These were largely descriptive and concerned with details rather than with analysis of issues and options.

Despite their apparent awareness of the revolutionary nature of the NQF reform, the NZQA treatment of such a fundamental change in approach appeared to ignore crucial considerations identified by writers on change management. Fullan suggests that people experience change from within an organisational context, and warns that ignoring this leads to the failure of many social innovations:

Neglect of the phenomenology of change – that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended – is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms (1991, p. 4).

In the educational context, he notes that, “innovations may contain many good ideas and resources, but assume conditions different from those faced by teachers” (1991, p. 130). Parlett and Hamilton also stress the significance of organisational context in educational innovation, asserting that it is impossible to separate them because:

students do not respond merely to presented content and to tasks assigned ... they adapt to and work within the learning milieu taken as an integrated whole (1977, p.10).

Similarly, McKinnon and Shute note that educational change is facilitated by taking into account organisational and cultural influences, and by providing “a supportive setting for sharing, exploring and learning” (1995, p. 11).

¹⁴ An Introduction to the Framework; The Framework and Universities; The Framework and Private Training Establishments; The Framework and Industry; The Framework and Schools; The Framework and Maori (NZQA, 1991, Wellington).

Research suggests there is more chance of successful implementation of assessment reforms in particular, if they are compatible with the organisational context in which they are delivered (Bell, 1993; Hood, 1998; Wolf, 1995). In her review of the research on implementing competence-based systems in the UK, Wolf (1995) points out that assessment reform must be carried out in organisations by people. Both organisations and people have unique pre-existing concerns, values and objectives, and will only carry out reforms if they perceive the benefits as outweighing the costs. She cautions:

Assessment is not simply a technical affair, but operates within complex institutions which themselves have a social and economic context ... Implementation problems ... derive ultimately from a failure to recognise or accept economic and organisational constraints (1995, p. xiv).

In summary, NZQA's approach appeared to overlook the simple fact that, "How the framework will actually work depends a lot on the people who will have to implement it" (Bell, 1993, p. 9). This oversight is likely to have contributed to problems in NQF implementation across the board.

The PTE context and NQF assumptions

As noted in Chapter 2, the NQF was developed in a social context where an incoherent and inconsistent qualifications system was assumed responsible for a low-skilled workforce and economic decline. The choice of a system that would streamline all qualifications by deliberately blurring the distinction between academic and vocational education was in keeping with the theory of economic rationalism underpinning the extensive social reforms of the time. The NQF was a fundamentally economic reform based on the assumptions of what Codd calls an "instrumentalist market view" (1995, p. 7). The assumptions of this view are that knowledge is a commodity, the teacher-student relationship is contractual rather than pedagogical, and educational standards are

determined by purchaser demands, where the purchasers are students, the government and employers. The NQF clearly construes education in this way. Knowledge is broken into saleable “unit standards”, which can be “delivered” by contracted “providers” and are written by “standards setting bodies” representing employers (see Appendix B). The NQF has always been supported by the Employers’ Federation and by trade unions.

Educational organisations that are most comfortable with such a view of education are likely to be those most comfortable with implementing the NQF. Certainly, those educational organisations resisting the NQF hitherto are those which also resist the market view of education: universities, some polytechnics and some schools (see Hall, 1995; Codd, 1994; Elley, 1992, in Smithers, 1997, p. 25). In Wolf’s (1995) discussion of the similar change to competence-based assessment in the UK, she points out that there is high commitment to “academic” systems of teaching and assessment partly because they are cheap and easy to deliver. More significantly, such systems are the product of powerful forces in society, closely linked to methods of organising those societies through selection for further education and employment. In addition, these systems “employ huge numbers of people who will defend their own sectional interests” (1995, p. 130). Educational organisations that resist the NQF may well view unit standards-based assessment as a rejection of organised education. This helps explain why implementation issues, as much as philosophical arguments, dominate the debate about this form of assessment.

PTEs, ITOs and some polytechnics are the most enthusiastic implementers of the NQF. These organisations have an industry focus and are committed to vocational training:

the education they offer is of necessity sensitive to market forces and likely to be more compatible with a market view. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the establishment of NZQA and the NQF enabled PTEs to offer nationally recognised qualifications for the first time, causing rapid growth in that sector from 1990. In the 1990s PTEs became responsible for a significant proportion of New Zealand vocational education. They took over from polytechnics as chief providers of targeted training such as TO, YT, Skill Enhancement and ITO-based programmes (Guerin & Baker, 1997, p. 6). From 1996, education providers proposing such programmes improved their chances of receiving government funding if they offered NQF qualifications. The capacity to offer national qualifications, coupled with improved access to funding, comprised strong business incentives for PTEs to award more NQF qualifications than any other educational sector.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

NQF assumptions and approaches seem likely to be compatible with the PTE context. The literature on educational change management and organisational culture provides further direction for analysing the PTE context. The literature on organisational culture offers support for describing organisational context in terms of assumptions, objectives and approaches. Many definitions have been offered for organisational culture, and much written about its power, especially in relation to change management (see for example Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Handy, 1988; Neville, 1998a; Owens, 1995; Schein, 1992). Schein's (1992) diagram of the levels of culture, and Deal and Kennedy's (1982) outline of how to "diagnose" a culture describe organisational context in terms of three levels. Organisational assumptions, on the deepest level, originate with the founding members and are the "ultimate source of values and action" (Schein, 1992,

p. 17). They are unconscious, taken-for-granted, non-negotiable beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. One level up from its assumptions are the espoused values of an organisation. These are first articulated by the founding members, and include its strategies, goals, and philosophies – its objectives. The most visible level, its artifacts, are an organisation's visible structures and processes. These include norms of behaviour and attitude, the physical setting, and documents – its approaches.

Although little research has been carried out specifically on the organisational context of PTEs, the following discussion assumes that both school and company-based research may identify organisational features of PTEs that successfully implement the NQF. Although there are significant differences of scale and focus between PTEs and other educational organisations, particularly schools as experienced by PTE students, PTEs are nevertheless commercial companies whose core business is education. The literature on educational change management suggests implementation is facilitated by an organisational context that provides powerful impetus for change, and supports readiness for change.

Impetus for change

Fullan points out, “innovations are usually developed in response to the incentive system of the society” (1992, p. 51). This incentive becomes the impetus for change and results from some form of pressure, either external or internal. Bardwick characterises this pressure as “a sense of danger”, asserting that it is only this which gives people “real energy and long-term commitment to deal with the pain and anxiety of change” (1991, p. 133).

Change inevitably entails demands on staff energy, time and workload that combine with anxiety and confusion to cause robust questioning of the desirability of the innovation (see for example Kemp & Nathan, 1992; Nolan, Ayres, Dunn, & McKinnon, 1996; Scott, 1999; Vaill, 1989). This period of turbulence and difficulties is frequently not survived by an organisation and has been suggested as the reason for so much failure of educational innovations (Fullan, 1992; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994). The impetus for change must be powerful if an organisation is to tolerate the ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty accompanied by conflict and disagreement that are an inevitable and fundamental part of implementing educational change. As has already been noted, political and economic factors provided compelling impetus for PTEs to change to the NQF.

Readiness for change

An approach to change management developed by Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994) grew out of an understanding of the significance of organisational context in change, and provides useful direction in the attempt to understand the struggle of education sectors in New Zealand with the NQF reform. The approach was developed in response to problems faced by UK schools, which were grappling with national reforms to curriculum content, processes and assessment that required rapid adoption (West, 1998, p. 772). The approach began with identifying organisational features that are significant in change initiatives. The researchers devised a questionnaire for school staff, which was used as a measure to gauge a school's readiness for change, explain its reaction to change, and thus strengthen its ability to manage change. Results of the questionnaire were recorded on a scale. This was used both by the researchers in order to analyse

staff views, and by school staff as a basis for discussion, enabling each school “to identify its own readiness for action” (Hopkins et al., 1994, p. 106).

Based on their understanding of change theory and experience of school organisation, Hopkins et al. identified ten organisational features that could be measured using the scale. They distinguished six organisational conditions: transformational leadership, commitment to staff development, stakeholder involvement, inquiry and reflection processes grounded in school-based data, effective coordination strategies, and collaborative planning. They named four organisational norms: shared objectives, roles conducive to an orderly environment, empowering structures, and supportive relationships (Hopkins et al., 1994, pp. 106-108). The extent to which these features were present was found to indicate the extent to which an educational organisation was ready for change, and likely to sustain long-term change successfully.

There is extensive support for the view of Hopkins et al. that these organisational features are most significant in educational change management (see for example Fullan, 1992; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hood, 1998; Hopkins et al., 1994; Kemp & Nathan, 1992; McKinnon & Shute, 1995; Scott, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1996). A review of studies on PTEs suggested four features indicating readiness for change may be significant in implementation of the NQF. Leadership, objectives, roles and staff development are now explained in more depth, with reference to the extent to which they may be displayed in the PTE context.

Leadership

The kind of leadership likely to indicate readiness for change and foster successful change is “transformational”, concerned chiefly with altering the cultural context in which people work (Hopkins et al., 1994; Schein, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1996; Vaill, 1989). The leader of an organisation has a key role to play in change management: if the leader does not want change, it will not happen. In fact, Schein asserts that “the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture” (1985, p. 2). The transformational leader is able to articulate new values, clear goals, and a strong vision (Vaill, 1989). More likely to take the role of “initiator” rather than “responder” or manager”, key tasks of the transformational leader include motivating staff and students, and reaching the community (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 154).

Collaboration is a central feature of the leadership style of the transformational leader. Both business and educational literature stress that successful change management requires a non-hierarchical leadership style that shares power (see Murphy, 1991, p. 13, in Hopkins et al., 1994, p. 154). Such a style is strongly facilitative rather than controlling; it empowers teachers and gives them real participation in decision-making through a variety of leadership roles; it emphasises teambuilding and networking (Fullan, 1997; Fullan, 1992; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Scott, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1996; Short, Greer, & Melvin, 1994; Stewart & Prebble, 1993).

As Sergiovanni (1996, p. 105) points out, in smaller organisations there is more scope for leadership of all kinds, simply because there are fewer people to share responsibilities. The small size of PTEs facilitates a transformational style of leadership. In 1996 the maximum average number of students at any one time in a PTE

was 57, with an average of 3.3 administration staff and 7.4 teaching staff (National Research Bureau, 1996, pp. 12, 7).

Objectives

Hopkins et al. (1994, p. 107) define “objectives” as norms relating to the purposes of the educational organisation, and the shared understanding of goals and priorities. Both business and educational literature make it clear that collaborative work cultures support change because they either share values and ideas or are able to deal effectively with value differences (Sergiovanni, 1996; Vaill, 1989). Such cultures tend to produce high expectations (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins et al., 1994; Scott, 1999). Organisations that maintain high expectations have clear goals and focus on just a few priorities. They know what they do best and which area they have expert skills in, and “pour their attention into that area rather than allowing their strength to be dissipated or spread too thinly” (Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan, 1989, p. 65).

As noted in Chapter 1, PTEs provide an educational environment characterised by a highly focused vocationally-oriented curriculum which is aimed at enhancing employment and further education opportunities for their students. Given government funding arrangements, where continued funding depends on achieving contracted educational and employment outcomes, it seems likely that PTE tutors and administrators are highly motivated to share the goals of their students.

As explained in Chapter 2, the NQF is industry-driven. Designed to improve the workforce’s skills and qualifications and hence the economy of New Zealand, unit standards are written in close consultation with representatives of the interests of all

major user groups. These include industry and professional associations as well as education and training providers. Hence, both the NQF and PTEs aim to improve the skills of workers and links between industry and training. Shared objectives within PTEs, and the compatibility of these objectives with those of the NQF, could be expected to enhance PTEs' ability to manage the change to the NQF.

Roles

By "roles", Hopkins et al. mean norms about how a person in a particular position should perform, or how two persons should interact and behave (Schmuck & Runkel, 1985, in Hopkins et al., 1994, p. 108). Behaving in ways that create an orderly, secure environment is most likely to foster change that lasts (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Attendance and discipline policies are significant indicators of an organisation's norms about roles.

PTEs are very aware that they must provide a learning environment very different from school (AC Nielsen, 1999, p. 18). Aiming to prepare students for work, PTEs typically use the workplace as the model for their learning environment. This may entail following industry hours (Lucas et al., 1997, p. 25), or requiring students to sign a code of conduct relating to issues such as attendance and punctuality (Lucas et al., 1997, p. 38).

Staff development

As Fullan points out, "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that" (1991, p. 117). Any educational innovation requires teachers to undergo some form of professional development. However, if teachers are

not motivated to change, very little will happen. Thus, organisations with a commitment to staff development are most likely to handle change successfully. Successful staff development initiatives take account of the fact that change is difficult for teachers. Such initiatives acknowledge the anxiety surrounding change, and encourage risk-taking and mistake-making in a supportive environment (Guskey, 1986). This orientation to change, with its accompanying willingness to engage in experimentation, is mentioned in the literature as vital for the success of change initiatives (Fullan, 1997; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; McKinnon & Shute, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1996; Short et al., 1994).

Professional development is necessary in the implementation of standards-based assessment, but the addition to teacher workload may not always be allowed for. Despite the assurances of its 1993 chairman that NZQA would be “pressing for ...resources to be made available for teacher training” (Stewart, 1993, p. 11) in the new system and particularly in assessment requirements, there is little evidence that this occurred. Consequences of a lack of adequate professional development are shown in Fitzsimons’ (1997, p. 36) school-based study, where teachers displayed negative attitudes to standards-based assessment, and lacked understanding of how the new system differed from the old.

Similarly, early studies of the implementation of competence-based assessment in United Kingdom training organisations and workplaces show teachers interpreted competence-based assessment in widely differing ways, and had considerable problems changing to a two-category pass/fail system (Haffenden & Brown, 1989, in Wolf, 1995,

p. 107). Referring to the implementation of competence-based assessment as part of a national qualifications framework in South Africa, Lugg warns:

Simply developing the NQF and then informing educators about it will not bring about changes in their practice nor in the quality of the learning system ... professional development is essential for educators ... (1997, p. 137).

The few New Zealand accounts of standards-based assessment in PTEs do not mention the question of professional development for teachers. However, Forsman (2000) has observed heavy investment in wide-ranging tutor development by private providers. Apart from the required vocational qualifications, he notes tutors have had to acquire qualifications in adult education and mentions as an example qualifications in assessment of unit standards. Perhaps PTE tutors are particularly oriented to change, given that PTEs are businesses which will fail if they do not remain responsive to the ebb and flow of government policy.

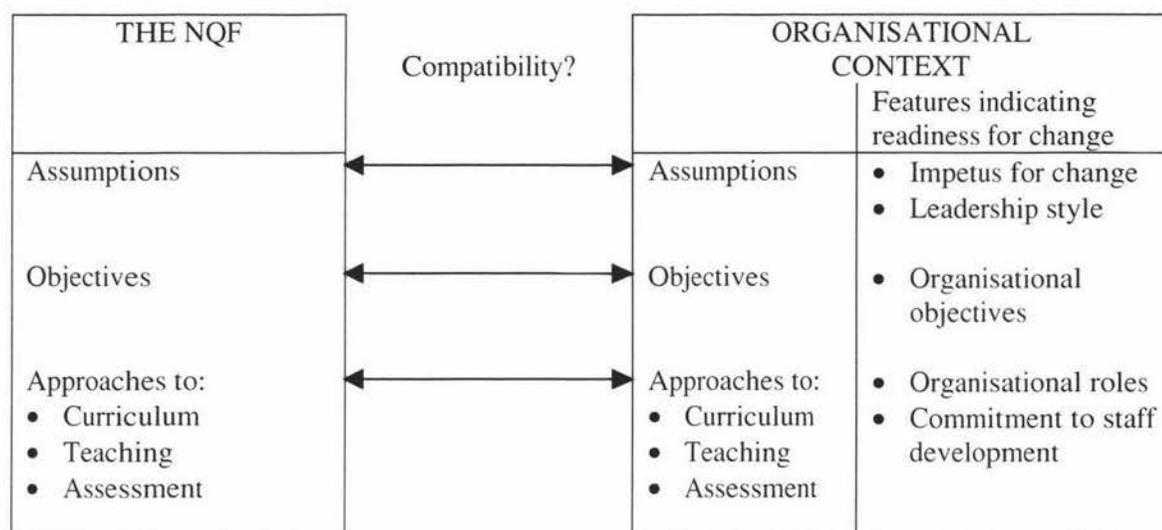
Staff development must be practical, teacher-centred and clearly relevant to improving teaching and learning. When teachers can see that the staff development activities are going to enhance learning outcomes, they are much more likely to engage in them enthusiastically (see Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins et al., 1994; McKinnon & Nolan, 1989; Scott, 1999; Short et al., 1994). PTE teachers are intimately involved with the outcomes of their teaching. Not only do they see their students move on to further education or into jobs, those providing Skill New Zealand-funded programmes also have to secure these outcomes or lose funding. Thus it would be expected that PTE teachers would be highly motivated to engage in professional development that clearly enhances these outcomes. As one case study shows:

... professional development is given a high priority and is funded by the organisation. An effective partnership between staff and management is seen as the key to delivering high quality outcomes for the student population (Lucas et al., 1997, p. 39).

EVALUATING COMPATIBILITY OF ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Chapters 2 and 3 identified assumptions, objectives and approaches characterising the NQF. As organisations, PTEs are also characterised by assumptions, objectives and approaches. Impetus for change, and norms of leadership, objectives, roles and staff development are features of organisational context which can provide direction for identifying organisational assumptions, objectives and approaches. These features indicate readiness for change in an organisation. While they do not guarantee organisational compatibility with innovations such as the NQF, they may be expected to enhance compatibility. They provide additional indicators for evaluating PTE compatibility with the NQF. Figure 3 (p. 62) adds the dimension of readiness for change to the framework at Figure 1. It combines indicators of readiness for change with assumptions, objectives and approaches, in order to evaluate compatibility of the NQF with organisational context. Figure 3 shows that impetus for change and leadership style provide direction for evaluating whether the assumptions of an organisation are likely to be compatible with those of the NQF. Similarly, organisational objectives provide direction for evaluating whether the objectives of an organisation are likely to be compatible with those of the NQF. Organisational roles and commitment to staff development provide direction for evaluating whether the approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment of an organisation are likely to be compatible with those of the NQF.

Figure 3. Framework for evaluating compatibility of the NQF with organisational context



SUMMARY

Literature both criticising and supporting the NQF indicated that the change to unit standards-based qualifications entailed significant change on the part of educational providers. The impact of organisational factors on change initiatives was well documented. Implementation of assessment innovations was facilitated by their compatibility with the organisation in which they were being implemented.

The review of the literature in the last three chapters explored issues relating to the remarkable record of PTEs in implementing the NQF, and provided an historical and theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 2 investigated the assumptions and objectives of the NQF, while Chapter 3 uncovered the approaches implicit in its standards-based assessment system. Chapter 4 has identified features of organisational context significant in implementation, and proposed a framework for evaluating the compatibility of the NQF with organisational context in these terms.

A high degree of compatibility with the NQF appeared likely to operate in the PTE sector. The focus of this study was therefore the extent to which the assumptions, objectives, and approaches of the NQF were compatible with those of PTEs. The following chapter describes and justifies the methodological approach adopted in the study.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes and justifies the methodological approach adopted in the evaluation of the compatibility of the NQF with the organisational context of PTEs. The research was guided by the intent to explain the extraordinary record of PTEs in implementing the NQF. This intent determined the procedure followed in the inquiry. The procedure is outlined and defended, issues of reliability and validity addressed, and ethical considerations noted.

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

As noted in the Introduction, the purpose of this study was to provide useful insights to share with other stakeholders in the refinement and implementation of the NQF. It aimed to discover reasons for the success of NQF implementation in PTEs, through evaluating the extent to which the NQF was compatible with PTE organisational context. It examined the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF and of three PTEs which could be said to have succeeded at implementing the NQF, and evaluated the extent to which they were compatible.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RATIONALE

A collection of instrumental case studies, carried out in three PTE sites, was chosen as the design for the study. This design enabled me to consult a range of sources in a variety of contexts in order to investigate the phenomenon of NQF implementation. I examined the different organisational contexts and personal experiences of the

administrators, tutors and students in PTEs that had implemented the NQF. The emphasis was on interaction with the participants in individual and focus group interviews, with my position as a PTE tutor and administrator being declared. Surveys and documentary analysis were used to triangulate interview data.

Rather than gaining a deep understanding of all the workings of each PTE, I sought to gain a deep understanding of this one phenomenon common to three PTEs. I wanted to uncover the relationships between implementation of the NQF and organisational context in each PTE, and look for commonalities and differences in each PTE's experience. I expected that by doing this I would then be able to evaluate the extent to which the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF were compatible with those of the PTEs. My ultimate purpose was then to provide useful insights for other NQF stakeholders. The three PTEs were selected for their ability to serve the particular purpose of investigating the relationship between implementation of the NQF and organisational context. While not pretending to be generalisable, the cases selected were intended to represent a diversity of particular contexts.

A qualitative approach

Research of this kind, which examines the experiences and perceptions of participants, demands a primarily qualitative approach. As Stake (1995, p. 12) points out, a qualitative approach is most appropriate for the researcher who is concerned to understand and preserve the "multiple realities" constructed by the participants, which may be different and even contradictory views of events. Creswell (1994, p. 6) notes that qualitative researchers seek knowledge through interaction with their subjects, trying to minimise the distance between them. Quantitative surveys were used in this

study as a technique for gaining a broader perspective within the case and improving validity. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are commonly employed in instrumental case study. As Stake points out:

With instrumental case study, where the case serves, the need for categorical data and measurements is greater. We will forego attention to the complexity of the case to concentrate on relationships identified in our research questions (1995, p. 77).

A collection of instrumental case studies

Merriam (1998) holds that multiple case studies are particularly useful for studying educational innovations and informing policy. A case study seeks to answer the question, “What is going on here?” (Bouma, 1996; Wolcott, 1988) by measuring a set of variables in one group at one point in time. Yin (1989) describes a case study as an investigation of:

a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (cited in Rose, 1991).

Stake distinguishes between “instrumental”, “intrinsic”, and “collective” case study (1995, pp. 3-4). In an instrumental case study the cases are used to help us understand phenomena or relationships within them, while in an intrinsic case study the emphasis is on the depth and complexity of the case itself (Stake, 1995, p. 4). A collective case study is a collection of case studies, where more than one case is examined.

The purpose of this collection of case studies was in keeping with the purpose of a form of evaluation research that has been termed “illuminative” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977, p. 10). The study sought to make a contribution to decision-making by NQF stakeholders through providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex realities surrounding

NQF implementation. Its purpose was primarily formative rather than summative, to “improve, not to prove” (Stufflebeam, 1971, in Isaac & Michael, 1981, p. 1). It was principally concerned with description and interpretation, and included such questions as how the NQF was implemented in each PTE, its advantages and disadvantages, and its effect on students. It was particularly concerned with the learning milieu. As Parlett and Hamilton point out, “innovatory programmes cannot be separated from the learning milieu” (1977, p. 128). In defence of the generalisability of qualitative programme evaluation, Parlett and Hamilton assert that “perceptive and rigorous study of specific situations can yield ... generally applicable insights” because of the essential similarity of all learning milieux (1977, p. 20).

Researcher stance

This study arose out of my firsthand experience of the change to unit standards-based qualifications in the PTE where I have been a director and tutor for ten years. In my own PTE, then, my stance as a researcher was that of “participant observer” (Bouma, 1996, p. 177; Stake, 1995, p. 104), part of the everyday life of the organisation and integrally involved in the consequences of its change to unit standards-based qualifications. I was able to use my position in the group and my own experience of the process in order to gain information about it. In this case, my own experience was an explicit resource used to enable the research (Bouma, 1996, p. 177).

In the other two PTEs, however, I was clearly an outsider, or what Bouma calls a “non-participant” (1996, p. 177). I was not part of the everyday life of those PTEs, in fact I had had no previous contact with them apart from attending a biennial networking meeting with their MDs. The perspective was thus more detached, although as a fellow

PTE director using unit standards-based qualifications I had the advantages described by McIntyre (1986) of being a member of the same culture. This meant I was easily able to understand events and the language of participants on the basis of “shared meaning” (McIntyre in Coutts, 1995, p. 88).

The data gathering techniques I used for this study were limited not only by time and money but also by my own subjectivity, or tacit knowledge. In order to overcome this difficulty and enhance the internal validity of the study, I employed a number of strategies. Participants in individual interviews were invited to approve the accuracy of interview transcriptions and drafts of findings. Six of my colleagues, including participants, proofread the literature review for accuracy, and my supervisory colleagues were asked to comment on the findings as they emerged. My position as a Director of a PTE, and by implication my assumptions and world view, were made clear to participants at the outset of the study (see introductory letters, Appendix C).

Both Stake and Merriam suggest overcoming the limitation of researcher subjectivity through long-term observation as well as “member checks”, peer examination and the clarification of researcher biases (Merriam, 1998, pp. 204-205; Stake, 1995, p. 115). Of these suggestions, only long-term observation was beyond the scope of this study.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data were collected between October 1999 and March 2000. Table 3 (p. 69) summarises the procedure followed.

implemented them with some degree of success. The criterion for “successful” use was the simple one that the PTEs in question had consistently met their obligations to their chief funding provider, Skill New Zealand, over a period of two or more years. These obligations include maintaining NZQA registration and accreditation, and achieving contracted outcomes in terms of unit standards-based qualifications gained, and numbers of learners in jobs or further education within two months of the conclusion of each training course. My own PTE, Information Technology Learning Centre (ITLC), met these criteria, and I asked the regional Skill New Zealand advisor for the names of other PTEs in the region that met the criteria.

From the names given to me, I selected two PTEs whose training areas, and thus their experiences implementing unit standards-based qualifications, were very different from my own. In addition, these PTEs were located in the same geographical region as my own, easily accessible and, as it turned out, also hospitable. Criteria suggested by the literature on collective case study were useful in selecting these PTEs. Stake (1995, p. 6) advises balance, variety, and most importantly, opportunity to learn. Rose (1991, p. 196) suggests selecting cases on the basis of their “explanatory and descriptive and exploratory power”. Similarly, Creswell favours “ ‘maximum variation’ as a strategy to represent diverse cases to fully display multiple perspectives about the cases” (1998, p. 120). Additional criteria applied to the selection of cases were that they were easily accessible and hospitable (Stake, 1995, p. 4).

I founded ITLC in 1991 with a husband and wife team who had been teaching on ACCESS training schemes, the forerunner to TOP training, in a small rural centre for three years. By March 2000, when data for this study was collected, there were three

administrative staff and thirteen teaching staff. Ten staff members were shareholding directors. Located in office accommodation at two busy seaside sites, a city and a small village, ITLC specialised in computer training.

The founder of Technical Institute Moana (TIM), which became a PTE in 1993, had begun teaching fish farming to a small group of ACCESS students in the area in the late 1980s. TIM had only two shareholders: the MD and his wife, who played no active role in the company. By March 2000 the company employed ten fulltime tutors and two administrative staff. Located in spacious premises on the outskirts of a small prosperous country town, TIM offered a range of education and training in the seafood, maritime, and automotive industries, as well as the tourism, adventure and hospitality industries.

The smallest PTE of the three, Del Mar Ranch (DMR), was founded in 1997 when another husband and wife team, who had been semi-retired public horse trainers for two years, were encouraged to apply for registration of DMR as a PTE. By March 2000 they were still the sole staff members. Located in 60 hectares of spectacular oceanside farm, DMR offered equine tuition and training in all English, Western and Harness disciplines.

DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

This study gathered data from administrators, tutors and students in three PTEs, and one Skill New Zealand advisor. Both in-depth individual interviews and focus group interviews, as well as survey and document analysis across three sites, ensured that the study incorporated multiple data-gathering techniques. The aim was to get enough

information from a range of independent and credible sources to represent the perceptions of the stakeholders effectively. The intention was to seek and interpret converging evidence in order to see if what I was observing and reporting carried the same meaning when found under different circumstances. In gaining data from a range of techniques, this study was in keeping with well-documented good practice for qualitative research (Anderson, 1990, p. 175; Creswell, 1994, p. 12; Merriam, 1998, p. 204; Parlett & Hamilton, 1977, pp. 132-134). Rigour in qualitative study is gained by this “triangulation” (Anderson, 1990; Stake, 1980), the combining of different sources and data-gathering techniques to “throw light on a common problem” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977, p. 13).

Interviews

Interviewing was the main data gathering technique used for this study, and provided data on assumptions, objectives and approaches in each PTE. This technique seemed the most efficient way to gain a deep understanding of how NQF implementation was experienced in PTEs. As “the main road to multiple realities” (Stake, 1995, p. 64), the interview allows the researcher to enter another person’s perspective (Merriam, 1998, p. 72).

Semi-structured individual interviews

I carried out semi-structured interviews, guided by a list of questions reflecting the issues to be explored. The exact wording and order of the questions, as written in the interview schedules (see Appendix D), was not adhered to strictly – nor was it expected to be. I accepted that exact wording and order could not be determined ahead if I was to

be able to carry out the functions crucial to qualitative research of responding to the situation and to new ideas, and respecting an emerging view.

Of the 28 staff at the three PTEs, 17 were interviewed at their convenience over a period of three months. Each interview lasted between one and two hours and took place in the participant's usual place of work, either the office or the classroom. During the interviews I was able to keep mostly to the schedule I had devised. The strength of the semi-structured interview is that it keeps interaction focused, covering the same ground with different respondents, while allowing individual experience to emerge. Its weakness is that the interviewer cannot divert far, or long, from the schedule without losing sight of the themes. In an instrumental case study such as this, diverting from the schedule is of limited usefulness anyway. As Stake (1995, p. 77) notes, the focus is on the relationships identified in the research questions, rather than on the complexity of the case.

Interview subjects were selected on the basis of their particular experience or knowledge about the assumptions, objectives and approaches of both the NQF and PTEs. I knew that the Skill New Zealand advisor, interviewed for the pilot study, would have insight into the assumptions and objectives of each PTE. He had guided each of the three PTEs in its implementation of the NQF and had an ongoing relationship with each PTE. His role meant he was aware of the extent to which each PTE was fulfilling its requirements to Skill New Zealand as its principal source of funding. He told me that the MD or equivalent in each PTE was also a founder of the organisation, and thus had in-depth knowledge of the entire process of implementing

unit standards-based qualifications in that context. In their role as founder and leader, I anticipated each MD would also have insight into PTE assumptions and objectives.

I decided to interview two groups of tutors. The first group was experienced in using unit standards, having worked with them for two years or more. The second group was new to unit standards, having used them for less than six months. I anticipated the two groups would have different perceptions of approaches entailed by the NQF in their own PTEs. Two interview subjects were identified through referral by other participants, a technique endorsed in the literature (see for example Merriam, 1998, p. 85). One MD suggested the office manager, who had an intimate knowledge of the administrative effects of unit standards-based qualifications. Another MD suggested a particular tutor experienced in using unit standards-based qualifications. In order to minimise effects of over-familiarity, in my own PTE I decided to interview tutors from subject areas different from my own.

Focus group interviews

I decided to conduct focus group interviews in order to triangulate survey and other interview data, particularly with respect to approaches entailed by the NQF. I anticipated students would provide a different perspective from staff on these approaches. While it was possible to survey every student as there were only 158 students enrolled over the three PTEs, it was clearly not possible to interview each student individually. Focus groups thus increased the number of student participants significantly. In addition, my personal experience of PTE students led me to believe that focus groups were likely to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group (Morgan, 1997). I knew that individual

students interviewed one to one might be hesitant to provide information, and the fact that they were similar and could cooperate with each other meant that this technique had a high chance of success in this study. My experience with students and their reaction to unit standards led me to expect that students would discuss the topics actively and easily (Morgan, 1997, p. 17).

I set up one focus group of six to ten students in each PTE site, according to the self selection procedure developed in the pilot study (see later). ITLC has two sites, and so one focus group was set up at each site to allow for differences between sites. All students were engaged in National Certificate programmes at the PTEs. Each focus group lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and took place by appointment in classrooms or lunchrooms. I ensured each group sat around a table for ease of communication. The focus group interviews followed a preset protocol, composed of an agenda and ground rules (see Appendix E). The agenda began with general explanations and went on to explain the information sheet, consent form, and questionnaire as well as providing for students to ask questions. Four short ground rules were then clarified, beginning with a statement of purpose. Finally the agenda listed five questions about the students' experience of unit standards and two questions concerning their experience at their PTE. As I expected, the focus group discussions were lively. My experience as a tutor and facilitator of discussions in groups of this nature enabled me to conduct the interviews in such a way that every participant had ample opportunities to speak. I used active listening techniques, repeating students' comments and clarifying meaning as part of the process of taking notes. I did not transcribe the focus group interviews, but read my notes back to the students as I took them, checking for accuracy and meaning.

A limitation of the focus groups was that, owing to time constraints, all took place within the first month of the course when unit standards were relatively new to most students. A future study would aim to conduct focus groups closer to the end of each course, when students were more familiar with unit standards.

The interview schedules

A set of generic interview questions covering the issues identified in the research questions was devised. They were first grouped loosely according to the themes of impetus for change, organisational objectives and approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment. Next, questions were allocated to interview schedules according to the anticipated expertise of the different participants. Hence there were different schedules for the Skill New Zealand advisor, MDs, Office Manager, experienced tutors, new tutors and focus groups (see Appendix D). Following suggestions made in the pilot, the order and wording of questions was simplified and clarified. I posted or faxed the schedule to participants ahead of time, although the spontaneous nature of some interviews meant this was not always possible.

Recording of interview data

Interview data were recorded in all cases by fieldnotes and in the majority by audiotape as well. I was able to transcribe two interviews onto computer documents myself, but time constraints meant that I had to employ a transcriber to do the remainder. Problems with the audiotape were experienced in the first two pilot interviews, and so the machine was changed for subsequent interviews. Operator error was a problem in two other interviews – one where I omitted to press the record button until the end of the first side of the tape; and one where I could not change the battery when it ran out. In

addition, some material was lost in each interview when changing sides of the tape. I took detailed notes throughout each interview, however, and wrote them up in more detail if necessary soon afterwards. I relied entirely on my notes for transcribing focus group interviews, as the machine proved inadequate for recording conversations that involved more than two people.

The difficulties with audiotaping did not appear to impede the work seriously, however. Some researchers advocate the adequacy of transcribing only sections of tapes (Jones, 1991, p. 210), while the respected qualitative researcher Stake (1995, p. 66) is quite scathing about the cost and annoyance entailed in making transcriptions of audiotapes. In his view, the respondent's meaning is usually more important than the exact words used, and can be checked with the respondent. In the course of each interview I checked regularly with participants by repeating back what I thought they had said as I wrote the notes. The completed transcriptions were sent to each participant for checking and reviewing. Each participant was able to report back to me or return the transcriptions within three weeks, although some participants chose not to check the work.

Surveys

I decided to survey staff and students in order to augment the interview data. Both surveys were designed to provide quantitative information that would aid within-case triangulation, and give a broader perspective on assumptions, objectives and approaches in each PTE. Both assessed attitudes using a rating scale in Likert format (Bouma, 1996, p. 69), in keeping with the surveys on which they were based. I expected the surveys to provide data on organisational features that would reveal information about

assumptions, objectives and approaches in each PTE. As there were only 28 staff and 158 students in total over the three PTEs, it was possible to survey them all. The response rates for interviews and surveys is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Response rates for interviews and surveys

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
	No. participants (population)	No. participants (population)	No. participants (population)
Individual interviews			
Skill NZ	1 (1)		
Admin. staff	1 (3)	3 (3)	2 (2)
Exp. tutors	4 (8)	3 (6)	2 (2)
New tutors	2 (4)	1 (2)	
Focus group interviews	7+5 in 2 groups (110)	10 (40)	5 (8)
Staff survey	13 (15)	10 (11)	1 (2)
Learner survey	89 (110)	26 (40)	6 (8)

Staff Survey

I created a questionnaire for PTE staff based on the one developed by Hopkins et al. (1994) (see Chapter 4). The survey was designed to examine assumptions, objectives and approaches in each PTE, as these were revealed in organisational features of leadership, objectives, roles and staff development. The survey collected individual staff members' opinions of the extent to which these features were present in their PTE.

The major changes I made to the original questionnaire were "school" to "PTE", "pupils" to "students", and "colleagues" to "staff members" to reflect the different environment. Other changes were made to clarify meaning and simplify expression. Of these the most significant was Statement 9, where I changed "development decisions" to "decisions about future directions for this PTE". I thought the statement as it was had the potential to confuse staff thinking about professional development. In addition, I reversed the order of the rating scale so that it ranged from "Strongly agree" (1) to "Strongly disagree" (5). I wanted to be consistent with the order I chose for the rating

scale in the learner survey, believing it would make it easier for less literate student respondents.

As the PTEs surveyed had small numbers of staff, the response rate was particularly high. Four possible respondents did not participate, at ITLC and TIM because they felt they were too new to the PTE to be able to comment, and at DMR because the two participants believed one set of responses reflected both their opinions.

Learner Survey

This survey (see Appendix F) was designed chiefly to provide data on the approaches entailed by standards-based assessment, by revealing student attitudes to unit standards at PTEs. It built on the six-statement survey devised by Priestley (1997) for his study of New Zealand secondary school students' attitudes towards unit standards within traditional school subjects (see Chapter 3). Statement 19, "I can find out exactly what to do, to complete a unit standard", simplifies and combines two of Priestley's statements: 1, "The performance criteria of the unit standards are clearly worded and easy to understand" and 2, "Unit standards help me to know what is required of me in my subject" (1997, p. 384). Statement 17, "I only have to do the minimum of work to get a unit standard", is adapted from Priestley's Statement 5, "I only do the minimum of work required to pass my Unit Standards assessments" (1997, p. 387). Statement 18, "I would work harder if unit standards were graded (eg 'A' – 'E')", is a simplification of Priestley's Statement 6, "I would be more motivated to work towards my Unit Standards if excellent achievement was recognised" (1997, p. 388).

The survey was piloted with two focus groups of PTE students, whose comments and suggestions were built into the final format. These groups pointed out the importance of checking that students knew what unit standards were, which led to Statements 1 and 2. Statements 3 through 10 were designed to reveal student perceptions of the PTE at which they were studying. Statements 3 through 6, see Appendix F, are adaptations of the staff survey Statements 5 through 8, and were intended to enable comparison of student and staff perception of the norm “involvement”. Statements 11 through 13 were intended to reveal student perceptions of the content of unit standards, while Statements 14 through 18 concerned the impact of unit standards on their learning. Finally, Statements 19 through 25 were intended to uncover student perceptions of assessment to unit standards. As in Priestley’s (1997) survey, participants were asked to indicate their opinion on a 5-point rating scale. Believing it would make it easier for less literate student respondents, I reversed the order of this scale so that it ranged from “Strongly agree” (1) to “Strongly disagree” (5).

As the PTEs surveyed were small in size, it was possible to achieve a high response rate through personal administration of the survey. A demographic analysis of each group surveyed is at Appendix G. The survey was limited by the difficulties students had interpreting some statements. During its administration, students at all three PTEs requested clarification of the statements taken from the Hopkins survey. Small numbers meant I could clarify confusion individually during administration of the survey. Both the staff and the learner surveys were also limited by the difficulties involved in comparing data from the two surveys concerning the “involvement” condition. My field notes show, for example, that the statement, “This PTE has a policy to involve students in decisions” (LS3), met repeatedly with questions like, “What sort of

decisions?” I responded consistently with the explanation, “Decisions about the course and what you’ll do each day, as well as policy decisions about lateness”. The focus was on the decisions rather than on formal written policy. A future study would delete these questions from the learner survey. They confused students, it was difficult to compare the data from the two surveys, and there seemed little point in attempting to do so, as this data did not prove relevant in the final analysis anyway.

At ITLC, I explained the purpose of the survey to students in their class groups and offered to read the questionnaire aloud if they preferred. The groups indicated they would prefer further explanation, individually, of statements that confused them. Five students asked individually for explanations. Three students did not participate because they felt they did not know enough about unit standards to complete the survey, and two did not participate because they felt their English was not good enough. For these students it would probably have been preferable to read the questionnaire aloud, but perhaps they were ashamed in front of their peers. At TIM I read the questionnaire aloud, at the suggestion of their tutors, who knew the literacy level of students was not high. I explained the purpose of the survey to each class group, asked for questions, then read each statement one by one. Interpretation was required at certain points, particularly for the “involvement” statements taken from the Hopkins questionnaire. At DMR I administered the survey to the group seated around a table, but five members of this group preferred not to have the statements read aloud. One of the students indicated she would prefer to have the questionnaire read to her, and so I did this after the focus group discussion. Again, some explanation was asked for of the Hopkins-based statements.

Document review

I identified a set of readily available documentary sources that could augment and triangulate interview and survey data. PTE applications for registration and accreditation, and course brochures were common to all three PTEs. The applications gave a historical as well as recent perspective on organisational assumptions and objectives in each PTE. Course brochures detailing unit standards-based qualifications offered provided more data on organisational objectives. In addition, ITLC made available their entry for a business award, an informal student survey and their official student diary. These provided further data on organisational assumptions, objectives and approaches. Similarly, TIM made available a student rule book, which provided data on organisational approaches. Some tutors at TIM and DMR provided unit standards-based course manuals to illustrate points they were making. These provided more data on approaches entailed by the NQF.

I limited my use of these documents to clarifying factual details from interview and survey data. The analysis of official documents such as these is limited by their propensity to contain only that information which is publicly admissible and therefore likely to show the organisation in its best light (Calvert, 1991, p. 121).

In spite of the limitations I have indicated in each data gathering technique, the use of a multimethod approach improves reliability because it can achieve broader results (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 373). The trustworthiness of this study's findings lies partly in their consistency over two or more sources (Guba, 1981, in Czarniawska, 1998, p. 70).

Pilot study

I carried out a pilot study at ITLC, in order to test the data gathering techniques. Merriam (1998, p. 75) recommends pilot studies as a means of ensuring a sufficient database is available to permit the drawing of valid conclusions, and providing a crucial testing ground for questions.

I interviewed the Company Administrator, Skill New Zealand advisor, two tutors experienced in using unit standards-based qualifications and two tutors new to unit standards-based qualifications. These interviews took place on site and lasted between one and two hours, and enabled me to refine questions and questioning techniques. In the course of these interviews I also became aware of documentary sources.

I then approached all tutors for permission to ask classes for volunteer students to take part in one hour focus group interviews, preceded by the learner survey. This resulted in two focus groups of six to eight students, which enabled me to refine, clarify and create questions for subsequent focus group interviews and the learner survey. In addition all pilot participants provided helpful feedback on the layout and wording of the information sheet and consent form (see Appendix H). The staff survey was not piloted, as it was adapted with very few changes from one designed by Hopkins et al. (1994, pp. 210-211).

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Labelling data

I created a precise labelling system for locating data referred to in the findings. Each reference was labelled with a combination of letters and numbers. For interview data,

the first two letters referred to the interview schedule used, eg “SNZ” for the schedule of the Skill New Zealand advisor, “MD” for that of the Managing Director or equivalent. The following number corresponded to the number of the question on the interview schedule, and the final letter or letters were the initials of the interviewee. If two interviewees had the same first name initial, their surname initial followed.

For survey data, “SS” was used for staff survey items, while “LS” was used for Learner Survey items. The number following those initials corresponded to the number of the item on the survey. For documentary data, the initials of the PTE came first, followed by “D” for documents and a page number. These labelling systems proved too complex to use in reporting the findings, so they were simplified for this purpose. Table 5 (p. 85) shows the labels used to refer to the interview, survey and document data in Chapters 6 and 7. For example, “A1” in brackets following text or a quotation, indicates that the source of this information or direct quotation was the ITLC Company Administrator.

Within-case and cross-case analysis

Data were interpreted according to what it revealed about assumptions, objectives and approaches in each PTE. This interpretation was then examined for what it contributed to an evaluation of the compatibility of the NQF with the organisational context in the PTEs. Finally, the compatibility of the NQF and PTE organisational context was evaluated.

Table 5. Labels used to refer to data sources in reporting findings

DATA SOURCE	LABEL USED
Interviews	
ITLC Company Administrator	A1
TIM Managing Director	A2
TIM Administration Manager	A3
DMR Managing Director and Director	A4
Skill New Zealand advisor	SNZ
ITLC student focus groups	FG1
TIM student focus group	FG2
DMR student focus group	FG3
ITLC experienced tutors	T1, T2, T3, T4
ITLC new tutors	T5, T6
TIM experienced tutors	T7, T8, T9
TIM new tutor	T10
DMR tutors	A4, T11
Surveys	
Staff survey scale 1, 2, ...	SS1, SS2...
Learner survey statement 1, 2, ...	LS1, LS2...
Learner survey demographic question 1, 2, ...	Question 1, Question 2...
Documents	
ITLC Business Plan, June 2000	D1
ITLC Entry for the Lampen Group Excellence in Managing and Developing People Award, July 2000	D2
ITLC Informal survey, July 2000	D3
ITLC Student Diary, 2000	D4
ITLC re-accreditation document, 1 June 1997	D5
TIM Policies and Procedures, May 1997	D6
TIM Student Rule Book	D7
DMR Application for Registration and Accreditation, June 1996	D8
DMR information brochure	D9

I began analysis of the data by numerically coding questions from the interview schedules, statements from the surveys and evidence from the documents. Each was coded according to the relevant section of the evaluation framework I had developed (Figure 3, Chapter 4). The number “1” thus related to questions concerning “assumptions”; “2” related to questions concerning “objectives”, and “3” related to questions concerning “approaches”. From this beginning, the coding became more elaborate, as is explained in the following sections.

Ultimately I created both a within-case analysis and a cross-case analysis, in line with Merriam's (1998, p. 194) suggestion for presenting the findings of multiple case study in two phases. The within-case analysis recorded interview, survey and documentary data from each PTE in terms of assumptions, objectives and approaches. This provided a format in which to report the findings: assumptions and objectives in Chapter 6, approaches in Chapter 7. The cross-case analysis made generalisations comparing findings across the PTEs, and formed the basis of the discussion, Chapter 8.

Interviews

All interview data were transcribed onto computer documents. To facilitate analysis, a new computer document was created for each section of the evaluation framework I had developed: assumptions, objectives and approaches. I used interview questions as headings. The names of each PTE and participant group served as sub-headings. Using the computer "cut and paste" facility, interview data were then allocated to new documents. For example, the document "Assumptions" had headings made up of interview questions relevant to this section. Under each heading was a PTE as sub-heading, in the order ITLC, TIM and DMR. Data from each participant or participant group were entered under further sub-headings, in the order Skill New Zealand advisor, MD, Office Manager, experienced tutors, new tutors, and focus groups.

After this first stage of analysis, I made a further list of topics taken from the evaluation framework: approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment, as well as impetus for change, leadership, roles and staff development. I then re-read the hard copy created in the first stage of analysis, making margin notes and colour coding according to the new topics. Further themes emerged and were also colour-coded at this point. Again using

the computer “cut and paste” facility, interview data were then re-allocated according to the new headings.

This process of re-allocation according to key issues and themes which form the study’s framework is well-documented in the literature on analysis of qualitative data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe a process where episodes of action or talk are reduced to their essential elements and compared for similarities and differences, which then generate themes and categories (cited in Allan, 1991, p. 186). Parlett and Hamilton (1977, p. 15) call this process “progressive focusing”. Stake (1995, p. 74) points out that case study researchers analyse data using both “direct interpretation” of individual instances, and “aggregation” of instances until something can be said about them as a class. Direct interpretation was the method chiefly employed in this analysis. However, aggregation was employed to some extent. When reporting interview findings, I noted how many participants each finding could be attributed to.

Staff survey

This survey (see Appendix I) measured staff perceptions three to five years following initiation of the change to the NQF. I have assumed, however, that organisational features in each PTE were much the same at the time of the study as they were at initiation. Organisational culture is slow and difficult to change (Sergiovanni, 1996), and leaders have a significant role in creating and sustaining culture (Schein, 1985). When this study was undertaken, key leadership personnel in all three PTEs were unchanged from the time of NQF implementation.

I analysed the staff survey results using an extension of the method suggested by Hopkins et al. (1994, p. 211). Each individual responded to each statement by circling 1 (“strongly agree”) through to 4 (“strongly disagree”) on a rating scale. Hopkins et al. did not use a “neutral” response category. The circled numbers, or scores, were then added in various ways devised by Hopkins et al. (1994, pp. 211-212) to arrive at a total out of 16 or 24. For example, a total for “leadership” was obtained through adding the scores for Statements 13, 14, 15 and 16. A total for “objectives” was obtained through adding the scores for Statements 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21.

I was interested in the “average” opinion of staff in each PTE, and so mean scores were calculated. As already noted, I had reversed the rating scale in my version of the questionnaire. However, when I added together individual scores as indicated by Hopkins et al., I gave each response category the same value as in the original. Hence, for example, “Strongly agree” was given a value of 4 while “strongly disagree” was given a value of 1. To obtain a mean opinion, I divided the totals by the number of respondents in each PTE. In this way I arrived at a score out of 24 or 16 that could depict the opinion of most staff members. Scores for the four organisational features relevant to the study, and how they were obtained, are shown in Tables J1 through J4 at Appendix J. The survey was designed so that its findings could be reported visually as a series of scales. Hence, mean scores were entered on scales to give a graphic depiction of average staff opinion in relation to readiness for change. The higher the score, the greater the readiness for change. These scales appear as figures in Chapters 6 and 7. After this initial analysis, staff survey findings were allocated to the same headings and topics as the interview data and incorporated in the general findings.

Learner survey

As the total number of participants in the learner survey across the three PTEs was only 121, percentage results had little meaning. Hence results were reported in terms of actual student numbers. The learner survey was analysed using Surveycraft computer software. A data analyst entered responses manually into Surveycraft, and produced results in tables showing raw data, percentages, totals “agree”, “uncertain” and “disagree”, and means. I created summary tables based on the Surveycraft tables, composed of learner survey responses grouped by PTE. Responses to learner survey statements LS1 through 25 were grouped according to themes addressed in the questionnaire. These were: factors in student choice of PTE (LS7-10); student perception of relationship between unit content and employment prospects (LS11 and 12); student perception of unit standard approach to curriculum (LS13 and 14); student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment (LS20-24); and student perception of validity of unit standards (LS17, 18, 25). Responses to learner survey demographic questions, Questions 1 through 7, were grouped by PTE. All the summary tables (G1 through 25) appear at Appendix G with an example of the Surveycraft tables. Using Excel computer software, data from some of the summary tables G1 through 15 were converted into column graphs, which appear throughout Chapters 6 and 7. After this initial analysis, learner survey findings were allocated to the same headings and topics as the interview data and incorporated in the general findings.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was undertaken only after receiving approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee in July 1999. The guiding ethical principle was that of protecting the interests of participants. Conducting the process in a considerate manner,

gaining informed consent, protecting privacy, and maintaining honesty of purpose contributed to ensuring an ethical approach.

Considerate conduct

Mindful of the fact that the research subjects included learners aiming to gain qualifications and administrators aiming to keep a business afloat, I ensured I was well-prepared for each encounter with participants, and designed interview and survey procedures to keep disruption to a minimum. All participants received an information sheet (see Appendix H) emphasising the voluntary nature of their participation, covering confidentiality issues and offering to provide the findings at the end of the research. The information sheet outlined the research procedures, including an estimation of the time commitment required and suggesting the use of locations convenient to participants. The need for this kind of considerate researcher conduct is emphasised in the literature (see for example Bouma, 1996, p. 189; Rose, 1991, p. 210).

Informed consent

Although the pilot study was undertaken in my own PTE, an ethical approach to consent was carefully maintained. Staff were informed formally in writing and informally over lunch breaks and by phone of what was needed from them. An introductory letter (see Appendix C) was sent to directors and all other teaching and administration staff as well as the Skill New Zealand advisor for the region, a total of sixteen people. This letter introduced the topic of the research, included an information sheet and consent form, and invited participation in a pilot study. Focus group and learners survey participants were all volunteers, asked for with the permission of their tutors.

When the decision was made, four months following the pilot, to include my own PTE in the study, permission to use data gathered in the pilot was sought from each participant in individual interviews. It was not possible to gain the same kind of consent from focus group and learner survey participants, as by that time not only had they finished their course three months beforehand, but also no record had been kept of who they were. Data from these interviews and surveys were accordingly not used in the study.

I gained access to other PTEs by telephoning the MD of each. This approach was suggested by the Skill New Zealand advisor, who knew each one personally. In the initial telephone call mention was made of the advisor's recommendation, and both MDs readily agreed to take part. A brief introductory letter (see Appendix C) enclosing the information sheet and sample consent form was then sent, followed by a telephone call to ensure the letter had been received, and that staff were willing to participate. A first appointment to visit sites was then made, which led to other appointments for interviews and surveys. Interview schedules and consent forms were sent out in advance. In some cases interviewees proposed "on-the-spot" interviews, and so consent forms were signed and interview schedules given out at the interview.

At each stage of the research process participants received an oral briefing and had the opportunity to ask questions before signing a consent form specifically designed for that stage of the research (see Appendix H). Thus informed consent was gained from all participants for observation, interview and examination of documents. Transcripts of individual interviews were sent to each participant for approval and correction before

being used in the findings. Informed consent is an essential component of an ethical study (Bouma, 1996, pp. 194-5).

Privacy

Maintaining participant privacy was a potential problem in the small PTE community. As Langenbach, Vaughan and Aagaard note:

Even if participants are assigned pseudonyms in the report, anyone familiar with the school or community in which the study took place may be able to identify them (1994, p. 285).

Hence, the information sheet made participants aware of this possibility, so that they could decide if they were willing to risk social or commercial consequences of being identified. In addition, bearing in mind “it can be extremely difficult to predict to what uses one’s research will be put” (Punch, 1994, p. 93), in the information sheet I endeavoured to inform participants of who would or would not have access to the data gathered. I gave participants the option of whether or not to have their interviews audiotaped, and also undertook to destroy the data at the end of the study so that no issue of secondary analysis of data by other researchers could arise. In addition, the transcribers and data analyst I employed signed confidentiality agreements (see Appendix K).

Honest purpose

In order to maintain honesty of purpose, I provided an information sheet to all participants (see Appendix H) that stated the purpose of the research. Mason (1996, pp. 29-31) makes it clear that maintaining honesty of purpose is an important ethical consideration. However, at the data collection stage my own views, interpretations and critique of unit standards had to remain hidden as much as possible. Further,

expectations of the research findings could not be divulged as that could have affected participant responses, rendering findings invalid (Bouma, 1996, p. 194; Punch, 1994, p. 90). This kind of deception can be argued as justified in gaining data in that it respects participants' rights without harming them (Burgess, 1989, p. 67). Hence, the information sheet tells participants why the research is being done, but not what the research hoped to find. Instead, it offers to tell participants what was found, and what conclusions were drawn, at the completion of the study (Bouma, 1996, p. 190).

Ethical researchers need to consider their degree of involvement with the participants. I strove to maintain a "noninterventionist" (Stake, 1995, p. 44) stance in all three sites, interviewing tutors from subject areas different to my own, and students from groups other than my own. However, research participants were aware of my involvement in unit standards as a PTE director and tutor myself, and occasionally asked me directly for information or my own opinions on matters relating to the issues. In the interests of honesty, intimacy, and courtesy, I replied truthfully to personal questions but kept my answers brief, and moved the interview on to focus on the participants. The aim of the interviewer has traditionally been to remain "neutral and non-judgemental", listening more than talking, rephrasing, reflecting back, and summarising (Merriam, 1998). However, when the interviewer is known to have knowledge and experience of the issue under question, it can be inappropriate and even discourteous not to reply. As Ribbens puts it, "What do you do when you are asked direct questions about yourself?" (1989, p. 584). Oakley goes so far as to assert, there can be "no intimacy without reciprocity" (, 1981, cited in Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 370).

Conclusion

The approval of the Ethics Committee confirmed that the research procedures I intended to employ were likely to be ethical. At all three sites, participants were unfailingly cooperative, open and interested in the investigation and its outcomes. This suggested that I had managed an approach protecting the interests of the participants.

SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined and justified the collective case study approach and procedure followed in the study of the extent to which the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF were compatible with those of PTEs. Three PTEs were selected on the basis of their success at implementing the NQF and their diversity. Data were gathered through seventeen semi-structured individual interviews, six focus group interviews, two surveys, and document analysis. Interview schedules and the learner survey were piloted. The chief limitation of this methodology was my tacit knowledge as researcher. Validity was obtained through the use of triangulation, achieved through combining different sources and data-gathering techniques, as well as through member checks, peer examination and the clarification of researcher biases.

All data were chiefly analysed according to how they contributed to an understanding of organisational context in relation to NQF implementation in PTEs. The research questions led to the development of a framework for evaluating compatibility of the NQF with organisational context. This framework provided the structure for presenting the findings in a within-case analysis, and discussing them in a cross-case analysis. The study was guided throughout by the ethical principle of protecting the interests of participants. Through careful preparation, providing information sheets and consent

forms, and making appointments I endeavoured to keep disruption to a minimum, ensured consent was gained at each point, protected participant privacy and strove to maintain honesty of purpose. The next two chapters present the findings of the inquiry in terms of the assumptions, objectives and approaches revealed in each PTE.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS: ASSUMPTIONS AND OBJECTIVES IN PTEs

The purpose of this study was to discover reasons for the remarkable record of NQF implementation in PTEs, through evaluating the extent to which the NQF was compatible with PTE organisational context. With this aim, a literature review examined the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF (see Chapters 2 and 3). A review of change management literature identified features of organisational context which are significant in educational implementation, and which indicate readiness for change (see Chapter 4). The study then focused on the particular experiences and perceptions of administrators, tutors and students implementing unit standards-based qualifications in three PTEs. These experiences and perceptions were examined for what they revealed about organisational assumptions, objectives and approaches in each PTE, and how these compared with those of the NQF.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings of this inquiry, which are then discussed in Chapter 8. The findings are presented and discussed in terms of the framework for evaluating compatibility of the NQF with organisational context devised by the researcher (see Figure 3, Chapter 4). Figure 4 (p. 97) is an expanded version of this framework, detailing the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF and features of organisational context in PTEs that provided direction for the inquiry.

Figure 4. Expanded framework for evaluating compatibility of the NQF with organisational context

THE NQF	Compatibility?	ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT	
			Indicators of readiness for change
<p>Assumptions The market view (economic rationalism):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic reasons to change qualifications system • Knowledge in the form of unit standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - standards set by industry writers - sold to and delivered by contracted providers 	↔	<p>Assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impetus for change • Leadership style
<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create single, seamless qualification system, thus improving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - links between industry and training - skills of workers - the economy 	↔	<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational objectives
<p>Approaches <i>Curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace-focused • Unit standards not curriculum statements • Unit standards as tastes of success <p><i>Teaching:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutor as workplace facilitator and assessor • Learner-tutor relationship personal and contractual <p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement for assessor training • Mix of methods • Authenticity, sufficiency • Validity 	↔	<p>Approaches <i>Curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design • Content <p><i>Teaching:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of educational environment • Tutor role • Learner-tutor relationship <p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gathering evidence - record keeping • Ensuring validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarity in unit standards - reliable judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational roles • Commitment to staff development

In keeping with Figure 4 (p. 97), indicators of readiness for change and features of organisational context in each PTE provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF. Impetus for change and leadership style provided direction for investigating compatibility with assumptions of the NQF. Organisational objectives provided direction for investigating compatibility with the objectives of the NQF. Organisational approaches to curriculum design and content provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF approach to curriculum. Organisational roles, conditions of the educational environment, tutor role and learner-tutor relationship provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF approach to teaching. Finally, organisational commitment to staff development, as well as management of assessment and ensuring of its validity, provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF approach to assessment.

Data for the study were sourced from individual and focus group interviews, two surveys, and documents. Findings from the various data sources are reported according to their relevance to key indicators in each PTE. Findings from each PTE are reported separately. The findings on assumptions in each PTE are presented first. These are followed by the findings on organisational objectives and, finally, on approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment.

ASSUMPTIONS

As noted in Chapter 2, the assumptions underlying the NQF reform were fundamentally economic. According to the theory of economic rationalism underpinning the widespread social reforms of the 1980s, there were powerful economic reasons for reforming the qualifications system. What was seen as an incoherent and inconsistent

qualifications system was held responsible for unacceptable numbers of low-skilled workers, and economic decline. A significant aspect of the qualifications reform was the attempt to package all knowledge in the form of unit standards. In accord with the market view of education, unit standards are written by representatives of industry and sold to contracted providers to deliver.

The assumptions underlying PTEs are less well documented. As noted in Chapter 1, however, PTEs are mostly limited liability companies and trusts owned by private individuals or organisations. Education is the business of PTEs. If they are to survive, their leadership is compelled to ensure education is provided in a manner compatible with sustainable business practice. The assumptions of PTEs are therefore likely to be revealed through an investigation of their impetus for change and of their leadership.

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Organisations need a powerful impetus for change, based on compelling external or internal pressure, before the pain and anxiety of change is readily undertaken (Fullan, 1992). For the PTEs of this study, the change to unit standards-based qualifications was highly stressful and so the impetus to adopt the NQF needed to be powerful. The Skill New Zealand advisor reported that when the NQF was proposed to employers and training providers in the early 1990s it was met with resistance, particularly from larger industries with training structures already in place. In the maritime industry, for example, one tutor from Technical Institute Moana (TIM) had met with the following attitude at a coastguard conference: “Why should you change something that works. If

it's fixed, why fix it again?" (T10)¹⁵. Perhaps it is not surprising that from 1996, government funds were allocated more readily to education providers proposing TOP, Skill Enhancement and ITO programmes if they offered NQF qualifications.

Information Technology Learning Centre (ITLC)

ITLC adopted the NQF in 1995. Staff were motivated by the chance to compete with other tertiary providers, particularly polytechnics, by offering "nationally recognised qualifications" (A1). This meant students could be confident that their PTE qualification was portable and would be recognised, even if the name of the PTE was not. One tutor mentioned the "reputation" (T3) ITLC gained through offering national qualifications. As well as giving PTEs "access to credible qualifications overnight" (A1), the NQF provided for qualifications where there had been few or no qualifications previously. Prior to adopting the NQF, ITLC had only been able to offer Pitman qualifications recognising typing and wordprocessing achievements; the NQF enabled them to provide formal recognition of student competence in a far wider range of areas including service sector and communication skills. As one tutor pointed out, this was particularly important for the kind of student likely to study at a PTE:

It's given them qualifications they wouldn't otherwise get in a conventional system. Most of our students haven't achieved anything in the school system and because of their life decisions they haven't got qualifications either (T3).

Government funding policies provided continuing impetus for change. From 1996, ITLC was able to take advantage of government funds being allocated more readily to education providers proposing TOP, Skill Enhancement and ITO programmes if they

¹⁵ See Table 5, Chapter 5, for data sources referred to by labels

offered NQF qualifications. From 1999 EFTS funding, formerly available to PTEs offering only a limited range of unit standards-based qualifications at Level 3 or above, became available for the entire range of these qualifications. This provided a strong motivation for ITLC tutors to teach unit standards-based qualifications at a higher level than before. Although their decision was reinforced by what the students said they wanted, “the deciding factor was economics” (T1).

Learner survey data did not strongly support staff perceptions of the competitive advantage of being able to offer a national qualification. This indicated that, although the offering of unit standards was a factor in choice of ITLC, other factors were more significant. As Figure 5 indicates, 47 out of 85 students agreed that they chose to study at ITLC because it offered unit standards (LS7).

Figure 5. Factors in student choice of ITLC

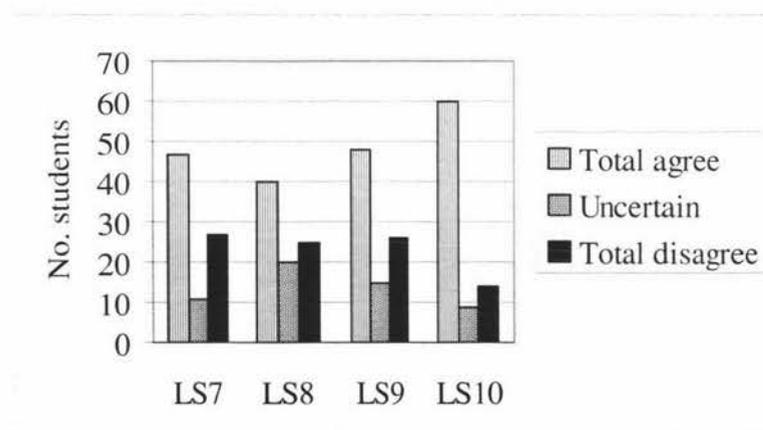


Figure 5 also indicates, however, that 40 out of 85 students would have studied at ITLC even if it didn't offer unit standards (LS8), and 48 out of 89 agreed that the skills they got from the course were more important to them than the unit standard qualifications (LS9). Financial considerations were more highly significant than the other factors in

student choice of ITLC, however. Figure 5 also shows that 60 out of 83 students agreed that they chose to study at ITLC because the fees were affordable (LS10).

Impetus for the change to unit standards-based qualifications had to be powerful, because the change itself was highly pressured. Although they had been positive initially, ITLC tutors described the actual change to unit standards as “traumatic” (T1), making them feel “wilted” (T2), and “close to nervous breakdown and stress” (T3). They described the workload as “massive” (T3), “a major addition” (T4), “immensely increased” (T1). This was partly due to the pace of change to unit standards-based qualifications at ITLC:

We made the change too quickly. We introduced unit standards to every course from one year to the next ... Perhaps we could have made the changes earlier. We didn't have the option because of funding for courses. It was probably the only way to go (T1).

This intensified the difficulty of dealing with unanticipated consequences such as having to change software and thus write new resources and assessments: “We were learning new software, writing new learning programmes, resources and assessments, and changing our teaching style” (T1).

ITLC tutors found this a lonely process which directly affected their teaching. The sense that “there was no one else out there” grappling with unit standards in exactly the same way caused one tutor to feel her teaching became “bumbling” (T2). This seemed unfair on students, whose cooperation was also sought: she had coped with this by telling her students, “you're my guinea pigs” (T2). Another ITLC tutor accepted that, “when you're doing something new, you mustn't feel embarrassed. You have to be happy to say, “I don't know everything” (T3).

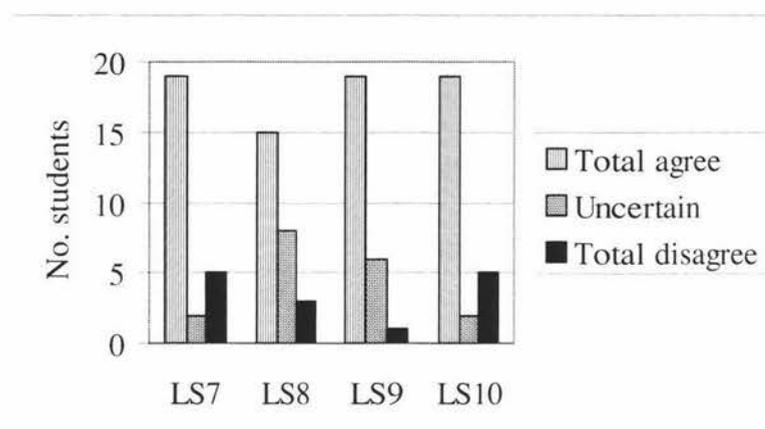
Technical Institute Moana (TIM)

TIM also adopted the NQF in 1995 and, as at ITLC, were motivated to persevere by the chance to compete with other tertiary providers by offering nationally recognised “portable” qualifications (A2). The NQF seemed a powerful self-marketing tool to TIM administrators, and adopting it seemed a sound decision both “student-wise and business-wise” (A3). The NQF enabled TIM to broaden the range of marine-related qualifications offered. Coupled with the funding incentives of 1996 and 1999, this had led directly to growth: as TIM’s Managing Director (MD) put it bluntly, “We wouldn’t be in business without unit standards – it’d be too hard” (A2). One tutor described TIM as “big business, it’s growing all the time” (T9). Accordingly, the year 2000 saw TIM shifting from cramped shop-front premises to spacious premises on the outskirts of town.

As with ITLC, learner survey data did not strongly support staff perceptions of the competitive advantage of being able to offer a national qualification. This indicated that, although the offering of unit standards was a factor in choice of TIM, other factors were more important. As Figure 6 (p. 104) indicates, 19 out of 26 students agreed that they chose to study at TIM because it offered unit standards (LS7).

Figure 6 also indicates, however, that 15 out of 26 would have studied at TIM even if it didn’t offer unit standards (LS8), and 19 out of 26 agreed that the skills they got from the course were more important to them than the unit standard qualifications (LS9). Financial considerations were highly significant in student choice of TIM. As Figure 6 indicates, 19 out of 26 agreed that they chose to study at TIM because the fees were affordable (LS10).

Figure 6. Factors in student choice of TIM



Again the impetus for the change need to be powerful. TIM staff as at ITLC found the process of changing to unit standards-based qualifications “very stressful” (A3). Although in the very early stages there was little involvement of ITOs and moderation systems were only in their infancy, so that the main difference was that “we kept records of all the assessments we did and that’s really all we did” (T9), the workload soon increased. Tutors described the workload involved in introducing unit standards as “quadruple” (T10), “horrendous ... easily 16 hours every weekend, at least three hours every night as well” (T8). This was caused by having to research, write, deliver and assess unit standards concurrently.

Del Mar Ranch (DMR)

By the time DMR decided to offer TOP training and apply for PTE status in 1997, the impetus for adopting the NQF was irresistible. The chance of receiving ETSA funding was greatly enhanced if they offered NQF qualifications. In addition, the NQF meant DMR could offer a National Certificate where there had been no formal qualifications before. Like ITLC and TIM, the DMR MD spoke of developing a “reputation” (A4) based on credibility gained through offering a national qualification. Although DMR

staff described the workload as “double” because of all the documentation necessary for assessment (A4, T11), these business incentives were powerful.

Learner survey data indicated that the offering of unit standards was not a deciding factor in choice of DMR. As Figure 7 indicates, only two out of six students agreed that they chose to study at DMR because it offered unit standards; four disagreed with this statement (LS7). For DMR students the nature of the course offered was far more significant.

Figure 7. Factors in student choice of DMR

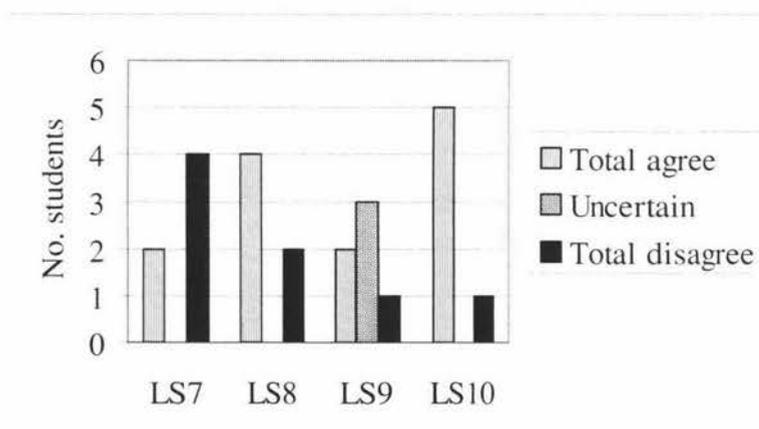


Figure 7 also shows that four out of six students would have studied at that PTE even if it didn't offer unit standards (LS8). While two out of six students agreed that the skills they got from the course were more important to them than the unit standard qualifications, three were uncertain about this and one disagreed (LS9). As with ITLC and TIM, financial considerations were highly significant in student choice of DMR. Five out of six agreed that they chose to study at DMR because the fees were affordable (LS10).

Examining leadership style as well as impetus for change provided direction for investigating organisational assumptions in the three PTEs.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

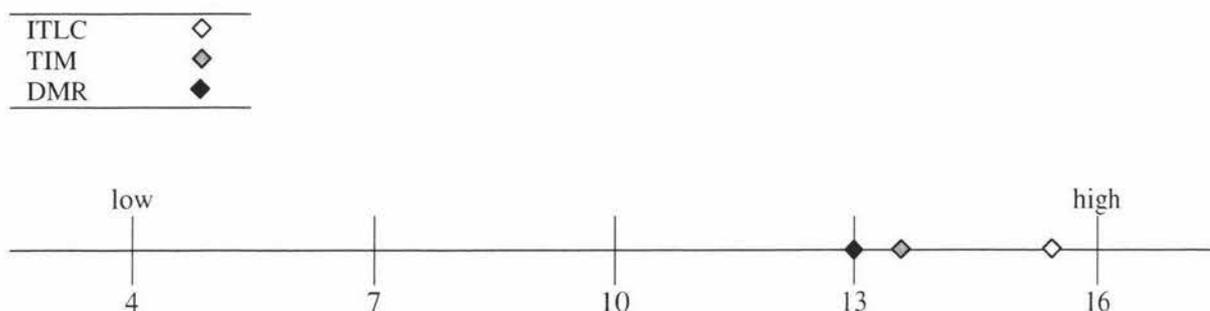
The role of the educational leader using the NQF is that of the contracted provider, who purchases unit standards for delivery. As already noted, PTE leadership is compelled to ensure education is provided in a manner that sustains business. The assumptions of PTEs are therefore likely to be revealed through an investigation of their leadership. As indicated in the evaluation framework (Figure 4, p. 97), leadership style provided direction for investigating organisational assumptions. Leaders in any organisation have a key role to play in successful management of change such as that required by the implementation of the NQF. If key leadership personnel do not want change, it will not happen. Leadership that indicates readiness for change is “transformational”, concerned with managing organisational culture, and characterised by collaboration (Hopkins et al., 1994; Schein, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1996; Vaill, 1989).

ITLC

As indicated in Figure 8 (p. 107), survey data revealed that staff perceived ITLC leadership as highly transformational, as defined in staff survey statements 13-16 (see Appendix D). The mean score was 15.2 out of 16, indicating that most staff “strongly agreed” with statements indicating that ITLC leadership was transformational (SS7). They strongly agreed that staff were frequently encouraged to take a lead in new developments; staff undertaking leadership roles were given appropriate support; they knew who to approach for advice or direction on different aspects of their work; and

they found that the styles of leadership used were generally appropriate to the task in hand.

Figure 8. Degree to which PTE staff perceive leadership as transformational



Further evidence of shared leadership at ITLC was provided by comments added by respondents to the staff survey. One tutor noted, “All staff are equal and able to contribute freely and openly”, and nine of the 13 ITLC respondents described their roles in management terms.

ITLC’s Company Administrator described himself as acting as a liaison “informing ITLC how the outside world was going to affect us” (A1). He said it was typical of his style to “ensure I talk to every possible person when there is a change or decision to be made ... facilitating consensus” (A1). When reasons to change to the NQF seemed compelling, he “called meetings which made the decision to change” (A1). Tutors nominated which unit standards they wanted “and we sent a cheque away for them” (A1). He welcomed the accreditation process as a quality “benchmark” and was not afraid of it, as he believed many other providers were:

We didn’t let NZQA or the bureaucracy push us around. We didn’t accept we had to do everything exactly as they said. If we thought it was nonsense we didn’t do it and told them why ... We’ve always been like that (A1).

TIM

As shown in Figure 8 (p. 107), survey data revealed that staff perceived TIM leadership as transformational, although not as highly as at ITLC. The mean score was 13.9 out of 16, indicating most staff “agreed” with statements indicating that TIM leadership was transformational (SS7). The liaison function identified at ITLC was crucial in the leadership carried out by the MD of TIM. A senior tutor attributed TIM’s continued success to this:

the sole reason the school has survived is (the MD), he’s always been involved with SETA and training organisations. He has always had his finger on the pulse, he has a fantastic understanding of how things work and whose back to scratch. A lot of it is political but (he) does it better than most. He’s an “arse-kicker”, he gets out there and does it. That’s why we’re still in business, he’s friends with everyone, has no enemies (T9).

The MD himself was personally committed to the concept of unit standards:

I believe in unit standards, I think they’re a great education tool ... I personally failed the school system because I believe I didn’t cope well with the exam system (but) I used to do very well during internal assessments (A2).

The decision to adopt unit standards was made collaboratively by the staff of the time:

I remember over a cup of tea one afternoon discussing unit standards as opposed to what we were doing. We felt the positives outweighed what we were doing. So there wasn’t any great stick to wave – the tutors could see the sense in it. It was very informal, getting through things together (A3).

Having served on the Advisory Committee of the Seafood ITO, and been instrumental in the development of the very first New Zealand fish farming and seafood unit standards based on similar unit standards from SCOTVEC, TIM’s MD had a feisty

attitude to authority similar to that of ITLC's Company Administrator. This was despite an unpromising first encounter with NZQA:

We started with a dirt floor ... my first classroom was an old scout den that was a condemned building. NZQA came to look it over to register us and the lady went through the floorboards – got her foot stuck – I thought that was the end of us ... I had to get a crowbar to get her out (A2).

The MD fought NZQA to incorporate "Technical Institute" into the name of his PTE. NZQA objected because it would confuse the PTE with polytechs, but this MD pointed out that it was not illegal and was able to go ahead. His reason was "I wanted the students to feel better about their qualification ... and I wanted (TIM) to become confused with Polytech" (A2). Equally confident about dealing with ITOs, the MD noted: "you can override an ITO by going straight to NZQA - that's not done often but ... you get cockier" (A2). The MD noted that "We're getting accredited all the time. Nothing holds us up now" (A2). He said that he and his staff could stand up to ITOs and argue for themselves and "we know what to do and how to pull all the right strings" (A2). Key leadership personnel all said they were tired of having to complain a lot, however (A2, A3, T9). They felt they had always done it, and it used to be good because they were making a difference. But now they wondered why they had to keep doing it. However, the new premises and the Diploma were exciting new innovations to them and were motivating them to keep going (A2, A3).

The confident leadership at TIM was carried out by strong-minded individuals. When I suggested that TIM's success at implementing unit standards-based qualifications could have been because the two leadership personnel saw things the same way, and had a good relationship, the response from the Administration Manager was swift and decisive:

(We) don't see eye to eye! We fight terribly. We're both very different people. Someone said it's like we're married, and we should have counselling! I speak my mind. We yell and scream and then take on board what the other says. We've had crises and because of that we know how to handle each other. We had a major crisis five years ago and another one about a year ago. The bottom line is it's his business and what he decides goes, but we've learnt to deal with one another and accept each other (A3).

DMR

As indicated in Figure 8 (p. 107), the MD at DMR perceived DMR leadership as less highly transformational than the other two PTEs: the score was 13 out of 16, indicating he "agreed" with statements indicating this (SS7). The decision to set up their training programmes was in response to the invitation of the farm owner, in recognition of their expertise. The decision to offer unit standards-based qualifications was made by the two staff together: "It was our decision" (A4), based on a chance suggestion by Taskforce Green representative who had been working with them on the grounds. They obtained the necessary information and documentation from the Equine Industry Training Organisation (EITO) and continued from there.

OBJECTIVES

As noted in Chapter 2, the main objective of the NQF was to create a single, seamless qualifications system that would improve links between industry and training, the skills of workers and thus ultimately the economy. The Skill New Zealand advisor explained that PTEs are required to spell out organisational goals as a requirement of accreditation and that, in order to receive Skill New Zealand funding, they must occupy a specific educational niche and design programmes to meet perceived industry needs in their regions (SNZ). In addition, Skill New Zealand funding contracts with providers require that various percentages of students complete a certain number of unit standard

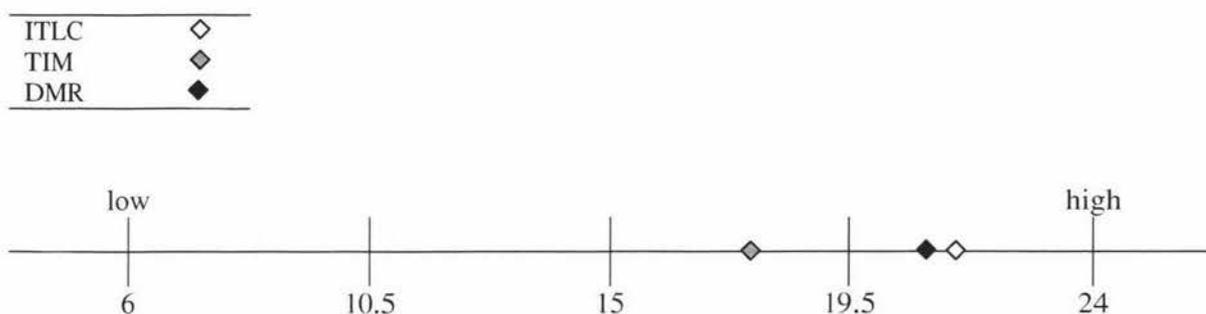
qualifications, and be placed in employment or further education within two months of course end.

In keeping with Figure 4 (p. 97), compatibility with the objectives of the NQF was investigated in terms of the organisational objectives in each PTE. As revealed in Chapter 4, assessment innovations have more chance of successful implementation if their objectives are compatible with those of the organisational context in which they are delivered (Bell, 1993; Hood, 1998; Wolf, 1995). In addition, a shared understanding of organisational goals and priorities, with high expectations and clear focus supports change (Beare et al., 1989; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins et al., 1994).

ITLC

Figure 9 (p. 112) shows that ITLC responses to the staff survey indicated that shared objectives was an organisational norm with a “high” degree of clarification at ITLC. The mean score was 21.6 out of 24, indicating that most staff “strongly agreed” with statements indicating that ITLC had shared organisational objectives (SS1, see Appendix I). They strongly agreed that there was an agreed policy to involve students in decisions; that ITLC had a policy for keeping people informed about future development priorities; and that ITLC’s future plans reflected priorities that had been agreed on.

Figure 9. Degree to which PTE staff perceive organisational objectives as shared



ITLC specialised in computer training not provided at its two geographical locations by “Auckland-based polytechnics or universities” (D1, p. 14). ITLC’s mission statement was “to provide education and training of Polytechnic quality” in their geographical region (D1, p. 3). Six of the eight courses provided by ITLC were Skill New Zealand funded. Every tutor taught on at least one of these courses, and was aware that ongoing Skill New Zealand funding required that various percentages of their students complete a certain number of unit standards, and be placed in employment or further education within two months of course end. The last four weeks of each 24-week course was called “Total Focus on Employment” and was devoted entirely to the search for jobs or further education (D4). ITLC had received Skill New Zealand funding since their founding (SNZ). This indicated that tutors continually achieved the contracted outcomes, and both tutor and student expectations were therefore high that students would achieve these goals. Learner survey data indicated high student expectations of educational success. Forty nine out of 84 ITLC participants in the learner survey started their course with either no qualifications or no more than two School Certificate passes (Question 3, see Appendix G). Yet 78 out of 87 expected to gain all or most of the unit standards offered on the course (Question 2).

The Company Administrator and tutors described themselves as always changing, offering new courses, updating unit standards, and experimenting in order to achieve their contracted outcomes (A1, T1). They were using unit standards innovatively, in combination with other kinds of qualifications to meet more of their students' needs. ITLC continued to offer Pitman examinations, although at a much reduced rate than before the NQF. Two ITLC courses also accessed UTTA funding, for students not eligible for Skill New Zealand programmes, through offering unit standards-based qualifications at Level 3 (A1, T2).

Tutors at ITLC perceived a direct link between students' educational success provided by the NQF, and their chances of gaining employment. As the students succeeded educationally, perhaps for the first time, they gained a sense of achievement. Their self-expectations began to rise and, as one tutor noted, "this confidence encourages them to apply for a job" (T3). Another tutor observed that the units thus became "strategies to get you places" (T5).

Learner survey data showed that the great majority of ITLC students perceived a strong relationship between unit content and employment prospects. Sixty five out of 87 students agreed that the content of unit standards was what they needed to know to get a job (LS11). Only 15 were uncertain about this, and seven disagreed. Similarly, 67 out of 86 students believed unit standards showed an accurate picture of what they knew and could do: a useful aid in gaining employment (LS12). Only 12 were uncertain about this, and seven disagreed. This result was borne out by a focus group comment, that the unit standard qualifications would "look good on our CV" (FG1).

TIM

As shown in Figure 9 (p. 107), responses to the staff survey indicated that shared objectives was an organisational norm with a less “high” degree of clarification at TIM than at ITLC. The mean score was 18 out of 24 (SS1). This response still indicates a significant degree of clarification of this norm at TIM, however. Operating in an area not serviced by polytechnics, TIM offered a range of education and training in the seafood, maritime, and automotive industries, as well as the tourism, adventure and hospitality industries. TIM prepared students for a range of employment available in the area. TIM’s mission statement was “to encourage a love of knowledge by the teaching of essential skills for living in today’s world” (D6, p. 6.0). In TIM’s “Policies and Procedures” document, a series of goal statements and performance indicators began with the goal, “to successfully operate all programmes on offer” with the accompanying performance indicator, “funding agency outcome predictions are achieved” (D6, p. 6.0).

Three of the eight courses provided by TIM were Skill New Zealand funded, and all eight courses were closely connected with employment opportunities in the area. In line with the aims of Skill New Zealand, tutors at TIM all were aware that the main goal of the courses was to get students into jobs or further education through training them “to industry specifications” (T7). Like ITLC, TIM had received Skill New Zealand funding since their founding (SNZ). This indicated that tutors continually achieved the contracted outcomes, and both tutor and student expectations were therefore high that students would achieve these goals. Twenty two out of 26 TIM participants in the learner survey started their course with either no qualifications or no more than two

School Certificate passes (Question 3). Yet all 26 expected to gain all or most of the unit standards offered on the course (Question 2).

Similarly to ITLC, TIM staff described themselves as always changing, offering new courses, updating unit standards, and experimenting in order to achieve these aims. The MD was particularly overt about the need for accessing other funding, and quoted homegrown maxims such as:

“There’s no money that we don’t get.”

“We’re a shop front and whoever wants to pay us, we’ll take their money.”

“We’re shopkeepers, we supply baked beans and we do lots of cans” (A2).

Like ITLC, TIM was not completely dependent on using unit standards-based qualifications. TIM offered two courses based solely on the requirements of the Royal New Zealand Coastguard Federation and had created another course “package”, which targeted marine industry employees and incorporated unit standards with the Maritime Safety Authority licence (T9). From 1999 TIM could access UTTA funding through offering unit standards-based qualifications at Level 3 and above, and by the end of that year was offering three courses at or above this level. Their newly introduced Level 4 Diploma in Marine Technology was made up of 80 credits based on unit standards and 40 credits based on TIM-created modules that were not unit standards. These modules were not, and would never be, registered on the Framework because they were so specialised, eg electric fishing. However because the course had been approved by NZQA as a diploma it was eligible for Ministry of Education funding and student loans and allowances.

Learner survey data showed that the clear majority of TIM students perceived a strong relationship between unit content and employment prospects. Nineteen out of 26

students agreed that the content of unit standards was what they needed to know to get a job (LS11). Only six students were uncertain about this, and one disagreed. Similarly, 19 out of 26 students believed unit standards showed an accurate picture of what they knew and could do: a useful aid in gaining employment (LS12). Only five were uncertain about this, and two disagreed. This perception was borne out in the focus group, where students referred to unit standards as “a plus to get you into a job” (FG2), the “basis for a lifetime”, “stepping stones”, qualifications that “can’t be taken away from you” (FG2).

DMR

As shown in Figure 9 (p. 112), responses to the staff survey indicated that, as at ITLC, shared objectives was an organisational norm with a “high” degree of clarification at DMR: the score was 21 out of 24 (SS1). DMR offered equine tuition and training in all English, Western and Harness disciplines, not available anywhere else locally. The leading goal of DMR was “to be recognised as a provider of education, re-education and training for the equine industry” (D8, p. 5). As with TIM, this was closely followed in their documentation by a list of objectives including:

To accept the obligation to provide quality training courses and meet the relevant criteria prescribed by NZQA ... or any other Government Agency that DMR may contract to (D8, p. 5).

The aim of their programme was:

To give young unemployed people with low qualifications, who have a common interest in the Equine Industry, the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to gain employment within the Equine field (D8, p. 20).

DMR provided one Skill New Zealand funded course at Level 2. Staff worked hard to impress on their students the relationship between jobs and qualifications:

you cannot hang out your shingle without qualification ... if you want to be a horse trainer or horse breaker or anything, get yourself qualified...(A4)

The two DMR tutors were also the administrators and so there was keen awareness of Skill New Zealand funding requirements. As at ITLC and TIM, DMR had received Skill New Zealand funding since their founding (SNZ). This indicated that contracted outcomes were continually achieved, and tutor expectations were therefore high that students would achieve these goals. Five out of six DMR participants in the learner survey started their course with either no qualifications or no more than two School Certificate passes (Question 3). Yet five out of six expected to gain all or most of the unit standards offered on the course, and the other one expected to gain more than half (Question 2).

Like ITLC and TIM, DMR used unit standards innovatively, in combination with other kinds of qualifications to meet more of their students' needs. In addition to unit standards, DMR offered their own EITO-approved Horsemanship Certificate recognising "the psychology of horsemanship, not just the stable routines and systems (as assessed in unit standards)" (A4).

Learner survey data showed that the clear majority of DMR students perceived a strong relationship between unit content and employment prospects. Four out of six students agreed that the content of unit standards was what they needed to know to get a job (LS11). Only one was uncertain about this, and one disagreed. However, although

three agreed that unit standards showed an accurate picture of what they knew and could do, three were uncertain about this (LS12).

SUMMARY

In Chapter 6 the assumptions and objectives of the NQF have been re-stated, and the assumptions and objectives of three PTEs have been examined in terms of impetus for change, leadership style and organisational objectives. The following chapter re-states the approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment implicit in the NQF, and examines the approaches of the three PTEs.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS: APPROACHES IN PTES

As noted in Chapter 3, the approaches characterising the NQF were those entailed by its use of standards-based assessment. Standards-based assessment was designed for, and historically has had most success in, workplace-focused education. Its approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment are grounded in the requirements of the workplace.

In keeping with Figure 4 (p. 97, Chapter 6), examining curriculum design and content provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF approach to curriculum. Examining tutor role and learner-tutor relationships provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF approach to teaching. Finally, examining commitment to staff development, as well as the management and ensuring validity of assessment, provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF approach to assessment.

APPROACH TO CURRICULUM

The NQF approach to curriculum is workplace-focused in both design and content. The unit standards on which the NQF is based are intended to be used as performance standards rather than curriculum statements (NZQA, 1996b). Their small size is designed to provide the learner with incremental experience of success (NZQA, 1992).

ITLC

Curriculum design and content

ITLC staff used unit standards as the basis for designing curriculum. As one tutor explained, when they decided to adopt unit standards-based qualifications:

there weren't any major alterations (to our programme design) because we chose unit standards that met our objectives. We were doing wordprocessing and audio transcription, so those units fitted in with our plan (T4).

The ITLC Company Administrator perceived the unit standards as providing students with possibly a better standard of education, because tutors had to cover more areas in their curriculum and “not just teach things they and the students like” (A1). In contrast with this view, four out of six ITLC tutors perceived the unit standards as having narrowed their course content to what was assessed:

(it) made you very conscious of what you taught. You only taught what was in the unit standards because you wanted students to pass. You would cut out other stuff you might have included due to the time frame (T3).

One tutor expressed concern that:

There is a danger that unit standards can be divorced from context – they teach a set of skills without worrying about the meaningful application of skills ... they teach skill without strategies (and encourage you to) to teach to the assessment (T6).

Three tutors noted using unit standards had increased the theory content of their courses: “We might've glossed over theory before. Now we had to make sure they understood the theory part of it” (T4); “It was not just practical but theory skills as well ... every unit was integrated with a theory and practical component” (T3). One noted that this had reduced the time available to ensure practical mastery:

Before unit standards they were mastering wordprocessing. After unit standards they knew a little about a lot (T1).

One tutor noted that early wordprocessing unit standards were not always up-to-date – “We resented having to teach some topics that seemed of no use, irrelevant” (T1). She said tutors had reacted by not protesting, just knuckling under “because of the timeframe ... we were feeling under pressure and stressed out” (T1). One tutor considered aspects of recent Business Administration units were still not up-to-date (T2). Two tutors also mentioned that unit standards lacked clarity (T2, T4). There was very little help or guidance with examples so tutors were continually having to “figure out what the heck was meant by it (and so) took different interpretations” (T4).

Some students at ITLC thought the match between unit level and maturity level of students was not judged well by tutors: “grooming and work attitudes – (that’s) more aimed at school leavers” (FG1). ITLC focus group participants appreciated the nature of learning based on unit standards, however: “Here we focus on one thing, not like school” (FG1). They saw the unit standards as practical and job-related, commenting that:

(The units) are good practice – you can use these skills later in a job – it’s all connected to the workplace...They’re broad – this course covers all aspects of office jobs (FG1).

Learner survey data indicated that the majority of ITLC students did not perceive the content of unit standards as limited. Only 12 out of 88 students agreed that unit standards covered less than they would like to know (LS13), although a more significant 26 out of 88 were uncertain about this. The majority of ITLC students

perceived unit standards as having a positive effect on organising their learning. Sixty three out of 88 agreed that unit standards helped them organise their learning (LS14).

TIM

Curriculum design and content

TIM staff also used unit standards as the basis for curriculum design. The tutor most involved in initiating the change to the NQF reported that TIM had built on existing strengths in the early stages:

We saw it as tailor-making a package that was good for us, so we could use the resources that we had, use the staff that we had ... (T9).

He explained their initial approach to designing a unit standards-based programme:

We just basically picked our own off the Framework ... we went through without really realising the ramifications. Yeah we just tried to pick units of the same level. We put all the units together into a package to make a full (marine) licence (T9).

These ramifications were that TIM then had to get accredited to numerous ITOs, which proved costly. After a period of adjustment, learning as they went, TIM began offering National Certificates, thereby streamlining their ITO involvement.

Like his ITLC counterpart, TIM's MD believed that unit standards caused tutors to expand their curriculum:

Because most of our staff aren't tutors (they) would tend to drift into teaching their own thing – but when you're stuck with unit standards you've got to teach the same thing. You don't just stick to what you know ... (A2).

Tutors with an industry background tended to agree with this view, noting that the units “do force you to teach to more of a syllabus. You can’t blunder along and do what the class wants to do” (T9). The units “give you a programme and you do your list of plans to suit that. And how you teach is up to you” (T10).

One tutor with a background in secondary school teaching thought unit standards caused her to play a bigger role in programme design than she ever had before. Whereas before using unit standards her teaching workload had focused on presenting and delivering, now she had to become a “jack of all trades”, adding researching, writing and assessing to her workload (T7). However, she saw this as an inevitable part of teaching:

because you’re too overloaded ... You’re stressed to the eyeballs, always. Perhaps that just goes with the territory, with teaching – it is demanding (T7).

Another tutor with a secondary school teaching background noted the flexible order in which units could be taught enabled her to plan her programme in such a way as to increase students’ confidence:

so those who were used to failure can actually see they have achieved something to give them more courage to do the rest (T8).

One tutor saw the breaking down of learning into manageable parts as a positive feature of unit standards. Achieving unit standards provided a starting point for building the confidence of students who had failed in the more “cut and dried” pass/fail school system:

Tutors can focus on getting people through the little bits step by step ... (saying to students) ‘you’ve achieved this and that’s really good and now you can go on to this which is a little more difficult’ (T7).

The Administration Manager noted the breaking into small blocks of learning gave the student:

the opportunity to feel excited – ‘I’ve passed something!’. And the more you get excited, the more you care about success, the more success you get, it’s magical. I see it in the students all the time (A2).

This was supported by student comments in the focus group: “your learning is focused and targeted” (FG2). Some students thought there was too much theory and not enough practical experience, however (FG2).

Every tutor mentioned that using unit standards made their teaching more assessment-driven. However, as with ITLC, learner survey data indicated that TIM students were uncertain about whether the content of unit standards was limited. Only five out of 26 students agreed that unit standards covered less than they would like to know (LS13), but a significant 11 out of 26 were uncertain about this. As with ITLC, the majority of TIM students perceived unit standards as having a positive effect on organising their learning. Nineteen out of 26 agreed that unit standards helped them organise their learning (LS14). Five were uncertain, and two disagreed.

The MD mentioned the lack of clarity in unit standards, and the lack of official help or guidance. This increased the difficulty for staff of implementing unit standards, as “we weren’t a school, none of us are tutors, none of us had worked in the polytech system or in education” (A2). In hindsight, the MD says, if he’d known what was involved in the process of setting up unit standards, he would have gone fish farming! (A2) The staff’s interpretation of the requirement for unit standards to be undertaken in the workplace, coupled with hostility from the marine environment who might have provided

workbased training for students, led to the decision to buy their own vessel and operate it commercially. This was a “terrible financial decision (that) nearly busted us” (A2).

One tutor observed that the difference between levels on the NQF was not always clear, so she was uncertain of the depth to which she should be teaching them (T8). The relationship of credits to the content of unit standards was also problematic for tutors. One tutor thought that “the credits are not given in proportion to the teaching time or the supposed teaching time” (T8). She gave the example of being able to cover a unit worth 15 credits in three weeks “because the students had mastered a lot of skills prior to that”. Similarly, student perception was that “the credits are uneven – lots of work can be one or two credits; not much work can be heaps of credits” (FG2). Students gave the example of Unit 6914, “the biggest unit standard on navigation and maritime but it’s only two credits at Level 2; whereas the ropes unit is six credits” (FG2). Another tutor, exaggerating but expressing the uneven allocation of credits, said, “There are some units where you’ve got 20 credits you know you can finish by lunchtime” (T9).

Focus group participants mentioned the problem of unit standards not being up-to-date. In particular they referred to a unit involving ropes – “the PCs (performance criteria) are out-of-date, like, cables aren’t used any more and ‘multi-plait’ is not done in ‘natural fibre’ ” (FG2). They expressed the opinion that “people who write unit standards are out of touch with the students doing them” and “they need to go to bars and boats and look” (FG2). In addition, they thought requirements of some unit standards were unrealistic: some of the unit standards needed for the marine qualifications, for example, were applicable to “overseas cruiseliners not small charters” (FG2).

DMR

Curriculum design and content

DMR staff found unit standards very helpful in curriculum design, because they provided “a fixed format to work from ... a curriculum and a programme” (A4). Frequent changes to the National Certificate prescription were frustrating, however: “NZQA changed the whole National Certificate in Equine, deleted all the Maths units just as we got ourselves a Maths tutor” (A4). Especially galling was the way in which they were notified of these changes:

It is a problem when the NZQA person with no knowledge of our field comes to re-register and they’ve changed the (National Certificate requirements) without telling you ... Then they charge you \$100 an hour to contact the EITO about the unit changes. That I have a problem with (A4).

DMR tutors estimated that using unit standards had caused their teaching to be “70% practical, 30% theory – before unit standards it was 100% practical” (A4). They viewed the practical as the “evidence statement of the theory”, giving the example of teaching horse grooming:

We teach the theory of why a strapper blows when he’s brushing a horse, then we look for the energy level students put into grooming ... If they do not display the energy level, they may not be suited ... for a position in a stable (A4).

DMR staff did not perceive unit standards as narrowing of course content; including unit standard content had expanded their course. However, they did find that unit standards did not cover everything that they believed equine employers were looking for in prospective employees. Their decision to offer a DMR Horsemanship Certificate in addition to unit standards was prompted by what the MD perceived as a failure in

unit standards to recognise the difference between training people to handle animate and inanimate objects:

EITO understand racing, trotting, the breeding industry – but not horsemanship, which is what employers want because it produces a good result. Only a limited number of people can satisfy employer demand for people who can handle horses. Teaching people to handle horses is very different from teaching people to handle computers or do engineering – animate objects are very different from inanimate. Confidence in handling horses makes you employable – overcoming physical fear - a horse smells fear. This is difficult to teach and not necessarily measurable in unit standards (T11).

Students expressed no qualms about the focused nature of the course content: “it’s more relevant than school learning” (FG3). However, they valued the non-unit standards-based course content as much as the unit standards-based course content: “This course is better (than the polytech one), because there’s more variety – we learn natural horsemanship” (FG3). Students at DMR appreciated the way unit standards broke down topics into smaller parts. It meant they felt confident about what they had to do – “it’s nice to have it all set out and organised” (FG3).

Learner survey data indicated divided opinion among DMR students as to whether the content of unit standards was limited. Two out of six students agreed that unit standards covered less than they would like to know, while one was uncertain and three disagreed (LS13). As with ITLC and TIM, the majority of DMR students perceived unit standards as having a positive effect on organising their learning. Four out of six agreed that unit standards helped them organise their learning, while one was uncertain and one disagreed (LS14).

APPROACH TO TEACHING

As indicated in the evaluation framework at Figure 4 (p. 97, Chapter 6), organisational roles, conditions of the educational environment, tutor role and learner-tutor relationships provided direction for investigating organisational approaches to teaching.

Organisational roles and conditions of the educational environment

Lasting change is fostered when it is clear to people in an organisation how they should interact, and when they behave in ways that create an orderly, secure environment (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins et al., 1994). Most PTEs provide vocationally focused education in industry or subject niches, frequently modelling the learning environment on the workplace for which they are preparing their students (AC Nielsen, 1999; Lucas et al., 1997).

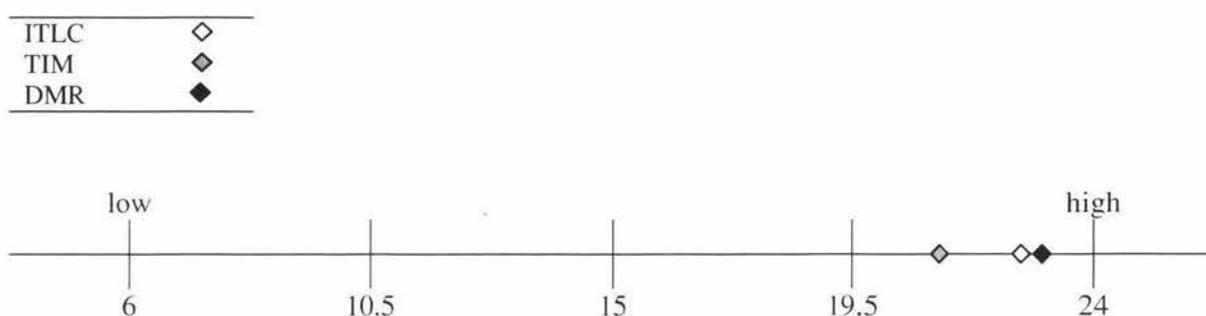
ITLC

As shown in Figure 10 (p. 129), responses to the staff survey indicated that the extent to which roles were conducive to an orderly environment was an organisational norm with a “high” degree of clarification at ITLC. The mean score was 22.6 out of 24, indicating that most staff “strongly agreed” with statements indicating that roles at ITLC were conducive to an orderly environment (SS3, see Appendix J). In particular, they strongly agreed that all staff members were clear about their own and other people’s responsibilities.

When asked for a metaphor that accurately described ITLC, the Company Administrator described it as more of a “club”, like a tennis club, than a family. This was because staff had “a common interest”, but weren’t “as close or social as a family” (A1). One

tutor saw ITLC as a “very supportive team producing a saleable product” (T4). A tutor new to ITLC mentioned the welcoming, supportive atmosphere with no competition as like a “family”, while the challenge of “you’re not molly-coddled along” made it more like a “team”. She concluded that ITLC was “halfway between a family and a team” (T5).

Figure 10. Degree to which staff perceive organisational roles as conducive to an orderly environment



Modelled on an office environment, ITLC had a code of conduct that included a dress code, and attendance and discipline policies (D4). Their two premises were both air conditioned, carpeted office blocks with facilities including computer suites, seminar rooms, reception area, kitchens and student lounges (D1, p. 6). It was policy that the most up-to-date computer equipment be supplied (D5). Each tutor was with a group for a whole day at a time, structuring the day according to the subject and their personal judgement. Classes ran from 9 am till 3 pm, and there was no expectation that tutors would be on site outside of those hours.

ITLC had a written policy of small class sizes (D1, p. 9). No course had more than 20 students, and five out of eight courses had no more than 14 students. At any one time the maximum number of students at the city site was 120, and at the village site 28.

Focus group participants were very appreciative of the small class sizes compared to school:

at school you're just one of the numbers, here you get more attention – the classes are small and the place is small; there is one on one training; you get to know your tutors (FG1).

They noted, “The one to one approach makes it so much easier to learn” (FG1). They were appreciative of the workplace model: “tutors don't treat you like another little kid, they treat you like equals ... don't talk down ... they're on the same level” (FG1). They also appreciated the atmosphere: “not too formal – lots of laughing” (FG1).

TIM

As is shown in Figure 10 (p. 129), responses to the staff survey indicated that the extent to which roles were conducive to an orderly environment was an organisational norm with a less “high” degree of clarification at TIM. The mean score was 20.6 out of 24, which still indicates a significant degree of clarification of this norm at TIM, however.

When asked for a metaphor that accurately described TIM, staff emphasised business aspects more than ITLC staff, but again the two strands were interwoven in the metaphors chosen. The MD and a long-serving tutor felt that over ten years the atmosphere had changed from that of a close “family”, with staff and students socialising freely (A2, T9). Although it was still “a friendly place to learn”, the emphasis now was on the “company serving clients” (A2) or “big business ... with more of split between management and staff” (T9). The Administration Manager and a long-serving tutor, however, felt that TIM was still very much a family where “long-term people feel they belong” (A3), and pointed out that staff still socialised out of work.

This tutor was happy to “go the extra mile” for his students, because he had a very personal commitment to TIM. He attributed his personal success to having been one of TIM’s original students, and he wanted to pass that on:

I’d do anything for this place. If I can give the students what I got - this is family to me I suppose (T10).

The Administration Manager also noted that a new staff member had commented recently, “I love coming to work, thanks for letting me be in this family” (A3), and a newer staff member chose the concept of “whanau” to describe the personal parental approach to students at TIM (T8).

A copy of the TIM student rule book hung in every classroom. This contained dress guidelines, and attendance and discipline policies compatible with those found in the automotive, hospitality and marine industries for which students were training (D7). Hospitality students were expected to wear black and white when engaged in practical training or field trips; automotive students were supplied with overalls (A3). Tutors and administrative staff had decided on a compulsory navy and white uniform with TIM logo in keeping with professional wear in the automotive, hospitality and marine industries. As TIM offered courses in a range of disciplines, all of which contained potential for injury, there were detailed policies and procedures concerning premises and equipment. These were designed to ensure “The institute’s premises meet the requirements of the resource Management Act and the Building Act” (D6, p. 6.3). Equipment and resources were selected and maintained “at a level that will ensure quality learning experiences ... and positive learning outcomes” (D, p. 6.3).

Each tutor was assigned overall responsibility for the design and implementation of one course. While tutors might teach one or two specialty units on each other's courses, the main tutor did most of the teaching on their own course, structuring the day according to the subject and their own judgement. One tutor enjoyed the fact that "you're sticking with one topic and not having to switch every half hour" (T7). Tutors were expected to be on site from 8.30 am till 4.30 pm, and classes ran from 9 am till 3 pm. The maximum number of students on site was 140, with no class sizes bigger than 16. As at ITLC, students were very appreciative of the small class sizes: "I like the small classes – there's always someone if we're struggling" (FG2); "(we get) personal attention" (FG2).

Staff were very aware that "the biggest problem we've had with 90% of our students is that they have failed in the school system" (T9). One tutor made the point strongly that the type of students he taught had to be handled differently from school or "they'd be gone" (T10). This tutor was particularly pleased at a recent course evaluation where students had described him in glowing terms:

They thought that I became part of the team, created a fun learning environment, encouraged them to improve all the time (T10).

He made the point that, despite the relaxed environment, discipline was maintained without his becoming a hated authority figure:

If they deserve a rollicking then I'll give them one. But I'll do it in such a way where they enjoy it. They'll say oh fair enough (T10).

Respect figured largely in his description of his relationship with students. Aware that "Some of the students we get, some of them have had a really hard life", he knew the

importance of sensitive handling. The MD was aware of the close relationships between tutors and learners, and so kept one particular role to himself:

I'm the only one who can kick a student off a course. Tutors only give warnings. I've only kicked off two students in nine years (A2).

Sometimes this role involved helping defuse a situation, enabling tutors and students to reach a compromise.

Like their ITLC counterparts, TIM focus group participants noted how different the PTE environment was from school:

"it's not like at school ... they (tutors) join us for lunch. It's not like tutors and students – they share about themselves. We're all equal (FG2).

They noted: "I would have gone a lot further in school if I'd had tutors like this" (FG2); and "my attitude is different here (from how it was at school) – I want to be here. You're never put down" (FG2). As at ITLC, they mentioned the atmosphere at TIM: "Everyone's so happy here. The people around here – everyone's happy" (FG2). Students' perception of discipline mirrored their tutors': "they don't take crap from us ... we have fun" (FG2). Students were appreciative of the workplace model: "We're treated as adults – equal to the tutors. We relate as mates" (FG2); "first names are used and we're introduced to each other" (FG2).

DMR

As is shown in Figure 10 (p. 129), responses to the staff survey indicated that the extent to which roles were conducive to an orderly environment was an organisational norm with a very "high" degree of clarification at DMR. The mean score was 23 out of 24. DMR staff combined an emphasis on family with a keen awareness of the business side

of their work, and described themselves as a “family-orientated team business” and students as “the products of our system” (A4).

Security of environment was a high priority for DMR. Many DMR students left home for the first time to attend the specialised training in a rural location. To help gain the trust of parents, DMR used the concept of “family” in its promotional literature: “family atmosphere is provided for young riders” (D9). DMR provided accommodation close to the training farm and took very seriously the responsibility of providing a secure training venue and atmosphere: “we call all the students kids (and) give them a barbecue once a fortnight to make sure they feed themselves” (A4). Students picked up on the family atmosphere: “We’re treated like we’re one big family” (FG3). The nature of equestrian employment meant that DMR students had to be prepared to live away from home following the course as well. Taking the responsibility to ensure a safe job environment for their students, DMR staff drove all over New Zealand to check out jobs for students (A4).

DMR was a working farm of 60 hectares: an equestrian environment. The students had real-life responsibilities to the horses and the farm, and DMR held equestrian showdays for the community to take part in. While there was no formal code of conduct, students were expected to adhere to the appropriate equestrian dress code for show days, and attendance and discipline policies mirrored those found in equestrian employment (D8, p. 20).

At DMR there was a maximum of nine students on site, some of whom lived over the road from the farm at accommodation provided by DMR. As with ITLC and TIM,

DMR focus group participants noted how different the PTE was from school: “it’s more relaxed than school” (FG3); “you don’t have the pressures of school – the peer pressure, the lack of one to one teaching” (FG3). They also noted the positive atmosphere: “it’s a fun way to learn – there’s always something happening, something different to learn” (FG3). One student who was on her first day at DMR even went so far as to observe, “It’s like a holiday camp, because everyone’s always got a smile on their face” (FG3).

A workplace model was emphasised at DMR. Staff stressed the development of initiative, impressing on their students that:

if an employer’s got to keep coming out all the time and say ‘Look, do this or do that’, then he might as well be doing it all himself (A4).

Respect figured in the way staff talked of the tutor-student relationship. They spoke of teaching students in much the same way as they approached the training of horses: “principles, suggestion and persuasion rather than fear and intimidation” (A4). Students were appreciative of the workplace model, commenting: “it’s very like work here – real-life, but with support” (FG3). They recognised the fair approach to discipline:

I was late because I was stuck in traffic, and (my tutor) just said, “Get here when you come”, no drama. But he wouldn’t let you take advantage of it (FG3).

Tutor role

Teacher roles and learner-teacher relationships in the NQF approach to teaching are workplace-focused. The chief role of the teacher using the NQF is that of workplace-based facilitator and assessor (Peddie & Tuck, 1995a). The NQF approach to teaching is intended to reflect the personal approach possible in the workplace setting. It is intended to foster trusting learner-teacher relationships that can take account of

individual learning styles and provide learning activities that are collaborative, and connect content and application (Hood, 1998).

ITLC

Five out of six ITLC tutors reported that the use of unit standards meant that their style had to be tutor-directed, chiefly instructional and less creative. The experienced tutors blamed this on the timeframe entailed in the use of unit standards. They considered they covered a great deal of material in the course, but less thoroughly than they would have liked, and with less time for students to revise and practise (T1, T2, T3, T4). These tutors saw their role primarily as “facilitator” (T2, T1) or “explainer, helper” (T1), “there for advising, suggesting” (T2). Perhaps in her anxiety to get through all the unit standards, one tutor found it difficult not to “help more than I should” and in fact deliberately absented herself from the classroom in order to encourage the students to solve their own problems (T1). A tutor new to ITLC with a background in secondary school teaching described the use of unit standards at ITLC as “totally tutor-centred”, and “encouraging everything coming from the tutor” (T6).

Tutors described themselves as using “a mix of methods” (T2, T4) to teach students unit standards, using a combination of hands-on demonstrations, group work, manuals and short lectures. However, they experienced tension between their creativity as tutors and their role as deliverer of unit standards. A tutor new to ITLC noted some tutors thought that it should be possible for unit standards to be “just picked up and taught by anyone”, and labelled this attitude a “passion-killer” (T6).

ITLC tutors all mentioned that, although their personal teaching philosophy was that they wanted students to learn to think for themselves, they didn't feel the units encouraged that: as one tutor declared, "I have this belief in spite of the unit standards" (T1). Another tutor mentioned that the predominance of preconceived outcomes in unit standards made it difficult for students to cope with more open-ended outcomes in some unit standards (T2).

In spite of the drawbacks they perceived, tutors were positive about the way using unit standards enabled them to encourage students to work together "in a group ... to try to work out what you haven't been able to yourself" (T4). A tutor new to unit standards remarked that the units "lend themselves" to this way of working (T5). Using unit standards had encouraged one tutor with an industry background to change teaching methods: "It's forced me into trying new (teaching) methods (like) project and group work" (T3). Using unit standards made a tutor with a polytechnic background more aware of workplace requirements (T1).

A tutor new to ITLC thought that some of the drawbacks could be overcome if unit standards were used in a more integrated way. He believed it would be possible to "overlap and integrate unit standards (and use tasks that are) more open-ended and student-centred" (T6). He could also see the potential to adapt unit standard material to acknowledge learning styles.

Learner survey data indicated that a clear majority of ITLC students did not perceive unit standards as preventing them thinking for themselves. Fifty three out of 87 agreed

that unit standards helped them to find things out by themselves (LS15). Nineteen were uncertain and 15 disagreed.

TIM

One TIM tutor said a tutor's role was to "instruct and entertain" (T9). However, he found unit standards made his day less flexible and responsive to student needs for variety:

... in the old days you could go out to the bandstand and do something else (if the students were getting bored) ... with the units you can't do that ... because you know you have to cover the stuff in the end (T9).

The attitude that it should be possible for anyone to teach any unit standard made one tutor feel he was expected to be "more a delivery person than a tutor" (T10). Another felt that her status as a tutor had become reduced to whether she could "teach to the PC in order to pass assessment" (T8).

Similarly, another tutor saw the prescriptive nature of unit standards as causing her to "spoonfeed" students and be less creative as a tutor. She saw her role as having changed from "a facilitator and manager of learning" to "the person who's got to beat the elements and PCs into them" (T7). Although she acknowledged the value of students knowing what was expected of them, she saw the rigidity as limiting – "this is what they've got to know, nothing more and nothing less". She found she spent "less time preparing work and more time coping with assessment paperwork". Compared to teaching high school English and French, where she had been able to be "very creative about the delivery and how you're going to inspire the students, get their attention", she felt that assessment was the focus of unit standards:

almost everything revolves around assessment and moderation ... (so) you tend to spend a lot less time being a creative tutor because you're struggling to cope with the assessment documentation ... And that to me has been a loss in a way because I used to have a lot of enjoyment preparing my material and trying to think of creative ways to deliver it ... (T7).

In spite of this, she still described her goal as a tutor as to “transform”, “inspire” and “mentor” people, and saw unit standards as “a medium” through which to do this.

As with ITLC, learner survey data indicated that the majority of TIM students did not perceive unit standards as preventing them thinking for themselves. Sixteen out of 26 perceived unit standards as helping them to find things out by themselves (LS15). Six were uncertain about this, and four disagreed. Focus group responses indicated students perceived tutors as using creative teaching methods: “they tell us stories and we have fun. They have brilliant teaching methods – I love their stories” (FG2).

DMR

Tutors at DMR did not express concerns about negative impacts of unit standards on tutor creativity and students thinking for themselves. Not aiming to be creative or particularly entertaining, they used unit standards quite simply as curriculum statements, reducing them to key words and concepts for students to memorise (A4). The teaching method was “repetition, repetition, repetition” of these key items, aiming to enable students to understand and remember the content of each unit (A4). Five out of six DMR students agreed that unit standards made them think for themselves (LS15). The other one was uncertain about this.

Learner-tutor relationship

ITLC

ITLC tutors reported that unit standards caused them to have higher expectations of their students:

We're giving them a more ... a higher qualification than what we had been giving them before. (This) raised expectations on students (T3).

A tutor new to unit standards found that the possibility of incorporating unit standards and therefore qualifications into a work based training programme caused her to change her programme and perception of what was possible for students to achieve. Rather than just aiming to get students into jobs, she could also “offer them a qualifications base that they could build on in their own time, once they were employed” (T5). This put a new kind of pressure on the tutor – they wanted the student to pass, “because it’s a reflection on (the tutor) if they don’t” (T4). Focus group participants reported a sense of pressure which was sometimes perceived as unwarranted:

the tutor’s at the front, telling us what to do – it can be hard to catch up – I get growled at for not being up-to-date in my work, but I started the course later than everyone else (FG1).

The great majority of comments from students about their relationship with tutors was positive, however: “the tutors make it easy to get work done” (FG1); “we can talk to the tutors – they are open people” (FG1). When asked whether unit standards motivated their learning, the response was, “it’s the tutors who make us learn, not the unit standards” (FG1). Relationships with classmates were perceived as directly relating to learning: “you answer questions even if there’s a chance you’ll be wrong, because

there's a kind atmosphere, you can take more risks (laugh)" (FG1); "the majority of us get along well, which also helps our learning" (FG1).

Learner survey data showed that the great majority of ITLC students perceived unit standards as motivating. Sixty nine out of 87 students agreed that aiming to get unit standards motivated their learning (LS16). Only nine students were uncertain about this, and nine disagreed.

TIM

As well as tension between their roles as creative tutor and deliverer of unit standards, TIM tutors reported that the use of unit standards brought tension between their pastoral and assessor roles. The MD noted that the change to unit standards-based assessment had brought a significant change in relationship between tutors and students:

I can remember going to parties with students in their homes ... we never do that ... it's against policy now, because it could compromise your position too much. You're their tutor and assessor (A2).

Although tutors typically saw the tutor role as: "Someone who can ... become a friend, someone you can talk to and we are like Ma and Pa" (T9), using unit standards made some feel it was more like school and "it has become more hard to teach them" (T9).

Comments from TIM students about their relationship with tutors was exclusively positive: "the tutors want us all to finish and to pass. They are very flexible" (FG2); "the relationship with my tutor leads me to places where I can do exceedingly well" (FG2). Casting their tutors in the role of parents, students described their classmates as a "family-knit group", (FG2). Similarly to ITLC, relationships with classmates were

perceived as directly relating to learning: “I cope with difficulties of unit standards by the friendliness of the people. It’s like a family” (FG2).

Learner survey data showed that the great majority of TIM students perceived unit standards as motivating. Twenty two out of 26 students agreed that aiming to get unit standards motivated their learning (LS16). Only three students were uncertain about this, and one disagreed.

DMR

DMR students were particularly aware of tutor scrutiny:

you shouldn’t be sitting round on this course, ever – there’s always something to be doing, eg get the ticks off the horses; fix something, treat the wounds on the horses ... they’re constantly watching us (FG3).

Learner survey data showed that the majority of DMR students perceived unit standards as motivating. Five out of six students agreed that aiming to get unit standards motivated their learning (LS16). The other one disagreed.

APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

The standards-based assessment system of the NQF is a fundamentally different approach to assessment from the norm-referenced approach traditionally used in New Zealand. Implementing standards-based assessment increases teacher workload (Peddie & Tuck, 1995a; Wolf, 1995). Teachers are required not only undertake some form of professional development in order to understand and operate the system, but also to manage the gathering of evidence and record keeping associated with this form of assessment as well as ensure its validity.

As indicated in the evaluation framework at Figure 4 (p. 97, Chapter 6), organisational commitment to staff development, as well as management of assessment and ensuring its validity, provided direction for investigating compatibility with the NQF approach to assessment.

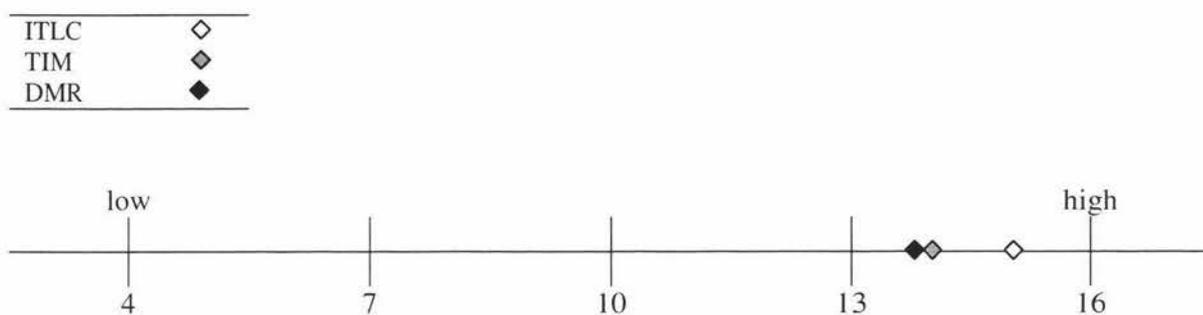
Staff development

Any educational innovation requires teachers to undergo some form of professional development. Change management literature suggests that if teachers are not motivated to change, very little will change. Thus, educational organisations with a commitment to staff development and willingness to engage in experimentation are those most likely to handle change successfully (Fullan, 1997; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; McKinnon & Shute, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1996; Short et al., 1994).

ITLC

Survey data revealed that staff perception of ITLC's commitment to staff development was very high. As Figure 11 (p. 144) shows, the mean score was 14.8 out of 16, indicating that most staff "strongly agreed" with statements indicating that ITLC was committed to staff development and willing to engage in experimentation (SS10, see Appendix J). They strongly agreed that ITLC had an appropriate policy for staff professional development; that there were procedures for ensuring that the professional development policy responded to changes in staff needs; that they knew who to talk to about their own professional development needs, and that staff supported one another in professional development activities.

Figure 11. Degree to which PTE staff perceive there is commitment to staff development



Staff saw the change as having been facilitated by tutor attitude, which was professional, flexible and accepting of change. The Company Administrator pointed out that “Our tutors were going to do it properly if it killed them” and that ITLC had a policy of “only employing experienced people who can adapt” (A1). An ITLC tutor noted, “We had to accept change because (teaching computer literacy) we’re changing all the time” (T3).

When the change to unit standards was initiated, ITLC tutors attended local moderation “cluster groups”. Would-be providers of unit standard qualifications were allocated to these groups by NZQA Moderation Services. In these groups, tutors decided which unit standards to consider, divided the work up, and helped each other develop assessment models (T4). Although they were supportive of each other, they had to be tolerant of professional isolation as sometimes they were the only ones teaching a unit; one tutor resented having no financial compensation for developing unit standards-based programmes (T1). One tutor noted that “teamwork” and a “non-competitive model” were very important in getting through this time (T2).

According to ITLC’s Company Administrator, changing to unit standards-based qualifications “forced” tutors to “re-evaluate their curriculum and keep up with the

times” (A1). Agreeing with this, tutors reported that unit standards caused them to “tighten up” their programme (T4), to make “good changes in resources and materials (and) keep up-to-date” (T1) and “improve (my) thinking skills ... (and) accept change as a way of life” (T3). These changes were generally viewed as positive: “it’s hard at the time but you do benefit. You’re pushing where you wouldn’t have gone” (T3).

ITLC tutors frequently provided professional development and training for each other (T3). Tutors had increased their “repertoire” (T2) of unit standards, adding to the number they taught in line with various National Certificate requirements and branching into new areas. A tutor who had formerly taught only wordprocessing, for example, had begun to teach accounting as well (T1).

TIM

Survey data revealed that staff perception of TIM’s commitment to staff development was high. As shown in Figure 11 (p. 144), the mean score was 14.1 out of 16 (SS10). The mean staff response was to “strongly agree” with statements indicating this. In the early days of the change to unit standards, the three key staff:

attended everything (to do with PTEs and unit standards) together ... mainly because then there’s more than one person who knows what’s going on. And we all pick up different things (A3).

They subsequently made decisions together about which unit standards to do, and shared the workload.

TIM made a point of including in tutor contracts the requirement that staff complete at least one course a year (D6, p. 6.4). Tutors were required to gain Unit Standard 4098,

on the use of unit standard assessment (T8). One tutor noted that moderation of unit standards also helped with general professional development:

I feel that it does also help you to keep up with your subject. Develop you in your subject, your field (T7).

The Administration Manager encouraged tutors to learn from each other: “I tell our industry tutors they need to take advantage of the tutors – they can all learn from one another” (A3). Tutors reported increasing the range of subjects they taught because of the requirements of unit standards: a tourism tutor was teaching mathematics and communication skills (T8); another tutor reported, “I’m teaching more things than what I did before (unit standards)” (T10).

DMR

Similarly, survey data revealed that staff perception of commitment to staff development at DMR was almost as high as that of ITLC. As shown in Figure 11 (p. 144), the score was 14 out of 16, indicating the respondent “strongly agreed” with statements indicating this (SS10). DMR staff found that using unit standards made them develop programmes in ways they hadn’t before and, although they had always known how to teach, assessment and moderation were entirely new processes for them. It was not easy, but overall DMR thought it was “a good thing (that) the unit standards forced us to improve our knowledge and development of our programme” (A4).

Managing assessment

Standards-based assessment promotes the use of a mix of assessment methods, deliberately downplaying the role of the written examination. There is emphasis on

assessment in authentic settings, and on achieving 100% competency. The opportunity for reassessment is a key principle in standards-based assessment, and careful record keeping is essential.

Gathering evidence and reassessment

ITLC

ITLC tutors had to design assessment tasks that would meet the approval of the computing moderator, who demanded great precision in wording. The experienced tutors all expressed concerns about consistency of judgement given that every organisation was setting up its own system.

Tutors gathered evidence of student achievement using a combination of methods that included observation using a tick sheet and dates (T4), as well as “formal written, formal practical, informal task, practical and projects based on a student’s own topic” (T2). However, faced with the necessity of providing evidence for a plethora of range statements, the emphasis was on methods that closely resembled old-style examinations: “We give written, timed practical tests ... It’s faster than observation. They are open-book tests under test conditions” (T1). This is probably not surprising at ITLC, given the demands of a succession of computing moderators as well as ITLC tutors’ stated confidence in the reliability of examinations and their continued use of Pitman examinations. One tutor justified their use of this method because there had been “cheating in open assignments and non-supervised assessments ... students copied each other’s files” (T1). Although she would have liked to encourage more assignment and project work, she believed:

When you have to assess every little PC then the assignment method cannot guarantee every PC has been covered individually. I wouldn't see group assessment as valid – the moderator's requirement wouldn't allow for it (T1).

Although they had had to put considerable effort into creating assessment tasks, tutors had found there was “Less work, once it's set up. There is a set assessment with guidelines for answers that make marking easier” (T2). An unexpected consequence of this effort was that tutors were now selling resources and assessment tasks they had created to other providers (T3).

An unresolved problem was, however, still the sense that they were taking more time for assessment and less for teaching than they wanted to (T1). A tutor new to ITLC noted, “The way (assessment is) interpreted here is in terms of minutiae, skill-based, written tests, based on individual effort” (T6). He thought it was possible to justify group assessment because “project teams work together in the workplace”, and suggested a more holistic approach to assessment. He gave an example of how this might be achieved:

Spreadsheets and database could be integrated into a business unit where you could teach several units concurrently in a large task over several days, and record the evidence as you see it – through observation of physical events (T6)

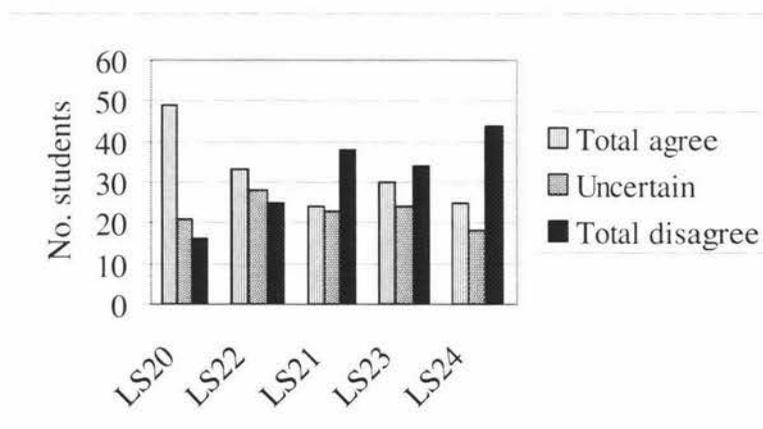
Learner survey data indicated that ITLC students perceived written work as significant in the gaining of unit standards. As Figure 12 (p. 149) indicates, 49 out of 86 students agreed that they had to follow written instructions to get a unit standard (LS20). Figure 12 also shows that opinion was almost equally divided over whether students had to write answers in worksheets or workbooks to get unit standards (LS22). More students disagreed that, if they wanted to get a unit standard, their practical skills were more

important than what they could read (LS21), or write (LS23). Close to equal numbers agreed or were uncertain on these statements.

Unit standards do not specify a timeframe for completion. Believing “there should be time-limits for competency sake” (T2), tutors had developed a reassessment policy:

We used “what is reasonable in a workplace” as a benchmark ... We have a policy of three re-sits ... because of the time factor and because experience teaches us this is a good motivational technique. It reduces stress and anxiety for the conscientious, and increases stress for the less conscientious (T2).

Figure 12. ITLC student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment



Assessment and reassessment took up a great deal of time and tutors considered this restricted course content:

the workload is bigger with so many little assessments and three re-sit chances ... there are some things I just don't get to cover because time is taken up in assessments (T4).

Learner survey data indicated that a small majority of ITLC students did not perceive unit standards as allowing unlimited opportunities for reassessment. As is shown in Figure 12, 44 out of 87 students disagreed that they could take as long as they needed

to, to complete a unit standard (LS24). The remaining 43 agreed or were uncertain on these statements, however. Reassessment was mentioned favourably in the focus group, who reported satisfaction with a system which “doesn't set you up for failure” because “you get a chance to do it again” (FG1).

TIM

The Administration Manager at TIM felt that creating assessment schedules was continually reinventing the wheel (A3). One tutor felt overwhelmed by all the different demands on her time: “For instance all these hospitality units needed books, I've had to research and design the whole course” (T7). One timesaving strategy had been to buy in unit standards-based resources, created by other users. However these had limitations. This tutor found some bought resources were not relevant to the course being taught:

(The bought-in reading unit) is well designed, there's nothing wrong with it, but I feel I would like to rewrite it to be relevant to my hospitality course. But I do not have the time right now (T7).

Others seemed unsuitable for the kind of students likely to be attempting those units.

The automotive skills students, for example, were expected to read big manuals:

And some of them have ADD and some of them have dyslexia and they are clever but they can't wade through those books they've got to read in order to obtain some of the units (T8).

The tutor thought this resource did not take account of different learning styles and unnecessarily disadvantaged students who might become excellent mechanics but had reading disabilities:

Although it is in a point form it's not geared to a person who has a reading disability ... if I had to do it, I would break it up, I would make it bigger, easier to read, and ask multiple choice questions (T8).

One tutor noted that unit standards had caused teaching to become "more book-oriented" (T9). Another found she could integrate delivery and assessment of unit standards after time because "you actually become more familiar with them and what is expected of the students" (T7).

Problems with gathering evidence were expressed by TIM students as well as tutors, in particular those who were required to get practical experience on boats and in bars. Some of the requirements were unrealistic in the timeframe allowed, such as that students clean up seasick. One tutor noted, "I worked full-time on the boats for four years and sure I had to clean up sick, but probably once or twice in that whole time" (T10). Tutors were reduced to manufacturing realistic-looking seasick so students could mop it up (FG2, T8)! Other requirements were unrealistic because they were relatively unusual in the industry, such as plying multiplait rope:

Not many boats have multiplait ropes ... My students, why should they miss out because they can't do multiplait ropes? Why should they be deemed as incompetent because they cannot plait some multiplait rope (T10)?

Tutors were frustrated that students could be judged incompetent because they never got the chance to complete these tasks (T10). It led to the perception that the writers of unit standards were people sitting up in an office:

I'm sure half of them don't know what the hell they're doing because what they want students to do is ridiculous (T10).

He suggested giving “endorsed” National Certificates, such as are available in Boatmasters:

A Boatmasters Certificate can be issued with no indication of seetime completed, or it can be endorsed with the number of hours seetime completed. This would overcome that 100% requirement when it’s just not realistic (T10).

TIM staff also used a variety of methods for gathering evidence, including portfolio type presentations as well as discussion of points with students. All had experienced frustration at ITO moderators’ demands for evidence. For example, the Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation (ATTTO) did not consider one roleplay enough for assessment of the visitor tourist information section of a certain unit. Not only did the tutor feel “forced ... to write two role plays and one telephone role play and a written part to it”, but she also had to “video all role plays and audio record all telephone role plays” (T8). She felt this was treating her as if she would otherwise cheat:

... It reflects on my personal integrity that I cannot be trusted and (yet) I know what it takes to work in the industry because I’ve worked in it for 15 years and I have published a book ... I know whether a person would be competent or not (T8).

The Administration Manager talked about problems meeting the requirements of a number of different ITOs. TIM was answerable to the Hospitality Standards Institute (HSI), Competenz (formerly Maritime Qualifications New Zealand), the Seafood ITO (SITO), the Motor ITO (MITO) and the Retail ITO as well as the ATTTO. Observation records required by some ITOs, for example, necessitated employers taking a very active role as assessors:

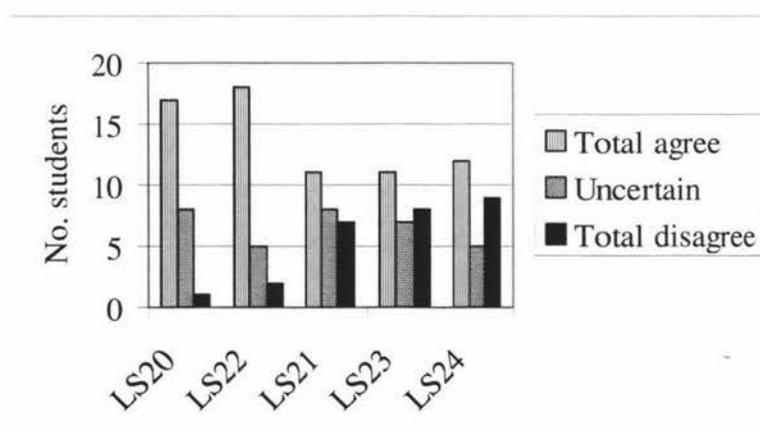
For example, we have to have observers observing two or three times in the workplace and detailing every little thing. The school can’t do that for 20 students. Employers

have to be really willing to take on an assessment role. We can talk them into it once, but not two or three times (A3).

Concern about the role of ITOs in assessment was also expressed by the Skill New Zealand advisor. He noted that “the current format of assessment seems messy and needs re-evaluation” (SNZ), and linked this with different ITOs having different methods of evaluating a person’s ability.

Learner survey data indicated that, as with ITLC, TIM students perceived written work as significant in the gaining of unit standards. As shown in Figure 13, 17 out of 26 students agreed that they had to follow written instructions to get a unit standard (LS20). Figure 13 indicates that 18 out of 25 students agreed that they had to write answers in worksheets or workbooks to get unit standards (LS22). Unlike ITLC, more students agreed that, if they wanted to get a unit standard, their practical skills were more important than what they could read (LS21), or write (LS23). As with ITLC, however, close to equal numbers disagreed or were uncertain on these statements.

Figure 13. TIM student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment



Similarly to ITLC, TIM had a reassessment policy of “three separate attempts” (D6, p. 6.8). Unlike ITLC, learner survey data indicated that opinion was fairly equally divided on whether they could take as long as they needed to, to complete a unit standard (LS24). Figure 13 shows that, while 12 out of 26 students agreed with the statement, five were uncertain and nine disagreed. Reassessment was mentioned favourably in the focus group, who saw it as a system where “you’re rewarded for the work actually done” and “you can learn from your mistakes” (FG2).

DMR

DMR “took quite a while after registration to get our heads around assessment and moderation” (A4). One problem was the isolation:

We don't fit into any field. If you're in farming, agriculture or fisheries - there are other places that are doing it aren't there? - We are about the only equine facility in this area (T11).

They found the assessment system unnecessarily complicated:

What started out as a simple subject was totally complicated by the over-regulation, over-use of statutory and "bureaucratic bullshit". The amount/volume of paper work that is created and the double up of workload (A4).

Like ITLC and TIM they resented each provider having to develop their own assessment tools: “every provider had a different system because there was no standardisation” (A4, T11).

Tutors gathered oral and practical evidence informally every day for the 16 weeks of the course, noting that sometimes students complained, “It seems like you’re spying on us and watching us all the time and we can’t relax” (A4). They also used written tests, to pinpoint weaknesses in knowledge, but observation was the main method used:

Assessment is "What you see is what you get" within the equine field. It's a practical visual result. We could tell by seeing the results of instruction. This is the only way of seeing whether theory is being taken in (A4).

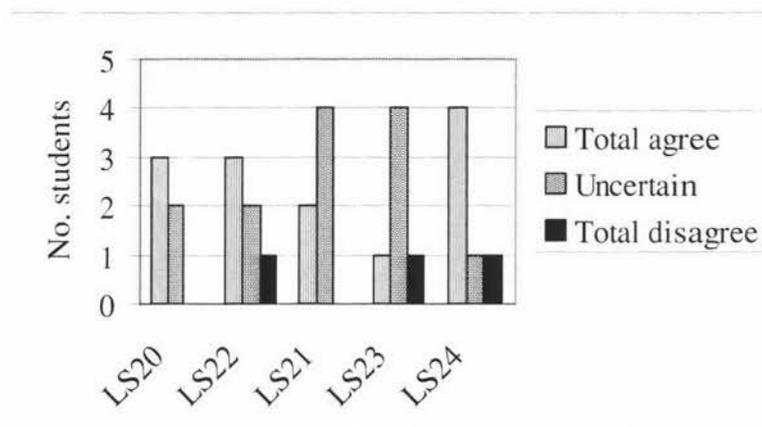
Very aware of their responsibilities to provide their students' potential employers with valuable well-trained employees, the DMR tutors said they had to be "pretty perceptive, we don't miss a trick, we've got eyes in the back of our head" (A4). They had developed their own Record of Learning for each student, "a recording form of everything I've done", recording their daily observations of the students (A4, T11).

Learner survey data indicated that, as with ITLC and TIM, DMR students perceived written work as significant in the gaining of unit standards. As shown in Figure 14 (p. 156), three out of five students agreed that they had to follow written instructions to get a unit standard (LS20), and three out of six agreed that they had to write answers in worksheets or workbooks to get unit standards (LS22). Figure 14 shows that, unlike ITLC and TIM, more students were uncertain that, if they wanted to get a unit standard, their practical skills were more important than what they could read (LS21), or write (LS23).

DMR staff gave their students "multiple opportunities to qualify" (A4). They could be reassessed at weekends as well as after the course had finished:

If they don't want to take advantage of it, more fool them. We say, 'Come up for the weekend, won't cost you anything, we'll do this unit and this unit because that's all you've gotta do'. We focus on that unit one on one until they say, 'I've got it, I'm remembering it' (A4).

Figure 14. DMR student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment



There was no policy limiting the number of times a student could be reassessed at DMR, and “a steady trickle” of students returned to stay at the weekend in order to complete their qualification (A4). Sometimes a student returned after some years away, as in the case of an Olympic equestrian’s groom, a 1997 student who asked to return for a weekend in 2000 to complete her National Certificate. Unlike ITLC and TIM, learner survey data indicated that the majority agreed with the statement that they could take as long as they needed to, to complete a unit standard (LS24). Figure 14 shows that four out of six students agreed with the statement, while one was uncertain and one disagreed. Reassessment was mentioned favourably in the focus group, who saw it as a system where “you can go over (the units) again before you’re assessed” (FG3).

Record keeping

The Skill New Zealand advisor thought the unit standards were a good way of “(forcing) tutors to keep accurate records of student achievement and show their progress in an orderly way” (SNZ). Staff at all three PTEs spoke wearily, however, of the time-consuming demands of record keeping for assessment and moderation.

ITLC

Both tutors and administrators spoke of the greatly increased workload caused by handling the administration of unit standards-based qualifications. ITLC had taken on one extra fulltime office staff member since the introduction of unit standards-based qualifications. The extra administration included monitoring the changes to unit standards, handling annual re-registration, five-yearly re-accreditation, hooking on students and paying for them, recording and paying for unit standards credited, recording and paying for National Certificates completed. The Company Administrator noted that this was a much bigger job now than it had been when they first introduced unit standards. They had had to upgrade their computer software: “our database ‘Pukedata’ is not really keeping up with it now and has been replaced with ‘Take 2’ ” (A1).

One tutor spoke of record keeping as “a paper work blowout” (T2). Computing tutors kept records of observations and completed practical tasks, and stored copies of all student work produced until students received confirmation of achieving the unit.

TIM

TIM had had to take on an extra office assistant to deal with the demands of unit standards administration. The Administration Manager described her responsibilities as:

the staff, the paperwork (student records and assessments, but not class scheduling), and I am the moderation co-ordinator for all the tutors. I do the advertising, invoicing; the books are done by a part-timer one day a month. At least I don’t do that any more (A3).

One experienced tutor remembered back to the early days of unit standards, when, although the unit standards had caused extra paperwork, “there wasn’t the moderation or the ITO involvement” (T9). He now considered the “paper trail” caused by ITO demands as “the biggest problem ... it causes burnout for staff. I went fishing for six months” (T9). One of his colleagues agreed, calling it “a nightmare!” and pointing out that:

It detracts from the good points (of unit standards) because you feel bogged down and you can’t focus to the same extent on the quality of your delivery and the quality of the learning environment (T7).

This tutor noted the negative impact of complex assessment paperwork:

You’re so stressed trying to cope with the paper work that you’re not actually focusing on the candidate and observing them properly because you’re just swamped with paper work (T7).

This “paper trail” had become “absolutely enormous”, to the point where “it’s at the stage where everything is in triplicate” and included assessment results and records of pastoral care as well as photos and videos (T9). The space required for all the record keeping had ballooned: “it was shelves, now it’s a room, in the new building it will be a library!” (T9). Paperwork for each unit was kept in three boxes: tutor box, assessment material and incomplete assessments. In addition tutors recorded whether or not students were competent in each PC by logging in an assessment progress book (T8). A new form of paperwork was a student receipt for work done. Introduced because of the need for a safeguard against student complaints to the funding agency, this provided proof against students coming in a year later saying they hadn’t received their National Certificates.

Although tutors were saving class time by combining assessment activities for a number of units at TIM:

where the problem comes in is with ... generating the paper work (because) you've still gotta have the paper work for (each separate unit's) assessment. Because at any time one of those may be called for moderation and it needs to be comprehensive, complete, and cover everything (T7).

DMR

DMR staff were proud that, with only nine students, they could manage all the administration manually, and could focus mostly on “the delivery of, the assessment of and the completion of each unit and getting (students) out there into work” (A4). They kept separate files on each student, including recording forms for every unit and record books. They were incredulous at the number of forms required for “evidence”, describing this as “mind-boggling” (A4):

(The NZQA assessor) wants me to write another form saying on this day I saw this evidence of this particular (behaviour or knowledge). But we've seen this over 16 weeks, day after day. The student does the written test and in my opinion does exactly what the NZQA asks for. (The NZQA assessor) just wants me to spend more of my time to say the same thing ... they're not willing to trust you and your judgement. But I'm a registered assessor – I have qualifications – what more do they want? ... She says, 'I don't know anything about horses, but it seems to me we need another column here so that people like me can understand it'. We'll play their silly game (A4).

Ensuring validity

Valid assessment is consistent and fair. The validity of standards-based assessment is heavily dependent on the clarity of the unit standards themselves, and on reliable assessor judgement.

Clarity in unit standards

ITLC

One ITLC tutor believed students could find out exactly what was required “if they bother to read all the material”, and found marking easier than before unit standards because judgements were stated (T2). However, she thought unit standards were not always written clearly or well. This was especially true in the early days of using unit standards, but even now she found the interpretation difficult. This was addressed by informal internal moderation, with tutors “getting others’ work and discussing it to see how they’ve interpreted it” (T2). This tutor also found unit standards could sometimes be too specific: “The PCs don’t allow for a variety of student responses, technology changes or ideas change” (T2).

Learner survey data showed that the great majority of ITLC students perceived the unit standards as clear. Sixty eight out of 87 students agreed that they could find out exactly what to do, to complete a unit standard (LS19). Only 16 were uncertain about this, and just three disagreed. In addition, tutors had ensured that students knew what unit standards were and had seen examples of them. Seventy eight out of 88 students agreed that they knew what unit standards were (LS1). Only seven were uncertain about this, and three disagreed. Seventy two out of 89 students agreed that they had seen an example of a unit standard (LS2). Nine were uncertain about this, and eight disagreed.

TIM

One TIM tutor had problems with clarifying the wording of unit standards: “what does ‘describe’ or ‘evaluate’ mean?” (T8). Tutors were using Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) provided by ITOs, which was helping overcome problems with lack of clarity.

One tutor felt unit standards enabled her to set out clear expectations for students, and that this encouraged them to learn (T7).

Focus group participants commented that the wording of unit standards and accompanying Common Assessment Tasks provided by the relevant ITO seemed unclear: “they need to be written clearer”; “it’s unsure what is wanted”; “the wording is not precise enough” (FG2). An Indonesian student found the unit standards very confusing, the language and system “too complicated”, although overall she found the system “fairer” than that used in Indonesia (FG2).

Learner survey data showed that, in spite of focus group comments, the great majority of TIM students perceived the unit standards as clear. Twenty two out of 26 students agreed that they could find out exactly what to do, to complete a unit standard (LS19). Only four were uncertain about this, and none disagreed. In addition, similarly to ITLC, 22 out of 26 TIM students agreed that they knew what unit standards were (LS1). Only three were uncertain about this, and one disagreed. Eighteen out of 26 agreed that they had seen an example of a unit standard (LS2). Seven were uncertain about this, and one disagreed.

DMR

The MD of DMR found the main disadvantage of unit standards was the vocabulary used, and thought “the words that they used can only be dreamt up by an academic with no knowledge of the equine industry” (A4). His sense was that the process of registration and moderation were similarly hampered by being carried out by people with no knowledge of the equine industry.

Learner survey data showed that every DMR student perceived the unit standards as clear. All six students agreed that they could find out exactly what to do, to complete a unit standard (LS19). Similarly to ITLC and TIM, all six students knew what unit standards were (LS1), and had seen an example of a unit standard (LS2).

Reliable judgement

The Skill New Zealand advisor reported anecdotal evidence of instances where:

trainees have been given qualifications when it appears trainees should not have been assessed as 'achieved'. Trainees have told me they never actually completed the qualification but they still got it. Also, subsequent providers have reported that trainees didn't have the knowledge they should have (SNZ).

In spite of this, the Skill New Zealand advisor's perception was that unit standards were "a good thing generally because they give an achievement level to work to, and for employers to recognise" (SNZ). He believed the growing awareness of employers about the unit standards through providers establishing industry links was an important factor here. He saw the NQF as having the potential to remedy lower standards if the moderation process was followed correctly and the moderating groups, particularly cluster groups, were effective (SNZ). He said the ongoing concern of Skill New Zealand was to improve ways of measuring the success of individuals and of programmes, and deciding a reasonable level of achievement for students on a course (SNZ).

ITLC

Ongoing moderation in order to ensure validity meant ITLC tutors' workload was still higher than it was prior to unit standards. One tutor reported that three different

computing moderators in five years had made contradictory and “ridiculously pedantic” demands, and been “extremely dictatorial”, yet tutors had adjusted “because it’s easier to do that than to fight” (T1). Tutors were now more confident at disputing moderation demands, however. One tutor was not going to comply with the new (third) computing moderator’s interpretation of Unit 2780:

... his version is so long winded and complicated. There is so much writing and (he’s imposed) a time limit ... he interpreted (the requirements) as a lot of detailed written testing of knowledge (T3).

In spite of these efforts at achieving validity, tutors’ experience with students from other providers reflected that reported by the Skill New Zealand advisor: students had enrolled with a unit standard but did not appear to have the expected knowledge. This led one tutor to believe that “there is a huge variation in the way units are being assessed” (T4). She wondered if this was because of open book assessment and re-assessment.

Moderation processes were not entirely clear to those tutors new to unit standards: “There is a moderation process, but I haven’t experienced it yet” (T6). The suggestion was made that this should be part of induction (T5, T6).

Four out of six tutors at ITLC expressed concerns about the inability of unit standards-based assessment to perform the same purposes as norm-referenced assessment. They wondered if employers would be disadvantaged by having no way of comparing student attitude and aptitude:

It's a disadvantage to the employer who has no indication whatsoever unless a verbal reference is given which would show the student has or has not worked very well indeed (T2).

The unit standards don't recognise excellence. As a qualification they don't help employers to see the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate (T1).

Concerns about mediocrity were also expressed, particularly in light of the opportunity for reassessment provided by unit standards: "Is it making everyone mediocre by getting everyone through?" (T3). One tutor new to unit standards was certain that the practice of reassessment "reinforces mediocrity" and saw unit standards as:

a minimum skills standard – like 50% in School Certificate. It gets you through but there is no acknowledgment or recognition for knowing more ... There is no encouragement (T6).

Another tutor saw unit standards as "a minimum standard for that level" and believed, "if you have the time, then you should take the students right past it" (T2). Two ITLC tutors felt that re-sits gave them a "moral problem", because "some people pass who shouldn't – because of the re-sits, people do get through the system" (T2, T3). Two tutors at ITLC expressed doubts about the extent to which students retained knowledge that had been assessed through open book and reassessment (T1, T4). One tutor expressed concern that unit standards had no provision for recognising difference in quality: "there is no differentiation between the slow and quick learner" (T2).

One tutor questioned the fairness of unit standards, and commented, "the Pitman exam seems fairer" (T4). Comparing student attitudes to Pitman exam with attitude to unit standards, she said:

there doesn't seem to be the same pressure on students to learn something ... I'm not sure I can honestly say it's a good way of testing someone's understanding ... The students are more focused on a Pitman exam ... they know that they won't have the chance to look up their notes. Students put more effort in when it was an exam. Through the practice exam they know exactly what they have to learn, and they work on their weak points. They don't do this with unit standards (T4).

However, a tutor new to unit standards saw this form of assessment as “very positive compared to the old exam system” and, apart from wondering if the system “might be a bit of a soft option” (T5), believed it was practical and relevant.

Learner survey data showed that the great majority of ITLC students perceived the unit standards as requiring them to work hard. Figure 15 (p. 166) shows that only 13 out of 87 students agreed that they only had to do the minimum of work to get a unit standard, while 60 disagreed with this statement (LS17). A slight majority of students did not agree that they would work harder if unit standards were graded. Figure 15 indicates 45 out of 87 disagreed with this statement (LS18). Twenty three agreed with this statement, while 19 were uncertain. These conflicting opinions were reflected in focus group data. Those against grades said:

It's better than grades – it motivates you because you're not getting an 'F', and it doesn't put some people higher than other people;

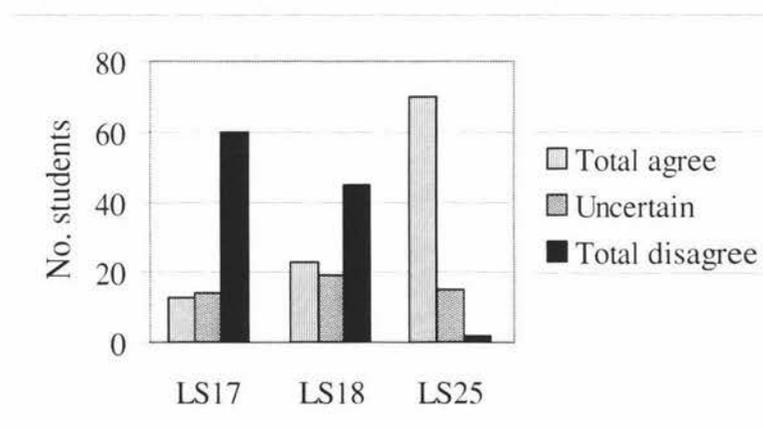
The National Certificate and ITLC reference at the end (of the course) will recognise our effort – we don't need grades to show this (FG1).

Even though one student was against grades, she still made the rather wistful comment that: “we can get good grades on assignments” (FG1). Two students were quite definite that “it would be good to know the standard to which you're completing the work”. Suggesting a middle road, another noted that the marking required by unit standards

tended to “be a tick or a ‘re-do’ rather than comments”, and she would have found comments more motivating “especially as there are no grades” (FG1).

Learner survey data also showed that the great majority of ITLC students perceived unit standard assessment as fair. Figure 15 shows 70 out of 87 agreed with this statement (LS25). This was backed up by comments in the focus group such as “assessment seems fair – there’s a stringent marking regime to match you up to a standard” (FG1).

Figure 15. ITLC student perception of validity of unit standards



TIM

Similarly to ITLC staff, the Administration Manager called moderation “time-consuming and a hassle” (A3). Instead of being “as easy and streamlined as possible”, it was “one of the most difficult parts of using unit standards, because all ITOs are different and standards are different amongst them” (A3). As at ITLC, the MD spoke of a “dictatorial” approach by ITOs to moderation: “If you don’t do it their way then you don’t get accredited” (A2). Features such as a six week time lag between sending assessment schedules and activities to the moderator and receiving approval and

therefore being able to use them, and “huge emphasis on dates and missing deadlines” (T8), caused some students to miss out on a National Certificate. The ATTTO, for example, wanted to know specific dates:

... when you start the course, when you start the assessment process, when you hand (assessment tasks) out to the students, when you expect it back from the students ... and if you change them you have got to notify them otherwise they are reporting you to the NZQA ... (T8).

The logistics of this were highly complex, particularly when there was uncertainty about whether courses would run because of numbers, and when units were being delivered to combined classes at different levels of achievement. It caused tutors to set assessment dates which were non-negotiable with students: “It’s like an exam. You either are there or you’re not” (T8).

One tutor found the most helpful form of moderation was cluster groups where tutors moderated their own material. For her, those groups were “part of my learning process” because she was networking and receiving support from other providers, and could “see what others are doing and how they are doing it” (T7). She found the inter-provider system used for business administration units less effective because:

It hasn’t offered the opportunity to network and learn from others. You don’t get as much out of it because there’s no personal communication (T7).

Similarly to ITLC tutors, one TIM tutor wished unit standards provided some way of indicating, “ ‘Look this person gained 100% every time’ ... because some just scrape through” (T8). Two tutors expressed doubts about the extent to which students retained knowledge that had been assessed through open book and reassessment:

you'll get them to try and recall something a month or two down the track. "Do you remember what you did in unit such and such?"

"No".

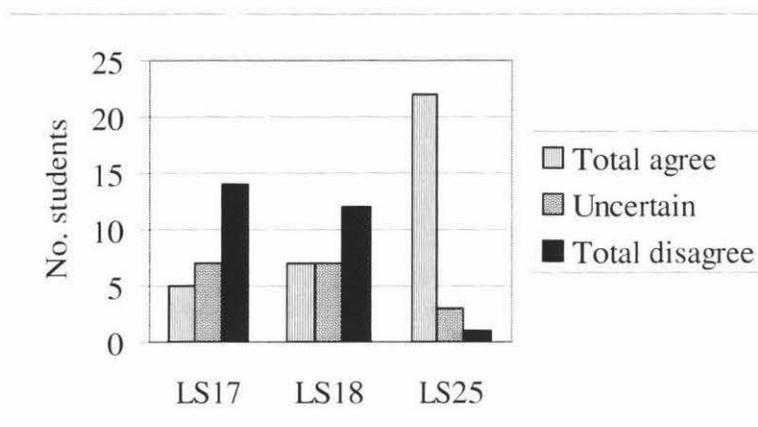
"But you did it you know."

... But then of course I think that's just skilled teaching. I mean how many kids remembered the work five minutes after they wrote the exam? It's the same thing really (T7).

This tutor also expressed concern at the difficulty of maintaining consistency in marking when students are being assessed for the same thing at different times: "perhaps you're just not really paying attention and you put a couple of ticks where they shouldn't have been" (T7).

Unlike ITLC, learner survey data indicated that opinion was fairly equally divided on whether unit standards caused them to work hard. Figure 16 (p. 169) shows that, although 14 out of 26 TIM students disagreed that they only had to do the minimum of work to get a unit standard, 12 agreed with or were uncertain about this statement (LS17). As at ITLC, however, more students did not agree that they would work harder if unit standards were graded. As shown in Figure 16, 12 out of 26 students disagreed with this statement (LS18). Seven students agreed with this statement, while seven were uncertain. As with ITLC, learner survey data also showed that the great majority of TIM students perceived unit standard assessment as fair. Figure 16 shows 22 out of 26 students agreed with this statement (LS25).

Figure 16. TIM student perception of validity of unit standards



DMR

The MD reported that local cluster groups, the moderation system used for “Core Skills” (communication skills and core generic unit standards), were not particularly effective:

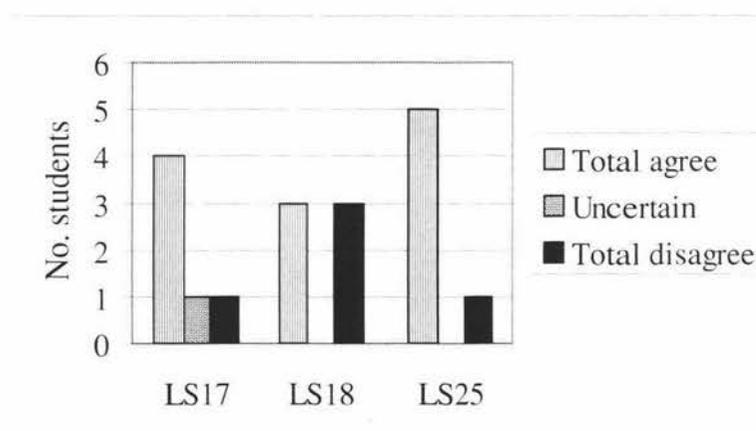
In our Core Skills Cluster Group there are four other providers - noone else does equine. The common thread in these meetings is, "Let's get this over with" (A4).

He considered examples sent to cluster groups by NZQA Moderation as practice a waste of time. National moderation meetings were not necessarily any more useful, and he labelled the moderation meetings of the EITO as “without exception, social occasions” (A4).

Unlike ITLC and TIM, learner survey data indicated that DMR students perceived unit standards as requiring them to do only the minimum of work. Figure 17 (p. 170) shows four out of six students agreed that they only had to do the minimum of work to get a unit standard (LS17). This response was echoed in the focus group: “in unit standards you don’t have to know anything outside of the standard” (FG3); “what you have to

know is written down – it’s very limited” (FG3). As with ITLC and TIM, opinion was equally divided on whether students would work harder if unit standards were graded (LS18). Figure 17 shows three out of six agreed with this statement, and three disagreed. As with ITLC and TIM, learner survey data showed that the majority of DMR students perceived unit standard assessment as fair. Figure 17 shows five out of six students agreed with this statement (LS25).

Figure 17. DMR student perception of validity of unit standards



SUMMARY

In Chapters 6 and 7, data from a variety of sources were brought together in order to evaluate the extent to which the assumptions, objectives, and approaches of the NQF were compatible with those of PTEs. The experiences and perceptions of administrators, tutors and students were examined for what they revealed about organisational assumptions, objectives and approaches in each PTE, and how these compared with those of the NQF.

A Skill New Zealand advisor was interviewed, and administrators, tutors and students at all three PTEs were interviewed and surveyed, and documents reviewed, in order to

explore compatibility of organisational context with the NQF. An examination of the results has highlighted similarities and differences in experiences and perceptions at the three PTEs, and identified issues related to each organisation's compatibility with the NQF. These issues are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8

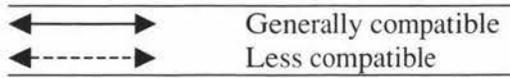
DISCUSSION: EVALUATION OF NQF AND PTE COMPATIBILITY

This study sought to explain the remarkable record of PTEs in implementing the NQF. A review of the literature suggested that implementation of an educational innovation is more likely to succeed if the innovation is compatible with its organisational context (Bell, 1993; Hood, 1998; Wolf, 1995). A framework was developed by the researcher for evaluating the extent to which the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF were compatible with those of PTEs. The findings of the study are summarised in terms of this framework (see Figure 18, p. 173). As indicated in Figure 18, the assumptions and objectives of the NQF were largely compatible with those of the PTEs studied. There was less compatibility between the NQF and the PTEs in their approaches, however.

ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions of both the NQF and the PTEs of the study were grounded in a market view of education as a business, and were thus highly compatible. This compatibility was enhanced by PTE readiness for change, which was indicated in powerful impetus for change and in the high degree to which the staff perceived leadership style in each PTE as transformational.

Figure 18. Summary of findings: compatibility of NQF and organisational context in three PTEs



THE NQF	Compatibility?	ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT (3 PTEs)
<p>Assumptions: The market view (economic rationalism):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic reasons to change qualifications system • Knowledge in the form of unit standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sold to, delivered by contracted providers - standards set by industry writers 		<p>Assumptions: Education as a business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business incentives as impetus for change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - competition, credibility - funding • Leader as founder of educational business: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purchaser and contracted provider of unit standards - willing to engage in dialogue with standards setting bodies
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create single, seamless qualification system, thus improving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - industry/training links - skills of workers - the economy 		<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications not limited to NQF • Workplace-based qualifications for unqualified students • Students fit for work or further education • Running a successful business
<p>Approaches: <i>Curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace-focused • Unit standards not curriculum statements • Unit standards as tastes of success <p><i>Teaching:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutor as workplace facilitator and assessor • Tutor-student relationship personal and contractual <p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement for assessor training • Mix of methods • Authenticity, sufficiency • Validity 		<p>Approaches: <i>Curriculum:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit standards as relevant and practical, but limiting • Unit standards as curriculum • Unit standards as positive starting points <p><i>Teaching:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace model for educational environment • Tutor-student relationship pastoral and creative <p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to staff development • More written assessment, continual assessment • Unworkable systems • Lack of clarity in unit standards, inefficient moderation

Impetus for change

Organisations need a powerful impetus, based on compelling external or internal pressure, before the pain and anxiety of change is readily undertaken (Bardwick, 1991; Fullan, 1992; Hopkins et al., 1994). For the PTEs of this study, adopting the NQF was certainly fraught with pain and anxiety, particularly because of the very heavy workload involved. The impetus to adopt the NQF was powerful, however, as it was rooted in the business incentives of competitiveness, credibility and funding. Adopting the NQF meant they could compete with other tertiary providers, particularly polytechnics, by offering nationally recognised, credible qualifications, often in areas where there had been few or no qualifications previously. It meant their students could be confident that their qualification was portable and would be recognised even if the name of their PTE was not. In addition, opportunities for gaining government funding were greatly enhanced when PTEs offered NQF qualifications. This affected ETSA funding from 1996, and UTTA funding from 1999, both of which enabled PTEs to offer training for free or at a significantly reduced cost to students.

As the learner survey indicated, at all three PTEs affordable fees were a highly significant factor in student choice of education provider. The offering of unit standards-based qualifications was a less significant factor in student choice of PTE than staff believed. At DMR in particular the specialised training available appeared to be more significant than the qualifications offered. Although all three PTEs of this study provided education and training that was not otherwise available locally, there were fewer opportunities in their locality for the kind of equine training available at DMR than for the kinds of training available at ITLC and TIM.

Student attitude to the offering of qualifications reflected the differing levels of understanding about the value of unit standards found in the Skill New Zealand study of longer term outcomes of TOP (AC Nielsen, 1999). Students who were career focused were aware of the importance of these qualifications. Some students became aware of the importance of qualifications only after finishing their TOP course (AC Nielsen, 1999, p. 78). Offering NQF qualifications in the three PTEs studied was thus more valuable as a means of gaining Skill New Zealand funding than as a marketing tool to prospective students. However, this is perhaps not surprising given the negative perception of education and qualifications with which many PTE students start their courses.

Leadership style

The role of the educational leader using the NQF is that of the contracted provider, who purchases unit standards for delivery. In each PTE of this study, the leader in the implementation of unit standards-based qualifications was also a founding figure in the organisation. Each leader had founded the organisation as an educational business, which had to provide education in a manner that was in accord with sustainable business practice: both financially viable and responsive to market changes.

Leadership that indicates readiness for change is “transformational”, concerned chiefly with altering the cultural context in which people work (Hopkins et al., 1994; Schein, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1996; Vaill, 1989). In keeping with characteristics of transformational leaders, the PTE leaders of this study saw their role as chiefly that of liaison between the world outside their own organisation and the staff, as facilitators rather than controllers (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Each leader had articulated the

need for the change and motivated others to make it, and emphasised that the decision was made in collaboration with other key figures in the organisation. As all three PTEs were small organisations, this was in line with Sergiovanni's (1996) reflection that in smaller organisations there is more scope for leadership of all kinds, simply because there are fewer people to share responsibilities.

Staff survey findings on leadership style reflected different degrees of collaboration across the PTEs. While staff at all three PTEs perceived the leadership style as transformational, ITLC's score was notably higher on this measure than the others. The ITLC leader had the title, "Company Administrator", in contrast with leaders at TIM and DMR, who were titled, "Managing Director". The majority of ITLC staff described their roles in management terms. In contrast, at TIM other staff understood that "the bottom line is it's his (the MD's) business and what he decides goes" (A3). The lower score of DMR on this measure probably reflects the fact that DMR leadership and staff is composed entirely of a husband and wife team, who probably do not see themselves as "collaborative" with anyone outside of themselves. The scores of all three PTEs on this measure were still within the "high" quadrant, however, indicating a readiness for change that enhanced their compatibility with the NQF.

A marked feature of the leadership style at both ITLC and TIM was confidence and a healthy scepticism of the demands of standards setting bodies and of NZQA. The leaders had consistently confronted these bodies with the reality of implementation in their particular settings, frequently advocating on behalf of tutors whose workload precluded them from protesting themselves. PTE leaders' willingness to engage in such dialogue in order to help fine-tune the system is probably a very valuable contribution

to success in NQF implementation. As Fullan (1991) points out, those responsible for educational innovations frequently ignore organisational context, and this oversight leads to failure in implementation.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the NQF were largely compatible with those of the PTEs of the study. As noted in Chapter 2, the NQF was intended to streamline all qualifications into a single system. It aimed to improve the skills of workers, and thus the economy, by awarding qualifications for a wide range of learning, whether academic or vocational, wherever and whenever it took place. PTE objectives mirrored those of the NQF, except that the PTEs were not limiting the qualifications they offered to those available on the NQF. The compatibility of NQF and PTE objectives was enhanced by PTE readiness for change, indicated in the high degree to which staff perceived the organisational objectives of the PTEs as shared by administrators, tutors and students.

All three PTEs of this study had clear organisational objectives, spelt out in the documents required for accreditation to offer NQF qualifications. The main funding source for all three PTEs was Skill New Zealand, whose requirements provided motivation for both administrators and tutors to achieve these objectives. In line with the aims of this agency the main objective of courses was to enable students to achieve workplace-based qualifications so that they could procure jobs or further education. All three PTEs continually achieved educational and employment outcomes for their students, demonstrating these objectives were understood and shared by all in the organisation and thus that the PTEs were ready for change. This kind of shared understanding of organisational objectives, with high expectations and clear focus,

indicates readiness for change (Beare et al., 1989; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins et al., 1994).

The focused vocational education offered by PTEs is the kind of education for which standards-based assessment was originally designed (Wolf, 1995), and at which the 1992 Skill New Zealand strategy was targeted. Although the majority of students surveyed started their PTE course with few or no qualifications, almost every student expected to gain all or most of the unit standards offered on the course. Students also perceived a strong relationship between unit content and employment prospects. Both tutors and students reported high expectations of educational and employment success as a result of using unit standards. Thus the NQF objectives of improving learners' skills and employability, appeared to match closely both the organisational and curriculum objectives of the PTEs studied. When organisational objectives are compatible with those of an innovation, there is more chance of successful implementation (Bell, 1993; Hood, 1998; Wolf, 1995).

The NZQA objective of creating a single streamlined system seemed less well accomplished, in that none of the PTEs was confining its qualifications to those of the NQF. All three PTEs were using unit standards in combination with other kinds of qualifications, to meet more of their students' needs and achieve their contracted outcomes. Although the NQF was vital to these PTEs' qualification systems, each one had means in place of extending their students' qualifications beyond those of the NQF. For example, standards-based assessment did not fit easily with methods of developing and assessing "horsemanship", a quality DMR tutors perceived as vital to employability

in the equine industry. Clearly the NQF has yet to encompass a wide enough range of assessment methods and areas of qualification.

Other gaps between NZQA intentions for the NQF and the realities of its implementation became apparent in the investigation. The choice of a standards-based assessment system for the NQF had a considerable influence on approaches to curriculum and teaching as well as assessment itself in the three PTEs studied. This influence did not always reflect NZQA intentions.

APPROACHES

As were its assumptions and objectives, the approaches characterising the NQF were grounded in the requirements of the workplace. PTEs are educational establishments characterised by a highly focused, vocationally oriented curriculum. Their approaches therefore may be expected to be highly compatible with those of the NQF. As Figure 18 (p. 173) indicates, there was some degree of compatibility between the approaches of the NQF and the PTEs of the study to curriculum, teaching and assessment. The areas of most incompatibility were in the approach to assessment. As with their assumptions and objectives, however, the compatibility of NQF and PTE approaches was enhanced by PTE readiness for change. This was indicated in the high degree to which staff perceived the organisational roles of the PTEs as conducive to an orderly environment, and the high degree to which staff perceived there was organisational commitment to staff development.

Approach to curriculum

Standards-based assessment entails an approach to curriculum that is based on objectives that are closely linked with the requirements of the workplace. NZQA intended unit standards to be used as performance standards rather than curriculum statements, and to provide learners with small achievable qualification goals. Critics of this approach warn that its tightly defined objectives can limit what is learnt (see for example Posner, 1988; Skilbeck, 1984).

Curriculum design

Despite NZQA intentions, in the PTEs of the study, unit standards appeared to be treated more as curriculum statements driving course design than as performance standards. Particularly in situations where training had not been very structured, unit standards had brought structure. Tutors in all three PTEs talked about this positively, describing unit standards as a “syllabus”, a “programme” and a “curriculum”, which could be used to design courses according to the requirements of a National Certificate. Tutors with an industry background, in particular, noted that using unit standards caused them to extend their course content and teach in a more structured way. Administrators also noted this effect. The MD at DMR noted frustration, however, with inadequate communication from NZQA about changes to the National Certificate prescription.

The lack of performance standards in unit standards led to problems in all three PTEs. Tutors reported that unit standards lacked clarity, not only in wording but also in relationship of credits to content, and differentiation of levels. With little official help or guidance with examples, both tutors and administrators were continually having to

interpret the requirements and intentions of unit standards, both to students and among themselves.

Curriculum content

Course content at all three PTEs was focused and vocational, the kind for which standards-based assessment was designed. In all three PTEs, adopting unit standards-based assessment had a significant impact on the content of courses offered. Courses became increasingly focused on content that was assessable, at the expense of content that tutors believed was useful for students to know but was not easily measurable. DMR tutors did not express dissatisfaction with the narrow focus of unit standards. The National Certificate was used in combination with their own form of qualification to give the students a comprehensive training. Some ITLC and TIM tutors, however, believed that using unit standards made their teaching more assessment-driven and less focused on meaningful application of the skills being assessed. This difference in experience may be accounted for partly by the differing teaching backgrounds of these tutors. The two DMR tutors had an exclusively equine teaching background, while the six ITLC and TIM tutors who expressed this frustration had a more general, less vocationally-oriented school and polytechnic teaching background. In keeping with views critical of behavioural objectives curriculum models, this group of tutors saw the approach as inhibiting of flexibility and spontaneity, giving undue weight to preplanned decision making and unsuited to capturing nuances and complexities in learning (as noted in Posner, 1988; Skilbeck, 1984).

These concerns did not appear to be shared by the students, although this may reflect the very lack of awareness of complexity in learning that concerned certain tutors. Just

over half of all the students surveyed disagreed that unit standards covered less than they would like to know (LS13). While only 19 out of 88 students agreed with this statement, a more significant 38 out of 88 were uncertain about this, perhaps because the survey was taken in the first month of the course, when unit standards were new to these students. Although 78 out of 88 students knew what unit standards were (LS1), and 72 out of 89 had seen an example of a unit standard (LS2), their experience of them in practice was somewhat limited. However, 86 out of 110 students perceived unit standards as having a positive effect on organising their learning (LS14).

Contrary to expectations raised by critics of standards-based assessment (such as Elley, 1996; Irwin, 1994; Priestly, 1997), in all three PTEs unit standards-based assessment caused theoretical knowledge to play a greater part in course content. Students now had to “know” as well as “do”, and all three PTEs immediately began to include more theory in their courses. DMR tutors appeared to view the unit standards themselves as course content, and reduced them to key words and concepts for students to memorise. Although the investigation revealed no other tutors with this unsophisticated approach, the nature of the unit standards being used combined with the considerable practical application of skills and theory at this PTE perhaps justified it. DMR students spent only one hour per day in the classroom and the rest of the time dealing with the practical demands of horse-handling, during which they were constantly reminded of key words and concepts of the unit standards (D8, p. 21). ITLC and TIM students on the other hand spent most of their time in the classroom, and their tutors felt frustrated because increased theory content meant there was not as much time for practical mastery.

Tutors and students at each PTE saw the breaking down of learning into manageable parts as a positive feature of the new system. In contrast with the critical view that the small size of unit standards may lead to fragmentation of learning and incoherence of learning programmes (Irwin, 1994; Peddie & Tuck, 1995a), achieving unit standards provided a starting point for building the confidence of students who had failed school examinations. The breaking down of topics into smaller parts helped achieve the NZQA aim that the unit standards would provide “frequent tastes of success” (NZQA, 1992). It gave students confidence that they knew what they had to do, helped them organise their learning, and motivated their learning. This positive view of the small size of unit standards is probably a result of the fact that in all three PTEs, unit standards-based qualifications were designed as an integrated package of unit standards, rather than a “piecemeal” curriculum (Hager, 1993, in Peddie & Tuck, 1995a, p. 203).

This study therefore showed a generally close connection between the approaches of the NQF and the PTEs to curriculum, which did not always reflect the concerns of critics. Although the lack of clarity in unit standards had caused significant problems for administrators and tutors, the approach appeared to suit their students.

Approach to teaching

The educational environment, teacher roles and learner-teacher relationships in the NQF approach to teaching are workplace-focused. In line with PTE characteristics noted in the NZAPEP submission (2000), the educational environment in all three PTEs was closely aligned to the workplace. This was a natural outcome of the teaching approach employed by PTE tutors in this study, who were all highly experienced in their fields and showed a strong pastoral awareness of their students. In addition, tutors were

keenly aware that small class sizes facilitated a mix of teaching approaches and a close learner-tutor relationship. Changing to unit standards had affected the educational environment, as well as tutor role, learner-tutor relationships and resources used.

Organisational roles and conditions of the educational environment

All three PTEs were modelled closely on a workplace environment, and set out to be different from school, reflecting the findings of Skill New Zealand studies (AC Nielsen, 1999; Lucas et al., 1997). Their premises, equipment, dress codes, and discipline and attendance policies all reflected conditions and policies in workplaces for which they were preparing their students. Each PTE was committed to keeping class sizes under 20, which facilitated close learner-tutor relationships and an informal, supportive learning atmosphere. This lack of formality did not equate with a lack of discipline, however. A secure and orderly, yet relaxed environment characterised all three PTEs.

Staff survey findings on organisational roles reflected a high degree of orderliness across the PTEs, indicating general readiness for change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins et al., 1994). TIM staff recorded a less high degree than ITLC and DMR staff, which probably reflected a lesser involvement of teaching staff in future planning at this PTE. TIM staff certainly appeared to have a clear perception of their own and others' responsibilities. At all three PTEs, staff chose words such as "family", "business" and "team" to describe their workplace, while students most frequently and spontaneously used the word "family". Although staff at all three PTEs were acutely aware that they were involved in running a business, there was a strong emphasis on close personal relationships.

Tutor role

A standards-based curriculum has been criticised as compelling teachers to interpret others' objectives, rather than create their own goals (Eisner, 1979; Peddie & Tuck, 1995a). As with concerns about the limiting effect of unit standards on course content, it was ITLC and TIM tutors with a broad teaching background, rather than DMR tutors, who expressed these concerns. Although the approach of DMR was the least creative approach to teaching unit standards at any of the PTEs, five out of six DMR students agreed that unit standards made them think for themselves (LS15). This is probably another consequence of the highly practical, minimally classroom-based nature of DMR training. ITLC and TIM tutors were also concerned that unit standards caused them to "spoonfeed" (T7) students, rather than encouraging them to think for themselves. This may reflect difficulties in changing from teaching based on a norm-referenced assessment system to that based on standards-based assessment.

However, in the PTE contexts studied, where one tutor had a small class for an entire day or week at a time, negative effects of unit standards on tutor role seemed to be minimised. Unit standards had caused the six tutors with an industry background to increase their range of teaching methods; those with a school or polytechnic background reported becoming more aware of workplace requirements; and those with an exclusively schoolteaching background could see the potential to integrate unit standards and use tasks that were more open-ended and student-centred.

Learner-tutor relationship

ITLC tutors felt pressured by the role of assessor, as though their students' success or failure was a personal reflection on them. Perhaps reflecting the small rural community

in which they were set, TIM tutors from all backgrounds reported that the use of unit standards brought tension between their pastoral and assessor roles. However, the approach to teaching necessitated by standards-based assessment appeared to affect tutors more negatively than students, whose perception of their relationship was overwhelmingly positive. In line with the findings of Skill New Zealand studies (AC Nielsen, 1999; Kerr, 1999; Lucas et al., 1997), students attributed their educational success to the relationship with their tutors as well as with the others in the class. Tutors and administrators in all three PTEs repeatedly emphasised the necessity of maintaining a personal and pastoral role, so that they could cater for students who were not accepted by the mainstream. Keeping class sizes to under 20 was seen as facilitating this.

Approach to assessment

As the standards-based assessment system of the NQF is a fundamentally different approach to assessment from the norm-referenced approach traditionally used in New Zealand, implementation of it inevitably increases teacher workload. The approach requires that teachers undertake some form of professional development in order to understand and operate the system. Change management literature suggests implementation is unlikely to be successful without professional development that motivates and encourages teachers in a supportive environment (see for example Fullan, 1997; Guskey, 1986; Sergiovanni, 1996). Teachers implementing the NQF must also come to terms with new methods of managing assessment and ensuring its validity. Not surprisingly, tutors at all three PTEs experienced a greatly increased workload in implementing standards-based assessment.

Staff development

In line with Forsman's (2000) observations, staff perception of their PTE's commitment to staff development was very high at all three PTEs. It seems likely that PTE tutors are particularly oriented to and ready for change, given that PTEs are businesses that will fail if they do not remain responsive to the ebb and flow of government policy. The change to unit standards-based qualifications motivated both tutors and administrators to engage in professional development that ranged from formal qualifications to informal and ongoing teaching of each other. In all three PTEs, tutors had increased the range and depth of their teaching subjects.

Managing assessment

Most problems with managing standards-based assessment in the three PTEs studied were caused by requirements for authenticity and sufficiency, reflecting findings by studies in New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Fitzsimons, 1997; Goodwill, 1998; Meldrum, 1999; Wolf, 1995).

Gathering evidence

Tutors at all three PTEs found they had to spend a great deal of time preparing to deliver and assess unit standards, as have teachers using unit standards in schools (Fitzsimons, 1997) and polytechnics (Goodwill, 1998; Meldrum, 1999). Tutors had to create classroom resources as well as assessment activities and schedules. Every tutor spent more time assessing students under this system than they had under other systems, and in fact most described themselves as continually assessing. Staff at all three PTEs questioned the efficiency of having to develop their own assessment resources to comply with moderation when they knew these were being designed for the same unit

standards all over New Zealand by similar organisations. Although the possibility of selling resources was viewed positively, this was not seen as a particularly desirable outcome. While tutors found that bought-in teaching resources proved of limited practical use, and the best teaching resources were those they created themselves for a particular class, tutors would have appreciated the provision of standardised NZQA-provided exemplars of assessment resources such as schedules and tasks.

ITLC did not have many problems with the requirement to provide authentic assessment situations. Even for groups of up to 20 students, setting up authentic situations for computer and administration assessment had proved practicable, both on the premises and off the premises at workbased training. Similarly, TIM had the physical space to set up authentic workshop and hospitality scenarios on the premises for their automotive and hospitality courses, and could organise local workbased training easily. The marine unit standards were another matter, however, and had caused all manner of problems from an initial disastrous investment in a commercial boat through to ridiculous situations with tutors manufacturing seasick. Although they had set up authentic assessment scenarios through comprehensive workbased training arrangements, some of the requirements of these unit standards were unrealistic in the time reflected in the credit allowance given. Tutors believed they could have taught the requirements of unit standards and qualified the students to work in the situations without having to gather evidence of every single performance criterion. DMR's working farm set-up was probably close to ideal for this form of assessment, but it must be remembered that only nine students were being catered for.

Administrators and tutors at all three PTEs had experienced frustration at ITO moderators' demands for direct evidence, reflecting polytechnic experience with ITOs (Meldrum, 1999). Tutors perceived ITOs as not trusting the professional judgement of tutors. At TIM in particular, tutors noted that one ITO appeared to trust the verbal assessment of their own industry assessors, but not that of tutors. In order to overcome these difficulties, most tutors had fallen back on the use of written tests, in line with the experience of other New Zealand users (Goodwill, 1998; Meldrum, 1999). At both ITLC and TIM, moderation requirements caused tutors to implement assessment systems that were much closer to the former examination system than to the more flexible intentions of the NQF. Such situations could almost certainly have been avoided with more NZQA guidance.

Learner survey data showed that student perceptions of assessment methods largely reflected tutors' comments. Statements LS20 through 23 were intended to reveal the extent to which tutors were dependent on written material in assessment, in light of the fact that unit standard assessment is intended to use a range of methods for gathering evidence. Participants' questions during administration of the learner survey indicated confusion over the meaning of some statements and suggested in some cases unfamiliarity with assessment of unit standards. This was not reflected in the ways students completed the surveys, but was perhaps reflected in some large "uncertain" responses. The trend indicated, however, that written work was a significant component of unit standard assessment at all three PTEs.

The trend for all three PTEs was least equally divided and most generally in favour of the statement, "I have to follow written instructions to get a unit standard" (LS20),

indicating tutor preference for workbooks and written tests for assessment. This would be expected at ITLC, with the heavy emphasis on wordprocessing and computer literacy in their qualifications, but was more surprising at TIM, where 16 out of 26 students survey participants were automotive students (see Table G19, Appendix G). Responses to the statement, "I have to write answers in worksheets or workbooks to get a unit standard" (LS22) generally followed the responses to LS20 except at ITLC, where students evidently felt there was less writing than following written instructions. DMR recorded a high degree of uncertainty on this issue, perhaps indicating lack of familiarity with unit standard assessment as they completed the survey early in their course and had not yet had any written tests. This result may also have reflected the emphasis on observation indicated by their tutors. Dependency on written assessment was further explored in statements LS21 and LS23. Responses to these statements indicated that reading and writing were more important at ITLC than at TIM, and that DMR students were uncertain. This is perhaps not surprising given the differing emphases of the courses.

Reassessment

Although all three PTEs were diligent about reassessment, each PTE had found it difficult to manage. In some situations they had also found it difficult to justify, reflecting problems of fairness, validity and standardisation noted by Fitzsimons (1997). In the New Zealand polytechnic setting, Goodwill (1998) has written of the very heavy teacher workload engendered by the requirement for evidence of 100% competency.

LS24 was intended to reveal students' perception of reassessment opportunities. Although students generally perceived unit standards as fair (LS25), at ITLC and TIM

this did not entail unlimited opportunities for reassessment. Both ITLC and TIM had developed reassessment policies of three separate attempts, while DMR put no limit at all on the number of times a student could be reassessed. Again, given the number of students involved and the nature of assessment in each of these different settings, these policies seem justified. Students at all three PTEs expressed satisfaction with the arrangements.

Record keeping

Both administrative and teaching staff at all three PTEs spoke wearily of the time-consuming demands of record keeping for assessment and moderation and the greatly increased workload caused by handling the administration of unit standards-based qualifications. ITLC and TIM had taken on extra office staff to handle the administration involved in monitoring the changes to unit standards, while tutors described record keeping as cause for burnout. While the MD was still able to handle all these requirements manually at DMR, because of the much smaller student numbers involved, he still questioned the amount of paperwork required by NZQA. In all three PTEs the amount of record keeping required was perceived as excessive, in line with findings from studies in New Zealand and the UK noting that standards-based assessment requires detailed and extensive record keeping (Lucas et al., 1997; Priestly, 1997).

Ensuring validity of assessment

Validity of standards-based assessment depends on clarity and reliability of judgement. Issues with these factors concerned the Skill New Zealand advisor as well as tutors at all three PTEs.

Clarity

As noted earlier, tutors at all three PTEs expressed problems with the wording and vocabulary of unit standards. Tutors consulted each other in interpreting the wording, and effectively had to translate for their students. The vocabulary used in some equine and marine unit standards caused DMR and TIM tutors to believe that the unit standards were written by people out of touch with industry conditions. It is notoriously difficult to state learning outcomes with the kind of precision necessary to ensure reliability of interpretation (Irwin et al., 1995, p. 7; Peddie & Tuck, 1995a, p. 202; Priestly, 1997, p. 147).

Although TIM students expressed difficulty with lack of clarity in unit standards, the majority of learners in all three PTEs agreed with the statement, “I can find out exactly what to do to complete a unit standard” (LS19). This was in line with student responses to similar statements in Priestley’s study: “The performance criteria of the unit standards are clearly worded and easy to understand” and “Unit standards help me to know what is expected of me in my subject” (Priestley, 1997, p. 384). This could be explained by the fact that the students had a close relationship with their tutors and could have the wording explained, but is not particularly reassuring about validity in the light of the fact that so much interpretation had to be carried out.

Reliability of judgement

Both tutors and the Skill New Zealand advisor expressed concerns mirroring those in Wolf’s UK studies, which found assessors displayed “enormously variable judgements regarding the level of performance at which a student should be judged ‘competent’ ” (Wolf, 1995, p. 122). As noted earlier, a criticism frequently levelled at unit standards

is that the performance standard itself is not in fact clear, but buried in assessment guides and the moderation process (Irwin et al., 1995). The validity of standards-based assessment is thus heavily dependent on the reliable judgement of assessors and moderation processes.

Variable judgements were reported at ITLC and TIM in spite of the prescriptive nature of the unit standards themselves, and in spite of the exhaustive moderation processes undergone by tutors. The attempt of one NZQA manager to address the issue shows he accepts there is difficulty, despite official NZQA documents about the NQF which repeatedly assert that the unit standards and the qualifications developed from them are perfectly clear (see for example Ministry of Education, 1999a, p. 9). He cites Wolf's argument:

The important thing is to accept that perfect transparency is unattainable and that clear specification of outcomes is only one aspect of sound and fair assessment. The use of exemplars and the building up of case law; the socialisation of assessors and their constant resocialisation; the monitoring of marking reliabilities – all these are equally important (, 1993, p. 3, in Barker, 1995, p. 27).

In the PTEs studied, there was no evidence of the use of exemplars and the building up of case law in the moderation processes experienced. Socialisation, constant resocialisation and the monitoring of marking was experienced with varying degree of satisfaction in cluster groups, the method used for the moderation of Core Skills unit standards and, in the early days, for computing unit standards. Tutors and administrators also engaged in mostly informal internal moderation, which they found effective. They were anxious, however, that there was no recognition of this by NZQA: "there's nothing tangible to say we're doing it" (A3). This perhaps reflects the way PTEs are used to the over-bureaucratic nature of NZQA processes.

However, the majority of moderation processes experienced at the three PTEs involved a single moderator, or an ITO as moderator. This form of moderation was frequently perceived as simply making dictatorial demands on tutors and administrators, which not only greatly increased workload and caused tutors to favour examination-style written assessments, but also bore little resemblance to the processes recommended by NZQA. In addition, TIM administrators and tutors, who dealt with six different ITOs as well as a computing moderator, found great variation in approaches to moderation. Both ITLC and TIM staff had regularly disputed and debated the demands of moderation.

Tutors with a school teaching and polytechnic background expressed concerns about the inability of unit standards-based assessment, with its provision for reassessment, to perform the same selection and ranking purposes as norm-referenced assessment. Priestley's study of secondary school students' attitudes towards unit standards within traditional school subjects backs these tutors' view. It suggests unit standards encourage plateau learning because they do not recognise excellence (Priestley, 1997, p. 388). The response to his statement, "I would be more motivated to work towards my unit standards if excellent achievement was recognised" (Priestley, 1997, p. 388) indicated general support for it. The majority of PTE students in this study, however, disagreed with this idea. Tutors with an industry background did not express this kind of concern, perhaps reflecting the different focus of vocationally-oriented education. In this kind of education, the focus is on whether someone can reach the standards required, rather than levels of achievement in relation to others.

The learner survey results did reinforce Priestley's finding that students perceive the gaining of unit standards as requiring more than a minimum effort. Secondary school

students disagreed with the statement “I only do the minimum work required to pass my Unit Standards assessments” (Priestley, 1997, p. 387). The majority of ITLC and TIM students also disagreed with this statement (LS17). Although DMR students strongly agreed with this statement, in the focus group interview as well as in the survey, it may be significant that this data was gathered early in the course. At that stage in the course, if DMR students had a perception that it was easy to get unit standards perhaps this was because of careful course planning by their tutors designed to build student confidence. As two TIM tutors noted, they deliberately planned their unit standards-based courses so that students would experience success in achievement as soon as possible (T7, T8). Interviews with their tutors suggested that DMR students had to work hard to complete their National Certificate (A4, T11).

The NQF approach to assessment was generally compatible with that of PTEs. Practically based and not strictly time bound, it allowed for flexible methods. However, the tutor workload involved in gathering evidence, reassessing and record keeping was frequently leading to dependence on assessment methods closely resembling written examinations. This dependence was heightened by the majority of moderation processes engaged in by these PTEs, and was not the intention of the NQF approach.

SUMMARY

This study aimed to uncover factors and perceptions in PTE implementation of the NQF, that might explain why the small PTE sector has consistently been responsible for the greatest numbers of NQF learner registrations and qualifications awarded in any educational sector. These factors and perceptions were revealed through an evaluation of the extent to which the NQF was compatible with the organisational context of three

PTEs that could be said to have succeeded in its implementation. As anticipated at the outset of the study, both the NQF and PTEs were characterised by certain assumptions, objectives and approaches that could be compared, in order to evaluate their compatibility.

The three PTEs of this study adopted the NQF in the mid 1990s. They experienced it initially as a turbulent process, with administrators and tutors grappling with a greatly increased workload interpreting and adapting to the requirements of unit standards-based assessment. The assumptions of the NQF and the three PTEs studied were highly compatible, however, and this compatibility was enhanced by organisational features of the PTEs that indicated readiness for change. The market view of education underlying the development of the NQF was highly compatible with business incentives operating in the PTEs. Competition, credibility and funding provided powerful impetus for PTEs to change to the NQF, and a transformational leadership style in the PTEs ensured commitment to the change was high. The NQF objectives of improving the economy through improving the skills of workers were highly compatible with the objectives of the PTEs, and this compatibility was enhanced by the sharing of organisational objectives in PTEs, a feature indicating readiness for change. Unit standards-based qualifications were integrated into the everyday routine of each PTE within one year of the decision to make the change. By the end of 1999, several years later, all three PTEs confidently attributed an improved image, higher profile and organisational growth to implementation of the NQF. All three PTEs were also considering the ongoing impact of unit standards on learning and teaching and reviewing the compatibility of the NQF with their own objectives.

The compatibility of NQF and PTE approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment was enhanced by organisational roles and commitment to staff development, features which indicated readiness for change. However, in contrast with their assumptions and objectives, the approaches of the NQF and PTEs were not always compatible. There was evidence that, despite NZQA intentions for the NQF, unit standards were largely treated as curriculum statements, driving programme design and frequently limiting course content. The change to unit standards brought about changes in teaching approach, particularly for tutors with a predominantly teaching as opposed to an industry background. These tutors noted an uncomfortable shift to a less creative and more assessment-focused role, and a more formal learner-tutor relationship. This did not appear to affect student perception of the relationship negatively, however. Small class size enabled tutors to maintain close pastoral relationships with students.

The least degree of compatibility between the NQF and the organisational context of the PTEs studied was in their approaches to assessment. Tutor workload in particular had remained greatly increased by the demands of standards-based assessment. Tutors were continually engaged in mostly informal professional development, keeping up with changes to unit standards and increasing their areas of expertise. Concerns were expressed about time spent on preparation of resources and assessment activities, delivery of assessment and reassessment, and record keeping, at the expense of preparation and delivery of appropriate lessons. Citing time constraints and moderation demands, tutors at two of the three PTEs had fallen back to a large extent on the written test for gathering evidence of achievement, despite NZQA's intentions to the contrary. Concerns were also expressed by tutors at all three PTEs about lack of clarity in unit standards, and the difficulty of achieving reliable judgement. Participation in informal

internal moderation and autocratic external moderation systems did not appear to have achieved this satisfactorily.

Despite the difficulties, staff at all three PTEs remained committed to unit standards-based qualifications. In their approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment they demonstrated a continual readiness for change, such as in their experimenting with combining unit standards and other qualifications in new ways to meet their students' qualification needs. Students themselves reported a largely positive attitude to unit standards, seeing them as motivational, straightforward and fair. In addition, they reported a very positive attitude to the educational environment of the PTEs.

LIMITATIONS

This study aimed to evaluate the extent to which the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF were compatible with the organisational context of PTEs that could be said to have succeeded at implementing it. The study revealed general compatibility of these indicators in three PTEs in the greater Auckland area offering certain unit standards mainly at Levels 1, 2 and 3. The study cannot predict how generalisable the findings might be at other levels of the NQF in other PTEs or organisational contexts. The constraints of time and finance meant that participants were limited to administrators, tutors and students; the opinions and experiences of employers were not sought. Similarly, the study investigated only the opinions of certain stakeholders in considering approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment. No observations were carried out of the delivery, assessment and moderation of unit standards. Future studies could explore these issues and use these methods.

CONCLUSION

It appeared to be in the best interests of the three PTEs to continue to offer unit standards-based qualifications. Much of the groundwork had been done, at considerable personal and organisational cost to the initiators, and students were benefiting from the chance to gain qualifications in a practical and skill-based way.

There were difficulties, however. There appeared to be gaps between NZQA intentions for the NQF, and the realities of implementation. The success of NQF implementation appeared most threatened by the workload entailed in the use of standards-based assessment, particularly in the areas of managing assessment and ensuring validity. The following chapter discusses implications of this, and makes recommendations for the refinement of a unit standards-based assessment system. These are expected to be of interest to all NQF stakeholders, not only NZQA and ITOs, but also other educational organisations considering whether or how to adopt unit standards-based qualifications. In light of the controversy (see for example Austin, 2000; Chamberlain, 2000; Garner, 2000; Zander, 2000) surrounding the implementation of the standards-based National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), secondary schools may also benefit from considering these recommendations.

CHAPTER 9

RECOMMENDATIONS

Certain features of the organisational context of PTEs appeared crucial to the success of NQF implementation in the three PTEs of the study. NQF implementation may not be as successful in larger organisations where there is not such a high degree of readiness for change, and compatibility between the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF and the organisation. In the three PTEs of the study, there was compelling impetus for change to the NQF, and leadership style was strongly collaborative and motivational. Organisational objectives were highly focused, shared, and compatible with those of the NQF. In addition, PTE approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment were largely compatible with those of the NQF. Even in the PTEs where all these factors were present, however, the workload entailed in the use of standards-based assessment threatened the continuing success of its implementation. In particular, the requirements of managing assessment and ensuring validity were highly burdensome to these NQF providers. While some of these issues could be addressed by providers themselves, many of these issues can only be addressed by the writers of unit standards, and by NZQA and ITOs. The following recommendations address the areas of incompatibility between the NQF and the PTE organisational context identified in Figure 18 (p. 173). Recommendations for NQF providers are listed first, followed by recommendations for the writers of unit standards, and for NZQA and ITOs.

- 1. Allocate paid time for teachers to engage in professional development.** NQF providers could reduce pressure on teachers by ensuring they are formally allocated paid time for professional development of all kinds associated with NQF implementation. In particular, teachers could be encouraged to engage in formal as well as informal assessor training. Those with a background in norm-referenced assessment only are especially in need of this training. Perhaps in conjunction with other providers, teachers could also use such time to develop classroom resources suitable for different learning styles, and methods of integrating unit standards in order to avoid over-assessment.
- 2. Maintain small classes.** NQF providers which are able to keep class sizes to under 20 will probably minimise difficulties experienced by teachers changing from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment. Small classes facilitate assessment procedures, and close relationships between learners as well as between learners and teachers.
- 3. Improve the clarity of unit standards.** The writers of unit standards need to pay careful attention to vocabulary and sentence structure, perhaps consulting with a wider range of providers on vocabulary and simplifying wherever possible. If unit standards are to be performance standards and not curriculum statements, as intended by NZQA, they should be written this way rather than as learning outcomes. Performance criteria should be clear statements which enable an assessor to judge whether the element has been demonstrated to the required standard. In addition, the relationships between credits and content, and differentiation of levels,

should be clarified. Ideally, students would not need extensive explanations by teachers in order to understand unit standard requirements.

4. **Continue moves to broaden the NQF to include a wider range of areas of qualification, and assessment systems other than standards-based.** NZQA is continually expanding the areas in which it is possible to gain NQF qualifications. In the year to June 2000, for instance, the number of registered unit standards increased from 13,772 to 15,397 (NZQA, 2000d, p. 1). In addition, the government has signalled a broadening of the NQF to include many forms of assessment. “Framework qualifications” are now to include degrees, certificates, diplomas and international qualifications, as well as unit standards-based qualifications (Ministry of Education, 1999a, p. 4). Ultimately this could eliminate the need for organisations to offer qualifications additional to those on the NQF. This would achieve the objective of creating a single streamlined qualifications system.

5. **Provide exemplars and other practical guidance for unit standards-based assessment.** NZQA could reduce the workload of teachers and administrators considerably by providing guidance in the form of national exemplars for a variety of assessment schedules, and assessment activities which include acceptable student responses. This form of guidance could reduce the occurrence of unacceptably variable judgements, and at the same time give support to the professional judgement of competency rather than a slavish recording of evidence for every performance criterion. Both NZQA and ITOs could confer with providers about acceptable assessment and reassessment situations so that these could be devised to meet requirements for authenticity yet take account of provider constraints.

Simplifying and standardising forms of record keeping would also reduce teacher workload.

6. **Introduce a more streamlined approach across ITOs and individual moderators to moderation procedures.** When a single provider has to deal with a number of ITOs and individual moderators, the lack of consistency in demands makes for a heavy administrative and teacher workload.
7. **Expand moderation procedures.** NZQA and ITOs could provide practical guidance and support for the use of a wider range of moderation procedures, such as exemplars, case law, monitoring of marking and socialisation. In practice, it appears that the emphasis is on the activities of lone moderators as opposed to groups of providers.
8. **Introduce consensus panels for moderation.** A practical and cost-effective means of expanding moderation procedures would be the introduction of consensus panels such as those suggested by Sass and Wagner (1992). In the same way as Core Skills moderation cluster groups have operated for at least five years, panels composed of the providers of like unit standards and supported by NZQA-provided guidelines could meet two or three times a year for a whole day at a time. Properly monitored, they could establish performance standards by aiming for consensus on such issues as interpretation of unit standards and reassessment. They could reduce teacher workload by maximising the existing experience of teachers, who could bring the perspective of both industry and teaching backgrounds. Teachers participating in such panels could share classroom resources, and address issues such as how to

integrate delivery and assessment of unit standards. The panels would give more credence to the professional judgement of teachers, something that teachers perceive as lacking in the present system. They would have the potential to empower teachers and make them feel trusted, particularly if they operated according to the principles of effective professional development (see for example Fullan, 1997; Guskey, 1986; McKinnon & Shute, 1995; Short et al., 1994). The panels would need to be cooperative not punitive, encouraging risk-taking and mistake-making, and clearly motivated by the opportunity to improve learning and teaching.

9. **Improve communication with NQF providers.** Many problems with NQF implementation have arisen because of poor communication between NZQA and NQF providers. There are some encouraging signs that this may change. NZQA has plans for new development support and liaison services, reported in the September 2000 issue of *onQ* (NZQA, 2000f). These mention a series of workshops and three appointments of people to work on quality assurance and NQF issues with government and PTEs, Pacific Islands providers and ITOs. Such services could begin to address issues raised by this study.

10. **Support government funding of PTEs.** PTEs have always been among the most significant supporters of the NQF. Their remarkable record in its implementation is partly due to government funding incentives, and so it would be in the interests of NZQA to support such funding for PTEs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has shown that there is a significant degree of compatibility between the assumptions, objectives and approaches of the NQF and the organisational context of the three PTEs investigated. This compatibility, enhanced by a general readiness for change, provides some explanation for the remarkable record of PTEs in NQF implementation. The study could be replicated in other PTEs considered successful in implementing the NQF, in order to establish how generalisable its findings are. A similar study of the experience of PTEs that are not considered to have implemented the NQF successfully could increase understanding of the significance of compatibility of organisational context with this innovation. Further light on this could be provided by studies of the same key indicators in other organisational contexts, such as schools and polytechnics, and at other levels of the NQF.

The evaluation framework could be expanded to include other key indicators of organisational context such as organisational structures and relationships, as suggested by Hopkins et al. (1994). The range of participants in a future study could be extended to include employers. A study of employer attitudes to the NQF would make a valuable contribution to discussion of standards-based assessment as opposed to norm-referenced assessment, in terms of how employers rank and select potential employees, and whether the reporting system of unit standards meets employer needs.

This study revealed that there appear to be gaps between NZQA intentions for the NQF, and the realities of its implementation. A study of the historical roots of these gaps could provide further guidelines for NZQA as it seeks to fulfil its mission. Similar

guidelines could be provided through a study of the management of standards-based assessment and ensuring of its validity in other Western countries.

CONCLUSION

The mission of NZQA is to “promote improvement in the quality of education in New Zealand through the development and maintenance of a comprehensive, accessible and flexible National Qualifications Framework” (NZQA, 2000a, p. 2). To be successful in this mission, NZQA would do well to take careful account of the compatibility of the NQF with the organisational contexts in which it must be implemented. PTE leaders in this study displayed commitment and willingness to engage with NZQA and ITOs on issues of NQF implementation. This attitude suggests NZQA and ITOs would do well to encourage and indeed seek PTE feedback, regarding it as vital to successful NQF implementation. PTE administrators and tutors are well placed to make recommendations and be consulted in the process of clarifying unit standards and achieving reliable judgement in their use. Only through awareness of the realities of implementation will the NQF be refined and achieve its aims.

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Appendix A

DEFINITIONS OF ASSESSMENT TYPES

norm-referenced	See Table 2, Chapter 2
standards-based	See Table 2, Chapter 2
competency-based (also known as competence-based , criterion-based or performance-based)	Success is measured against demonstrated achievement of a set of clearly specified outcomes. The emphasis is on real-life rather than academic performance.
criterion-referenced	Success is measured against criteria that are the goals and outcomes of learning. The emphasis is on academic performance and written tests. Assessment is part of the instructional process.
achievement-based	Compromise between fully norm-referenced and fully criterion-referenced approaches. Uses a grading scale.

Appendix B

DEFINITIONS OF UNIT STANDARDS TERMINOLOGY

unit standard	A nationally recognised, coherent set of learning outcomes and associated performance criteria.
learning outcome	A statement of the knowledge or skill the learner is expected to have when they have met the requirements of the unit, eg. “Participate in groups and/or teams to gather ideas and information” (Unit 9677 version 4).
purpose	Fuller explanation of the learning outcome, eg. “People credited with this unit standard are able to contribute to ideas and information gathering, and contribute to group and/or team function” (Unit 9677 version 4, p. 1).
element	Specific learning outcome, eg. “Contribute to ideas and information gathering” (Unit 9677 version 4, element 1).
performance criterion	More detailed learning outcome, eg. “Contributions made are relevant to the subject matter under discussion by the team” (Unit 9677 version 4, performance criterion 1.1).
range statement	Gives boundaries or context or guiding examples, eg. “contributions – ideas and information” (Unit 9677 version 4, p. 2).

level	Indicating the degree of complexity in learning outcomes; decided by the relevant advisory groups according to generalised descriptors provided by NZQA. For example, level 2 leads to semi-skilled occupations, level 5 to advanced craft or technical occupations, level 7 to academic, professional or managerial occupations.
credit	Allocation indicating the estimated time needed for a typical learner to demonstrate that all learning outcomes have been met; an agreed value only based on the assumption that one credit equates to about 10 hours' work.
field	Broad subject area, eg. Core Skills.
sub-field	Smaller area within a field, eg. Communication Skills.
domain	Still smaller area within a sub-field, eg. Interpersonal Communications.
National Certificate	Awarded between levels 2 and 4 of the NQF.
National Diploma	Awarded between levels 5 and 7 of the NQF.
standards setting body (SSB)	Advisory group made up of representatives of the interests of all major user groups including industry, associations and providers. SSBs contract writers to write the unit standards. NZQA then endorses them for registration; used to ensure that unit standards reflect the best of current practice and a thorough understanding of the field.
Industry Training Organisation (ITO)	Established under the 1992 Industry Training Act, these bodies are responsible for setting standards and arranging the delivery of industry training for the sector they represent. ITOs are supported partly by industry and partly by an Industry Training Fund which subsidises certain training; in fields and sub-fields connected with an industry, the relevant ITO is recognised as the SSB.
National Standards Bodies (NSBs)	SSBs in areas which are not applicable to a particular industry, but relate to a wider spectrum.

Appendix C

INTRODUCTORY LETTERS

Introducing the pilot study

Introducing the study

Ph. (09) 413 9126
email: jane.t@pl.net

21 September 1999

ITLC

Dear everyone

PILOT STUDY RESEARCH INVITATION

I would like to invite you to consider taking part in a pilot study for research I am doing about the National Qualifications Framework. As you know, this research is for my Masters degree and is intended in part to investigate the way that Private Training Establishments are implementing the Framework.

In its key goals for 1999 the NZAPEP (New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers) calls for research on the value PTEs provide. In today's changing political climate, policy-makers need to hear the voice of PTEs and recognise it as increasingly significant in tertiary education. Both the incumbent National Government and the opposition parties need information that will help them decide whether PTEs are worth funding on the same basis as other tertiary providers.

I am looking for pilot study participants who would be available over the next few weeks to help me develop my interview and survey questions. This means I would not only interview you and survey students using the questions, but I would also ask you to be critical about the questions themselves. I need to spend approximately one hour with:

- the Office Manager and Company Secretary
- at least two teachers who are new to the Unit Standards
- at least two teachers who have been working with Unit Standards for two years or more.

In addition, I would like to:

- ask as many students as possible to fill out a survey which would take them no longer than 30 minutes
- spend about an hour with a small group of students in a "focus group" interview.

I encourage you to take part –ultimately it could help us provide information for policy-makers, and it could even be fun!

If you would like to take up this offer, and/or are happy for your students to take up this offer, please contact me as above and I will give you an information sheet and consent form with more information about the research and your involvement.

Thank you very much for taking time to read this.

Yours sincerely

Jane Terrell

Ph: (09) 413 9126
email: jane.t@pl.net

19 October 1999

Director
PTE

Dear

RESEARCH INVITATION

Thank you for agreeing to consider taking part in research I am doing about Unit Standards in Private Training Establishments. As I explained on the phone today, this research is for my Masters degree. I hope it will help improve Unit Standards and the ways they are being implemented.

I intend the research to provide you and your organisation with a clear picture of both your own and other PTEs' experience with Unit Standards. I hope the study will help us provide information for policy-makers and other education providers responsible for changing and implementing Unit Standards. It could even be fun!

As a PTE director myself, I believe this research is vital in today's changing political climate. The voice of PTEs must be heard and recognised as increasingly significant in tertiary education. Both the incumbent National Government and the opposition parties need information that will help them decide whether PTEs are worth funding on the same basis as other tertiary providers.

I have enclosed an information sheet and consent form with more detail about the research and your possible involvement. I would need to visit you several times over a period of about three months, and interview yourselves, as well as any other administration or tutoring staff. It would also be very helpful if I could survey as many learners as possible, and interview a group of 6 to 12 of them. I may also ask if I could review organisational documentation relating to the Unit Standards. I hope this doesn't sound too daunting!

I am grateful that you are open to taking part in this study. I will ring you next week, when you have had a chance to read the enclosed and tell others about it. If you are still interested in taking part, perhaps we could make an appointment then for me to come and meet you.

Yours sincerely

Jane Terrell

Appendix D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

(in the form of a generic interview schedule)

Skill New Zealand advisor (SNZ)

Managing director (A1, 2, 4)

Administration manager (A3)

Experienced tutors (T1-4, 7-12)

New tutors (T5, 6, 10)

Table D1: Generic interview schedule

INTERVIEW QUESTION	SNZ	A1,2,4	A3	T1-4, 7-12	T5,6,10
1. What is your role in/relationship with this PTE?	✓	✓	✓		
2. What do you/does Skill NZ see as an effective PTE?	✓				
3. Why do you/does Skill NZ recommend purchasing funding from this PTE?	✓				
4. When was unit standards assessment first implemented in this PTE?	✓	✓			
5. What was your role in initiating the change to unit standard assessment?	✓	✓	✓		
6. How was unit standard assessment introduced to teachers and learners?		✓	✓	✓	✓
7. What was the response of employers, administrative staff, teachers and learners to unit standards?	✓			✓	✓
8. Why was unit standards assessment introduced in this PTE?	✓	✓			
9. What did you/ETSA hope unit standards would achieve: for the local economy? for learners?	✓				
10. Which unit standards did this PTE first implement?	✓	✓			
11. What unit standards does this PTE now implement? Why the changes?	✓	✓			
12. Which unit standards do you teach? How long have you been using unit standards?				✓	✓
13. Are you aware of courses this PTE or Skill New Zealand would like to do, or feel there is a demand for, but haven't, because there are no unit standards in those areas?	✓	✓			
14. What made it possible to implement unit standards assessment in this PTE?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15. What has made it possible for you to implement unit standard assessment?				✓	✓
16. What has made it possible to continue to use unit standard assessment?		✓	✓		
17. What made it difficult to implement unit standards assessment in this PTE?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
18. What has made it difficult for you to implement unit standards assessment?				✓	✓
19. How would you describe the way this PTE managed the change?	✓				

Table D1 (contd): Generic interview schedule

INTERVIEW QUESTION	SNZ	A1,2,4	A3	T1-4, 7-12	T5,6,10
20. With the benefit of hindsight, what would you have done differently?		✓	✓	✓	
21. What administration is involved in implementing unit standard assessment? How is this different from before unit standard assessment?		✓	✓	✓	✓
22. What is unit standards assessment achieving for - this PTE/ learners/ teachers/ employers?	✓	✓		✓	✓
23. What quality assurance systems are in place here – for this PTE/ for qualifications/ for learning programmes?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24. What quality is being assured – systems or outcomes?	✓				
25. What are the goals of this PTE/ Do you have a mission statement?		✓			
26. What metaphor would you use to describe this PTE (eg team? family? machine?)		✓	✓	✓	✓
27. How is this PTE structured?		✓			
28. How do you encourage a wide range of learners to participate in this programme?		✓	✓		
29. What support is there/ do you provide for teachers new to unit standards assessment?		✓	✓	✓	✓
30. How would you describe this PTE's relationship with the wider community?		✓			
31. What effects did the change to unit standards have on your –workload/ programme design/ programme goals and objectives/ course content/ approach to teaching/ approach to assessment/ relationships with other staff?				✓	
32. What effects do unit standards now have on your –workload/ programme design/ programme goals and objectives/ course content/ approach to teaching/ approach to assessment/ staff relationships?				✓	✓
33. What advantages/disadvantages do unit standards have for teaching and assessment? What problems do unit standards give you?				✓	✓
34. How do unit standards operate in this PTE – who teaches/ assesses/ moderates what? How do you design your learning programme? What input do your colleagues have in your teaching/ assessment/ moderation?				✓	✓
35. What is your personal teaching philosophy?				✓	✓
36. What do you think of NZQA philosophy as revealed in unit standards?				✓	✓

Appendix E

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Agenda

Ground rules

AGENDA AND GROUND RULES
FOCUS GROUP



EXAMINING UNIT STANDARDS ASSESSMENT
IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

AGENDA

1. What's this all about?
 - Information Sheet
 - Consent Form
 - any questions?
 - Questionnaire
2. Ground Rules
3. Talking about the Unit Standards:
 - which Unit Standards are you doing?
 - what do you know about Unit Standards?
 - what do you like about Unit Standards?
 - what do you dislike about Unit Standards?
 - what will Unit Standards do for you?
4. Talking about your Private Training Establishment:
 - why are you studying at this PTE?
 - what's it like for you here?
5. Any other thoughts?

Please turn over...

GROUND RULES

This focus group interview is designed to help me find out what you think and how you feel about Unit Standards as you are experiencing them in this learning organisation:

- everyone has an important contribution to make – make sure everyone gets their say
- what you think and feel may become clear as you listen to the discussion – it's OK to change your views as you hear what the others say
- you do not have to agree or disagree with the others – just try to be detailed and clear as you reflect on the questions I put to you
- usual rules of group interaction apply – no putdowns, no gossip
- enjoy!

Thanks for your help!

Appendix F

LEARNER SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE



EXAMINING UNIT STANDARD ASSESSMENT IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

You have been asked to answer this questionnaire as you are a learner in a Private Training Establishment (PTE) which uses unit standards for assessment. The questionnaire is designed to find out how learners think and feel about unit standards. It is part of research into the experience of PTEs who use unit standards for assessment, which it is hoped will improve unit standards and the ways they are being implemented.

Your answers are anonymous and confidential. If you do not want to answer a question, please leave it. The information will be viewed only by the researcher and will be used only for this research and publications arising from it.

Please put your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided, to be collected by the researcher.

Thank you for your help.

SECTION 1: YOUR OPINIONS

For each of the following statements, circle the initials which indicate how much you agree or disagree. For example, if you strongly agree, circle 1. If you agree, but less strongly, circle 2, and so on...

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	strongly disagree

Knowing about unit standards:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I know what a "unit standard" is. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I have seen an example of a unit standard. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

This Private Training Establishment (PTE) and unit standards:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. This PTE has a policy to involve students in decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. There are clear procedures for involving students in decision making. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I know who to approach if I want to comment on this PTE's policies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I frequently comment to my tutors(s) about aspects of PTE life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I chose to study at this PTE because it offered unit standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I would have studied at this PTE even if it didn't offer unit standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. The skills I get from this course are more important to me than the unit standard qualifications. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I chose to study at this PTE because the fees were affordable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The content of unit standards:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. The content of unit standards is what I need to know to get a job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Unit standards show an accurate picture of what I know and can do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Unit standards cover less than I would like to know. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Learning with unit standards:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. Unit standards help me organise my learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Unit standards make me find things out by myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Aiming to get unit standards motivates my learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I only have to do the minimum of work to get a unit standard. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I would work harder if unit standards were graded (eg "A" – "E"). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Assessment to unit standards:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. I can find out exactly what to do, to complete a unit standard. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I have to follow written instructions to get a unit standard. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. If I want to get a unit standard, my practical skills are more important than what I can read. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I have to write answers in worksheets or workbooks to get unit standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. If I want to get a unit standard, my practical skills are more important than what I can write. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I can take as long as I need to, to complete a unit standard. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Assessment of unit standards is fair. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please turn over

SECTION 2: ABOUT YOU

Please circle the boxes which apply to you.

1. What qualification(s) are you hoping to get from this course?

- 01 National Certificate in Equine
- 02 Unit Standards towards National Certificate in Computing
- 03 National Certificate in Computing
- 04 National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing
- 05 Hospitality and Bar Service Certificate
- 06 National Certificate in Employment Skills – Automotive
- 07 National Certificate in Tourism and Computing
- 08 National Certificate in Maritime Hospitality
- 09 Commercial Marine Licence
- 10 Diploma in Marine Technology
- 98 other (*please say what*): _____
- 99 don't know

2. How many unit standards do you expect to complete by the end of the course:

- 01 all, or most, of the unit standards offered
- 02 more than half
- 03 one or two
- 04 none

3. Educational qualifications before doing this course:

- 01 none
- 02 1 or 2 School Certificate passes
- 03 more than 2 School Certificate passes
- 04 Sixth Form Certificate or higher

4. Kind of paid work done any time before starting this course :

(circle more than one box if necessary):

- 01 never had paid work
- 02 clerical/office
- 03 customer service
- 04 manufacturing/labouring
- 98 other (*please say what*): _____

5. Gender:

- 01 female
- 02 male

6. Age:

- 01 16-17
- 02 18-39
- 03 40+

7. Ethnic identity:

(circle more than one box if necessary):

- 01 New Zealand Maori
- 02 New Zealand European
- 98 other (*please say what*): _____

Appendix G

LEARNER SURVEY RESULTS

Surveycraft table – example

Responses to statements

- Factors in student choice of PTE (LS7-10)
- Student perception of relationship between unit content and employment prospects (LS11, 12)
- Student perception of unit standard approach to curriculum (LS13, 14)
- Student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment (LS20-24)
- Student perception of validity of unit standards (LS17, 18, 25)
- Student perception of clarity of unit standards (LS19, 1, 2)

Responses to Questions 1-7

- What qualification(s) are you hoping to get from this course? (Question 1)
- How many unit standards do you expect to complete by the end of the course? (Question 2)
- Educational qualifications before doing this course (Question 3)
- Kind of paid work done any time before starting this course (Question 4)
- Gender (Question 5)
- Age (Question 6)
- Ethnic identity (Question 7)

TABLE 26 (CONT.) Standard Banner 1 *BY* To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 BASE: RESPONDENTS/COLUMN
 FILTERS: Statements(Assessment of unit standards is fair)

	Unit Standards in Course				Previous Qualifications				Previous Paid Work				
	All, or most, of the unit standards offered	More than half	One or two	None	None	1 or 2 School Certificate passes	More than 2 School Certificate passes	Sixth Form Certificate or higher	Never had paid work	Clerical /office	Customer service	Manufacturing /labouring	Other
RESPONDENTS	109 100.0% 90.1%	7 100.0% 5.8%	2 100.0% 1.7%	1 100.0% 0.8%	39 100.0% 32.2%	37 100.0% 30.6%	10 100.0% 8.3%	30 100.0% 24.8%	14 100.0% 11.6%	19 100.0% 15.7%	76 100.0% 62.8%	32 100.0% 26.4%	32 100.0% 26.4%
To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements?													
1 Strongly Agree	39 35.8% 97.5%				15 38.5% 37.5%	10 27.0% 25.0%	5 50.0% 12.5%	10 33.3% 25.0%	7 50.0% 17.5%	6 31.6% 15.0%	22 28.9% 55.0%	12 37.5% 30.0%	9 28.1% 22.5%
2 Agree	50 45.9% 87.7%	5 71.4% 8.8%	2 100.0% 3.5%		19 48.7% 33.3%	19 51.4% 33.3%	2 20.0% 3.5%	14 46.7% 24.6%	5 35.7% 8.8%	9 47.4% 15.8%	39 51.3% 68.4%	13 40.6% 22.8%	16 50.0% 28.1%
3 Uncertain	16 14.7% 88.9%	2 28.6% 11.1%			4 10.3% 22.2%	5 13.5% 27.8%	3 30.0% 16.7%	5 16.7% 27.8%	1 7.1% 5.6%	1 5.3% 5.6%	12 15.8% 66.7%	6 18.8% 33.3%	6 18.8% 33.3%
4 Disagree				1 100.0% 100.0%			1 2.7% 100.0%					1 1.3% 100.0%	1 3.1% 100.0%
5 Strongly Disagree	3 2.8% 100.0%				1 2.6% 33.3%	2 5.4% 66.7%			1 7.1% 33.3%	1 5.3% 33.3%	2 2.6% 66.7%		1 3.1% 33.3%
Total Agree	89 81.7% 91.8%	5 71.4% 5.2%	2 100.0% 2.1%		34 87.2% 35.1%	29 78.4% 29.9%	7 70.0% 7.2%	24 80.0% 24.7%	12 85.7% 12.4%	15 78.9% 15.5%	61 80.3% 62.9%	25 78.1% 25.8%	25 78.1% 25.8%
Total Disagree	3 2.8% 75.0%			1 100.0% 25.0%	1 2.6% 25.0%	3 8.1% 75.0%			1 7.1% 25.0%	1 5.3% 25.0%	3 3.9% 75.0%	1 3.1% 25.0%	1 3.1% 25.0%
Means	1.9	2.3	2.0	4.0	1.8	2.1	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.0
Not answered	1 0.9% 50.0%							1 3.3% 50.0%		2 10.5% 100.0%			

Table G1. Factors in student choice of ITLC

	LS7	LS8	LS9	LS10
Total agree	47	40	48	60
Uncertain	11	20	15	9
Total disagree	27	25	26	14

Table G2. Factors in student choice of TIM

	LS7	LS8	LS9	LS10
Total agree	19	15	19	19
Uncertain	2	8	6	2
Total disagree	5	3	1	5

Table G3. Factors in student choice of DMR

	LS7	LS8	LS9	LS10
Total agree	2	4	2	5
Uncertain	0	0	3	0
Total disagree	4	2	1	1

Table G4. ITLC student perception of relationship between unit content and employment prospects

	LS11	LS12
Total agree	65	67
Uncertain	15	12
Total disagree	7	7

Table G5. TIM student perception of relationship between unit content and employment prospects

	LS11	LS12
Total agree	19	19
Uncertain	6	5
Total disagree	1	2

Table G6. DMR student perception of relationship between unit content and employment prospects

	LS11	LS12
Total agree	4	3
Uncertain	1	3
Total disagree	1	0

Table G7. ITLC student perception of unit standard approach to curriculum

	LS13	LS14
Total agree	12	63
Uncertain	26	12
Total disagree	50	13

Table G8. TIM student perception of unit standard approach to curriculum

	LS13	LS14
Total agree	5	19
Uncertain	11	5
Total disagree	10	2

Table G9. DMR student perception of unit standard approach to curriculum

	LS13	LS14
Total agree	2	4
Uncertain	1	1
Total disagree	3	1

Table G10. ITLC student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment

	LS20	LS22	LS21	LS23	LS24
Total agree	49	33	24	30	25
Uncertain	21	28	23	24	18
Total disagree	16	25	38	34	44

Table G11. TIM student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment

	LS20	LS22	LS21	LS23	LS24
Total agree	17	18	11	11	12
Uncertain	8	5	8	7	5
Total disagree	1	2	7	8	9

Table G12. DMR student perception of gathering evidence for unit standard assessment

	LS20	LS22	LS21	LS23	LS24
Total agree	3	3	2	1	4
Uncertain	2	2	4	4	1
Total disagree	0	1	0	1	1

Table G13. ITLC student perception of validity of unit standards

	LS17	LS18	LS25
Total agree	13	23	70
Uncertain	14	19	15
Total disagree	60	45	2

Table G14. TIM student perception of validity of unit standards

	LS17	LS18	LS25
Total agree	5	7	22
Uncertain	7	7	3
Total disagree	14	12	1

Table G15. DMR student perception of validity of unit standards

	LS17	LS18	LS25
Total agree	4	3	5
Uncertain	1	0	0
Total disagree	1	3	1

Table G16. ITLC student perception of clarity of unit standards

	LS19	LS1	LS2
Total agree	68	78	72
Uncertain	16	7	9
Total disagree	3	3	8

Table G17. TIM student perception of clarity of unit standards

	LS19	LS1	LS2
Total agree	22	22	18
Uncertain	4	3	7
Total disagree	0	1	1

Table G18. DMR student perception of clarity of unit standards

	LS19	LS1	LS2
Total agree	6	6	6
Uncertain	0	0	0
Total disagree	0	0	0

Table G19. What qualification(s) are you hoping to get from this course? (Question 1)

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 3)	48	0	0
Unit standards towards National Certificate in Computing (Level 2)	32	4	0
National Certificate in Computing (Level 2)	29	2	0
National Certificate in Employment Skills - Automotive (Level 1)	1	16	0
National Certificate in Tourism and Computing (Level 2)	1	6	0
National Certificate in Marine Hospitality (Level 2)	0	4	0
Commercial Marine Licence	0	1	0
Hospitality and Bar Service Certificate	1	0	0
National Certificate in Equine (Level 2)	0	0	6
Other	4	0	5
Don't know	1	0	0

Table G20. How many unit standards do you expect to complete by the end of the course? (Question 2)

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
All or most	78	26	5
More than half	6	0	1
One or two, or none	3	0	0
Total	87	26	6

Table G21. Educational qualifications before doing this course (Question 3)

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
None, or 1 or 2 SC passes	49	22	5
More than 2 SC passes	10	0	0
SFC or higher	25	4	1
Total	84	26	6

Table G22. Kind of paid work done any time before starting this course (Question 4)

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
Customer Service	65	10	1
Manufacturing/Labouring	17	15	0
Clerical/Office	16	3	0
Never had paid work	8	4	2
Other	22	7	3

Table G23. Gender (Question 5)

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
Female	75	3	6
Male	13	22	0

Table G24. Age (Question 6)

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
16-17 years	33	15	2
18-39 years	42	11	4
40+ years	13	0	0

Table G25. Ethnic identity (Question 7)

	ITLC	TIM	DMR
New Zealand Maori	22	4	0
New Zealand European	49	20	6
Other	28	3	0

Appendix H

INFORMATION SHEET

CONSENT FORMS

Interviews

Focus group interviews

Document review

INFORMATION SHEET

EXAMINING UNIT STANDARDS ASSESSMENT IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

RESEARCHER: Jane Terrell BA Dip Tchg
Director, Northern Business College
Phone: 09 486 1788

SUPERVISOR: Eileen Piggot-Irvine MEdAdmin
Lecturer, Department of Education Studies, Massey University
Phone: 09 443 9700

1 WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

My name is Jane Terrell and I've been using Unit Standards for assessment in a Private Training Establishment (PTE) since 1995. I'd like to invite you to take part in research I am doing about Unit Standards. This research is for my Masters degree and is intended to help improve Unit Standards and the ways they are being implemented.

2 WHY HAVE YOU ASKED ME?

You are involved with Unit Standards in a PTE – either as a candidate for assessment or as a trainer, assessor, or administrator.

3 DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and it is your right not to take part if you don't want to. If at any point in the research you no longer want to participate, you can withdraw without giving a reason. When the data analysis is complete, however, it will not be possible to withdraw your contribution.

If you are a candidate for assessment, your choice about participation will have no effect on your assessment.

4 WHAT WOULD TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

I will ask you to allow me to do one or more of the following:

- interview you individually and/or in a small focus group (maximum 2 hours)
- ask you to fill out a questionnaire (approximately half an hour)
- ask if I could read relevant written material, such as minutes of meetings, work diaries and reports

I will ask you to sign a formal consent form to show that you are aware of what the research involves and that you are prepared to participate.

5 WHERE WILL THE RESEARCH TAKE PLACE?

At your training site, or wherever it is convenient and comfortable for you.

6 WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

No material which could personally identify you or your PTE will be used in any reports on this study unless you consent. If you wish, your name and personal details will be changed so you cannot be identified by those who know you. However, it is possible that anyone familiar with your PTE may still be able to identify you. If you are uncomfortable with that, it would be better to limit your participation to the focus group or anonymous questionnaire.

During the research, all tapes and written copies of interviews/discussion groups will be stored at my home. I will transcribe the tapes myself, or employ a transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. If you wish, I will personally hand-deliver you, at your training site, a copy of the transcriptions for your approval, and will only use the material you approve. At the end of the research the tapes and notes will be destroyed.

7 HOW WILL I BENEFIT FROM THE RESEARCH?

You may or may not benefit directly from the research. When the research is complete I will prepare a report on the findings and post copies to relevant Government agencies and to your PTE, where they will be available to you. The report is intended to be used to improve Unit Standards and the ways they are being implemented.

8 STATEMENT OF APPROVAL

This research has received ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus.

CONSENT FORM

INTERVIEWS

EXAMINING UNIT STANDARDS ASSESSMENT
IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions. I understand that I will not be able to withdraw my contribution, however, when the data analysis is complete.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

I understand that the information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project.

I agree/do not agree to interviews being audiotaped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during interviews.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

CONSENT FORM

FOCUS GROUP

EXAMINING UNIT STANDARDS ASSESSMENT
IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions. This includes the right to withdraw physically from a session, and to withdraw information after viewing the transcript of a session.

I agree to participate in the focus group on the understanding that an agenda and ground rules will be established, agreed upon and clearly spelt out prior to commencing any session.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

I understand that the information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project.

I agree/do not agree to the focus group session being audiotaped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the focus group session.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

CONSENT FORM
DOCUMENT REVIEW

EXAMINING UNIT STANDARD ASSESSMENT
IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw documents from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions. I understand that I will not be able to withdraw my contribution, however, when the data analysis is complete.

I agree to provide documents for review to the researcher on the understanding that my name and the name of my institution will not be used without my permission.

I understand that the documents will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I

STAFF SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE



EXAMINING UNIT STANDARD ASSESSMENT IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

You have been asked to answer this questionnaire as you are a staff member in a Private Training Establishment (PTE) which has experienced the change to unit standards for assessment. It is part of research into the experience of PTEs who use unit standards for assessment, which it is hoped will improve unit standards and the ways they are being implemented. The questionnaire is adapted from one created in 1994 by Hopkins, Ainscow and West in their book, School Improvement in an Era of Change. It is concerned with the conditions that appear to be important for successful educational change, and is designed to find out how far you think these conditions apply to your PTE.

Your answers are anonymous and confidential. If you do not want to answer a question, please leave it. The information will be viewed only by the researcher and will be used only for this research and publications arising from it.

Please put your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided, to be collected by the researcher.

Thank you for your help.

SECTION 1: YOUR OPINIONS

For each of the following statements, circle the initials which indicate how much you agree or disagree. For example, if you strongly agree, circle 1. If you agree, but less strongly, circle 2, and so on...

1	2	3	4
strongly agree (always the case)	agree (sometimes the case)	disagree (rarely the case)	strongly disagree (never the case)

Professional development:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This PTE has an appropriate policy for staff professional development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. This PTE has procedures for ensuring that the professional development policy responds to changes in staff needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. I know who to talk to about my own professional development needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Staff support one another in professional development activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Involvement:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 5. There is an agreed policy to involve students in decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. There are clear procedures for involving students in decision making. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Students know who to approach if they wish to comment on this PTE's policies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Students frequently comment to me about aspects of PTE life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Inquiry and reflection:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 9. There is a policy of using staff experience to guide decisions about future directions for this PTE. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Information is collected systematically as part of the planning process. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. All staff members have a role in contributing to and interpreting information for planning purposes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. I feel able to express my views freely about this PTE's policies and practices. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Leadership:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Staff are frequently encouraged to take a lead in new developments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Staff undertaking leadership roles are given appropriate support. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. I know who to approach for advice/direction on different aspects of my work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. I find that the styles of leadership used are generally appropriate to the task in hand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Coordination:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 17. This PTE has a policy for keeping people informed about future development priorities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. The links and overlaps between activities are well coordinated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. Staff are clear about their and other people's responsibilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Informal contacts with colleagues make a positive contribution to my work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Planning:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 21. Our future plans reflect priorities that have been agreed on. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. This PTE has well-established procedures for planning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. I know how I can contribute to planning processes in this PTE. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. Our planning processes encourage good working relationships. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Please turn over

SECTION 2: YOUR ROLE

Please indicate whether you consider your present post in this PTE to be a:

- senior management role
- middle management role
- other (*please say what*)

That's all!

Thank you very much for your help.

Appendix J

STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Staff survey analysis: comment

Some participants left either one or two statements unanswered, so their score for those statements was not included in the total, or in the mean calculation. Five participants added comments instead of or as well as the circled response. These were interpreted as follows. Two ITLC and two TIM participants indicated by adding written comments that they were new to the PTE and wrote “Don’t know” or a question mark by several statements. I did not include these responses in the totals or mean calculations. One ITLC participant wrote comments instead of circling numbers for Statements 4 and 24. At Statement 4, “Staff support one another in professional development activities”, the comment was, “Don’t know individually but are supportive when application gets to Directors Meeting”. I interpreted this as an “agree” response. At Statement 24, “Our planning processes encourage good working relationships”, the comment was, “ Don’t know that the planning processes can encourage ‘good’ – our planning processes ‘force’ working relationships”. I interpreted this as an “agree” response. The same participant circled “strongly disagree” for Statement 5, “There is an agreed policy to involve students in decisions”, but added the comment, “We do but there is no policy”. I interpreted this as indicating the participant believed that this did happen even though there wasn’t a formal written policy on it. I counted it as an “agree” response.

Appendix K

CONFIDENTIALITY FORMS

Transcriber

Data Analyst

CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

TRANSCRIBER

EXAMINING UNIT STANDARD ASSESSMENT
IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

I agree not to disclose the name of, or any other information that would lead to the identification of, the participants in the research study being undertaken by Jane Terrell.

The audiotapes, transcriptions and computer discs:

- will not be made available to any other person but Jane Terrell or her supervisors, Eileen Piggot-Irvine and Pat Nolan
- will be kept securely while in my possession
- will not be retained by me as copies or in any other form

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

DATA ANALYST

EXAMINING UNIT STANDARD ASSESSMENT
IN PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

I agree not to disclose the name of, or any other information that would lead to the identification of, the participants in the research study being undertaken by Jane Terrell.

The survey data:

- will not be made available to any other person but Jane Terrell or her supervisors, Eileen Piggot-Irvine and Pat Nolan
- will be kept securely while in my possession
- will not be retained by me as copies or in any other form

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____