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UNSKILLED YOUTH, UNEMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
A Case Study

A thesis presented in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Social Policy
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Rosalind A. Coulter
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores a training course as a way of helping unskilled school leavers become more employable. They were found to be at a disadvantage in the labour market because they lack skills and are at a greater risk of suffering from long-term unemployment. The effects of unemployment on youth are explored in the literature review and identified as having a detrimental effect on health and well being, with the long-term risk of creating a pattern of permanent unemployment.

TOPS, a fully Government funded vocational training programme targeted to the disadvantaged in the labour market, responds to this need. This research followed the progress of eight unskilled school-leavers who were involved in a TOPS course. They were interviewed before, immediately after and again six weeks following their course. To augment this investigation interviews were also conducted with the training providers. Following the literature in this area, the relative merits of training courses and their delivery are investigated.

Findings of this select group of young people involved on a TOPS course suggest that for most of them this scheme enabled them to increase their skill levels and greatly enhance their chances of employment in the future. The majority were successful in moving on immediately to further vocational training. The nature of educational delivery played a significant role in establishing this transition with a focus on creating an encouraging, nurturing learning environment and providing high quality teaching. Work experience complemented coursework by reinforcing practical skills and encouraging self-reliance. As a method of policy intervention, with reference to this TOPS course, I recommend that it justified the investment of funds involved.

Dedicated to the Memory of my Father

AUBREY COULTER

and
my Brother

HAMISH AUBREY COULTER

who always loved and encouraged me
and whose deaths
during the writing of this thesis
has given me great sorrow.

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INTRODUCTION

The problems of unemployment and long-term unemployment in society are well recognised. Both have grown in New Zealand in the last several decades and affect large numbers of people. High numbers of unemployed are costly to society in terms of welfare benefits and the loss of productivity. There are heavy costs to the individuals affected also. Unemployment and especially long-term unemployment create financial hardship and threaten physical and psychological health as well as general well being (European Health Committee 1987; MSC 1982; Walsh 1987; Watts 1983).

Unskilled school-leavers are in a vulnerable position in the labour market and have a higher likelihood of becoming unemployed. Their failure in the education system makes gaining higher skill levels more difficult. Unemployment suffered in youth increases the chances of unemployment in later life. It also makes it hard for young people to create a positive sense of identity, is looked on suspiciously by employers and can even lead to permanent unemployability.

All would agree that prevention is better than cure. The issue that this thesis explores is what can be done with unskilled school leavers to help increase their employability so they can avoid the compounding disadvantages of unemployment.

The Research

The intervention investigated in this thesis, is a Training Opportunities Programme (TOPS). It is a government funded vocational training programme which is targeted to the disadvantaged in the labour market. The young unskilled are one area of focus.

The fieldwork component examines the experiences of eight unskilled school-leavers on a TOPS course through interviews before, after and six weeks after their course. The first interview explores their experiences at school and their attitude towards beginning a course, the second, their experiences on the course and the final interview was included to be a check on what they are doing by that point. To augment this, interviews were conducted with the manager and the tutor of the course in order to get their opinions about important features of running training courses and delivering education to at-risk learners.

To put the interviews in context and assist in analysing the findings, the literature review investigates principles of good training courses and the needs of at-risk learners.

Aims

The aim of the research is to observe how this training course helps these eight unskilled school-leavers improve educationally and increase their employability. Investigation centers on what factors helped the trainees to learn, in the organisation of the course and the delivery of education.

Key questions are:

Q: How can the course be structured to maximise its effectiveness?

Q: How does education need to be delivered to students who are educationally at-risk?

Q: What outcomes can trainees gain from a successful training course?

Outline of thesis

Chapter One explains why the young and unskilled need assistance. The unskilled have an increased risk of long-term unemployment and are at a disadvantage in the labour market.

Chapter Two sets TOPS in its political context. The government policy response to the problem of unemployment has shifted away from job creation schemes and towards providing training for the disadvantaged in the labour market. TOPS are one of the state funded training schemes.

Unskilled school-leavers that have failed in the school system have often faced barriers to learning. Chapter Three discusses possible barriers to student learning at school, focussing on those experienced by the trainees interviewed. The second part of Chapter Three investigates the literature outlining features of successful training courses and effective delivery of education to the educationally at-risk.

Qualitative research was chosen as the most effective methodology for the fieldwork. Chapter Four explains the research design and details how the interviews were organised and carried out.

Chapter Five analyses the reasons why the trainees failed in the school system. The barriers to learning identified in Chapter Three form the framework for this discussion. Barriers to trainees learning included being from an ethnic minority group, not having support from home, feeling uncomfortable with or put down by teachers, lacking commitment and motivation to work and being alienated from the learning community of the school.

Chapter Six presents the TOPS training course and the experiences of trainees on it. The selected TOPS course is organised in keeping with the factors identified in the literature and provides a secure learning environment for most trainees. The tutor's comments about teaching the educationally at-risk also corresponded closely to what was

recommended. Chapter Six also details what the trainees gained and how they changed as a result of being on the course. The trainees are on the first level of accreditation towards becoming chefs. Their success is considered in terms of their progress to the next level of training and in their increased ability to learn how to learn.

In Chapter Seven, the principles of successful training courses outlined in the literature are summarised and compared to the TOPS courses studied. The achievements of the trainees are presented highlighting important features of the training from their perspective. The conclusion ends with a discussion of the merits of TOPS training as a policy, based on the experience of these trainees.

Why this research is important

This research adds to the literature about the needs of at-risk learners and the relative merits and organisation of training courses for them. Studying the effective implementation of courses for those who have failed in the school system and adding to the literature on how to make it easier for them to learn is important because the people involved are young and have either a lifetime of employment or unemployment ahead of them.

Unskilled school leavers have dismal employment prospects as they are without skills and their educational backgrounds are a barrier to them gaining any. Acquiring skills and in the process re-igniting the ability to learn can make an enormous difference to their lives. Not only are skills attained which can lead to employment but also the door is effectively opened for further learning. Needless to say there are huge positive spin off effects from both of the above. If unskilled school-leavers can engage in training that suits them, it will help them develop themselves and reach their potential, which would otherwise be wasted.

Developing principles on how this can be done well is worthwhile as it provides guidelines for training providers and therefore makes the most of the investment of funds involved.

CHAPTER ONE

UNSKILLED YOUTH DISADVANTAGED

This thesis investigates a TOPS (Training Opportunities Programme) programme as a method of increasing the employability of unskilled school leavers. Chapter One focuses on the unemployment and long-term unemployment risks facing the unskilled and why they are disadvantaged in the labour market.

Firstly the characteristics of the long-term unemployed are explored and it is established that being unskilled is one of many risk factors which increases the likelihood of experiencing a period of long-term unemployment. Secondly, particular risks which face unskilled school leavers in the labour market are discussed. They are in a vulnerable position because the labour market is increasingly requiring a higher level of skills and therefore the unskilled are disadvantaged and more likely to be employed in the more vulnerable, less protected secondary labour market. The very high rates of youth unemployment also put youth at-risk in the labour market. The significant disadvantages for young people who do experience unemployment and the long-term consequences this can have on their employment prospects are also explored.

Definition of long-term unemployment

Definitions vary on the length of time considered as long-term unemployed. Most OECD countries (and the OECD itself) regard it to be 12 months without work, however in New Zealand it is six months or 27 weeks (Prime Ministerial Task Force May 1994; Statistics New Zealand 1999). To qualify as unemployed, sources agree that someone has to be;

- a) without work,
- b) available for work, in other words, not ill and
- c) seeking work (Walsh 1987, p33).

1.1 RISK FACTORS FOR LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

Risk factors are anything that make an individual more likely to be locked out of the job market such as health, geographical location, skill levels or ethnicity. Risk factors are identified by examining the characteristics of the long-term unemployed and identifying groups which are over-represented (MSC 1982; European Health Committee 1987; Walsh 1987). For some it is not so much an individual's attitude but how the job market excludes some people.

The causes of high unemployment rates must therefore be sought largely in factors outside the control of individual unemployed people. This means that questions about who is most at risk of unemployment are mainly questions about how the burden of unemployment is shared across society (Payne 1996, p2).

Factors that increase the risk of being long-term unemployed are having low skill levels, being older, having ill health either physically or mentally, being part of an ethnic minority group, having limited mobility, being male, or living in an area of high unemployment, or coming from a single parent family. These are explored in detail below.

Low skill levels

The Policy Studies Institute (1996) in London analysed the histories of people who were trapped in long-term unemployment and identified risk factors for long-term unemployment. Like Walsh (1987), they found the long-term unemployed often had

low educational levels and the on the job training their participants received did not improve their position in their next job. The people they interviewed had a history of low paid work and had fragmented labour market experience, in other words they had changed jobs a lot.

The majority of long-term unemployed included in the Manpower Services Commission (MSC)¹ study had worked in unskilled (51%) or semi-skilled (53%) occupations. Results from the NCDS (National Child Development Study) compiled by Payne et al (1996) found that the odds of a man with low skills or no skills having a long spell of unemployment was twice as high as for men with degrees. Layard et al (1994) found that over three-quarters of unemployed men were manual workers. Many other studies concur with this (National Youth Employment Council 1974, Makeham 1980, Roberts et al 1981 cited in MSC Special Programmes Occasional Paper: No.4).

As Figure 1 shows, unskilled New Zealanders are more likely to be unemployed. Those who have no qualifications make up 11.7% of the unemployed while those with post-school and school qualifications only 4.3%. The rate of unemployment is over twice as high among those without qualifications compared to people with secondary and tertiary education.

¹ The MSC (1982) paper draws on three major studies, the DHSS Cohort study, the MSC Survey and the DE Survey (p25).

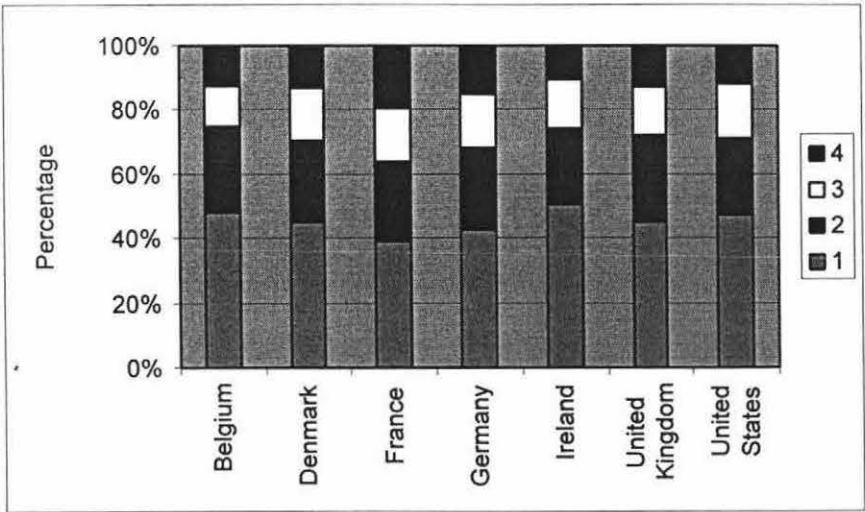
Figure 1: UNEMPLOYED PERSONS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN NEW ZEALAND, 1998.

<i>Educational Attainment</i>	<i>Number of unemployed (000)</i>			<i>Unemployment rate (%)</i>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No qualifications.....	27.6	19.8	47.5	11.9	11.9	11.7
School qualifications.....	16.6	15.3	32	7.1	6.1	6.6
Post-school but no school qualifications.....	8.1	5.2	13.4	6.9	9.2	7.6
Post-school and school qualification.....	17.9	16	33.9	4.1	4.5	4.3
Not specified.....	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total.....	70.4	56.5	126.9	6.8	6.8	6.8

Statistics New Zealand 1999, pp79-84

Recent OECD (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development) figures show this trend is not confined to New Zealand. Figure 2 shows that those who have the lowest skill levels (1) make up the greatest proportion of the unemployed in each country.

Figure 2 INTERNATIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 1995.



OECD Economic Survey United Kingdom 1998, p96.
1=Below upper secondary education
2=Upper secondary level
3=Non-university tertiary education
4=University level education

Old Age

British figures in the 1960s and 1970s show the majority of long-term unemployed men were aged over 45 and particularly over 60 (MSC 1982). In the early 1980s they report over 60% of long-term unemployed men were under 45 and the fastest growth took place among the under 25s. Excluding the over 60s, the highest rate of long-term unemployed was to be found in the 18-24 year old group.

New Zealand figures show that long-term unemployment increases with age. Labour market statistics for 1998 record that 20.2% of the unemployed between 15-19 years old are long-term unemployed. The percentages for successive age categories increase up to the 55+ age group which has a 49.3% long-term unemployment rate. Consistently over the last decade those in the older age groups have suffered a higher rate of long-term unemployment (Statistics New Zealand, *Labour Market Statistics 1998*, p121).

Ill health or Disability

Poor health is also a risk factor for long-term unemployment as being ill greatly reduces the chances of being successfully able to compete for a job. The DE survey found that 20% of those who had left jobs had done so because of ill health (MSC 1982). The European Health Committee (1987) reports that one third of men and one quarter of women say health was the reason they left their last job. Disability is a strong risk factor. The MSC survey found that there were more disabled among the long-term unemployed than among the unemployed overall, 13% compared with 8.5%. MSC figures from October 1981 showed that 50% disabled males had not had a job for more than a year, compared to only 30% of unemployed males; and 25% of disabled males had not had a job for 2 years, compared to 10% (MSC, 1982).

Poor mental health

Psychological problems increase the risk of long-term unemployment. A team at the University of Sheffield studied results from the GHQ (General Health Questionnaire) and they found that in a group of people unemployed for more than three months, two thirds of them had minor psychiatric disorders. They compared a group of unemployed to a control group of employed people and found that the rate of unemployed with psychiatric disorders was between 2 and 4 times higher (European Health Committee, 1987).

Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities are vulnerable to long-term unemployment, correlating strongly with the unskilled manual jobs they often fill. Krishnan (1994) estimates that the risk of being long-term unemployed measured as a percentage of total unemployment is 17% for a Pacific Islander, 13% for a New Zealand Maori and just 4% for a European.

Labour market statistics over the last decade show higher rates of long-term unemployment among ethnic minority groups. In 1998, 29.7% of European unemployed were long-term unemployed compared to 36.7% for Maori and 39.8% for Pacific Islanders (Statistics New Zealand 1999, p122).

Unemployment rates show an even more marked difference between ethnic groups as Figure 3 shows. While the percentage unemployed for Europeans is 3.2%, Maori have a rate over five times higher at 17.3%. Pacific Islanders also have a high unemployment rate (15.1%).

Figure 3: UNEMPLOYED PERSONS BY ETHNICITY IN NEW ZEALAND, 1998.

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Number unemployed (000)</i>			<i>Unemployment rate (%)</i>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
NZ European/Pakeha.....	40.8	32.6	73.4	4.8	4.8	3.2
Maori.....	15.1	14.2	29.4	16.4	18.3	17.3
Pacific Island.....	7.0	4.8	11.8	17.1	13.0	15.1
Other.....	7.3	4.7	12.0	14.6	11.8	13.3
Not specified.....	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total.....	70.4	56.7	127.1	6.8	6.8	6.8

Staistics New Zealand 1999,85-89

Limited mobility

Payne et al (1996) researching in the United Kingdom found that not having a driver’s licence was very likely to increase the time spent unemployed. Those who did not have one by the time they were aged 33 had double the chances of experiencing a long spell of unemployment. Other studies have also noticed this correlation (White and McRae 1989, Policy Studies Institute 1996). It is not difficult to see how limited mobility impacts on employment prospects. Not having a drivers licence eliminates jobs involving driving, and precludes travelling any distance to work.

Men more at-risk

Payne et al (1996) found that for women there were fewer risk factors, which would lead to a spell of long-term unemployment and the effects of them, were weaker. Statistics show that there are more men than women long-term unemployed, but the numbers of women are growing (European Health Committee, 1987). New Zealand figures also show that the risk of long-term unemployment is higher for men than for women. In 1994 of total male unemployment just over half (51%) were long-term unemployed compared to 40% of women (Krishnan, 1994). This trend has continued to

the present time, although both the percentages and the gap between them are smaller. In 1998 long-term unemployed males accounted for 36.8% of total male unemployment while for women the percentage long-term unemployed was 28.7% (Statistics New Zealand 1999, p120).

Although figures show more men are long-term unemployed it must be borne in mind that numbers among women may be underestimated. This is because married women often cannot claim a benefit and so are not included in unemployment register statistics.

Living in an area of unemployment

Studies concurred that living in an area of high unemployment is a risk factor as is looking for work in a time of recession, as job search periods are likely to be longer. Similarly in times of economic recession, job search periods are longer (Payne et al 1996, White and McRae 1989).

Family status

Among the long-term unemployed large families were over-represented, as were single parent homes (MSC 1982, Payne et al 1996). They were also less likely to own their own homes (Payne et al 1996).

FOCUS ON UNSKILLED

The unskilled are at-risk of long-term unemployment as they are more likely to be long-term unemployed and unemployed. Of the other risk factors discussed, most cannot or cannot easily be changed, for example age, ethnicity, health, mental health, family status and gender. Skill levels however can be improved, thereby decreasing the risk for trainees of suffering a period of long-term unemployment.

The focus of this study is on unskilled school-leavers, and examines a transition education programme as a means of reducing their risk of experiencing a period of long-term unemployment. The young unskilled were chosen as the focus of this research because they have their whole lives ahead of them and therefore the most time to benefit from training or suffer from reduced employment prospects.

The following section explores the particular risks which face the young, unskilled school-leavers in the labour market.

1.2 RISKS FOR YOUNG AND UNSKILLED IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The young and unskilled are in a vulnerable position in the labour market. If a young person does experience a period of unemployment it threatens their health and identity, is seen by employers as a handicap, increases the risk of unemployment in later life and can even lead to a pattern of permanent unemployment (MSC 1982, McRae 1987, Nash 1987).

Increasingly the labour market is requiring a higher skill level which puts the unskilled at a disadvantage. From this weaker position the unskilled also have an increased likelihood of being employed in the secondary labour market, discussed below, with the insecurity and disadvantages that brings. The young are already a vulnerable group in the labour market as unemployment is highest among youth. Being young and unskilled increases the risk still more. It was shown above that the unskilled are more likely to be unemployed and long-term unemployed.

The young and unskilled are a rational policy focus for the government. Young people have perhaps a greater chance of absorbing new ideas and patterns than some other age

groups. As the young have most of their lives ahead of them, it is cost-effective for the government to target this group as the costs of their unemployment would have to be borne on a longer term scale.

To put this in context, the unemployment statistics in New Zealand and around the world are briefly examined. Unemployment and long-term unemployment have increased greatly in New Zealand in the last forty years although unemployment growth has slowed down in the most recent past (Statistics New Zealand 1998). OECD figures for the last twenty years show this is also the case internationally.

Increase in skills required in labour market

The labour market is changing and requiring a more highly skilled workforce which puts the unskilled school-leaver at a disadvantage when competing for jobs. Even a decade ago the New Zealand Planning Council asserts that New Zealand cannot compete with low wage production line economies but our strength lies in having a quality education system and a flexible and highly skilled workforce (Callister 1989).

International research shows that there has been an increase in the average qualifications of employees (Mare, 1996).

The share of employees accounted for by workers with post-school qualifications rose by around ten percentage points, and the share of employees with no formal qualifications fell by over fifteen percentage points (Mare 1996, p17).

In the United Kingdom there has also been a decreased demand for unskilled workers and an increase in the jobs for managerial, professional and technical workers who need good qualifications (Robinson 1994, cited in Payne et al 1996, p2). Results from the Employment in Britain survey concur that since the mid-1980s there has been a substantial rise in the skills required in the workforce. The majority of employees in the survey (63%) reported that the level of skills needed to do their jobs had increased in the

last five years. Only 9 percent said that the skills they needed had decreased. They suggest that this is linked to the large increase of new technology (Gallie & White 1993, pp21-28). This is also echoed in New Zealand research.

The difference between now and twenty years ago is not so much in the number of jobs, but in the skill levels required to do them. The proportion of jobs which require low levels of skill has declined globally since the middle years of this century, and will continue to do so (ETSA March 1996, p39).

It is into this context that the idea of developing a 'learning culture' and the concept of 'lifelong learning' has been introduced. The Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment in 'Addressing New Zealand's biggest challenge' (November 1994) recommends:

In the rapidly changing world of today and tomorrow, the most important of these skills is the ability and desire to learn... As a society we must recognise the importance of developing a learning culture – a culture that encourages and views learning as a natural and enjoyable part of life (1994, p52).

This is a theme that has also been picked up by the Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA), a government body whose responsibilities include purchasing training to be provided for disadvantaged groups. One of ETSA's aims is to encourage 'lifelong learning' by providing training to people throughout their working lives.

Secondary labour market

Another risk for the unskilled is the increased likelihood of being employed in the less protected secondary labour market. The labour market is made up of two definite groups, the primary and secondary labour markets (European Health Committee 1987). The primary labour market is made up of secure, skilled employment and jobs tend to be well paid and offer fringe benefits. The secondary labour market by contrast is

insecure often part-time work and more likely to be low paid and without the same opportunities for advancement.

On the one hand there are protected workers who reap all kinds of benefits and on the other hand there are the 'outcasts' (European Health Committee 1987, p28).

The unskilled are more likely to be employed in the secondary labour market because they lack skills and therefore bargaining power. Those restricted to jobs in the secondary labour market are in a vulnerable position. Buswell (1986) found that young people's position in the secondary labour market has made them vulnerable to unemployment (p69).

Part-time work is on the increase in New Zealand. Between 1987 and 1998 the percentage of part-time employment grew from 17.1% to 22.7%, while full-time employment fell from 82.9% to 77.3% (Statistics New Zealand 1999, p97).

Youth Unemployment Statistics

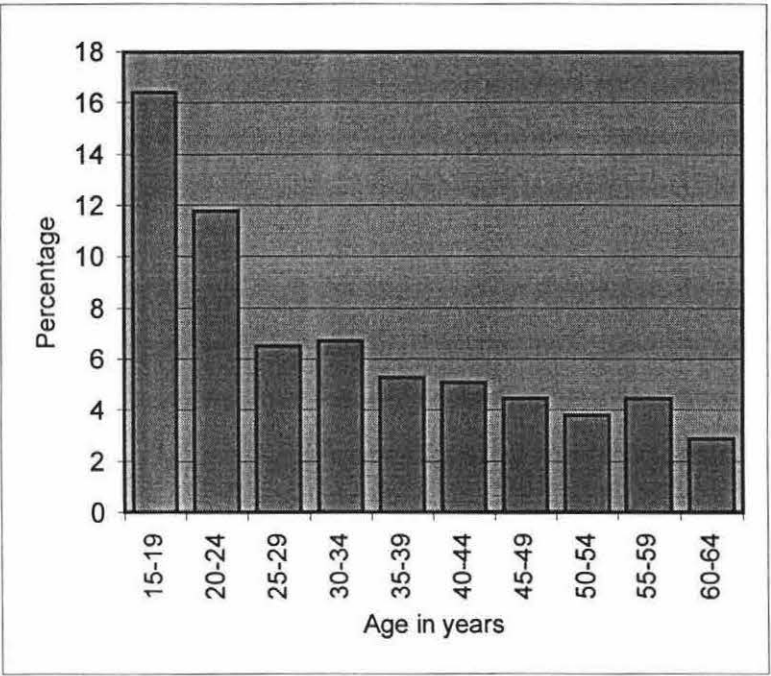
Young people in New Zealand are in a vulnerable position in the labour market because rates of unemployment among youth are so much higher than in other age groups. In 1978 youth unemployment was identified as a problem. In 1984 the official unemployment figure was 83,597 and a huge 55% of this number were under 25 (Gordon 1987, p119).

In 1986 amongst young men aged between 15-19 years old, 72% were participating in the labour force however by 1994 the figure had dropped to only 55%. For young women also the numbers in the labour force had dropped. In part this reflects an increase in the numbers of young people staying at school or enrolling at tertiary institutions.

Reduced employment opportunities may have meant that many young people are delaying entering, or have withdrawn from, the labour force (Krishnan 1994, p130).

Labour force participation rates in 1998 for 15-19 year olds are much the same (56%) and Figure 4 demonstrates that unemployment in that age group is higher than for any other (Statistics New Zealand 1999, p67).

Figure 4 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN NEW ZEALAND 1998.



Statistics New Zealand 1999, p67-69.

Unemployment destructive to youth

Unemployment and especially long-term unemployment holds several potential risks for young people. Unemployment for youth poses a threat to physical health and to the development of a healthy sense of self-worth. A period of unemployment is also seen as a disadvantage by employers and becomes a barrier to obtaining work. There is evidence to suggest that time spent unemployed as a young person increases the chance

of later unemployment. There is even the risk that the young person becomes completely unemployable.

It is well documented that a period of unemployment is associated with increased likelihood of mental and physical ill health (Jahoda, 1982; Morris et al, 1944 and WHO, 1983 cited in European Health Committee 1987, Warr 1983 cited in Breakwell 1985, Shirley et al 1990). This was also found to be the case for young people in a survey of 16-19 year olds in the United Kingdom (Breakwell, 1985).

The young people who were unemployed were characterised by lower levels of psychological well-being, self-esteem and life satisfaction than either those on YOP (Youth Opportunities Programme) or those in 'real' work (where 'real' is equated with any paid employment not part of a YOP scheme) (Breakwell 1985, p493).

Unemployment also creates a threat to individual's sense of identity. Breakwell (1985) found that the young unemployed studied believed that employed people were superior to themselves and they felt people in society in general would assume this also. Unemployment for these young people left them feeling they were inferior to the rest of the working population.

A period of unemployment is in itself a disadvantage as employers see it as a handicap. As the period of unemployment increases, the young unemployed are faced with more and more competition from young school-leavers without long histories of unemployment (McRae 1987).

Payne et al (1996) in a Policy Studies Institute study found that unemployment between the ages of 16 and 23 was a significant risk factor for a period of long-term unemployment in later life.

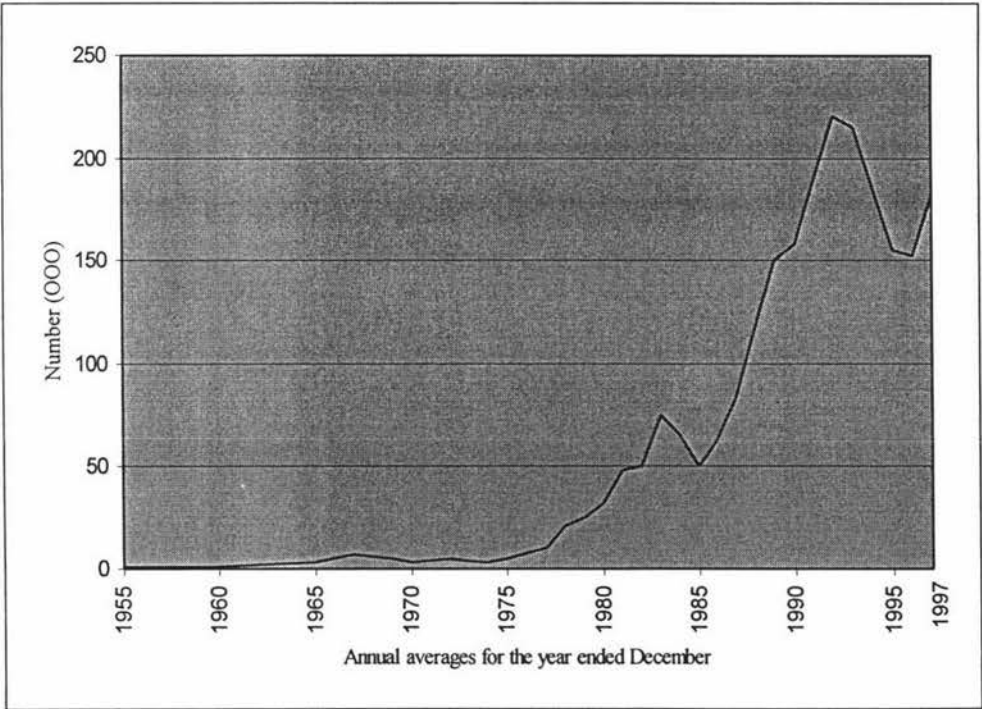
Holding constant the other terms in the model, each extra month of unemployment between 16 and 23 multiplied the odds of a long spell of unemployment starting after that age by 1.03 (Payne et al 1996, p19).

Unemployment and especially long-term unemployment is particularly destructive to young people as they may not develop habits of employment and normal self-identity and thus become unemployable (MSC 1982, McRae 1987, Nash 1987).

Unemployment Statistics

In New Zealand unemployment has grown dramatically over the last forty years with various peaks and troughs. Figure 5 summarises the huge growth in unemployment in New Zealand since 1955. Unemployment has peaked in 1983 with 76,475 unemployed and in 1992 with 216,858. The rate was falling since 1992 but has risen again between 1996 and 1997 (Statistics New Zealand, 1998).

Figure 5 REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT IN NEW ZEALAND 1955-1997



Statistics New Zealand 1998, p311.

Walsh writing in 1987 documents the rise in unemployment internationally and demonstrates that since the mid 1960s it has been on the increase rising to new heights

with each recession and never falling back as far thereafter . Between 1975 and 1984 for example unemployment in the United Kingdom went from 4.5% to 13%. In seven countries unemployment has at least doubled and in only one has it fallen. Over half the countries moved into double figures.

Figure 6 UNEMPLOYMENT INTERNATIONALLY COMPARED, 1975-84.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Belgium	4.4	5.8	6.6	7.1	7.3	7.7	10.0	11.7	12.9	14.0
Denmark	4.9	6.3	7.3	8.3	6.0	6.9	10.3	11.0	11.4	11.0
France	4.1	4.4	4.9	5.2	5.9	6.3	7.3	8.1	8.3	9.7
Germany	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.3	3.3	4.6	6.7	8.2	8.6
Ireland	6.4	7.8	7.6	7.1	7.1	7.3	9.9	11.4	14.1	16.0
Italy	5.8	6.6	7.0	7.1	7.5	7.5	8.3	9.0	9.8	10.2
Netherlands	5.2	5.5	5.2	5.3	5.4	6.0	8.6	11.4	13.7	14.0
Sweden	1.6	1.6	1.8	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.5	3.1	3.5	3.1
UK	4.5	4.8	5.2	5.1	5.3	5.6	9.0	11.8	12.7	13.0
USA	8.3	7.5	6.9	5.9	5.7	7.0	7.5	9.5	9.4	7.4

(Source: *Labour Force Statistics* (OECD) cited in Walsh 1987, p2)

In the years following 1984, unemployment has not kept growing at such a rate, in fact in six of the countries it has fallen between the mid-1980s and late 1990s as Figure 7 shows. Six of the nine countries have unemployment rates below 10%.

Figure 7 UNEMPLOYMENT INTERNATIONALLY COMPARED, 1990-1998.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Belgium	6.7	--	--	--	10	9.9	9.7	9.2	--
Denmark	9.7	--	--	12.4	12.2	10.4	8.7	7.9	--
France	9	--	--	--	--	--	--	12.5	11.5
Germany	--	--	--	--	8.4	8.2	8.9	8.7	--
Ireland	--	14.7	15.1	15.7	14.8	12.2	11.9	--	--
Italy	9.1	--	--	10.3	11.4	11.9	12	12.2	11.9
Netherlands	6.9	6.5	6.5	7.5	8.5	8.1	7.4	--	--
UK	7.1	8.8	10.1	10.5	9.6	8.8	8.2	7.1	--
USA	--	--	7.4	6.8	6.0	5.5	5.4	--	--

OECD²

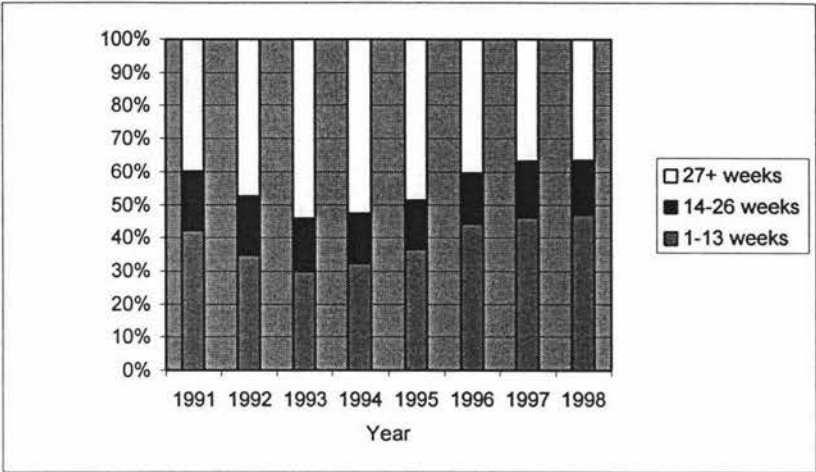
Long-term unemployment Statistics

New Zealand long-term unemployment rates as a percentage of the total unemployed increased steadily till 1993 and have since dropped. The New Zealand Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) reported in March 1986 that 7,200 people had been unemployed for more than 6 months, this was 11% of the total unemployed. By March of 1993 there were 78,500 long-term unemployed a huge increase to 47% of total unemployed (Krishnan 1994, p125).

Figure 8 shows long-term unemployment as a percentage of all unemployed between the years 1991 and 1998. Long-term unemployment peaks in 1993 and has decreased steadily since then to settle at a slightly lower rate than it was in 1991.

² Surveys are not uniformly up to date nor do they provide exactly the same information. Information is not available for every year. Standardised unemployment rates used in most cases and consistent with OECD definition, short term unemployment considered 1-12 months.

Figure 8 UNEMPLOYMENT BY DURATION IN NEW ZEALAND 1991-1998



Labour Market Statistics 1998, p120

Walsh (1987) demonstrates the rise in long-term unemployment internationally. Figure 9 shows increases in the numbers long-term unemployed, in some cases the numbers trebled between 1975 and 1984.

Figure 9 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT AS A PROPORTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT, 1975 and 1984.

	1975	1984
Belgium	35.9	58.9
Denmark	25.0	29.5
France	11.1	27.0
Germany	9.6	32.7
Ireland	31.6	40.9
Italy	28.4	46.4
Netherlands	22.6	54.2
Sweden	7.1	13.4
UK	13.7	39.8
USA	4.2	13.1

Cited in Walsh 1987, p5.

In 1970 in Britain there was only 1 long-term unemployed person out of every 250 in the workforce. By 1982 the ratio was 1 to 25 (MSC 1982).

Since 1984 there has not been such a dramatic increase in long-term unemployment rates although it has increased in the majority of countries. It should be noted that in these statistics long-term unemployment is considered to be 12 months or over, not six months as in New Zealand. If all the measurements used six months higher numbers long-term unemployed would be recorded.

Figure 10 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT AS A PROPORTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT, 1990 and 1998.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Belgium	68.7	--	--	--	58.3	62.4	61.3	60.5	--
France	40.9	37.5	37.0	35.5	36.0	40.3	41.0	40.4	41.1
Germany	--	--	--	--	32.5	33.3	32.7	34.0	--
Ireland	--	59.4	56.3	53.9	60.7	58.2	57.6	--	--
Italy	69.8	--	--	--	61.5	63.6	65.6	66.3	--
Netherlands	49.3	46.1	43.9	52.3	49.4	46.8	49.0	--	--
UK	32.1	27.1	35.2	42.5	45.3	43.2	39.4	38.3	--
USA	--	--	11.2	11.7	12.2	9.7	9.6	--	--

OECD Economic Surveys, no statistics available for Denmark.

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores training as a means of increasing the employability of unskilled school leavers and this chapter has shown those who are young and unskilled to be at-risk of long-term unemployment and vulnerable in the labour market.

The risk factors for long-term unemployment are having low skills levels, being older, having physical or mental ill health, being part of an ethnic minority group, having limited mobility, being male, living in an area of high unemployment or being from a single parent family. Factors such as age, health, ethnicity, gender, geographical location and family background are impossible or difficult to change. Skill levels

however are a risk factor which can be reduced by increasing skill levels. The increasing of skill levels in unskilled school leavers is the focus of this research.

Significant risks face the unskilled school leaver in the labour market. The labour market is changing and requiring higher skill levels which disadvantage the unskilled and put them in a weaker position to compete for jobs. This increases the likelihood of them being employed in the less secure employment of the secondary labour market. Youth are further at-risk because unemployment is far higher among them than any other age group.

If young people do experience a period of unemployment it is a significant disadvantage and severely reduces their employability later on. Unemployment threatens physical health and the construction of a healthy sense of self-worth. It is also seen as a handicap by employers thus reducing employment prospects still more. Unemployment between the ages of 16 and 23 has been shown to increase the likelihood of unemployment in later life and can be so damaging that pattern of permanent unemployment is established.

Unemployment and long-term unemployment are not confined to New Zealand. Unemployment and long-term unemployment figures have both grown internationally over recent decades and although they have not continued to increase as fast as they were ten years ago, there are still significant numbers of people involved.

The changing government policy response to the problem of unemployment and long-term unemployment is explained in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

GOVERNMENT POLICY CONTEXT

This chapter provides a brief overview of the changes in government policy in response to the problem of unemployment and unskilled youth. The historical trend has been away from job creation as a measure to help the jobless and towards training programmes. The ideological shift, which underpinned these changes, is also explored. This examination sets the development of the Training Opportunities Programme (TOPS) and the Education Training Support Agency (ETSA), the government body which funds it, in context. It is intended to provide a generally descriptive framework, rather than a critical assessment of the change.

2.1 POLICY CONTEXT

New Zealand policy has moved away from the Welfare State model to a New Right policy direction and the shift from government intervention and job creation towards providing training has been part of this.

Historical Context

New Zealand had been accustomed to looking to the state as “a social guarantor of matters of security, welfare, public works, and, increasingly, in areas of health, education and employment”, since Vogelism in the 1870s (O’Brien and Wilkes 1993, p11).

This trend continued into the twentieth century and “in the post-war period this bipartisan and implicit agreement to use the state as the solution was very much a taken-for-granted part of the fabric of political life” (O’Brien and Wilkes 1993, p12).

The post-war period was characterised by interventionist government policies. The Welfare State was begun in 1938 by Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage with new directions for social and economic policy (Mulengu 1994). The 1938 Social Security Act introduced the concept of the ‘social wage’ and incorporated Keynesian economic policies designed to create a social and economic climate where individuals could live healthy and productive lives.

The philosophical ideals of the First Labour Government embraced free education, a community based preventative health scheme, a salaried medical service, a free public hospital system, adequate standards of housing, improved physical working conditions, a basic minimum wage and full employment (Shirley et al 1990, p24).

While not all these aims were realised, full male employment was achieved between 1940 and 1967 bringing with it increasing social and economic security (Shirley et al 1990).

The impressive achievement of full employment was attained by operating a closed economy.

External policy concentrated on insulating New Zealand from overseas influences with the state establishing protective tariffs, imposing import licences and creating marketing agencies for New Zealand’s primary exporters. Within New Zealand, government concentrated on diversification and on maintaining the viability of small-scale farming and manufacturing. Internal regulation included price stabilisation, the linking of wages to prevailing economic conditions by means of Arbitration Court rulings and the use of quasi-state agencies as instruments of government policy. The Reserve Bank was given an expanded role in financing areas such as agriculture and housing, and scientific and advisory services were promoted as a means of facilitating productive growth (Shirley et al 1990, p24).

Another crucial contributing factor was the favorable trading relationship that New Zealand enjoyed with Britain, who provided a guaranteed market for meat, wool and dairy exports.

The economic climate changed for New Zealand between 1967 and 1984 however, and unemployment increased as a result. Britain joined the EEC (European Economic Community) in 1972 and the Common Market's agricultural policy precluded New Zealand's privileged trading relationship. Prices for wool and dairy products had already fallen and meat prices also dropped in the 1970s (Shirley et al 1990). The oil shocks in the early 1970s had weakened the economy worldwide, which curtailed the demand for New Zealand exports.

In 1967 unemployment rose to over 3,800 people and in 1968 increased to 6,881. In the preceding years it had rarely exceeded 1,000 people (Shirley et al 1990). By 1977 unemployment had risen to levels vastly higher than in the post-war period and by 1984 was considered to have reached 'serious levels' (O'Brien and Wilkes 1993).

The government responded to the growth in unemployment by introducing 'active labour market' policies, such as subsidised work schemes and job training programmes from the mid 1970s. The focus was on creating jobs for people to be in.

Decline in state commitment to creating jobs

In the period between 1977 and 1984 however, there was a decline in the state commitment to creating jobs (Mulengu 1994). At the beginning of this period job creation was very important. An extensive number of schemes were put in place between 1977 and 1981 as the government still strove to achieve full employment. In the financial year 1978-79, 49% of job placements of registered unemployed people were onto job creation programmes (Mulengu 1994).

The Temporary Employment Programme begun in 1977 was offered as an opportunity to help people gain work experience and thus become more competitive in the job market. Mulengu (1994) suggests this hints at the changing government response to unemployment. Instead of concentrating on the problem of unemployment, the focus is on the unemployed. The insinuation is that unemployment is related to a skill mismatch¹, rather than acknowledging there may not be enough jobs in the economy.

Other groups in the community also wanted the government to move away from providing full employment. The New Zealand Manufacturers Federation felt the work force needed to be 'disciplined' and if jobs were harder to get they would be appreciated more and performed to a higher standard. Government interventions were seen as robbing the private sector of legitimate business (Mulengu 1994).

This was extended in the early 1980s when the government began restricting the eligibility criteria for public sector job creation. In 1980 the Temporary Employment Programme was split into four parts. The Project Employment Programme (PEP), Work Skill Development Programme, Job Creation in the Voluntary Sector and the Student Community Service Programme. PEP was different to the Temporary Employment Programme in that it had a more restricted format of project-specific and short-term work (Mulengu 1994).

In 1983 Robert Muldoon the Prime Minister at the time was quoted as saying,

The solution to unemployment was to have more activity in the economy, taking unemployed people into jobs in the private sector. It was no solution to have more and better temporary job schemes (*Press*, June 17 1983, cited in Mulengu 1994, p184).

New Zealand, like Britain, was changing and moving away from an interventionist approach with a priority of full employment towards a market-led economy.

¹ Skill mismatch refers to individuals not having the skills that the job market requires.

The Labour Government of 1984

The Labour Government elected in 1984 continued and built on these changes. Mulengu summarises clearly the changes the fourth Labour government brought.

Under the Fourth Labour government the financial market was deregulated and all controls on foreign exchange transactions were removed. The New Zealand dollar was floated. The economy was opened to the international market, most barriers to import and foreign investments were removed, and almost all supports, regulations, and restrictions were removed (Collins, 1987). State controls on prices, wages, rents and interest rates introduced by the National Government to fight inflation were removed. In the latter part of its term of office the Labour Government applied monetarist policies to control inflation. Specialised sales taxes were replaced with a comprehensive goods and service tax (Jesson, 1987). State-owned enterprises were formed from restructured government departments, required to pay taxes and dividends and to operate like private companies. Government departments were to charge for their services at commercial rates and state monopolies were opened up for competition (Boston and Holland, 1987). There was extensive privatisation of state-owned enterprises (Mulengu 1994, p196).

In summary the economy was opened up to the rest of the world with all the stimulation and vulnerability that brings. The government ceased to regulate within New Zealand, letting market forces determine prices, interest rates, rents and wages. Government departments were privatised, user pays introduced and the Welfare State significantly altered.

Ideological underpinnings of the changes

These changes were underpinned by a shift towards the laissez-faire free market approach and away from the corporatist philosophy of retaining economic sovereignty, a secure domestic market and an institutional commitment to full employment.

The New Right approach embodies a collection of ideas. One of the tenets is monetarism, outlined by Friedman. Monetarism asserts that there is a natural rate of unemployment in the economy, which will be returned to after temporary disturbances. The time lag they predict for it to return is between 1 and 2 years. Having unemployment below the 'natural rate' is only possible by an increase in inflation. For Friedman unemployment was the lesser evil of the two.

Any unemployment below the natural rate can only be attained at the unbearable cost of inflation (Friedman 1975 cited in Shirley 1990, p20).

New Right policy also assumes that markets are the most efficient way to distribute goods and government intervention tampers with the signals the market receives and therefore reduces its efficiency.

Job creation was seen as artificially creating jobs that would have been created anyway if the market was given its head. It was just seen as 'deadweight'. It would displace workers. In other words jobs would be lost elsewhere because the government had given subsidies and artificially created jobs. The jobs that were targeted to one group by the intervention were imagined to cut out another disadvantaged group somewhere else (Treasury 1984; New Zealand Employers' Federation, 1988 cited in Mulengu 1994, pp200, 201). Embodied in this is the idea that there are only so many jobs to go around.

Implications of this for unemployment and training

The implication for the unemployed was that the government viewed them as unemployed because of a skill mismatch, not because there were not enough jobs for them to fill. In other words it was their fault that they did not have work, it signified their lack of competitiveness in the job market.

Persistent high unemployment was associated with structural change, specifically with the development of barriers to employment through the failure of human capital to adapt to changed employment conditions (Higgins 1994, p195).

Consistent with this unemployment was considered to be frictional and caused by a mismatch between the skills of the unemployed and the jobs available (Employment Network, 1988). It was an 'adjustment problem' which would be spontaneously resolved once price stability was achieved (Shirley et al 1990, p20).

Accordingly the government saw their role as providing a trained workforce. 'Economic Management' (Treasury 1984) suggested that although there would be short-term gain in the expansion of labour market programmes, in that long term they would lead to a reduction in the expenditure the government could commit to other things. They advised that government intervention just 'shuffled people's place in the queue' and full employment was really only possible if wages fell.

The only intervention Treasury approved of was targeting cost-efficient help to the disadvantaged in the labour market with the aim of reintegrating them into the workforce. Training and re-training were seen to assist in increasing employability. Subsidies also needed to be consistent with a flexible labour market and not work against removing 'rigidities' (Treasury 1984).

Focus on training programmes

In 1985 the Government announced that job creation schemes both fully and partially subsidised would be phased out over a two year period. They were to be replaced by training schemes and job creation was to be targeted at the disadvantaged among the unemployed (Brosnan et al, 1990 cited in Mulengu 1994).

The central focus of state responses to unemployment was articulated as being: "to achieve a more active approach to training and employment; increasing the emphasis

towards accessible training and skill acquisition” (New Zealand Government, 1985:4). This was in essence the Labour Government’s employment policy. It clearly outlined the shift in policy emphasis from job creation to training (Mulengu 1994, p207).

In 1985 when TAP (Training Assistance Programme) was introduced all previous training schemes were abolished. Before 1986 training mainly targeted youth who were registered unemployed under School Leaver Training and Employment Preparation Scheme and the Young Persons Training Programme (YPTP). Pre-employment courses were abandoned and replaced with skill/training courses. TAP was to broaden these schemes and add an adult training component. The goal of training was employment.

In 1987 the ACCESS training scheme was introduced. “The shift in policy emphasis from job creation to training was completed in 1987 when the bulk of employment assistance fell under the ACCESS Training Scheme” (Mulengu 1994, p212). ACCESS was a training programme designed to help the disadvantaged in the labour market by giving them vocational skills while making the best use of government resources.

Continuing training focus

The training focus has continued as subsequent Treasury briefing papers to government attest. Under the heading ‘Meeting the high-income high-employment objective’ it is suggested that New Zealand needs the economy open to competition, invest in new technology and *upgrade quality and skills* (Treasury 1990, p35/36 italics mine).

‘Briefing to the Incoming Government’ (Treasury 1993) asserts that the government’s role in helping the disadvantaged is to improve the learning opportunities open to them. They found for example, that the majority of long-term unemployed have low skill levels.

Improving skills is the best long-run solution to reducing unemployment and raising incomes for the low-skilled (Treasury 1993, p19).

The report states that as well as qualifications, individuals need to develop learning skills and attitudes, motivation, responsiveness and the capacity to learn. It suggests that it would be best for firms to control training and that the successful development of people would be most likely to happen in a highly competitive environment. The welfare system was to support this focus by having eligibility criteria, obligations on recipients and levels of abatement and assistance.

‘Briefing to the Incoming Government’ (Treasury 1996) continues to focus on training as the means of helping the disadvantaged in the labour market.

In the longer term, good rewards for skill, combined with good access to learning opportunities is the means of reducing poverty and income disparities. As low-income people improve their skills, then both lower and average wage levels can increase (Treasury 1996, p46).

Raising skills is one of the four ‘key drivers’ recommended in achieving a high-income, high-employment society (Treasury 1996).

2.2 ETSA AND TOPS

The Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA) was established by the Education Amendment Act of 1990 and is under the Department of Education. This moved the responsibility for post-institutional education from the Department of Labour.

ETSA's aims

ETSA's focus is on the transition between school and work and its objective is that people have access to training throughout their working lives. Attention is focused in two areas; industry training and specifically targeting help to those disadvantaged in the job market. Training is delivered to industry through Industry Training Organisations (ITO's) and to the disadvantaged through the TOPS programme and other programmes like Skill Enhancement.

ETSA aims to raise the skill levels of the New Zealand workforce and develop a training culture. One of its strategies is to work alongside industry so that they have an influence over the training that is being provided. "Our job is to help industry get the training it wants" (ETSA February 1993). They work with industries and help them to identify training needs and develop ways of delivering training, such as apprentice style training and Traineeships.

ETSA is "committed to raising the skill levels of all New Zealanders to ensure maximum utilisation of our human resources for the general economic good" (House of Representatives 1994, p4). Success is measured by the numbers of trainees who move into either a job or further training (Ministry of Education and others, 1994). Its focus is on those whose needs are not well met by traditional educational institutions. It is committed to those who are under-represented in the fields of education and training, particularly Maori and Pacific Islands people, women, those with low or no qualifications, others who are disadvantaged, older workers who have been made redundant or who have unrecognised skills.

One of ETSA's aims is to achieve 'lifelong learning'. All the training ETSA funds is linked with the National Qualifications Framework, a new system of accreditation developed by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). It is an eight level framework, levels 1-4 are called the National Certificate, 5-7 called a National Diploma, a degree would fit in at this level and level 8 which comprises any other degrees, certificates and diplomas that people receive. Level one is roughly equivalent to 5th

form standard. Unit standards are the building blocks of the framework and there are unit standards in all areas of study from office systems to forestry to English. This creates a 'seamless' education system as all areas and levels of study are brought under one umbrella.

A "seamless" education system is a "system under which it no longer matters with which provider or in which educational programme students are studying. All learning will lead to qualifications within the same framework" (Ministry of Education, 1993a: 20 cited in ETSA June 1996, p19).

Once people have earned the required number of credits they receive the National Certificate or Diploma and this information is all kept on a national database.

This system has been developed to enable people to gain national recognition for their skills. At educational institutions; schools, polytechnics, public and government training establishments, colleges of education, wananga and in the workplace; teachers develop the syllabus so it can be measured against unit standards. Credit from any of these institutions can contribute towards the National Qualifications Framework. Knowledge and qualifications that people already hold can be integrated into the NQF so those people are not disadvantaged.

This new system aims to strengthen the concept of lifelong education by making the links between study at school and study after school stronger. It makes it more likely that people would think they need to get training after they have finished the seventh form.

Integration

To help ETSA achieve its aims it works closely with 'stakeholder' groups such as industry, education, Maori and Pacific Island people and the Government. They also work with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Ministry of Education, the NZ

Employment Service, Workbridge, the Ministry of Maori Development, Pacific Island Affairs and senior schools.

TOPS

The Training Opportunities Programme (TOPS) is designed to help people who have low skill levels to make the transition to employment and gain recognised qualifications. It embodies the concept of seamless education and lifelong education and encourages the participation of certain disadvantaged groups in the education system. Training is provided by a variety of private training institutions (PTE's) which are accredited with NZQA.

There are strict criteria that trainees must fit into if they are to gain a place on the course. This is the criterion as outlined in ETSA's 'Regional Purchasing Specifications'.

1. aged under 18 with low qualifications
2. aged 18 or 19 with low qualifications and have left school in the last six months
3. registered with the **New Zealand Employment Service** as an **unemployed job seeker** for at least 26 out of the last 39 weeks. You must be available for work, and either have low qualifications or have been referred by them after an in-depth interview
4. enrolled with **Workbridge** as an active job seeker and have been referred by them after an in-depth interview
5. receiving a **Domestic Purposes** or **Widows' Benefit** for at least the previous year - you must also have low qualifications
6. a **refugee**, if you have left the Mangere Refugee Centre or entered the country in the last year - you must also be registered with the NZES
7. an **ex-prisoner** who has served a sentence of six months or more and left

prison in the last six months - you must also have low qualifications and be registered with the NZES

8. a **NZES Priority Client** (including Job Action and Youth Action clients) - you must have no tertiary institute qualifications and have been assessed by NZES as likely to benefit from Training Opportunities (p40/41).

TOPS is fully funded by the government and available free of charge to trainees who fit the criteria and some trainees may be eligible to receive a training allowance to help them pay for the costs of the course. There is a travel allowance available worth up to \$60 a week and the amount given depends on how far trainees have to travel. They must pay at least \$5 a week of transport costs themselves (ETSA February 1996*). Training Benefits are available from the Income Support Service to students who are at least 16 years old. The amount varies dependant on age, marital status and number of dependants.

TOPS is made up of unit standards so that trainees can build up their qualifications from course to course and show to employers exactly what skills they have achieved.

CONCLUSION

In keeping with the ideological shift towards a monetarist as opposed to corporatist philosophy, government policy for the alleviation of unemployment has moved from a focus on job creation to training programmes. This embodies the assumption that unemployment is compounded by skill mismatch rather than because there are not enough jobs available.

It is in this context that ETSA and TOPS were created. In this thesis the effectiveness of a TOPS course was examined as a means of increasing the employability of unskilled youth. The next chapter looks at features of successful training courses as one measure of evaluating this.

CHAPTER THREE

TRAINING COURSES

This purpose of this thesis is to explore how a training programme helped increase the employability of unskilled school leavers. This chapter investigates some of the barriers to learning identified in the literature which face students at school. It focuses in particular on those experienced by the trainees I interviewed and defines what makes a young person educationally 'at-risk'.

Following that is a discussion of the features of successful training courses for people who are disadvantaged learners. Course organisation is examined as well as effective delivery of education.

3.1 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Groups who face barriers to learning

An Education Review Office (ERO) (1995) report summarises groups facing barriers to learning as:

Maori; women and girls; Pacific Island students; students from minority ethnic groups; students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and people with disabilities. These are similar to the groups identified in current equal employment opportunities (EEO) legislation (ERO 1995, p3).

These are the groups who are more likely to face barriers to learning and be educationally disadvantaged. As will be explained below these are extra-school barriers.

Types of barriers to learning

A later ERO (1996) report called 'Addressing Barriers to Learning', classifies barriers to education in three groups.

Barriers to learning identified in case studies include those which originate outside the school (extra-school), those which originate from national administrative arrangements (inter-school), and those which originate within each school (intra-school) (ERO, 1996, p4).

Extra-school barriers to education refer to factors which are outside the school's control, such as the social and cultural context the characteristics of the child or the child's family. The ERO (1995) list referred to above is an example of extra-school barriers. Inter-school barriers are common to all schools and come as a result of the structure of the education system. Teacher-student ratios are an example of this as are the curriculum, the timing of holidays and the length of the school day. Intra-school barriers are things within the management and organisation of the school that may present barriers to student learning. Funding and resourcing, teacher quality and assessment systems all fall within this category. Eliminating these three types of barriers will require different solutions as the responsibility lies in different places.

The particular barriers discussed below have been selected because they correspond to those experienced at school by the trainees interviewed on the TOPS course. Two extra-school barriers are explored; being from a minority ethnic group and barriers from parents. Inter-school barriers are excluded as they were not mentioned by trainees. The intra-school barriers examined are poor quality teaching and teacher misconduct. Elaborating on the ERO classification, a new category of 'intra-child' barriers (those

that come from within the child themselves) has been coined. Under this heading lack of commitment, peer pressure, truancy and alienation are investigated..

EXTRA-SCHOOL BARRIERS

Barriers for Maori and Pacific Island students

Much has been written to suggest that ethnicity could play a significant role in educational success. Research (ETSA February 1996) has found that Maori and Pacific Island students are automatically disadvantaged because education is delivered in a European cultural context.

The pedagogical approaches used in delivering the curriculum favours children of the Palagi background (ETSA February 1996, p42).

Exams such as School Certificate which are designed to fail half of the students who sit, the 'deficit model' of curriculum delivery and lower teacher expectations have been blamed for failure among Pacific Island students (ETSA February 1996). Seen and not Heard: Voices of Pacific Island Learners (ETSA June 1996), states "the proponents of the deficit approach to education assert that cultural differences in values and practices disadvantage persons from minority ethnic groups, which in turn, inhibits their educational achievement". They claim this approach is less popular now than it used to be but maintain that:

...negative attitudes and stereotypical assumptions about minority ethnic groups are still embedded in social and educational policies, and consequently, in teacher expectations and attitudes. The impact of the deficit approach on "disadvantaged" learners is mostly negative. For example, such learners tend to have low self-esteem and blame themselves for their failures in the school system (ETSA June 1996, p13).

Statistics bear out that Maori students are over-represented in truancy, suspension and expulsion rates and that they tend to leave school earlier and with lower qualifications

(Clark et al 1996, pp22-37). For example Education Statistics published in 1996, reported that in 1994 25.5% of Maori males and 29% Maori females remained at school until Form seven compared to 49% of non-Maori males and 56.9% of non-Maori females (Clark et al 1996, p10). 1996 Census population statistics show Europeans make up 71.7% of the population in New Zealand, Maori 14.5% and Pacific Island students 4.8% (Statistics New Zealand 1999, p58). In 1998 of all the post-school qualifications¹ gained, 2.3% were obtained by Pacific Island students and 6.7% by Maori compared to 84.8% achieved by Europeans (Statistics New Zealand 1999, p142). Clearly Maori and Pacific Island students are not achieving rates of education consistent with their percentage of the population.

Barriers from Parents

Another extra-school barrier is lack of parental support for education. If parents are not educated themselves they are less likely to understand the types of support that their children need and they can be unsympathetic and antagonistic in their attitude towards schooling (Clark et al 1996, p93). The tension of differing values between home and school can also be a barrier. To achieve success students need the learning and behaviours from at school to be reinforced at home.

INTRA-SCHOOL BARRIERS

Barriers within the classroom such as poor quality teaching and teacher misconduct are intra-school barriers to learning.

¹ This includes Trade Certificate, NZ Certificate etc, Nurse/Teacher Certificate, University Certificate or Diploma, Bachelors Degree, Post Graduate Qualification, Other Post School Qualification (Statistics New Zealand 1999, p142).

Poor quality teaching

ERO (1995) defines these factors as barriers to learning within the classroom;

- inappropriate delivery of the curriculum;
- too easy or too hard material;
- not enough books;
- recycled, out of date worksheets; or
- a lack of stimulation, enthusiasm and rigour (ERO 1995, p16).

Hawk et al (1996) found that lecturing the students or setting them a lot of copying and summarising work to do became a barrier to learning. Not explaining things adequately, using 'big' words and assuming the students understood when they did not also created barriers. Hawk also reported that excessive, as much as no control impeded student learning. If students thought the curriculum was irrelevant, it created a barrier to learning (Clark et al 1996).

ERO (1995) states that systems need to be in place so that the 'attention and interest of students are maintained'.

Good systems organise learning so that students do not find they have not enough to do and so that programmes do not leave students feeling that they are unable to complete set tasks because they are too hard (ERO 1995, p16).

This means that teachers have a part to play in creating or removing barriers to student learning by the way that they present the curriculum.

Few schools recognise that their own policies and procedures may impose barriers and disadvantage students. Teachers who are ill-prepared, who use outdated teaching resources, who fail to capture the interest of students or who have low expectations of their students create their own classroom-based set of barriers to learning and achievement (ERO 1995, p25).

Poor Teacher performance

ERO (1996) cites poor teacher performance as the most immediate of barriers to student learning. There are three issues involved:

- Teacher misconduct
- Incompetent teaching
- Unsystematic management (ERO 1996, p18).

Teacher misconduct is breaking school rules, for example frequently being absent or late. Incompetent teaching is where the teacher lacks sufficient knowledge of the syllabus, cannot organise classroom materials or does not have the skills or personal qualities to run the classroom. Unsystematic management is when the curriculum is not co-ordinated across the whole school and is left to individual teachers (ERO 1996).

Hawk et al (1996) found that racist attitudes and comments, put-downs and picking favourites were all barriers to learning. Students did not respond to lazy uncommitted teachers who did not seem to care, negative or grumpy teachers or those who took out their anger on students. Teachers reinforcing student failure has also been cited as destructive (ERO 1995).

INTRA-CHILD BARRIERS

Lack of Commitment

Teachers in one survey cited turning up on time, attending regularly, goal setting and completing work as important skills to develop. A poor attitude to learning is also a barrier (Clark et al 1996).

Peer pressure

Peer pressure has been found to be a barrier to learning (Clark et al 1996). 'Barriers to Learning' (ERO 1995) reports a survey of 54 secondary schools which asked about the barriers to learning within their school. Just under half of these identified barriers for Maori girls and among them peer pressure was mentioned. Barriers to learning for students can also be created by tension with other students for example falling out with friends and having other students in the class they do not like (Clark et al, 1996).

Truancy

'Barriers to Learning' (ERO 1995) reports that truancy has been identified by schools as a barrier to learning as has poor attendance. It also found that schools, which have had problems with this also, lacked adequate systems for curriculum planning and management of classrooms. Schools that targeted curriculum delivery and assessment systems for improvement found these successful in helping to increase attendance. This suggests there is a link between the quality of teaching offered to the students and their levels of attendance.

Truancy also becomes a barrier to learning in itself as the longer that students are away from school the harder it is for them to catch up as they miss work and lose contact with their friends. In this way it is a compounding problem (ERO 1995).

The more frequent the absences, the more difficult it becomes, to the extent that if or when chronic non-attenders return, it is virtually impossible for them to successfully fit back into mainstream classes (Hawk et al 1996, p229).

Suspension is a barrier to learning as the learning process is interrupted which increases the chance that it will not be reinstated.

Alienation

Some students become 'lost' within the school system. Being disconnected from the curriculum, which happens when they miss key lessons, can alienate students. This makes it more difficult for them to participate in their classes. Students in this position say that the curriculum is irrelevant.

When this comment is put alongside the fact that they have missed out some key parts of the curriculum, the irrelevancy issue can be read as one of disconnection, that is, they have become disconnected from the curriculum (Clark et al, 1996, p91).

Although alienation is classified here as an intra-child barrier this does not mean that it is the child's fault. Students may become alienated as a result of intra-school barriers such as boring lessons or negative relationships with teachers. Sometimes students fall through the cracks because they are out of synch with the values of the school.

The basic problem appeared to be the disjunction between the large, impersonal structure of the secondary school in operation, and the individual student with needs which were not being recognised or satisfied on a personal basis (Clark et al, 1996, p108).

The following factors identified by Activity Centres can contribute to student marginalisation

- placing low ability students in mixed ability classes where they fail
- the size and rigid structure of the mainstream school being too hard to handle
- schools being too confrontational
- slow students not being allowed to work at their own pace
- an inability to meet individual students' needs
- schools being too big, too impersonal and too inflexible
- an inability of the school to value every student (Clark et al 1996, p107).

DEFINITION OF AT-RISK YOUTH

In the educational context, a young person at-risk is generally considered to:

- have behaviour that cannot be managed by normal school discipline methods,
- be a persistent school refuser,
- be isolated from their peers,
- have low motivation (Baragwanath 1996, p46).

Clark et al (1996) concur with this and add students who have had disrupted learning patterns and groups who have been marginalised from conventional schooling patterns of learning and teaching.

At-risk students are often unmotivated and disruptive in class, have a very short attention span and take up an unfair amount of the teacher's attention. Schools in more affluent areas tend to have fewer youths at-risk.

OECD reports educational risk factors as "a background of poverty, ethnic minority status, features of family arrangements (e.g. single parent status), poor knowledge of the language of instruction, the type and geographical location of the school attended, and community factors such as poor housing. It was noted that risk factors cumulate such that for example the presence of four factors is predictive of a ten-fold likelihood of failure (OECD 1995).

3.2 TRAINING COURSES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

The previous section outlined some of the barriers to learning students can face at school and defined behaviours of educationally at-risk students. This section explores how good training courses are organised in order to maximize the chances of at-risk students re-entering the education system.

Aims of Training courses

Training courses are aiming to develop their trainees into confident young adults who are able to develop their skills and abilities for use in the workplace.

Other aims include encouraging responsible behaviour, helping trainees take control of their lives and teaching them to work with other people. The ATTI's (Association of Teachers in Technical Institutes) view of transition is "not a narrow transition from school to working life, but a transition from being a youngster in a schooling system to a fully-functioning adult in a society in which paid employment may be a part" (Johnston 1987, p209).

Singer and Johnson (1983) who observed over forty training programmes in Britain before writing their book entitled *'Setting up and Running Training Programmes'*; claim another important aim is for trainees to learn how to learn as this will give them the confidence to take up whatever opportunities come their way.

In the future youngsters will also need to understand and be able to use, the processes of work activity such as planning, decision making, interaction between people, data collection and information flow. The most important process of all is the process of being able to learn (Singer and Johnson 1983, p2).

As the literature below explains at-risk students who have not done well at school need a nurturing, warm environment if they are to succeed in education. They are most likely to do well in a small course where they receive personal attention and the syllabus taught in a user-friendly way with lots of encouragement and feedback. The students also need to be treated as adults and given choice and freedom with a clear understanding of consequences.

The principles discussed below have been drawn from a number of sources dealing with education for those at-risk. Some had a focus on training courses for at-risk youth,

some on alternative education provision for school age children and others on pre-vocational courses for school drop-outs who needed to be re-enthused to learn anything.

3.21 COURSE ORGANISATION

This section details important organisational features of training courses.

Small and Personal

At-risk students stand the best chance of success when they are in a small class where they will receive personal attention.

Writing about alternative schooling options for youth at-risk of failing in the mainstream education system, Conant (1992 cited in Clark et al 1996, p12) suggested "limiting class size, selecting teachers carefully, being flexible, and avoiding the conventional model of school in which rewards and penalties dominate the teacher-student relationship." Bates (1993 cited in Clark et al 1996) also saw the importance of small class sizes, caring staff, a flexible programme and a community environment around the school. Ciccone (1991 cited in Clark et al 1996, p13) in her study of an alternative high school in the United States saw the benefits of alternative schooling for at-risk youth being in the small size, informal atmosphere and therefore high degree of personal attention they were able to receive. Kershaw (1993 cited in Clark et al 1996), a New Zealand researcher, concurred with this. He saw "small size, support structures, close relationships and guidance counsellor support...as positive" and a lot more effective than deficiency models which aimed to fix students wrongs.

An OECD (1995) report giving recommendations to schools dealing with children at-risk emphasised among other things the importance of supporting the students social and emotional needs (cited in Clark et al 1996). Activity Centers, which are an

alternative secondary school programme in New Zealand, work with at-risk youth found using a one-to-one personal approach effective. They offered counselling and aimed to build self-esteem (Clark et al 1996). Small classes give the best opportunity for building trust between the tutors and the trainees. Singer and Johnson (1983) emphasise tutors and trainees must earn trust from each other.

Singer and Johnson (1983) suggest that in the light of the advantages of having small classes and a high ratio of teachers to student, the possibility of peer tutoring could be explored. In groups of mixed ability for example the more able students could assist those who were struggling and both gain, as the act of teaching would reinforce the knowledge of the student acting as tutor. They maintain that trainees can learn as much from each other as they can from their tutor and it is important to harness this group learning potential if possible. They also argue the importance of learning support being available to the trainees as they progress through the course in the form of guidance and counseling arrangements.

Activity Centers found small classes gave a sense of security and safety because the students were in contact with the same set of teachers all day, everyday. They see that students being able to build a relationship with their tutors as one of the reasons for their success (Clark et al 1996). Hawk et al (1996) emphasised that smaller classes would give the teacher more opportunity to plan effectively and the students could get more individual attention.

Clearly in the delivery of education to at-risk students an important component is a warm community environment, informal, personal and administered by caring staff. The trainees need this support to help them get past their often damaging experiences of school.

Post-school education must, in some ways, attempt to redress the profound alienation of those whom the schooling system has failed...post-school education must recognise the reality that many young people have acquired little but rejection from their school experience (Gordon 1987, p132).

Clearly defined rules

Rules and clearly defined rewards provide stability for students (Clark et al 1996). Singer and Johnson (1983) suggest one way of doing this is to have a 'traineeship agreement', which lays down for both the management and the trainee what they are expecting of each other.

The Activity Centers found it was important to have rules so trainees knew their parameters and the consequences of their behaviour, both positive and negative. They introduced the concept of rewards by developing a token economy whereby students were 'paid' for their work and then allowed to buy things with their earnings (Clark et al 1996).

Hawk et al (1996) found that students want to be treated firmly but fairly. Students distinguished between authoritarian, confrontational or negative discipline and a well managed classroom where established rules provided a secure, settled environment. They definitely preferred the latter.

Management

Singer and Johnson (1983) provide an outline of the skills needed by the course organiser. They need to have a genuine concern for the young people in the course and consider that the course exists to serve the trainees' needs. They also need to be able to organise people and make things happen, to be innovative and proactive in the face of problems, open to criticism and prepared to change things and take on new ideas. Managers need good people management skills and to be able to relate well to the tutors employed. Ideally they would also be able to create links with people in the community and tap into resources available.

Trainee as the client

Singer and Johnson (1983) emphasise that a training programme needs to consider the young person as their client and major beneficiary. Although other groups may benefit from the training such as the government, employers and tutors, the focus of the course should be on the needs of the young trainee. They point out that this means that at every stage the tutors need to be asking themselves if what they are doing is benefiting the trainees. They suggest that the length and content of the course needs to be agreed on by the trainee at the outset. Kaupapa Whakaora (an alternative education programme) makes a priority of maintaining a student centred learning environment where students as well as tutors are able to make decisions (Clark et al 1996).

The role of the tutor is to help the young people learn and profit from the course. Their job satisfaction is to come from the “extent to which the youngsters in their charge develop skills, abilities, self confidence and positive attitudes” (Singer and Johnson 1983 p28). They found that the common attitude of the tutors they spoke to was “if the pupil has not learned then the teacher has not taught”, in other words the tutors were always open to assessing and improving their own performance (Singer and Johnson 1983, p28).

Selection of trainees

Selecting trainees who are capable of and interested in the course is vital. The organisers as well as the trainees need to understand in what area the trainees’ aptitudes and abilities lie. Singer and Johnson (1983) state that if the course organisers have selected their trainees correctly they will want to learn. They thought the success of the Young Persons Training Scheme (YTS), which was being launched in Britain at that time, would largely depend on the extent to which young people were steered towards courses that suited them. They state that it is certainly no service to a young person to be placed on a scheme for which they are not suited and the idea of offering a place to anyone who comes along is not wise.

It is more important to ensure that the young person is really committed to, and has an interest in, what is on offer, than to worry about his or her past academic performance – or indeed about his school record in general (Singer and Johnson 1983, p36).

3.22 DELIVERY OF EDUCATION

This section discusses important features in the delivery of education to at-risk youth. As the at-risk have failed in the school system, learning has not been a positive experience, thus a nurturing learning environment is essential.

Tutors

High quality teaching is vital to delivering education to students at-risk. Quality teaching involves using appropriate teaching styles so the different needs of students can be accommodated, with teachers able to give empathy, care and encouragement to students as individuals.

A constant theme throughout this paper is that one of the most important factors in achieving desirable educational and personal change in at risk students, is the quality of the teachers involved. Context, content and delivery form are important, but they are subservient to the absolute necessity of have teachers who have a variety of teaching styles and methodologies and who can flexible adapt them to meet the diverse needs of difficult students. Beyond that they must have the capacity to empathise with students, showing care and aroha² (Clark et al 1996, p55).

OECD (1992) states teachers are at the heart of educational improvement.

² Maori word meaning love.

Teachers can make a difference. Expert, motivated, flexible teaching staff are the most vital component of high quality provision (OECD, 1992 cited in Clark et al 1996, p55).

An OECD (1994) report on teacher quality outlines these five areas of competence for teachers of the at-risk;

- a) pedagogical skill, including the acquisition and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies;
- b) empathy and the commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of others;
- c) knowledge of substantive curriculum areas and content;
- d) reflection and the ability to be self-critical, the hallmark of teacher professionalism;
- e) managerial competence, as teachers assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom (OECD 1994 cited in Clark et al 1996, p55).

The report states that the two most important skills for working with at-risk young people are the first two on the list; a) pedagogical approaches, the ability to use appropriate teaching techniques and b) being able to empathise with the students and treat them with respect. Clark (1993) and Ramsay (1993 both cited in Clark et al 1996) also found this in their research. Singer and Johnson's (1983) research concurred with this and also found it was important that tutors like young people.

The effect of quality teaching is that the students are encouraged in their ability to learn something which at-risk learners are very much in need of.

In the quotation below, Clark et al (1996) explains that effective teachers of the at-risk develop a rapport with their students and adapt their teaching methods to individual learning needs. They suggest that this makes the students feel valuable and worthwhile and this then gives them the confidence to learn.

There appears to be universal acceptance that quality teachers can make a difference to the educational and life chances of students at risk. Quality teachers are those who provide quality teacher/student interaction, that is they both individualise teaching

styles to suit the particular learning style of the students concerned and develop an emotional rapport with them. Students are made to feel valued and worthwhile and develop the confidence to take the risk of learning. The environment created by such teachers is facilitative of all students learning. Were schools populated entirely by such teachers, it is doubtful that alternative centers would be required (Clark et al 1996, p134).

Students report that the best tutors are those who show them respect and genuinely care (Baragwanath, May 1996). Robinson (1987), a tutor, found establishing rapport with her students was essential in order for them to be prepared to listen and learn. "It was very important for them to, if not like you, at least have some empathy with you because otherwise they simply wouldn't take on board anything you said, they'd rubbish the lot of it" (Robinson 1987, p56). She also found that being honest with the students brought down the barriers between them. As she was honest with them they were prepared to be honest with her.

A study published by the Education and Training Support Agency called 'Seen but not Heard: Voices of Pacific Island Learners', reports on the learning experiences of Pacific Island students on TOPS courses. They valued teacher acceptance and that was important in their learning process. Half of the eighty participants in the study found that the personal qualities of the teacher were important to helping them succeed. For example one commented, "She was patient, encouraged me to go to class. She'd come along to check if I was in class. If she saw me out there, she would take me to class, not the office."

The participants stressed repeatedly the importance of feeling like they belonged in the course. For example they made comments like, "I had a purpose for being there. I could do it!" and "I could keep up with the others", "I was listened to" (ETSA June 1996, p50). Just under half, thirty-two respondents commented that it was the teacher approach and methods that made a big difference to their learning.

These participants said the teacher involved had: provided extra tuition, “explained until I understood”, “never got mad when I got it wrong”, “gave lots of examples” and “would check for understanding, even if I didn’t ask” (ETSA June 1996, p50).

Hawk et al (1996) also found that the ability of a teacher to give encouragement really effects the way the student feels about the teacher, the subject and their performance in the subject.

The students’ comments suggest that both the encouragement about day-to-day efforts and achievements as well as encouragement about longer-term goals influence the way they feel about learning and the effort they put into it (Hawk et al 1996, p214).

There is ample evidence from a variety of programmes that ‘teacher quality’, tutors taking a personal interest in their students and respecting them as adults is appreciated and crucial to increasing students success.

TEACHING

As the literature demonstrates the principles around the delivery of education follow the theme of really meeting the student where they are. Making the information accessible, beginning with what the students already know, presenting it in an interesting way and letting the learner learn at their own pace as much as possible. The learning environment needs to be comfortable so the students can feel safe and at home. The literature commented on these different aspects of effective teaching.

Relating teaching to what students already know

It is important that the knowledge given is related to things the students already know. This gives them a starting point in their minds, something to relate the new information to. Research from England, Australia, Europe and America cited in Baragwanath (May

1996, p46) has all shown that “what a learner gains out of any learning situation is dependent on what she or he brings to that learning situation.” “Learning occurs considerably more rapidly, efficiently and meaningfully if a new input can be related to existing knowledge”

As well as this, Singer and Johnson (1983) suggest tutors take every opportunity to relate what they are teaching the students to the wider world of work, presumably to set it in context.

That the work is seen as relevant

Hawk et al (1996) comment on the need to make the curriculum relevant to the trainees so they understand the importance of what they are learning. Singer and Johnson (1983) also stress this and suggest one way to achieve this is to deal with issues as they arise. They give the example of teaching inter-personal skills in every day life rather than in a lecture format.

Flexible

The OECD recommendations for dealing with children at-risk (1995) suggest developing pedagogues, which meet individual needs.

Singer and Johnson (1983) state that every trainee has different learning needs. They recommend that timetabling be kept to a minimum and as much as possible allow students to work at their own pace. Tutors are to be more of a guide and resource person.

What is needed is a recognition that people are willing and able to learn at differing speeds and in different ways, and as much account must be taken of this fact as possible. Similarly there is a need to encourage individual young people to explore

their own particular interests within a general framework (Singer and Johnson 1983, p26).

They suggest that material be presented in different ways depending on the individual, for example some people would like to do a day release to a technical institute while others would find that boring and irrelevant. Activity Centers found it was successful to have the students working at their own pace and level.

Teaching style

Hawk et al (1996) found that students appreciated it when their teachers were organised, well prepared and knew their subject. They liked to be given clear instructions broken down into steps and in language they could understand. They also commented that they need to be able to ask questions and said it helped them learn if the teacher used anecdotes. Students enjoyed interest and variety and not too much text book work. They preferred teachers who had a sense of humour, made the lessons fun and could appreciate the students' sense of humour also.

Learning styles

Hawke et al (1996) found that students, especially those from the Pacific Islands benefitted from learning by doing. They also respond well to co-operative or group learning. Students favour it because it is less threatening and they help each other.

Parsons (1993) reports on the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), a British vocational and technical education programme working with 14-18 year olds. Programme delivery included problem solving and active learning and the students responded well to this. The students enjoyed situations where they were given "more practical work, more responsibility, more equipment and greater independence"

(Parsons 1993, p181). Teachers worked predominantly with small groups and individuals rather than lecturing the whole class.

Work experience

The value of work experience as part of transition education is well recognised. 'Our Children at Risk' published by the OECD in 1995, stresses the value of direct labour market experience for at-risk young people attempting to make the transition from school to work (Clark et al 1996). Trainees' opinions endorse this. TOPS trainees surveyed for ETSA came out strongly in favour of work experience (ETSA April 1996, p32).

Singer and Johnson (1983) stress that trainees on courses should be given 'real' work to perform and are not just left standing around watching work being performed. In order to achieve this close links with employers need to be developed. The hours and the discipline required in the work experience need to be as close as possible to what the real work will be like to prepare students adequately. The job needs to include defined standards of performance and clear feedback so they know if they are succeeding or not.

Training programmes lead to jobs

Undeniably it is best if training programmes lead to jobs. For this reason it is good if they are linked to trends in the labour market (Gordon 1987, p134). She maintains that even if there cannot be permanent work at the end of a course, an employer should agree to take the student on for a short time at least. If this cannot be done then she feels it would be better if the course was not offered at all. In Britain the YTS has been criticised for not succeeding in being the 'permanent bridge between school and work' that it set out to be. Many trainees are unable to get jobs at the end of it (Gordon 1987, p134).

They want specific skills that will enable them to get a specific job, not generalisable social skills that are seen as irrelevant to the urgent task of gaining employment. Gleeson and Mardle claim, when discussing the social and life skills training of apprentices, that students find any form of instruction, which is not immediately relevant to their work, 'not only a waste of time, but an unnecessary intrusion into what they need to know' (1980). (Korndorffer 1987, p230).

They want...the chance of a regular, secure job and the skills to gain and retain such employment. They are critical of any course content that does not appear to be aimed at these ends (Korndorffer 1987, p230).

Obtaining employment was of major importance to trainees on a YOP course studied by Jones et al (MSC Special Programmes Occasional Paper: No.4).

Assessment

Assessment is necessary in order to ensure that the trainees are progressing and to reward achievement. Singer and Johnson (1983) emphasise the importance of the trainees recognising that learning has occurred.

Trainees need to have targets that are realistic but will motivate and stretch them. They must also be involved in the assessment and allowed to discuss and question the judgements made on their work by their tutors. Students need more feedback than simple pass and fail judgements. Unrealistic goals are very counterproductive and accentuate the feelings of failure students may already have (Singer and Johnson 1983). Kaupapa Whakaora in their work with at-risk youth aim to build self-esteem by providing positive, successful learning experiences and continually reinforcing these successes (Baragwanath May 1996, p32).

As well as tests and exams, students can be assessed in other less formal ways. Individual meetings with the tutor and the student, students in groups talking over or writing a report about what they have learned, or individually keeping a log book or

profile of their own progress. The principle is always the same; the purpose of assessment is to show the student they are making progress. Tutors on TVEI (Technical and Vocational Education Initiative) in Britain found interactive assessment such as tutorials, statements on progress and attainment and target setting worked well to encourage students and help keep them motivated (Parsons 1993).

The valuing of achievement is counter to the deficiency model that has prevailed and goes some way to keeping pupils in the educational fold (Parsons 1993, p183).

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Quantifiable outcomes of a course are measured by the numbers of trainees who move into a job or into further training or who leave the course. Singer and Johnson (1983) find however that even if this does not occur, helping trainees to “develop their interests and aptitudes to meet whatever opportunities and challenges lie ahead”, can also be considered successful (p50/51).

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores how a group of people who failed at school were helped to re-enter the education system through a vocational training course. Chapter Three has investigated both some of the barriers, which contribute to student failure, and the features of good training courses that help disadvantaged learners to succeed.

Barriers to learning can be classified on four levels. ERO defined extra-school, inter-school and intra-school barriers. ‘Intra-child’ barriers was added to this. Rather than an exhaustive investigation the barriers focused on were those which affected the trainees I interviewed. Extra-school barriers investigated are being part of an ethnic minority group and parental attitudes. Intra-school barriers focused on were poor quality teaching presentation of work and teacher misconduct. Intra-child barriers covered

were lack of student commitment, peer pressure, truancy and alienation within the school system. The barriers to education experienced by the trainees at school are explored in Chapter Five.

Successful training courses are organised to provide a nurturing learning environment. They are small so as to ensure individual attention, have structure and clearly defined rules and regard the trainee as their client, by focusing on their needs as a paramount consideration. The tutor's role is crucial in responding to the various learning needs of trainees and providing encouragement and support. Teaching methods need to be 'user-friendly' giving relevant information in a clear and interesting way which allows for individuals learning needs and preferences. Assessment is positive for students when designed to show progress and reward achievement. Work experience modules are another valuable facet of training courses. The organisation and delivery of education on the TOPS course are detailed in Chapter Six.

The research method and process for the interviews conducted with TOPS trainees are described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis examines the experiences of a group of trainees on a TOPS (Training Opportunities Programme) course. The aim was to explore their perspective about how the course helped them to gain vocational skills and confidence in learning and thus reduce the risk of them becoming long-term unemployed. The most appropriate methodology was found to be the qualitative approach.

4.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative, interpretivist or post-positivist research, sees the purpose of social research as interpretation and understanding of the world and the way people interact together. Reality is considered to be subjective and inquiry is often inductive, simply exploring what is there without preconceptions. Inquiry cannot and indeed, should not be value-free. People are seen as unique and in the constant process of interpreting their worlds and assigning meanings to the events that happen in their lives. They create their own worlds and are not restricted by external laws. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding reality as defined by the research subjects

Features of Qualitative research

Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the perspective of the research subject in a non-threatening, relational way. The aim is for communication and understanding between the researcher and the respondent and the relationship is not at all hierarchical.

There is no intention to establish independence of the researcher from the respondent or the data; researcher and respondents are working together for a common goal, and the respondents are 'subjects' who define, explain, interpret, and construct reality, and as such they are as important as, if not more important than, the researcher (Sarantakos 1994, p50).

The researcher does not begin with preconceptions and a hypothesis is "not a condition but the aim of the research" (Sarantakos 1994, p50). The focus is on exploration. Research methods vary to suit the needs of different projects.

The purpose is for the respondent to explain reality from their point of view; their subjective experience is valued. The construction of reality is considered by the qualitative methodology to be a process that employs "patterns of meaning and action" (Sarantakos 1994, p50). The job of social research is to identify these patterns and thus understand the process of reality construction. The symbols that make up the 'patterns of meaning and action' are considered to reflect the context in which they occur and are to be understood with respect to that context. The researcher is not trying to be separate from the data or the respondent but work with the respondent. The latter defines and explains reality and as such is at least as important, if not more important than the researcher.

Qualitative work is explicit about the method and process to be used so that the respondent is an equal partner in the data collection process. In keeping with this research methods are responsive, flexible and explicit to make it as easy as possible for respondents to give information (Sarantakos 1994).

Why I chose a qualitative methodology

What Lamnek (1988 cited in Sarantakos 1994) describes, as 'Openness' in qualitative research is a commitment to understanding the perspective of the respondents. The purpose of qualitative research is not to prove or disprove anything but explore how the research subjects view their world. My research is qualitative because it explored the perspectives of TOPS trainees and my purpose was to understand their experience on the training course.

I began with research questions to guide my inquiry rather than a hypothesis. I conducted semi-structured interviews, which gave the trainees the freedom to express what was important to them on the topics we discussed. The methods of data collection were fully explained to the participants and they knew they had the right to leave the research project at any time. My method is explained in more detail below.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

My purpose in researching TOPS trainees was to see if and how they became more employable as a result of being on a TOPS course. I wanted to compare what their attitude was to training and education before and after their course and do one post course follow-up interview to see where the trainees had progressed to by then.

Although it involved the risk of trainees withdrawing during the process, I decided to tackle three sets of interviews. I felt this would be more accurate than doing one interview after the course and asking them to recall the changes that had occurred in their lives. Looking back in retrospect they may have made a different assessment of events. It seemed more illuminating to talk to them at the different points in their learning process and let that speak for itself.

The interview six weeks after was an important check up to see what they were doing and ascertain if the changes made in the first course had lasted to that point. A third interview goes a small way towards testing the effectiveness of the changes which may have come about in the trainees as a result of being on the course. While six weeks is a very short time frame I felt it would be interesting to see where the trainees had progressed to by then. Another reason for the third interview was that ETSA (Education and Training Support Agency) collects post-course statistics of what the trainees are doing two months afterwards. They do not feel six weeks is a long enough time for trainees to get a job (ETSA April 1996, p30). Timing constraints forced my final interview to be six weeks rather than two months after the course. This did not make any difference to my results however as the trainees were either in the next course or doing something else at the six week point.

Given the nature of the TOPS clientele, interviews seemed more appropriate than questionnaires because their previous educational backgrounds and possible problems with literacy could impair my results. Interviewing provided the opportunity to gain detailed data of the trainees' perspectives.

I considered choosing two TOPS courses and comparing them to each other. However no TOPS course is really typical and there are many variables such as clientele, training provider, ethnicity of the group, length of course and style of training. Sometimes the only thing they have in common is that they are both TOPS courses. Given this a comparison of the two would yield little useful result. My main interest is in those particular trainees and what they experienced rather than in how treatment and outcomes differ between courses. Also the timing of courses was a constraint as it would have been difficult to find two courses that fitted into my time frame.

The training providers I worked with run other courses and I chose 'Caterbase' because it began and ended at a time I could work with. I did not particularly choose a catering course. 'Caterbase' is an introduction to cooking course. It is the precursor to Bar 1,

Bar 2 and Bar 3, which are all cheffing courses. These trainees are at the beginning of the accreditation process for becoming chefs.

4.3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Setting up the research

I arranged an appointment with the Manager of ETSA to discuss my research and ask if they would refer me to a training provider whose students I could interview. They were happy to support my work. The Manager explained that TOPS courses have differing success rates and asked if I wanted to study a very successful course or one that had not achieved such good results. I answered that I wanted to study a successful course in order to see TOPS operating at its best. Because my purpose was to understand how training programmes could help those who are educationally at-risk, it was important that I work with a successful training provider and see training for this disadvantaged client group being done well.

The Manager gave me the names of three training providers to approach and I spoke to them all. The one I chose was the most keen to work with me and had a course which fitted the time frame I was working with.

Meeting the Training Providers and Trainees

Initially I met with the Supervisor and one of the Tutors to talk about the possibility of doing interviews with their students. They were very positive and encouraging about it and told me to get back to them nearer the time. At the beginning of the course in July, I went and visited the class and explained my project to them. In accordance with the Massey University Ethics Committee recommendations I gave out Information Sheets

about what I intended to do and did not return to ask if they wanted to be involved for several days so they would have time to think about it.

The Information sheet included contact phone numbers in case they wanted to contact me in the interim with questions about the project. The contact numbers used were my supervisors work phone numbers rather than my home phone number to protect my privacy. None of the trainees used the contact numbers.

I returned several days later and eight out of the sixteen students volunteered to be interviewed. I arranged appointments for the interviews then. They all signed Consent forms. The Information sheet and Consent form are included as Appendix 9 and 10. The sample included a balance of gender and ethnic groups. Four trainees were female and four male and of the four females, two were European, one Maori and one of Pacific Island ethnicity. Of the four males, two were European, one was Maori and one of Pacific Island ethnicity.

THE INTERVIEWS

After I drafted the questions I discussed them with one of ETSA's 'Skills Advisors' to check if they were appropriate and find out if they could be improved in any way. She felt the questions were fine and that I covered a good range of material. She suggested that I begin with easier questions and gradually move on to harder ones to help build rapport with the interviewees. I thought this was a very good idea and I ordered my questions to reflect this. Copies of the questions I took into the first, second and third set of interviews respectively are in Appendices 11,12 and 13.

In the first interview I began with some demographic details, asked about their memories of school life, their time between school and the course and their experiences of the course thus far. Exploring their attitudes towards school was important in order to set in context the changes in them by the time they started the course and after they

finished it. It also helped me to get to know them better and understand where they had come from. I was interested in what they had done between school and coming on the course in case this had an important part to play in helping them become education-ready. For most of them this was the case. In the first interview we talked more about the course than I had anticipated because they had been there a week by the time I was able to interview them. They were very positive and enthusiastic about the course and a good deal more motivated than I had expected.

In the second set of interviews my questions focussed on how they enjoyed the course and what they learned from it. The trainees remembered our first interview and I found we were able to re-establish rapport immediately. In that set I only had six people to interview as two had dropped out of the course.

When I came to interview for the third time five of the original eight trainees had progressed to the next level of catering course. I was able to interview four of them. The fifth missed our appointment and the other trainee completed the first course but was not allowed to go straight on to the next course. I contacted her by phone to find out what she was doing and how she felt about not being accepted for the next course. This information is included in Chapter Six.

Paired interviews

For the first set of interviews six trainees were in pairs and the other two were interviewed separately because they were not both available at the same time. In the second and third sets of interviews all the trainees were in pairs. I had planned to interview them separately however they preferred to be in pairs. The advantage of interviewing in pairs was that it made it less intimidating for the students and helped to put them at ease. Against that, as the conversation flows it can be hard to ask each person exactly the same questions especially if one respondent has a more dominant personality than the other does. There is a danger too that one person may echo the

other rather than thinking for themselves. I took junk food and drinks into the interviews for the students and I think it helped create a friendly atmosphere.

In comparing the results of the two techniques I do not think there was much difference in the data gathered in the individual and paired interviews. In the paired interviews in all but one case the pairs were as talkative as each other and sometimes gave me different answers to questions I put to them both, so I did not feel they were echoing each other. There was a pair who were a couple and she obviously took the lead in their relationship. They seemed to agree on a lot of things but would both answer for themselves and told me their different school histories. I felt like they were both thinking for themselves and that the interview was authentic. She talked a lot more than he did and I had to make sure I directed questions to him sometimes. He always answered my questions but said what he had to say with a lot less words.

Confidentiality

The interviews were conducted at the school and always in a room by ourselves. Either they stayed after class or the students were allowed out to talk to me. The trainees were relaxed and happy to talk. They all consented to being audio taped and they all knew that the tape could be turned off at any time if they wished. One trainee did ask me to turn it off at one point. I also told them that their real names need not be used unless they wanted them to. One trainee said he would rather not be named. I also reminded them later that they could conceal their names if they chose to. None replied that they wanted to. Despite this, I decided to change the names of the trainees and the training providers to protect their anonymity. The tapes were transcribed and the transcribers all signed confidentiality agreements. The raw data, tapes and transcriptions, have been destroyed.

Problems faced

The interviews went very well and no ethical problems occurred. The only difficulty I encountered was that in my first interview I positioned the microphone badly and the tape was not very clear. I could hear snatches which I quoted directly and other times I just heard the odd word and I reconstructed it as well as I could. Consequently that interview was not entirely word for word however because I had taken notes as well as taping it, I am sure it did not materially affect the quality of my data. Both those trainees had an opportunity to look at the transcript and make changes to it if they felt it was inaccurate. Neither of them found anything they wanted to change.

Processing the data

The raw data was transcribed and copies sent to the trainees care of the training provider and marked confidential. They were sent with stamped addressed envelopes so they could return the transcripts to me care of Univeristy with any clarification they wished to make. Only one of them did. After the first set of interviews I decided also to interview the administration manager I had first spoken to and the tutor on the trainees course. I thought this would help me understand some of the background to the school and more importantly the ethos and attitudes of the staff to the students. Those interviews were also taped, transcribed and sent to them. This thesis examines how this training course helped unskilled school leavers overcome their past barriers to learning and succeed in training. Interviews with the training providers complemented this and along with the literature review and the interviews with trainees, provided triangulation of data.

As I read each set of the interviews I noted themes in the margin as they emerged. I then used the cut and paste method of data analysis by cutting up all the interviews and assembling them in groups of one theme. All the information from all the interviews was put under a theme heading, even if only one or two trainees commented on it. For

example, only two trainees commented on the topic of motivation at school but this category was created none the less. In this way I ensured that no information was lost along the way. The themes for each collection of quotes related broadly to the questions I asked in the interviews.

All the quotes for each theme were collected and stapled on to pieces of paper under that heading. I put the papers into clear files; the first set of interviews filled two clear files and the second and third sets one each. This provided easy access to all the information. I highlighted each persons comments in different colours so it was obvious at a glance who said what.

I first assembled the data as it had been collected, writing up what the trainees were like in their first, then second and then third interviews in order to show how they had changed. This format provided a useful basis but was later reorganised into three new sections which instead of simply reporting the data, organised it around themes which related to the trainees development. The first was about trainees being education ready by the time they began the course, what they were like at school and how they had changed since they left. The second was about the learning environment on the course and the third about all the outcomes and benefits they gained.

These sections were further condensed and refined to become two chapters, Chapter Five about the barriers to learning experienced by the trainees at school and Chapter Six which detailed the learning environment on the course and the benefits gained by trainees there. Information from the interviews with the manager and tutor of the training school were included in Chapter Six to help show what kind of learning environment they were trying to create. Appendices were created for extra quotes and these are presented at the end of the thesis.

The data collected is discussed in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAINEES' BARRIERS TO LEARNING AT SCHOOL

This chapter details what the trainees recall about their experiences at school. The barriers they faced fall into the extra-school, intra-school and intra-child categories which were developed in Section 3.1 of Chapter Three. Trainees quotes are in italics and my questions, where included, are in regular type.

EXTRA-SCHOOL BARRIERS

Barriers for Maori and Pacific Island trainees

The trainees did not actually mention ethnicity as a barrier to learning. However, it is deemed an important issue in the literature which should be addressed here. The literature argued that minority ethnic groups are disadvantaged in the classroom as a result of pedagogical¹ approaches which favour 'Palagi' or European children, lower teacher expectations of Polynesian and Maori and examinations which are designed to fail half of the students who sit. It seems unlikely that students would critique these features of their education, especially when they are children. Jones' (1987) research suggests this as she found that Polynesian girls are likely to blame themselves for their failure at school without recognising the structural inequalities they are subject to. Four trainees were from ethnic minority groups, two Maori and two of Pacific Island ethnicity.

¹ Pedagogy = "the science and principles of teaching."

Parental attitudes

Six of the eight trainees commented on their parents' attitudes to their schooling. Of those six, four remember their parents taking an interest in their education. Only Teresa and Katrina had no encouragement from home. The girls were of Maori and Pacific Islands ethnicity respectively and both lived in an extended family situation either not with or not solely with their biological parents.

Katrina: My uncles...didn't even care about my reports, that's why I got into bad mouthing the teachers and stuff, like when my reports came in - 'ah it doesn't matter'.

INTRA-SCHOOL BARRIERS

Poor quality teaching

The students' memories of schoolwork were of it being difficult, boring or irrelevant. Consistent with suggestions in the literature, feeling comfortable enough to be able to ask questions was an issue and they would have liked their work to be presented in a more interesting way.

Four of the students felt they could not understand the work and did not feel able to ask for help.

Monica: In maths I was just too far behind, they put me in a top stream class for some reason, they were all yelling out the answers, they didn't wait for me to catch up.

Could you ask for help?

Monica: Too embarrassing to ask. All the brainy kids looking down on you for not knowing. I don't know why they put me there in the first place. I was just too far behind to catch up.

Teresa: A lot of the teachers I didn't feel comfortable with, I couldn't understand, especially my Maths and English teachers.

Four students commented they were bored by the work or felt like it was irrelevant to them.

Claire: I was bored. I was put in a top stream and I knew the work and I was bored, it didn't stimulate me enough. ...hot sticky sun in summer and being in Maths and English or Science class and it was totally going on and on and you just want to go to sleep, go home, put your feet up. I used to hate it...boring...teacher droning on.

Katrina: I wanted to be a chef, but how? Where will all the other things like History and stuff get me...?

Four students made comments about how they would like the work to be presented. They appreciated interactive, hands on learning that was not "boring". According to one, if teaching is interesting it just "all sinks in." Work that interested them really inspired them to learn. Several commented that they did not just want to do textbook work.

Cameron: (It's) gotta be (interesting). Some teachers just like chuck worksheets at you, it's too boring.

Teresa: ...give you a big fat book as big as your head.

So lots of interaction, lots of things to do, think about...?

Both: Yeah

Half the trainees said that they much preferred practical to academic subjects, which suggests they are better suited to hands on learning and non-academic study.

Geoff: Things that had a practical side I could do, but not really sitting down in class and theory all day.

Cameron: Agriculture and Horticulture was good because we were always doing practical, that was cool.

Teacher conduct

When asked what made a good teacher, three trainees recalled, even as far back as Primary school, those who took a special, personal interest in them and helped them with their work. Cameron, for example, had a teacher who gave him a lot of one-to-one attention and studied with him like a tutor. Despite a few having these excellent memories, this is the exception to the rule, as most trainees did not relate to their teachers.

Teresa: I remember that when I was very young, I had one teacher and her name was Mrs. Hamilton, she was very nice to me. All the other teachers, because I was such a brat, yelled at me, but this one would stop and say, 'I'll show you how it's done' took me through it slowly and yeah. She's one person from Primary that I remember when I was about six.

Any good teachers among them?

Jason: Yeah there was one, that was in Intermediate School, there was actually two, one was at Intermediate school and one was at Grammar school, that was my catering teacher at Grammar school and my teacher at Intermediate school for form one.

In each case personal attention encouraged them with their work and stopped them getting lost in the system.

Teresa: They could see I was slipping in my work, how I'd set my standards and they had a little word to me and stuff and then I'd suddenly I'd pick myself up, 'cause I wasn't really close with my family.

So it was encouragement really?

Teresa: Yeah.

And what made them good?

Jason: The teacher in form one, made me pull my act together 'cause I was the bad kid and she just took time aside to try and get things fixed up. And my catering teacher gave me the next level of catering when I was in her class, let me try different things that she wouldn't let other people do.

So it was the personal interest thing, perhaps?

Jason: Yeah.

Cameron: In high school I had a couple of good teachers, my agriculture teacher, he basically helped me through like every class, I'd study with him, he was almost like my tutor, he was really good.

For the trainees who did not like their teachers the reasons were the opposite of the above. They noticed a lack of personal attention and interest. Claire thought a good teacher would listen to their students and think about what they said, she said most did not do this.

Monica: I spent most of my time in IWA, the independent work area, as soon as I'd walk in they'd say, 'you're going to do something wrong, you may as well go'. They were just there to get paid and that, they didn't really seem to care a lot at the Catholic school.

Geoff: There were some good teachers that gave help, but others were like, they had favourite students and others they'd sort of neglect, ask them questions and they'd like, go to someone else.

So the good teachers were the ones that took an interest in you?

Geoff: Yes.

Teresa and Cameron felt put down by their teachers and were told that they would fail. Teresa said she was told this all through school from primary to college but claims interestingly, that it made her strive harder to become a better person. For Cameron it had the opposite effect.

Cameron: I had an English teacher who kept putting me down, and saying, you know, 'you're going to fail'. And he probably thought that if he kept saying that you'd get your act into gear but it just gets into your head after awhile.

Katrina also did not like her teachers but does not blame them in any way for this; she takes the responsibility for it herself.

Katrina: Me not liking the teachers was because of me, you get it? - it was because of me, it was my mouth, my foul language and what they gave me, I didn't appreciate.

Katrina has become aware that her own behaviour had a part to play in her poor relationships with her teachers. This means she can see it was not all the teachers' fault and that she has a responsibility to co-operate and respect them. Developing a co-operative, respectful attitude towards those in authority will help her relate to teachers and employers in the future and this will increase her chances of success in other training and in the workplace.

Trainees' memories of teachers were mainly negative. Only one trainee said his teachers were mostly good, others found them uncaring, disinterested and critical. The outcome of personal, caring teacher attention for three trainees, who specifically experienced it, was that it encouraged them in their work and helped them to succeed. This suggests teacher encouragement can be very significant.

INTRA-CHILD BARRIERS

Intra-child barriers are those behaviours or feelings within the student, which impede successful learning. Seven of the eight trainees acknowledged a lack of commitment to their work, some truanted and a few mentioned peer pressure as a negative influence. They were all alienated from the school community evidenced by not being in a normal learning routine.

Lack of commitment

The trainees were honest about how they had behaved at school and that at least part of the reason they had not achieved better results was due to their own lack of motivation. Seven of the eight trainees admitted they were lazy and had not been prepared to put in the effort necessary for them to do well. Dan and Katrina spoke of school being just a big joke and somewhere they would go to fill the day in and muck around. Teresa said she loved everything to do with food and would run away from every other class. Jason, Claire and Monica described themselves as slack, could not be bothered or as having always left work to the last minute or not done it at all.

Do you think it would be good if schools were stricter?

Jason: Yeah, to make slack-arse's like me pull finger a bit.

However it wasn't...I mean if you've got ADD...?

Jason: Yeah but I still couldn't make the effort in the end, like for all of this year, I just couldn't make the effort.

So when you were at school did you think it was very important for your future or very relevant to your life?

Katrina: At the time no. I took it as a big joke; I didn't have to listen to anybody to anything.

Geoff was the only trainee who did not talk about his lack of success being related to a lack of commitment on his part. He suggested he tried but the work was beyond him.

Geoff: I tried but it wasn't easy you know, I didn't know how to study those things...I knew I was wasting my time. I stayed there as long as I could, but I couldn't like pick up anything else.

Truancy

Cameron, Teresa, Dan and Katrina all mentioned 'wagging' at school.

Cameron: We used counsellors as scapegoats, period starts getting boring, we'd just go 'oh I've got an appointment with the..' and then you'd just yabber on about whatever eh. It's time off.

Peer pressure

Katrina and Dan mentioned peer pressure as a factor that had influenced their behaviour at school. Katrina said that is why she started smoking.

Katrina: There's always the cool crowd and a crowd that just concentrates on work that the cool crowd call the dorky crowd. I was with those in the cool crowd, that was the wrong crowd, it was just really bad eh. The cool crowd just did not want to pay any attention, and if you paid attention that was uncool.

Dan: We were just all clowns at school, did nothing but just joke around.

Alienation

Trainees did not seem to relate to their school community and were a law unto themselves. None of them were in a normal learning routine. Dan and Katrina took a term off school at one stage and Cameron spent a whole year studying only Agriculture and Horticulture. Monica was ordered out of the class as soon as she arrived and spent a lot of her time alone in the IWA (Independent Work Area) which alienated her from her classmates. She described herself as “always too hungover.” Claire missed a lot of school and ended up with big gaps in her education and Jason suffered from ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) which made it a lot harder for him to understand the work.

Monica: I always just slipped through the system somehow, sort of just got forgotten along the way.

Did you like learning at school?

Monica: I loved learning, in the right environment. ...It wasn't actually school, it was the people, I was teased and I'd feel bad and I'd just get really shy and not talk to anyone and think they were laughing at me all the time. It's fine now, but at the time it was hard.

Dan: I never did like our school motto. It was just 'to love and to serve,' that's it – what's that supposed to do?

CONCLUSION

Reasons contributing to the failure of trainees at school fall into the extra-school, intra-school and intra-child categories. Half the sample were from minority ethnic groups, which adds to the barriers they need to overcome to be educated in European schools. Two did not have very much encouragement or support from home while four others remembered their parents taking some interest in their education.

Some trainees felt uncomfortable with their teachers, put down by them or overlooked. Some could not understand the work and did not feel comfortable asking questions about it. Where teachers were interested and encouraging it did make a big difference to their motivation. Perhaps it gave them a feeling of being wanted and valued as a part of the school. It seems as though students are demoralised if the teacher does not take them seriously and they become disqualified from learning. Feeling marginalised and not being taken seriously by the teachers seems to echo the idea of them being alienated and on the edge of the school community. One wonders how much misbehaviour is due to not understanding the work and feeling alienated rather than a desire to be naughty.

Also many admitted they were not at a stage where they were ready or interested in learning and did not see its relevance for their lives. Some truanted and were influenced towards misbehaviour by their peers. As well as this many of them were on the edge of the school community and not subscribing to the attitudes and values of the school.

Chapter Six describes their learning experiences on the course.

CHAPTER SIX

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON THE COURSE

This chapter reports on the organisation of the TOPS training course, the delivery of education to trainees and the achievements they have made as a result. The broad headings 'Course Organisation' and 'Delivery of Education' match those used in the literature review presented in Section 3.2 of Chapter Three.

6.1 COURSE ORGANISATION

Consistent with best practice identified in the literature, this TOPS course is small and the tutor is therefore able to take a personal interest in his students. It provides clearly defined rules and boundaries so the students are given security. Staff consider the trainee as their client and succeed in creating a warm, supportive environment. Management is careful to select students who will be likely to succeed and benefit from the course.

Small and personal

There are sixteen students in the course, which is dictated by the size of the kitchen. Tim their tutor is able to keep a close eye on his students.

Katrina: He'll fine dice something and he'll send you back to your table and you'll have to fine dice something and he'll watch you closely, he watches everybody closely and he'll know what your skills are like.

Dan: He'll correct you if it's wrong.

They have one-to-one interviews during the course so the tutor and the student can discuss the student's progress. Tim aims that it be more of a fairly informal exchange of ideas than an interview in order to help the trainees feel at home.

Clearly defined rules

This TOPS course has rules that are adhered to rigidly. When Jason brought a BB gun to class he was immediately dismissed, as firearms are not allowed on the course. The students know that if they break the rules they will be punished. Tim sees their purpose as helping students to take responsibility for themselves.

They certainly succeeded in getting the trainees to think about the consequences of their actions.

Katrina: The other day...we came back about 30 seconds after nine and he marked us late. You've got to get here on 9 at 9.

All the trainees responded to the strict rules and felt they were a good thing.

Management

Beth has managed this training institute for eleven years. The institute runs private courses as well as TOPS programmes and in the past has run ACCESS and TAP programmes. They began with six trainees and have grown to one hundred and twenty.

Beth sees part of her role to be like a mother figure for the trainees.

Beth: I know that there is not one trainee in this school that would not feel confident about coming in and closing my door and telling me what their problems were.

She believes they are successful because “we care and we work as a family unit, we work as a team”, “we communicate everyday not just with each other but with every other trainee that we have here.” This was evident to me, as the feel around the training course appeared to be one of happy co-operation.

Beth: The biggest part of it is we actually give these kids sometimes the family they hadn't got – and they look on us as the family and they come back for advice, after advice, after advice.

If a trainee wants to leave the course she follows them up and encourages them as much as possible to stay with the course.

Beth: We don't just say fine, goodbye, see you later...we work on them for as much time as we have given by them and try and change their mind and explain to them what the outcome of getting a full time job is.

The trainees were obviously at ease with the staff and spoke warmly about them.

Claire: Really good, helpful, friendly, really approachable people. Everyone I've met so far is really good.

Trainee as the client

Tim and Beth both see that the trainee is the client and Beth attributes their success to this priority.

Beth: Why we're so successful is, the one person that's important to us is the trainee and every single one of those guys in this school, one hundred and twenty of them, we treat them as a person. I know every single trainee's name in the school to be able to speak to them by name, and that's important because they are as important as everyone else.

Tim: Part of the mission statement is that we are here for the students and they are our clients.

Tim and Beth both see the course as an opportunity for the trainee to discover if cheffing is what they really want to do.

The needs and opinions of trainees are taken seriously.

Tim: We don't treat them like 'yes sir/madam' but definitely what they say has an influence over their teaching environment.

There is also a built in mechanism for picking up any discontent with the course or the tutors. Every Friday there is a class meeting with the tutor and the students to discuss how things are going.

Katrina: We have a class meeting every Friday and that's to sit around and just to talk about how you felt about the week before or how you felt about that particular week that you may have had. Today we've got a meeting (we) basically talk about any problems with the class and if you have anything to bring up about the school.

Criticism is listened to and taken seriously.

So when the tutor says, 'Criticise me if you want to?' does he really mean it?

Dan: No, like we had this one guy Cameron and he just said 'brilliant' straight away, but he (the tutor) just came out, 'I don't want that I want the truth'. And

he just told him straight up that he's being sarcastic to us and stuff and he goes, 'ah I'll work on that.'

Measures of success

The course has a very high rate of getting their students into jobs. Beth estimated it at between 82-95%. This is not the only measure of success that they use however.

Beth: There's no failure from here, even if they don't succeed into a fulltime job we have given them skills that perhaps they didn't have 16 weeks ago.

Any gain for the trainee is seen as successful. Tim had the same attitude.

Tim: Even if I see a minimum performance or growth in the course maybe that there is an attitude change but that's all, there is a realisation of the larger world and that they're part of it – that's got to be a success.

He maintains that even coming on the course and finding out that cheffing is not what the trainee wants, is a success.

Tim: What we have done is actually narrowed the course of their career... now they are making a more adult decision about where they want to go, so that's got to be a success. Any forward movement is a success.

He considers they are behind the trainee whatever decision they make at the end of the course.

SELECTION OF TRAINEES

The literature (Singer and Johnson 1983) talks about the importance of training courses being suited to the needs and the talents of the trainees'. If the trainees are not interested in the topic or are not up to the standards of the course, then it is wasted on them. Beth and Tim, the administration manager and tutor respectively of the course were well aware of the need to give the places on the course to students who were going to make the most of them.

In her interviews Beth looks for keenness and punctuality and a well-groomed appearance. She also looks for someone who has already worked in the industry perhaps in a fast food outlet or as a waitress, receptionist or bar person.

Tim is no longer involved in interviewing however he has been in the past. He thought it was important they have "drive" and motivation. He felt the first test they had to pass in order to get into the school was to break the Catch 22 dilemma of wanting work and yet not being able to get it because they have no experience. Once they are determined enough to do this and apply for training, he feels they are ready for it.

He also relies on his gut instinct about people and judges whether they really want to work or just do course after course. He looked for team players, those who have played rugby or another team sport or are artistic. He recognises that the applicants are not academic but looks for those who are 'touchy, feely people' by which he presumably means people who enjoy and are good at working with their hands.

He also believes they have to be passionate about cooking and want to do it for themselves.

Tim: Every day we talk about food and I told them at the beginning, 'If you have no interest in food, don't come here'.

Trainees' motivated

All the trainees selected for the course were motivated and enthusiastic. They were all overjoyed to be accepted for the course and they knew that places on it were sought after. They knew it was going to get them a good qualification and they were prepared to work hard for it.

Cameron: There was like 60 or 70 other people wanting to be on this course and she cut it down to us.

Dan: At school eh, it would be like 'oh I've got an interview, oh nah stuff it, I'm taking off', and shoot off home. When we had a job interview or something we didn't have that urge to go, we'd just take off somewhere.

But that's changed?

Dan: I've changed a lot eh.

Katrina: You don't just think 'oh damn I don't like this course, I don't want to be here', I want to be somewhere else', like my thinking earlier on, but then if you look at the good side of it, it does come in handy it's really good. It will cut off all my wagging that I've ever done, it will cut it all off, because you only have four days.

Claire: I don't expect it to be an easy ride.

This was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that seven of the eight had had time out from school before beginning the course and experienced the realities of the working world. One was working full time but was getting bored with it. He had realised that in order to work his way up the ranks he needed to get qualifications. Teresa and Geoff had had some time out to “bum” around and were looking for “something to do”. Geoff had left school eight months before and been touring New Zealand and working in a supermarket. Teresa had already done one course and knew that training would increase her options. She said her first course gave her confidence when applying for

this one. Dan and Katrina had done a cheffing course and wanted to advance to higher qualifications. Monica and Claire were unemployed at the time they were accepted on the course and feeling bored and discouraged. Jason came straight from school. However, he was bored there, not making any effort and knew he was just wasting his time. For all of them coming on the course was a better option than what they had been doing.

Monica: ...having to leave and see what it's really like out there. Like now I wish I'd done a lot more work.

Monica: 'Cause I've always worked and I get shit wages and doing all the work and I get pissed off. At least if you've got your ticket you can demand a decent, at least a livable wage. I was getting paid \$7.50 an hour before tax.

For two choosing to be there made a big difference.

Monica: I reckon it's different because I want to (be here).

Katrina: Why I am here is because I wanted to come here, nobody told me to come here. I chose this myself.

The trainees were there because they wanted to be and were motivated to work hard, thus their intra-child barriers to learning had been overcome.

Suited to the course

Added to the fact that the trainees were motivated, they had a long-term interest in cheffing and favoured practical rather than academic study.

Teresa said she was interested in being a chef from the age of thirteen, Jason from when he was at Intermediate school and Katrina and Dan when they were in the fourth form.

Geoff became interested when he was about ten, Cameron when he was about six and Monica said she had always been interested in being a chef. Claire also said she had been interested in cheffing all her life.

A number of them had already worked in the food industry. In between school and beginning on the course Claire had worked as a pizza chef for a while and Monica had a cheffing job on a deep-sea trawler for about six months and had worked in a café and a Gourmet café for eight months. She had also done a Hospitality Course and been a waitress. Before he came on the course Cameron had been working full time at several different restaurants. Jason had been in the industry for about eighteen months and Geoff worked in a supermarket. Dan and Katrina had not worked in the industry; however they had been on another cheffing course before this one.

Jason and Cameron, like Geoff, said that they preferred practical to academic subjects at school.

Jason: I used to always enjoy making things and from about form one, I just loved cooking, I've always enjoyed it.

Does making things include woodwork and metalwork?

Jason: Yeah, woodwork and metalwork and design tech, everything to do with like the woods and metals and stuff.

So practical's more your thing?

Jason: Yep.

Did you like learning at school, was it fun to learn?

Cameron. At the start of the year, then it just got monotonous, extremely boring. Agriculture and Horticulture was good because we were always doing practical, that was cool...

And that's your thing...?

Cameron. ...again that's where practical came in, I have to do practical.

Teresa ran away from all her classes except cooking and would not even make an effort in other subjects. Dan said that when he got to fifth form that was when things “stuffed up” for him.

The trainees’ long interest in being chefs suggests both that they know where their interests lie and that their enthusiasm for cheffing is not just a passing fancy.

They were all hoping to get qualifications from the course and some had even bigger dreams.

Teresa: "I've planned all this. Go to 751 and 2, get some work, work for about 2 years after Bar 1&2, finish my Bar 3, save up and work until I reach about 25 grand, by then I should be about 23 or 24 and buy my own restaurant, (and) go overseas."

Katrina: "We're working hard to achieve our dreams..."

And what do you dream of?

Katrina: ...owning our own company

Dan: ...and our own house...

Katrina: ...managers of our own company...

The course did not just promise training but gave trainees a sense of hope and confidence in themselves.

Monica: "For once there is a light at the end of the tunnel. It's actually something that I've got an aim, for once in my life, I've never had a goal, I've finally got a goal...it's quite choice, it's groovy...something to look forward to."

Dan: They're making us feel like they know we're somebody, not like at school, 'oh yeah, he's just one of those students'. You can do whatever you want.

This TOPS course contains many of the organisational features recommended in the literature. It is small and gives personal attention to students and it has clearly defined rules. Rules are there to teach trainees to take responsibility for themselves, something Tim sees as important. That the course has a personal interest in students is evident in the manager's attitude. Beth sees herself as a mother figure and creates an environment where trainees feel confident to come and ask for help. Both the manager and the tutor look on the trainee as their client and consider their job to be meeting the student's needs. They have a weekly meeting where students can express any dissatisfaction they are feeling. Tim and Beth are careful about who they select for the course. Two key qualities they look for are motivation and an interest in food and the hospitality trade. The priority of the trainee as the client is also reflected in their conception of success. Beth and Tim consider any forward movement for the trainee as successful. For example even if all the trainee learns on the course is that they do not want to be a chef that is successful because it has narrowed the field of career options. This shows course management does not only care about their success rate for getting people into jobs, but what is best for the trainee.

6.2 DELIVERY OF EDUCATION

The literature emphasised the importance of the tutor creating a supportive, encouraging learning environment (Clark et al 1996, ETSA June 1996, Hawk et al 1996, OECD 1994, Singer and Johnson 1983). It was found that ways to achieve this are relating the new information to what students already know, teaching them what is relevant and useful to their lives, presenting the work in an interesting and fun way and creating an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions. Studies found training courses that lead to jobs were what the students wanted and that work experience was a valuable preparation for work in the real world. Assessment was found to be a positive experience when it emphasised progress and rewarded achievement. These are the things that Tim commented on in his teaching.

6.21 TEACHING

Relating teaching to what students already know

I asked Tim what the most important thing was in the delivery of education to this client group. He answered that it had to be simple and have relevance to their lives. When he is teaching about cooking a roast for example he would say something like, “Do you remember when your mother cooked a roast and it fell to pieces like it was made of straws?” Then he explains how to cook it so it will not. He explains this gives students a reference point, something to relate the knowledge to.

Student involvement

Tim finds that the students he has are not school-orientated or class-orientated so he gives them a lot of handouts and skeleton papers with spaces for them to fill in. He aims to involve them in the lesson and having things for them to fill in achieves this. He also encourages involvement by getting them to do group work and having discussions. The other half of the time is spent in the kitchen and that involves hands on learning.

Another way that Tim gets students involved is by encouraging peer teaching. If some students learn something more quickly than the others do, he uses them to explain it to the rest of the class. He finds the students look on this as him getting out of his job however he has found it works very well. He observed how patient the students are with each other.

Makes work interesting

Being funded only for the number of students attending, Tim acknowledges the onus is on them to make the course interesting.

Tim: More interesting than the cartoons in the morning, more interesting to get through the boring bus ride to get here, to make the effort to dress and shower in the morning to get here, it's got to have that interest otherwise we don't have a business.

He aims to make it relevant, user friendly and enjoyable. One way he sees to do this is to make sure he has fun himself and if he's having fun then "obviously that rolls on to the student." He makes sure that fun and joking is part of life in the kitchen.

He plans the programme carefully so that there are ebbs and flows of intensity. After a full, hard day's work he will plan a more relaxed day. There is still a healthy amount of pressure to perform though.

Responsibility of learner

Another of Tim's foundational aims is to teach the students to take responsibility for themselves. He teaches them that it takes hard work and a little bit of luck to get where you want to in life and that you cannot "fingerpoint" anyone else for the decisions you make.

He also likes to instil in them that their career is their own and to hold onto their goals tightly and treasure them.

Value of Work experience

The trainees do one day a week work experience and a two-week block at the end of the course. Tim notices a big change in the trainees as soon as they come back from their first day.

Tim: As soon as I see them come back from that first day out there, their attitude changes, they are no longer the kids that I know, but now people or adults that say, "Gee what he's saying is true, they really do make stock out there just the way he says".

He finds that their progress is accelerated vastly with the blend of practical work experience in the real world and practise on the course.

Tim: The harsh realities of life get hammered home pretty quickly under work experience.

He says the trainees are often disappointed when they come back from their first day if all they have done is to peel potatoes when they expected to go straight into it.

Tim: What they understand is that you need to earn the right to do whatever you're doing and that explains it very well.

Tim is careful to ensure that the venue for work experience is a good learning environment. The trainees select somewhere they would like to work and if he does not know the chef or has not had students there before, he visits to find out what it would be like. After the first three weeks they review everyone and if the chef and student are not happy he changes the placement. All the trainees work at different restaurants.

Aims of Assessment

The literature (Baragwanath May 1996, Parsons 1993, Singer and Johnson 1983) stressed that the purpose of assessment was to show students the progress they were making. In this way it can encourage them and realistically show them their achievements against a series of goals.

Tim increased the intensity of his tests throughout the course and never tests his students on work he has not taught them. To make sure they are as well prepared as they can be he will sometimes teach them a little higher than they need to pass. If they do not do well he does not flatter them but tells them honestly how they are going.

Tim: We are not here to fail them; we are here to make them succeed. The tests are not to fail but to succeed and that's why we put them there, so they can see that they're succeeding.

Tim's views on teaching concur with the literature. He felt the most important strategies were to relate the work to what students already know and involve them in the lessons by giving them work sheets to fill in and having class discussions. He strives to make his classes fun to keep students interested. He also emphasises the significance of teaching the trainees to take responsibility for themselves. Work experience is used to excellent effect, reinforcing the theory Tim is teaching and preparing them for the working world. His assessment is designed to show student they are succeeding.

6.22 THE TRAINEES' EXPERIENCE

Opinion of their Tutor

The trainees enjoyed having Tim as a tutor and found he was easy to relate to.

Cameron: Tim's a really good guy, good to be in his class, he teaches you heaps and is also quite personal as in tries to get to know everyone.

Geoff: The tutors are down to earth and that and you can talk to them.

Several trainees indicated that that there were problems sometimes but "you get over that" indicating that they could work through difficulties that they had. Another two mentioned that they had "gotten used to his ways" which shows they had grown gradually into a good working relationship.

Several commented that they enjoyed being treated as adults and Teresa appreciated the way he motivated them.

Teresa: Tim's funny he's really motivating, he's got this real sarcastic, motivating...it's awesome, I like it. I like his style; he's got skills.

Compared to how they talked about their teachers at school they seem a lot more relaxed and it appeared that they could relate to Tim.

Cameron, Katrina, Dan and Geoff were the four students I interviewed who made it onto the second course. Several found their new tutors stricter than they had been used to but this did not seem to be a problem.

Cameron: Our teacher's a bit more, well, we laugh a bit but she's really strict on everything...I find it quite hard.

Katrina: Oh, his teacher's fun. All you can hear is his class laughing. Our class we don't do so much laughing because our teacher is real serious...our class is like a serious sort of jokey class and their class is like full on jokey.

Katrina is learning to relate to her new tutor and know when to joke and when to be serious.

Katrina: I always tease my tutor.... It's like you can do anything in class; you can say rude stuff as long as it's at the right time. If he's in a joking mood then we all get in a joking mood.

They have much more positive relationships with their tutors on the course than they did with their teachers at school. They are able to work through any difficulties they have relating. They like him, appreciate that he takes a personal interest in them and treats them like adults.

Comfortable learning environment

The trainees generally found the atmosphere on the course warm, supportive and interesting. The course was well paced for them and yet demanding enough to keep them stimulated while not being too daunting. They liked the way the tutors presented the work and most of them either were or became comfortable enough to ask questions of the tutor. Initially Dan, Katrina, Claire, Monica and Jason all felt too threatened by the tutor to ask questions. Cameron, Geoff and Teresa did not. Teresa said she found it became easier as her confidence increased.

Katrina and Dan were nervous and a bit intimidated by the tutor. Katrina felt frustrated when the tutor went too fast for them and would not let them ask questions and then would tell them off when they asked each other. She found his mixed messages frustrating.

Katrina: Sometimes our questions are stupid but the first thing he told us when we came into this course was 'if you don't understand, ask', but no one asked. But when we ask he'll give us a smart remark like 'I don't know you tell me' and I thought 'oh OK then...'

By the end of the course however Dan and Katrina had the courage to ask if they needed to and were not so intimidated that they missed out on getting the information she needed.

Katrina: You feel a bit put down eh cause I get that too from my tutor. ... (I) don't take it the hard way.

Claire and Monica also felt put down by their tutor.

Monica: He treated us a bit like kids...he thinks that none of us ever worked before.

Jason did not find it a conducive learning environment.

Jason: I ask questions and like they may seem dumb to him but they're not to me, and he just puts me down in front of the rest of the class for it, so I just stopped asking questions.

Can you ask from your classmates in the breaks or you just sort of...?

Jason: No, I just leave it if I don't understand.

Because he feels put down in front of the rest of the class already, probably asking other students would only make him feel more stupid.

This experience will have big implications for Jason's ability to learn. He will probably feel alienated and increasingly unable to participate. Coupled with his ADD, which hampers his ability to concentrate and understand in class, this puts him in a vulnerable position. It is also a compounding problem. The less he understands the less he would be able to ask so the less he would understand and so it goes on. It highlights the importance of tutors taking their students seriously even if their questions seem silly. It is pure speculation but one wonders if not being able to understand the work or ask

questions about it led him to lose interest in the course, and if that made him more likely to bring along the BB gun which led to his dismissal.

Quality teaching

Four of the trainees commented appreciatively on the way the tutors taught them at the course and none made any negative comments about this. They appreciated the tutors explaining things clearly, using examples in the way they taught and making the work fun.

Dan: She'll do anything just for you to understand. No matter how many times you ask her a question over and over she'll answer it until you get it.

Katrina: She makes things interesting, she gives us examples.

Cameron: I never really liked to go to school. But here it's quite cool 'cause I'm not bored with it.

One student found the jargon confusing sometimes but she appreciated that it was important to know those terms in the cooking industry.

Pace of the course

Although the students found the course hard work it had the effect of getting them to rise to the occasion rather than discouraging them. They did not seem to resent the work at all; rather they seemed honoured with the challenge. They were proud of what they had achieved and said they enjoyed the course.

Monica: Like you'd finish one lot and the next minute, 'oh God', there's some more!

Claire: Big assignments and all sorts in between. It was fun.

Katrina: We don't have that time any more when we can take off and see our mates and stuff like that. It's like we start at nine and finish at; the latest would be five. It used to be about three. Friday's it'd be twelve. After that we go home, go over what we've just learnt that night, 'cause usually our tests come in, they come in unexpectedly so you never know.

The course was pitched well. It was difficult enough to make the students work hard but not beyond their capabilities. The students had confidence in their tutor.

Katrina: Tim's been through this before. He knows that we have no experience, we know nothing and he'll teach us at like a slow pace you know.

Dan: He'll know how to handle all the student's cause he's done a lot of teaching.

Two trainees did feel tempted to drop out of the course. One found the support to carry on from his family; another was inspired to continue after having done work experience.

Work experience

Some trainees found work experience more challenging than others did. Monica, Geoff, Cameron and Dan enjoyed their work experience and learned a lot. Claire and Katrina found it more difficult but both benefitted from being challenged.

Monica found working in a kitchen different to cheffing on the course and she learnt to work to a faster speed. She got on well with the other staff and they offered her some part-time out of it. Monica was actually thinking of giving up the course but being on work experience renewed her interest in it. It also reinforced lessons about teamwork. Geoff found work experience useful and says it gave him a good insight into what to expect when he gets a job. Cameron worked in an expensive restaurant for his work

experience. It was relaxing compared to his previous work where they had served one hundred and forty people a night. He said it took a couple of days to settle in but indicates it was not any problem adjusting. Dan enjoyed his work experience and felt like he was part of the team. He also was offered part time work as a result of working there. Dan had a learning experience there where suddenly it all made sense to him.

Dan: 'Cause one of the chefs there he just made me sit down and smell all of them (herbs) and once you get that you know what it is and when you get it right, he'd tell you it was right. It was quite easy all of a sudden.

Claire lacked confidence while on her work experience and felt like she was just slowing everybody down. She was determined however not to give up. Through the experience she learnt to communicate better and learnt how to get on with other staff. She found it different working in a real kitchen and learnt to work faster. She said she also learnt about motivation and responsibility and the presentation of food.

Claire: I didn't get any work but I learnt a lot from them.

Katrina did not enjoy her work experience.

Katrina: We've just finished work experience and my experience was crap, I had a terrible time. I mean I was meant to go there for experience, for cooking and stuff right to prep stuff and 75% of this bloody work experience I was cleaning. But it's hard working...I learnt to shut my mouth. I learnt to do that. I learnt to just to take it in. It was hard with the cleaning, but it was good.

She learnt to persevere even when it was really hard and take orders even though she did not agree with them. Tim commented that he felt it had been a really valuable experience for her. When I returned to interview for the second time I noticed a huge change in Katrina. Her whole demeanor and the look in her eyes was different, she looked like a different person. She looked stronger, tougher and more determined. I am sure this change came about because of her time on work experience.

She had a really hard time but was prepared to take responsibility and acknowledge where she was partially to blame.

Katrina: My choice that I had to make with that restaurant to go there was really part of it, 'cause I didn't actually volunteer to go anywhere. I didn't do that. And that's my fault. I didn't go and look at the menu; I didn't talk to anyone. I didn't go in and talk to the head chef and tell him 'look this is what I like to do' back then I was like, 'oh this is sweet, I'll go to this one' you know? I'll go to this one, it looks good.

Apparently while on work experience a lot of trainees thought hard about whether they wanted to be chefs or not. Some of them settled into it immediately and took it in their stride and others found it harder.

Work experience was certainly very valuable for all the trainees as it taught them what cheffing was like in the real world and thus helped to prepare them for the workforce while they were still within the secure confines of the course.

Training leads to a job

This TOPS course was called Caterbase and provides an introduction to cheffing. Caterbase precedes Bar One and Bar Two, higher levels chef training. This training establishment has a good relationship with many employers in the cooking industry and helps to place trainees in a job once they have finished their course. If the student is not happy they will help them find a different job. Further adding to potential job security, Beth said that catering is a strong industry in New Zealand. She quoted that 54% of people go out to eat.

Assessment

On the course trainees were much more enthusiastic and engaged in their work and assessments was a positive experience. They were pitched at an appropriate level and students' success was a source of pride and encouragement.

Katrina: It's the tests that give you a really good feeling, you know.

Claire: We don't have trouble with exams. Like we were worried – but it was a bit like when it came down to it we always did the work.

By the time the students were on the second course tutors raised the standards of assessment and if trainees failed a test and had to resit, the pass mark went up by 5%. Although the trainees found this harder, it was not too difficult.

This was very different to trainees' experiences of assessment at school. There they recall nervousness and tension at having to sit exams. Some found that they forgot everything under the pressure and would have preferred internal assessment. For those who did not study, exams just showed up their lack of knowledge and probably reinforced their sense of failure.

Geoff: I didn't like (exams). Like we'd come up to prelim exams like for School C and that, those I did pretty good in, like I was always passing...when it comes to like working in a closed environment like in a small class...things go wrong.

Cameron: I think I get nervous, more than anything. And a couple of days before it actually kicks in that I have to sit there and this is my life basically, if I fail this I'm stuffed. Yeah, it made me really nervous and I'd forget everything.

Dan: When I was at school, exams would come up and we'd say, we'll go to the movies after the exam'. So when you're in the exam, all you think about are the

movies. Ten minutes after the exam, 'ah stuff it' I'd rush off and go to the movies.

That what I was like. But now it's like 'oh no I've got to study'.

The comments students made about Tim as a tutor were positive and appreciative. They liked the fact they could relate to him and grew into a better relationship with him as the course progressed. Mostly the trainees found their learning environment supportive and non-threatening. One trainee however felt ridiculed for asking questions and just gave up asking, missing information as a result. He did not even feel able to ask classmates. This is similar to the 'alienation' that was a barrier to learning for trainees at school.

As reflected in the literature (Hawk et al 1996) the trainees I interviewed appreciated that Tim used examples in his teaching and made the lessons fun and not 'boring' like school. Tim succeeded in teaching the course at a pace students could handle. Stimulating enough to keep them challenged while not being so difficult they became discouraged.

Work experience was very valuable for trainees forcing them to grow towards self-reliance and in their ability to work as a team. It helped in preparing them for the working world by increasing their awareness of what being a chef involved. For Katrina it was a very hard but particularly valuable experience. Assessment on the course was well designed and achieved the ideal of encouraging progress. As a result students felt positive about assessment which was an experience they had not had at school.

6.23 TRAINEES' ACHIEVEMENTS

Of the eight trainees I interviewed initially Teresa dropped out of the course and Jason was dismissed so I was only able to interview them once.

Teresa came into the course with high hopes and very high ambitions and after sounding exceedingly keen in the first interview dropped out of the course a couple of weeks later. She completely disappeared and neither Beth nor I could contact her.

It is dubious whether Teresa has made any progress or not. It may have been a good experience for her to have been one of a privileged few accepted on the course, learn whatever she managed to learn and have had some dreams to do with catering. On the other hand given that she dropped out when she did, it may be a negative experience. She may associate all courses with high hopes but failure to stick at it, and that may put her off trying again. Also her track record may damage her chances of being accepted in the future to this or any other TOPS course.

As I only interviewed her once I do not have information about why she dropped out. The Manager and other trainees said she just disappeared and they did not know why. There may have been something about the course which she did not like but this cannot be known.

Consideration of Teresa's background reveals she had very disrupted schooling, was an orphan and has lived in a large extended family situation with seven sisters and eight brothers who she says are 'bums'.

Teresa: I sort of got moved around, chopped and changed nga iwi. I went to every school in the (town) area. Moving all over the place and it's a long story.

Possibly her disrupted school career and the influence of non-working family members have not enabled her to develop the tenacity necessary to complete a course.

Jason is the other trainee who did not make it through the first course. At some point between the first and second interviews he brought a BB gun to class and was fooling around with it shooting people. According to Beth he got in with the wrong crowd and did not really think through what he was doing. He was instantly dismissed as it is

against the rules to bring guns on to the premises. He also had the benefit of being one of the few accepted and would have learnt something in the time he was in the course.

I contacted him by phone after he left the course and he said that he was still working in the industry and would be going to another cheffing course. He has obviously progressed because he is still interested in training as a chef and is not giving up even though he ruined his chances at the first course.

Claire made it through the first course but not on to the second one. I was able to interview her twice. She passed the first course and did well. However, for some personal reasons, the school judged it best that she not go directly onto the next course. According to them she had failed to turn up to her work experience on some occasions and although she had later completed these requirements, they felt she needed some time out. Beth said she was too much of a perfectionist and had emotional problems, which she brought to the course with her. They all miss her and think she would make a good chef. She was top of the class and according to Beth would have 'worked her butt off'.

I rang Claire and asked how she was and what she thought about how the school had handled the situation. At the time she was doing housework to earn money. She was not completely happy with how the school had handled the situation and wished she could have been allowed to go straight on. She said she wonders what all her work did for her but that she would apply later to do the Bar One course.

Despite this setback Claire has made very good progress and the school will be happy to accept her later on once she has had a break.

Cameron, Geoff, Dan and Katrina all passed the first course and were accepted to Bar One, the next level of chef training course which Tim acknowledged was a lot more difficult. Monica also completed the first course and was accepted into the second. I was unable to interview her however because she missed our appointment and I could not contact her again because the course closed down for summer holidays.

Discussed below are the trainees' achievements while on the course. As well as gaining vocational cheffing skills they developed in their ability to learn and to relate to other trainees. They also noticed changes in themselves such as greater maturity and commitment to study and increased confidence. It is positive that they can see these changes in themselves and it proves to them they can change.

Those accepted to Bar One found they settled in quickly and were coping with the work at the time of the third interview. After the course the trainees still had their ambitions, which suggests they had not lost their commitment to cheffing. That some had re-evaluated them slightly indicates an awareness of reality.

Learning how to learn

As the trainees progressed through the course they have discovered techniques to help them to learn and begun putting them into practice.

Katrina realised that listening in class would greatly help her chances of remembering what was said in class when they get home. Dan realised that getting involved when in class and thinking about what he was doing would help him to learn and cut down on the time he would need to spend studying from books. Monica and Cameron discovered the benefits of concentration in class. Geoff learned that recalling what they did in class helped him when he studied and realised he needed to keep track of his notes.

Dan and Katrina devised their own study method.

Katrina: What we do is to write down heaps of questions right, like fifty questions, the answers are there. I'll be holding one paper, I'll be asking him the question, going tick, tick, tick, cross, cross, cross. We usually try to top each other's score until we get every single one of those questions right...

They were interested in learning for learning's sake, not just focusing on what they thought would be in the tests which suggests they have a high level of interest in the course.

...every single one of those questions, they're not in the test you know, but it's good to know it because it does come in somewhere but in a different way, not in the exact same way as we had it in our test.

They also found challenging other students helped to inspire them to learn.

The trainees have made these observations and developed these techniques for themselves and because of this the techniques are far more likely to become a habit and a behaviour pattern they own for themselves. Developing their ability to learn is important because it opens the opportunity for further training in the future. Trainees now have positive experiences related to learning while at school they mainly experienced failure. It is very likely this will also have a positive effect on their sense of self-worth.

Relationships with other trainees

The trainees grew in their ability to relate to one another and the group gelled together well. At the beginning some felt nervous but these feelings did not last. They learnt to co-operate as a team.

Katrina: We all help each other out now. Like you finish your dishes, you go and help somebody else. That's like a team now.

Dan: Everybody's into it now, no laziness or trying to take off.

They grew in their awareness of other people and some made comments showing they were prepared to make allowances for other students who had things to cope with such as ADD. Dan matured in the way he related to people.

Dan: I always judge people by how they look - a cool guy or a dork, I did that in the class as well but I was wrong.

The students helped each other to learn. The peer pressure within the group pushed the students towards working hard rather than towards just mucking around.

Katrina: Like this morning we went on a break and everybody was asking everybody else questions for that test. Someone would be on the other side and someone would just turn around and say, 'hey you, what are six high risk foods?'

Dan: Back at school they'd just look at you and laugh or give you a good bash in the head or something but over here you've got people telling you, just reminding you that you're not here to muck around and that's pretty cool.

Some had problems with other students but they began to develop strategies to deal with them.

Katrina: You remember in our first interview I said to you there was this girl that I really hated and she made me leave school. She's here...she is killing my life...she came to cause trouble.

Dan: If they keep looking at each other and getting angry all the time they'll definitely have a fight or something.

Katrina: Trying to keep away from her. Oh man I don't want to cross paths with her.

Changes they see in themselves

For reasons explained above I was only able to interview Claire and Monica twice. In their second interview Claire said she enjoyed the course and appreciated making new

friends and gaining new skills. She felt it was good preparation for the next course and that she got out of it what she wanted. Monica also felt the course prepared them for the next level and gave them the basics. She learnt about the importance of teamwork and that if you do not pull together, things do not get done.

Monica: You have to stick together to do everything – get things done and if you can't work together it just doesn't happen.

By the end of the first course, Dan noted a lot of changes in himself. His view of the future had changed dramatically. Whereas he used to imagine he would be a “bum” sitting back on the dole, he now has a goal. He says it has given him a really good feeling to be passing and “doing good”. His study habits improved dramatically.

Dan: It's like study's the first thing we do, before it used to be play. Now we just sit down and read our books.

This is an enormous change and it signifies a hundred percent increase in commitment. It makes a good foundation for learning and shows he must really be doing something that has captured his attention. Dan had a relaxed and confident attitude towards the next course despite being told it would be a lot harder. The third time I interviewed him, when he was enrolled on the second course he felt he had matured still more. He saw a big difference in himself compared to what he would have been doing if he were still at school.

Dan: Well I reckon if I was still at school all I'd be doing would be playing sports, bumming around, hanging round the streets with the boys. I don't see them anymore, got no time for it really.

Dan: Getting up every morning instead of our old routine of getting up late and stuff like that, but here you've got no chance.

Katrina came to the first course expecting they would just pick up the skills straight away and she learned that it takes time to get trained and requires effort and perseverance. Going into her second course she knows “it’s going to be even harder” and “we’ve gotta study more and we thought going through this course was hard.” As she reflects on work experience she now sees that only thinking of herself and how she felt, was selfish and uncommitted. She realised that because her eyes were always on the time, time seemed to go slower and if she got into it more she would enjoy it more. She is beginning to realise that there is more to it than just her enjoyment, it is important she does a good job.

Katrina: At the beginning of the course I said some pretty stupid stuff, reading back at it. Back then I was different...I’m really committed this time. It’s pretty hard, but it’s really good, you know.

Katrina: It’s like we’re not dumb; we don’t act dumb anymore. It’s like we know things now.

Katrina found that her confidence in general increased as a result of her training and that changed the way she behaved. She also learned how to work in a team. I noticed that Katrina had picked up the idea that your vocation should be something you are passionate about and that you should enjoy. This was an attitude that Tim was trying to teach them.

Katrina: If you really think that cooking’s your passion then you should always have fun.

In the third interview Katrina described herself as ‘more settled down.’

Dan and Katrina also had a plan for the future. They said if they did not get accepted to the second course they would apply elsewhere or would work and keep applying until they were accepted. They were committed enough to their goal of becoming trained that they would not give up if they were not accepted straight off. This indicates they

have an awareness of the different options open to them. They have a realistic attitude to some of the sacrifices involved in working the hours of a chef but were able to look on the bright side and see that a kitchen has a social life of its own.

In their third interview Katrina and Dan talked about how they had recently bumped into one of the 'brainy kids' from school. They remembered that at school he had passed fifth form Maths in the third form. They discovered now he was smoking drugs and playing "spacies". He had apparently been kicked out of Unitech for stealing a car and has two kids and a girlfriend.

They were really shocked that someone could throw away their educational opportunities and Dan wondered "how did that happen?" He reflected that education was "more valuable" to them now which illustrates how much they have changed since they were at school. There are clearly shifts in approach to education, valuing of learning, and consequent involvement and participation in courses. All of this seems likely to have positive outcomes for the trainees in the workplace and in pursuing employment.

They also talked about another friend who was going to work in Burger King and Katrina said 'What do you really want to work there for? Why don't you go and get some qualifications and work somewhere else?' This indicates they have really absorbed the idea that qualifications are important.

In the third interview Geoff reflected he was pleased with his skills and achievements.

Are you more confident in yourself generally?

Geoff: I am. 'Cause when I was back at high school I was getting on these down streaks. I didn't pass School C or anything. And now that I've achieved Caterbase – that's something.

Geoff: I've been doing study for once.

Cameron found his confidence in himself and his self-esteem had increased and that he learned about getting work and some new people skills. He viewed the first course as a challenge that they've made it through.

A couple of the trainees said their parents had also noticed changes in them since they had been on the course.

Cameron: My Mum's just come back from Europe and she said 'you're a different person'.

Katrina: They said 'you guys have gone quiet'...we're not depending on them anymore.

It is positive that the trainees are not only progressing but also able to assess this for themselves. It seems likely that if they develop the habit of evaluating their own performance this decreases the chance they will regress to old habits.

Progressed to the second course

Katrina, Dan, Cameron, Geoff and Monica were accepted to study on Bar One. They all recognised it was harder work and stricter standards but were prepared to work hard and were rising to the challenge.

Katrina: It's like if you go on a break, it's eight minutes and then you run back into the class.

Dan: Yeah, we're always five minutes early now.

Although the work was harder they appreciated the way that their new tutors taught them and that they made the work "fun." They found it was easier beginning the second course than their first one because they were more used to the surroundings and were with some people they already knew.

They sounded more mature and more aware of other students.

Dan: We all had fun in class but we forgot about the new students that were there and they were all quiet. But as the weeks went on everybody got to know each other.

When they started the second course Katrina and Dan found some of their friends changed and said they found out who their real friends were.

Katrina: We didn't say anything because we didn't want to make trouble in this course because we're going to be stuck with them until next year.

Dan: If you're going to be with the same class for the rest of the catering course so there's no use in holding grudges.

All the pairs from the first course were split up and although Dan and Katrina would rather have been together they appreciated it was done to help them gain independence. They could see the advantages in it.

Dan: (It's) worked out better now. Because now we can challenge each other.

Dan, Katrina, Cameron and Geoff all said they thought they were better with literacy and numeracy just from working with words and numbers more.

When I asked them what was the best thing about the last five months, they gave a variety of answers.

Geoff: Oh, my sort of knife skills.

Cameron: Just a bit more confident. Just like now I can get out and say stuff.

Katrina: We've learnt something, we've actually learnt something.

Dan: And we're learning more.

Katrina: ...to make it on this course was a really big thing to us 'cause like to make it on this course was our future.

Future plans

After the course the trainees still had plans for the future although some had re-evaluated them, illustrating their awareness of the options and realities of their situation.

Claire still plans to work and train for a while and then travel. She knows that better qualifications before she leaves will lead to a higher salary overseas. Monica was also still planning to continue her training.

Cameron had re-evaluated his dreams.

Did either of you want to own a restaurant?

Cameron: I said I wanted to, but not now. Yeah, I don't know, just looks like a lot of hard work. I've seen too many people go under. I might just leave that idea for a while.

Geoff wanted to do Bar One and Two but was not sure about Bar Three at that point. He still planned to travel and work as a chef.

Dan and Katrina's dreams were unchanged.

Katrina: We want to get into the next course. And I'm still, five years from now; I'm still going to get a restaurant.

And what about you Dan?

Dan: I'm going to be her head chef.

In the final interview all four trainees said that the course had been all they had hoped for.

Dan: Yep. It's like I've got something to do now in the future instead of bumming around.

Now at the start you said this Katrina, "This course I believe will be a really great success for us. I hope that in our last interview we'll come out with things like, 'I had fun. I enjoy it, I like it, I really know I want to be a chef now. I hope I can say these things in four months in our last interview with you.'" Is that how you feel?

Katrina: Yeah. Have I said all that? I basically said it in other words.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examines the question of how training courses can increase the employability of young people who have failed in the school system. On the basis of the experience of the eight trainees I interviewed this TOPS course succeeded to a large extent in providing appropriate training for students who had a dismal school history.¹

One way of measuring success is the numbers who pass the course and move into either a job or another course. Positive change in trainees can also be considered successful. Six of the eight trainees made it through the course and five progressed to study at a higher level. As well as gaining vocational skills they matured and developed in their ability to relate to other people and to learn. They have gained a positive learning experience, which effectively opens the door for further learning and would help to foster the belief that they can succeed with education. Trainees' comments attest to this.

¹ To be accepted for a TOPS course students must have two or less School Certificate subjects.

Back at high school I was getting on these down streaks. I didn't pass School C or anything. And now that I've achieved Caterbase – that's something.

To make it on this course was a really big thing to us 'cause like to make it on this course was our future.

Not all the trainees passed however. Teresa dropped out for no apparent reason. This further highlights the importance of the selection process considering trainees' motivation levels as even those who begin the course enthusiastic can change their minds. Jason's dismissal may be connected to the fact he felt uncomfortable asking questions in class and missed out on work. It is possible this caused him to lose interest in the course and fall into unacceptable behaviour. His unwillingness to ask questions because he felt belittled may be evidence of his timidity. However, it also suggests that tutors have a great deal of power over their students something which they can use to positive or negative effect.

Undoubtedly this change is due to the input of the course and co-operation of the trainees. To maximise success rates trainees need to be motivated and prepared to work as well as being enrolled on a course that they are capable of succeeding on.

Successful features of this TOPS courses were providing personal attention for students by having small classes and creating structure and boundaries with clearly defined rules, something which these trainees did not seem to experience at school. The attitude of staff towards trainees was caring and supportive and they succeeded in creating a family environment in which the trainees felt comfortable. Participants on the course were selected according to a criteria and most candidates proved to be good choices. Tim said the drop out rate (five out of sixteen) on the course was higher than they usually have.

Concurring with the literature students commented that they appreciated the interesting way they were taught and teaching was paced so they could keep up with it. Mostly they felt comfortable enough in class to ask questions and Jason's experience shows that

it is important that they feel they can. Students liked the fact they could relate to their tutor and the other staff and obviously felt at home on the course. Assessment was a positive experience for them and really contributed to their feelings of success. Work experience also had very valuable outcomes in terms of growth in maturity and competency.

Chapter Seven concludes about features of successful courses, discusses the merits of training for these trainees, and considers the idea in its wider context.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has considered the experiences of eight unskilled school leavers who were training on a TOPS course, in order to see how this intervention helped increase their ability to learn and their employability.

Unskilled school leavers were shown to be at risk of long-term unemployment and at a disadvantage in the labour market. Among the long-term unemployed, those who lack skills are over-represented; therefore being unskilled is a risk factor. Unskilled youth, the focus of this project, are disadvantaged in the labour market for a number of reasons. Higher skills levels are becoming more important to employers leaving those who are unskilled in a weaker position. Those who have less power in the labour market are more likely to end up employed in the secondary labour market.

Unemployment is already high among youth and if a young person does experience a period of unemployment it can be such a threat to health, well being and employability that a pattern of permanent unemployment is established. Unlike many of the other risk factors for long-term unemployment such as gender, ethnicity, family background and geographical location, skill levels are easier to change.

The Government has undergone a change in its policy responses to unemployment over the last several decades. In the 1970s and early 1980s policies tackled the problem by providing job creation schemes, based on the assumption that unemployment existed because there were not enough jobs available. More recently and in contrast to this, it has been considered that unemployment is contributed to by skill mismatch. In keeping with this, government policy initiatives have been directed towards providing skill training to the disadvantaged in the labour market. ETSA was set up in 1990 with a brief of purchasing competitive training from the community and targeting it to the

disadvantaged in the labour market. Unskilled school leavers are included in this criterion.

Literature about the successful delivery of education to those who have failed in the school system suggests that it is more effective to have small courses so that personal attention can be given to the trainees. Clearly defined rules help to give structure and boundaries, which the students very likely lacked, at school. It is important that staff consider the trainee as the client and address their needs as paramount. Careful selection of trainees is necessary to ensure that those who are chosen are both keen to do the course and will be able to cope with the requirements of it.

Teacher quality is a very important component in the delivery of education to those who have failed in the school system. It is also important that the syllabus be delivered in a non-threatening way to encourage students and make it as easy and enjoyable as possible for them to learn. Assessment can be used to good effect if it is fair, only testing students on what they have been taught, and designed to show progress and reward achievement. Work experience has been found to be very helpful for preparing students for the real working world.

My research followed the experiences of eight trainees on a TOPS course. An initial interview at the beginning of the course explored their memories of school and their attitude toward beginning a course. They were interviewed following the course and again six weeks after that to check their progress.

The training providers have been running training courses for eleven years. The course was organised along very similar lines to those recommended in the literature: they consider the trainee as their client, are careful about the selection of candidates and strive to create an interesting and encouraging learning environment. Single days of work experience are used from early in the course to complement the theory lessons. The course ends with a two week block in a restaurant of the students' choice; the tutor is careful to ensure that it will be a good learning environment.

This TOPS course has very good links with the catering industry and places trainees in jobs once they have finished. The training provider also checks to make sure they are happy. They have an open door policy and their trainees often stay in touch with the training providers once they have finished. This is strong evidence that the course is succeeding in creating a positive learning environment.

That teacher quality is vital is attested to by the students' experience. Feeling comfortable enough to ask questions in class was important. The class liked one tutor particularly because she let them ask questions and would answer them over and over again until they understood.

The students also appreciated the interesting way the work was taught. Several made a distinction between the course and the 'boring' work they were taught at school. Some of the barriers to learning the trainees suffered at school were poor quality teaching and teachers who put them down and did not take an interest in them. The organisation of the course was such that these barriers were overcome. The process of being assessed was also transformed into a positive experience for trainees; at school assessment was stressful and disappointing, highlighting what they did not know. On the TOPS course, assessment gave them a real sense of achievement. As Katrina said,

It's the tests that give you a really good feeling, you know.

A well run course can completely change a trainees' perception and experience of learning.

In the experience of the training providers and the trainees, the principles for organising and delivering training concur with those in the literature. This increases their capacity to be generalised. Factors such as providing an encouraging learning environment seem likely to be applicable across ethnic and age groups. Perhaps for disadvantaged adult learners strict rules and boundaries would be less important, although limits and consequences would seem to be significant for any age group.

Positive outcomes for the trainees fell into two categories: new catering skills and personal growth. The six trainees who passed Caterbase have reached the first stage on their way to becoming chefs. Five of them have progressed immediately to Bar 1, the next stage of cheffing accreditation. Judging by the record of the training providers and the systems used to place students, the trainees have a good chance of obtaining work.

Perhaps more importantly though the trainees have also developed in their ability to learn. They discovered methods to help them study, which will not only help them to learn but is something they have discovered for themselves and can therefore 'own'. Study skills are important because they are generic and can be applied to other courses in the future. Their success with study in this course provides a positive experience associated with learning which will make it easier for them to undertake further study. The trainees also noticed that they had developed in confidence and maturity.

Dan: They're making us feel like they know we're somebody, not like at school, 'oh yeah, he's just one of those students'. You can do whatever you want.

It cannot be stated categorically that the six trainees who passed Caterbase have completely overcome their risk of long-term unemployment and will definitely be employed for the rest of their lives. By becoming more skilled however, they have decreased the risk of long-term unemployment and as explained above, their positive learning experience opens the door for further learning.

As discussed in Chapter Six not all the trainees originally interviewed passed the first course. Teresa dropped out mysteriously and Jason was dismissed. It is doubtful that Teresa has made much progress on a learning pathway. Although drop outs are unusual for this course, this highlights that any trainee can change their mind and no selection process can guarantee the trainees will make the most of their opportunity. It also suggests selection of trainees needs to be as careful as possible to avoid the wastage of students dropping out. It seemed in general the trainees' motivation increased by having time out of the education system in between school and the course. This may be something for training providers to consider for trainee selection.

TOPS is a government funded policy aiming to increase the employability of the disadvantaged in the labour market. For the six trainees who passed Caterbase this TOPS course was money well spent. They gained skills and a positive learning experience that has already led to further learning for five of them and almost certainly will for the sixth. This is a pro-active policy which is an investment in the futures of these trainees. Although it is more expensive than maintaining them on the unemployment benefit, if it can integrate them into the workforce and keep them there, it will be a lot less expensive long term.

Monica: "For once there is a light at the end of the tunnel. It's actually something that I've got an aim, for once in my life, I've never had a goal, I've finally got a goal...it's quite choice, it's groovy...something to look forward to."

Of course this is not the whole answer to the problem of unemployment or long-term unemployment. It may be that there are people unemployed because there are no jobs for them to fill, not because they are unskilled. For that problem other policies would have to be considered. There is an important role for example, for economic and social policy in creating conditions which promote employment which is not explored here.

For unskilled school leavers however, whose potential is underdeveloped, vocational training programmes suited to their abilities and delivered in a user-friendly way which overcomes their previous barriers to learning, is possibly the most effective way to help them become integrated into the workforce. Spin off benefits abound including re-developing the ability to learn, opening opportunities for further learning, gains in well being and self-worth, the misery and disadvantage of unemployment avoided, potential for long-term employability developed and savings for the tax payer in unemployment benefits. This evidence strongly suggests that the personal and educational transformation experienced by the majority of the TOPS trainees investigated in this thesis, justifies this intervention.

APPENDIX 1:

TRAINEES' ATTITUDE AT SCHOOL

Katrina: Me not liking the teachers was because of me, you get it? - it was because of me, it was my mouth, my foul language and what they gave me I didn't appreciate it, like the teachers and stuff, I did not appreciate that, it just really you know got to me that's why I didn't like them, it was basically me you know. I had the power to do whatever I wanted in that school. I had the power to like the teachers and you know respect them, 'cause they are our teachers, they are teaching us, and I didn't take that, I didn't want to take that.

Sounds like you've thought about it and sort of analysed it quite a lot?

Katrina: Yes. Now I know that teachers are bloody important eh?

Monica: I just always left things to the last minute or not do it at all. If I'd applied myself, I could have done really well.

Monica: I hated it. The only good thing about school was I failed School C and managed to get into this course, school sucked.

Claire: I was sick quite a lot when I was 14 or 15 and I missed a lot of school and then I got behind. It left big gaps. I think my problem was just that it was hard to keep going to school, I didn't have the motivation. It made me not want to go because I'd missed out on so much. I didn't try enough.

Did you think when you were at school, that school was important or relevant to you?

Claire: No not at the time, I couldn't be bothered.

What are your memories of school life?

Cameron. Not too many until I got to (school) and that's where I basically got it got into gear and worked out my life. I was pretty bad at primary. I went to (school) and learnt some things finally and yep...

What changed? What made you...?

Cameron. I think there was a lot more discipline, so it made me sort of sit down and actually do something.

Did you think, when you were at school, that it was very relevant to you or important?

Cameron: Not till high school. I thought primary was just somewhere that you go to see your friends.

Teresa. (We used counsellors) to dodge class, I had Maori and then I had Home Ec next and they said we could come to Home Ec early so, I'd say to the

counsellor, 'I just want to talk about my day today', I got three quarters of an hour of my math's class off, it was good.

Teresa: I just loved, loved, loved anything to do with food, that's what I wanted to do and I ran away from every other class.

Dan: We were just all clowns at school, did nothing but just joke around, there was always one or two of them and we always respected them and left them to do their work and when they have time to muck around they'd come and muck around with us but that's all we did, just wait till the bell goes after school and then just shoot off somewhere and muck around. There was always a fight or two...from (school) the guys all come down to have a look, we'd drop in, drop back out.

APPENDIX 2:

TRAINEES' OPINIONS OF THEIR TEACHERS

How about you, what did you think they could have done better?

Teresa: Get involved with the students, take an interest in their education.

Put downs.

Teresa: Primary, I was always getting told I wouldn't make it, especially through Intermediate and right through College, I was always told that. And I guess that made me strive more to make myself a better person. I failed English, I'll share this with you, I failed English three times and I kept going and I eventually passed.

Could not ask questions

Did you feel like you could ask questions at school and they tell you what you wanted to know or needed to know?

Geoff: No not really.

Did you feel like you could ask if you didn't understand things in class?

Cameron: Not with all teachers no. You could, but you always felt that they might put you down. That's why I failed English,

Could not understand the work

Did you enjoy learning much at school?

Jason: No, because I couldn't concentrate and I couldn't understand it, so no.

Bored

Dan: You can't resist talking to your friends if they're in your class. You don't want to listen because it's all boring stuff.

Work irrelevant

Claire: I mean when I was going through school I thought, "What the hell is Social Studies going to do for me? What the hell is...I'm not going to be a scientist, what's science going to do for me?"

Monica: Maths. Algebra...why do we need algebra?

Claire: Yeah, why do we need algebra? That's what I couldn't understand.

How they would like to be taught

Dan: (Science) was my favourite subject because he made me enjoy it. We got to muck around with all the chemicals and stuff, it was cool.

Claire: [I asked Claire what made a good teacher and she said ones that "gave you fun work to do" and "made their schedule interesting", not "boring textbook work."]

Cameron: I think everybody in Primary doesn't like their teachers. One stood out when I was in first form. It was her first year at the College, and I think she wasn't with it, so we had a lot of fun in class and stuff like that, she was the only teacher I really liked in Primary.

APPENDIX 3:

MOTIVATED TO STUDY ON NEW COURSE.

What sort of process did you have to go through to get on the course? Did they interview you?

Jason: No because they knew how keen I was, because when I came on the other course I met (the manager) and that and I told them how much I wanted to get onto the course. She came to my school careers evening and I spoke to her then and when I came here I didn't even have to have an interview, they just put me on the course.

Geoff: I left home for about 8 months and was just sort of touring the country. I stayed there for about 6 months just working in a supermarket. I then I went down to (city), it was real strange down there, I came back and I wasn't on any benefit or allowance or anything and I was going through, looking for what I could do, something of interest. I lazed around a bit and then I just, I don't know I was feeling lazy so I just wanted to get up and get on with something. And that was your own decision? Or did anyone else come along and say 'hey, come on you should do this'?

Geoff: "Nah, it was either that or the Army, I wanted to go to."

Teresa: "I bummed around for a bit over the Christmas period and enjoyed myself. I think it was February, no I came up last year in November, and about February I thought hey snap, I've got to be doing something, got to go somewhere."

Katrina: Yeah, we feel lucky to be in this course. I mean this course has heaps to offer.

New motivation possibly due to time out.

So was it leaving home that made the change, or leaving school that made the change do you think?

Cameron: Leaving home I think, so much more responsibility.

Teresa: Leaving home, yeah.

And suddenly you're thinking right 'what am I going to do with my life'?

Teresa: Hey I'm an adult now, I have to make my own choices, I've got to make choices to get somewhere.

Katrina: "Basically in this course we expect fun, but you don't get fun all the time, you know sometimes you just have to get serious you know."

Katrina: "This course offers so much to us, it's like it's so bloody strict but then, it's good it comes in handy you know, like the strictness in this whole place it really does come in handy."

Katrina: I don't know about the rest of them but I think they chose me because I was like real eager and just been like persisting to get on the course.

Monica: But they don't take any slack which is good. (We) need discipline, some of these kids are fresh out of school.

What they were doing between school and the course.

Teresa: "And 'cause I had a good tutor, at my tourism course, really motivating. After coming out of her course, I felt like a totally different person, I had more confidence, I was more outgoing, the real me came out, this is really me, it hadn't come out till I did that course and that was like 6 months."

So you gained confidence and you were away?

"Yeah"

Teresa: "I either had the option of going full time dish washing which I didn't want to do and watching other people do what I want to do and cleaning up after other people that are doing what I want to do."

Dan: We went there because we needed qualifications to get somewhere, to get into other courses and stuff. The first few weeks we stuffed around like we did at school, until we really noticed that 'shucks we're not getting any younger' so we may as well start.

Dan: This course is really good, it just like bucked us up a little bit.

At the time you came onto this, what other options were open to you?

Claire: To just keep looking for a job which was really discouraging.

APPENDIX 4:

WHAT THE TRAINEES' HOPE TO GET OUT OF THE COURSE.

Monica: A piece of paper to tell people that I can cook.

Claire: I want more knowledge, striving to be better.

Geoff: Sort of like an entry to the next level, which is Bar 1.

Dan: To learn what to do and when to do it, to know more people as well.

So you want to work overseas?

Jason: "Yeah work overseas but also get a talent to create average things into extravagant things."

Cameron: "I know I want to go to England to work. Me and a friend of mine have always talked about opening our own restaurant. It would just be something cool to do, we sort of set a ten year time limit, have one in the next ten years."

So are you excited about the future, does it look good?

Katrina: "Oh yeah, we want to own our own Restaurant, that's our positive thinking, you know you've got to have positive thoughts, yep we want to have our own Restaurant and drive our own trucks and stuff."

Katrina: This course hopefully will be a really, really great success for us. I hope that in our last interview with you, we'd come out with like, I hope we'll be saying, 'I had fun, I like it, I enjoy it, I really know that I want to be a chef now.'In our next interview I hope I could say, 'it's getting better, everybody's enjoying everybody else's company, the teachers great. I hope I can say things like that, I just look forward to it.

APPENDIX 5:**HOW THE TRAINEES' FELT ABOUT ASSESSMENT ON THE COURSE:**

Katrina: We've passed every single test, I tell you that.

Dan: We've kept up with everybody else. We've never had to re-sit anything.

How did you find (the tests)?

Geoff: Oh pretty good.

Not too hard?

Geoff: Nah. I just tried to remember what I did before when we actually did it in class.

What did you think of this self-evaluation thing?

Claire: Well everybody tends to be a little bit harsh on themselves.

Monica: Yeah, self-critical. You don't know what to put, you don't want to sound like you're all up yourself.

Claire: You don't you know because classmates, some of the jealous people will look down on you if you're overly confident.

Monica: I think I'd write it differently now after doing the work experience because we did a pretty good job.

Cameron: Our last one was a secret where they had a sheet and they just ticked you off as you went through to show each step and stuff like that.

APPENDIX 6:

MEMORIES OF EXAMS AT SCHOOL

Teresa: Yep, mind blanks.

Teresa: If I hadn't actually practised the skill, that's when I'd go blank, but if I'd done it, like in a classroom, say like Home Ec, if I had done it and practised it in class...then I found I could put it into words.

Claire: ...100 miles an hour and then at the end when I got my results back, - why didn't I slow down and think a bit more. (She said she was fine in tests but exams were different. Said she did not fail but could have done a lot better. She liked (school) because it was all internally assessed.)

Cameron: Sitting their waiting for that time when you're allowed to go. I hated it, if it was all internally assessed, I would have passed. I cannot sit down in the classroom and write everything out, it's just not the way it is.

What about exams, do you have any particular memories about them?

Jason: Yeah, quite difficult.

Monica: (Said because she didn't learn in class, it was a lot harder when it came to exams. In school certificate maths she got 25% and did not study), "if I had, I could have done good." In math's I was just too far behind, they put me in a top stream class for some reason, they were yelling out the answers they didn't wait for me to catch up.

Katrina: They were tense and at the time you have to like study all the time and because of me I was like one of those rebels in school you know, and it was hard for me because I never listened to the teachers, even though I managed to pass the two in the end. History I never listened to that teacher, I was just like at the back you know, writing on my books doing anything I wanted. I managed to pass those two because those two were the main ones, I studied hard out on those two.

Dan: I always tried to avoid (exams), I'd always come up with an excuse.

APPENDIX 7:**WHAT THE TRAINEES' FELT ABOUT HOW THEIR WORK WAS PRESENTED AT THE COURSE**

Katrina: She'll really explain it to you eh. It's like she'll get an apple...and pretend it's a chicken and she'll cut it in half again and she'll show you. She's a really good teacher eh. We feel more comfortable with her than with Tim because she really explains it to us. She does eh, she's really good. But Tim, he'll explain it once and you'll have to get it.

Dan: Cause once they set an example it's like you've got something to look back at and you'll know what she was talking about.

Cameron: Yeah, Tim goes in depth with...always tells you a story about everything – to go with everything.

Claire: (Tim is) straight up and he knows a great deal and has some good ideas. It isn't just the same old French terms that we know – it's like different, it's like he wants to explain it in a way that it's not boring.

Dan: They make it fun.

Katrina: Yeah.

APPENDIX 8:**HOW THE TRAINEES' FOUND THE PACE OF THE COURSE:**

Claire: It's put down to us in the first week, you know how hard it is – that we're tested, you've got to survive work experience, the practical and theory and everything. Most of it I was tired, I wasn't getting a lot of sleep – everyone's the same, we're all pretty tired.

Geoff: It was more sort of intense than I thought it would be at times. Had tests all the way through.

Katrina: You've got to listen to them, you've got no choice. This course is hard. You've got to work really hard just to stay up there.

Dan: Yeah, like we don't have that time any more after school...

Cameron: Basically there was something different everyday. But that was quite good as well, like they'd give you notice if they were going to do something big. They help you out quite a bit – a lot more personal.

APPENDIX 9:

"Some experiences of trainees with a TOPS programme"

INFORMATION SHEET

HELLO, MY NAME IS ROS COULTER and I am a university student working for a masters degree. As part of that I am doing some research and I am interested in exploring the experiences of students on TOPS training courses. I am wanting to do a series of three interviews with about ten students, one as your course is beginning, one directly after it finishes in October and another two months after it's finished in mid-December. I want to find out what changes have taken place in your life over that time and what outcomes the course has had for you.

WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

I think the interviews will take about 1-2 hours each and if you consent, they will be audio taped, so I can most accurately understand and represent what you say.

TO PROTECT YOU...

- All the information I gather will only be used for this project and any papers that I write as a result of it.
- You do not need to have your real name mentioned unless you want to.
- I will not pass on to anyone, any details of the interviews and anyone who helps me with transcription (typing out what's on the tape) will sign a confidentiality agreement that they will not pass on anything either.
- If you agree to the interview being taped, you have the right to stop the tape for any part of the interview.
- Once the project is finished you will have the right to say what you want done with the tapes and transcripts. You may keep them yourself, have them destroyed or allow them to be kept along with other research projects.
- Once it is finished, I will prepare a 1-2 page summary of my thesis for you and also present it as a talk, if you are interested.
- No personal information about you will be passed on to your tutors here. They will only have access to the research in its finished form with no names mentioned.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE INVOLVED in this research and whether you do or do not has nothing to do with this Caterbase course or your learning here. Even if you begin this project you are still free to pull out at any stage. You may decline to answer any particular questions during the interviews and ask me questions about the research project at any time.

The (training provider's name) was recommended to me when I talked to (the manager) of the Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA) about doing this research. I spoke to (the manager of the training school) here and she suggested this course because the dates were suitable for my framework. I am studying at Massey University's Albany campus under (supervisors names and University contact numbers).

Please talk to me if you'd like to be involved,
Thankyou for reading this,

Ros Coulter.

APPENDIX 10:

“Some experiences of trainees with a TOPS programme”

CONSENT FORM

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 this study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. *(The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project.)*

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information sheet.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX 11:**QUESTIONS ASKED TO TRAINEES IN FIRST INTERVIEW**

1. My initial comments:

- a) Thankyou for doing this interview. My aim is to get to know you and see how this course meets your needs.
- b) First I want to get some background details about you:
 - talk about school and how you found that
 - talk about this course and how you found out about it, what you're hoping to get out of it.
- c) Remind them the interview is confidential
 - if you want to turn the tape off you can
 - won't reproduce your name unless you want me to

2. a) How old are you?

b) Ethnicity?

c) Where are you from?

Who do you live with?

Brothers and sisters?

d) Married?

Children?

e) What are your parents jobs?

3. a) Which different schools have you gone to?

How many years did you spend at each?

b) What are your memories of school life?

What were the good things about it?

Teachers?

Favourite subjects?

Exams?

Did you think that school was important / relevant to you / your future?

Was there good careers advice available to you? Did you trust the counsellors?

4. Did you like learning at school?

Do you know what your strengths and weaknesses are? / Were there things you were good at and not so good at?

5. Did you come here straight after school?

What did you do in between?

How did you get that job / Find out about that course?

How did you find out about TOPS?

What made you decide to come on this course? When did you decide you wanted to be a chef?

What other options were open to you at the time? ie. jobs or courses

Was it hard to decide to come on this course? Any fears about it? What helped you to overcome them?

What are you hoping to get out of the course?

Are you expecting it to be different to school? Why / how?

Excited about it? Is the future looking good?

APPENDIX 12:

QUESTIONS ASKED TO TRAINEES IN SECOND INTERVIEWS

1. How's the course going?
2. Did you enjoy the course?
3. How was work experience?
4. Do you think you've learned anything except for knowledge about cooking?
5. What were the good things about the course?
6. How did they assess your progress on the course? (tests/exams) How did you feel about that? How did they go?
7. Was the course tailored to your needs? / Could you learn at your own pace?
 Was it a non-threatening learning environment? – ie. caring and supportive
 Did you feel valued as a member of the class?
 Was the course-work interesting?
 Did you understand the teaching style of the tutors?
8. What are you going to do now?
 Course – are you looking forward to it?
 Job – do you feel well prepared?
 Job hunt – how's it going?
 Nothing – why?
9. Your dreams were.....has that changed?
 Is the future looking good?

APPENDIX 13:**QUESTIONS ASKED TO TRAINEES IN THIRD INTERVIEW****1. About the new course:**

What's it like?

Is it what you expected?

How is it different?

Were you prepared for it? Are you using what you learnt in the other course?

What are the tutors like? Do you feel like it's adult to adult?

Do you feel like you can ask questions? Is it a good pace for you?

Was the group really shy to start with like it was last time or was it easier to start with? Is it easier to learn now? Was it as scary as starting was before?

Have you had any tests / assessments yet?

2. Have you changed since the first interview? Apart from study have you changed personally?

Do you feel you have developed as a person? What's the best change or the most important change?

Has being here made a difference to your self-esteem?

Are you better at reading or working with numbers (literacy and numeracy)?

Do you think you are a better / more successful student now? Do you have a different attitude to learning? Has that changed much over the two courses?

Are things really different to how they were at school?

Have your parents said they have noticed a change in you?

3. What have the hard things about the course been? (Remind them they all started out very positive at the beginning).**4. Has it been all you hoped for?**

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