NPF NATIONAL PROJECT FUND AKO AOTEAROA

*Research report*

# Belonging, becoming and being: First-year apprentices' experiences in the workplace

Selena Chan

AKO AOTEAROA NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TERTIARY TEACHING EXCELLENCE

CPIT TE MĀTĀPUNA O TE MĀTAURAKA

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## Executive summary

In this report, the perspectives of first-year apprentices (both continuing and discontinued) and pre-trade student are studied to explain the factors influencing young peoples' decision to commence and continue with apprenticeship. Apprentices and pre-trade students from 7 industry training organisations (ITOs) encompassing the primary, infrastructure, manufacturing and service sectors participated in this project. Data collected from focus group and individual interviews were analysed using case study methods to derive findings based on first-year apprentices' experiences. The study's findings include: the need to help individuals match their 'vocational imagination' with the workplace realities; that support is required to help novices establish a sense of belonging to a workplace; and assistance is required to maintain engagement and momentum for apprentices' eventual completion of apprenticeship and qualifications.

## Introduction

This report presents and discusses the findings of a project to study the perspectives of New Zealand apprentices, in their first year of apprenticeship.

The aim of the project is to identify factors:

a. influencing apprentices' initial decisions to enter into and commit to an indenture,
b. contributing to continuation of the apprenticeship past initial entry.

To identify these factors, apprentices' perceptions of their entry trajectory and initial workplace learning experiences have been collected and analysed, and the experiences of potential, continuing, and 'unsuccessful'/discontinued apprentices compared. The project's objective was to enable learner experience to be usefully incorporated into the design of guidelines and to improve the induction processes and initial training for apprentices, with a view to contributing to increased retention and improved apprenticeship completions.

To begin, a brief summary of the evolution and role of ITOs within the New Zealand context is provided. This is followed by a description of the research method, research questions and underpinning literature supporting the project's findings.

The findings from the project are then reported. These include:

- Demographic summaries of the apprentices, pre-trade students and discontinued apprentices
- Profiles of the workplaces of first-year apprentices
- Themes emerging from focus groups conducted with first-year apprentices and pre-trade students, and interviews with first year apprentices and discontinued apprentices
- Discussion of the profiles and themes.

Recommendations, in the form of guidelines to assist first-year apprentices' induction and retention are then introduced and discussed. These are the need to:

- *Match individuals' 'vocational imagination' with the realities* of the industry apprentices have chosen to enter
- Provide support to help apprentices *establish a sense of belonging* to the workplace

- Assist with *maintaining engagement and momentum* for apprentices to complete apprenticeship.

## Industry Training Organisations participating

Apprentices representing the following ITOs participated in this project:

- Agricultural ITO
- Boating ITO / NZ Marine ITO
- Building and Construction ITO
- Competenz
- Hairdressing ITO
- Hospitality Standards Institute and
- Joinery ITO

## Overview of ITOs in New Zealand

New Zealand has had a long history of apprenticeship dating back to the 1890s (Murray, 2001). In the early 1990s, as a result of the Industry Training Act 1992, apprenticeships were rationalised through the establishment of ITOs. This Act replaced previous legislation governing vocational training and apprenticeships. ITOs are set up by various industries, with representatives of employers, employees and firms with stakeholder interests, and from education and training providers, industry associations, trade unions and government departments.

Currently, there are 38 ITOs. These cover a range of industry 'sectors' and can be categorised as primary, manufacturing, infrastructure services, and government and community services. The three core roles of ITOs are to:

1. provide information about industry skill demand thereby increasing the real power of students, employers and industry, and to inform providers
2. define national skill standards and qualifications required by industry to ensure the value and relevance of investment in education and training
3. broker training to meet the needs of employees in industry by linking individual workplace learning to national industry skill needs (Industry Training Federation, 2011).

The intention of the project reported here is to complete a broad study of the first-year apprentice experience within various industries engaged with apprenticeship training. Therefore, the ITOs participating in this project include industries from four sectors that have a history of apprentice training. These sectors are represented by the following:

- Primary sector: Agriculture ITO
- infrastructure sector: Building and Construction ITO
- Manufacturing sector: NZ Marine ITO supporting the boatbuilding industry; Competenz covering engineering and food and beverage manufacturing; and Joinery ITO
- Services sector: Hairdressing ITO; Hospitality Standards Institute supporting food and beverage services.

## Brief overview of apprenticeship in New Zealand

Apprenticeships are offered in a range of trades/crafts and occupations in New Zealand. These apprenticeships provide on- and off-job opportunities, organised by various ITOs. Apprentices or trainees complete a range of competency-based assessments. These assessments are carried out on- or off-job, and completion of assessments leads to accumulation of credits towards National Certificates at levels 3 and 4 on the New Zealand Qualifications framework (NQF) overseen by a standard setting body, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Apprentices and trainees under the age of 21 are eligible for assistance from government-funded Modern Apprenticeship coordinators. These coordinators are sometimes aligned to ITOs, or may be deployed by other organisations including training providers or trusts. Thus, apprentices are supported in their indenture not only through workplace support, but also through ITO organised provisions and, for some, Modern Apprenticeship Coordinators. Unfortunately, despite this support, completion of National qualifications is still low – ranging from below 10% in some industries to over 70% for a small number of industries (Mahoney, 2009). Therefore it is important to understand, from an apprentice perspective, what can compromise the efficacy of the support offered – support that is intrinsic – not only to qualification completion, but also to how novices become trade workers.

## Research objectives

The three **research questions** directing this project are:

1. What factors influence young people to enter a trade and, in particular, what factors influence apprentices' selective decisions to indenture and continue in a specific trade?
2. What are the initial induction factors that support (or impede) apprentices settling and continuing in a trade in the first year of their indenture?
3. What mechanisms, support and personal agency factors might assist young people towards full engagement in belonging to a workplace and eventually becoming tradespeople?

## Brief overview of the research method

The project is informed by socio-cultural approaches that emphasise the socially and culturally mediated practices in workplace learning (Billett, 2004; Vaughan, 2011; Wenger, 1998). As such, the research questions seek to investigate the contributions to apprenticeship decision making of the following:

- individuals (research question 1)
- socio-cultural milieu in which apprenticeships are enacted (research question 2) and
- interrelations between individuals and the socio-cultural environment (research question 3) influencing learning and identity formation through apprenticeship (Chan, 2008a).

The research tools used in this project included:

- focus group meetings with pre-trade students and first year apprentices
- Interviews with individual first year apprentices
- Interviews with apprentices who had decided to discontinue in the first half of 2010
- Questionnaire completed by all interviewees
- Questionnaire completed by employers of first-year apprentices who were interviewed

- Document review of induction information provided to apprentices through ITO websites, brochures and workbooks/assessment guides/training agreements, etc., issued to apprentices on commencement of apprenticeship.

Selection of research participants for this project was undertaken by each individual ITO. ITOs assisted with the organization of focus group meetings. Focus groups with pre-trade students were carried out at the premises of various training providers. Focus groups with first-year apprentices were conducted during block courses or day-release off-job training sessions at training providers' institutions. First-year apprentices who participated in focus groups were asked at the time of the focus group meetings for permission to carry out individual interviews. Apprentices agreeing to be interviewed were then interviewed either face to face or through telephone interviews. Discontinued apprentices were identified by ITOs and contacted by telephone, with telephone interviews carried out with apprentices who agreed to discuss their experiences. First-year apprentices who were interviewed were re-contacted 10 months after initial interviews were carried out. The apprentices who had decided to terminate their apprenticeship were then interviewed to find out reasons for their decision to discontinue apprenticeship. All focus groups and interviews were carried out with consent from individuals as governed by ethics protocols required by Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology.

A constructivist–interpretivist paradigm underpins this research project. This approach matches the overall intention of this project, which is not only to gather information on apprentices but also to understand more completely the perspectives of apprentices as enacted within an indenture. A mixed case study methodology has therefore been used to build narratives of apprentices as they progress through their first year of indenture. These narratives were constructed from information gathered by the various research tools. The data obtained were analysed to obtain answers to the research questions. Analysis of the data focused on comparisons of cases. This process involves the construction of narratives from the data gathered. These individual cases are then compared using within-case analysis and the congruence method (George & Bennett, 2005). This comparative process identifies similarities and differences between various cases and makes comparisons to better understand the effects of causal influences on each case.

## Connecting the literature to this project

A literature review was provided as a 'background' to this project, to accompany individual data reporting to each ITO. The individual reports provided data collation of findings pertinent to each ITO. In this present report, a brief overview of the literature is provided, structured around the three recommendations made here to help apprentices enter, continue, and complete an apprenticeship. The overview process is intended to provide a better understanding of the underlying philosophies that inform the processes used across this project, including the planning, execution, data analysis and interpretation stages.

### *Match individuals' 'vocational imagination' with the realities*

This project extends and builds on recent work undertaken in New Zealand which posits several models to explain the external and internal motivational factors that contribute to young peoples' initial post-school pathway decisions (Higgins, Nairn & Sligo, 2010; Leach & Zepke, 2010; Roberts, Gardiner, Gilbert & Vaughan, 2008; Vaughan, 2005; Vaughan, Roberts & Gardiner, 2006). It is therefore important to investigate decision-making pathways when entering into an apprenticeship, for example, how they might be different from the decision making of beginning tertiary students (Leach & Zepke, 2005). Post-school choice and decision making around the transition from school to higher tertiary education or work is a complex process (Higgins et al., 2010; Leach & Zepke, 2010; Vaughan, 2010; Vaughan et al., 2006). Nevertheless, although the decision-making processes for post-school choices are complex and often made while students are in their early years of high school, decision making can be modelled and better understood (Leach & Zepke, 2010). Factors influencing post-school career choices include parents and schools, students' academic achievement, subject area interests, and information obtained about the costs and financial supports provided by various post-school alternatives (Leach & Zepke, 2010).

In this project, some differences are identified in how research participants made career choices. In particular, pre-trade students and apprentices in several trades such as boat building, hairdressing and cooking based their career decisions on perceived 'status choice' or 'occupational prestige' of occupations. Pre-trade students and apprentices in these three trades based their occupational choice on strong affinities to aspects of each trade, perhaps derived from prior leisure (Hong, Milgram & Whiston, 1993) and/or school or part-time work engagement with the occupation (Smith & Green, 2001; Taylor and Watt-Malcolm,

2007). These apprentices perhaps have clearer initial ideas of a career path and have attained 'vocational imagination' (Higgins et al., 2010) as to future career prospects beyond apprenticeship. Vocational imagination is defined as "imagining oneself in a career pathway, with some specificity about what that might involve in terms of education qualifications and occupational possibilities" (Higgins et al., 2010, p. 14). In exhibiting the use of a pre-conceptualised sense of occupational choice, apprentices in this project may be using evaluative and strategic career choice processes as opposed to career choices based on meeting unclear aspirations or opportunistic/unplanned situations (Bimrose, Barnes & Hughes, 2008).

## *Establish a sense of belonging to the workplace*

In this project, apprentice perspectives of their entry into the workplace provide opportunities to examine the identity trajectories of young people as they transition from school (or another workplace) into an apprenticeship. Recent work in the area of life-long learning and workplace learning suggests seeking a wider perspective of how people 'learn by becoming' (Field & Malcolm, 2006; Hodkinson, Ford, Hawthorn & Hodkinson, 2007; Goodson & Adair, 2006). Hence, this project is framed by Vygotsky's premise that learning and identity formation are influenced by both individual choice/agency and socio-cultural influences (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995).

Learning a trade may be viewed as a form of acculturation into an existing practice community. It may bring together social influences and individual agency leading to the formation of vocational identity (Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008). In learning a trade, young peoples' perspectives on work and learning over the course of apprenticeship may be influenced by their initial experiences and induction. In the longer term, workplace practices may contribute to individuals' construction of identities and their roles in society (Stokes & Wyn, 2007).

For first-year apprentices, the need to establish either a sense of 'belonging' to a workplace (Chan, 2009) or an affinity to a trade's culture of practice (Gherardi, 2010) may be pre-requisites to establishing vocational identity as trade workers (Chan, 2009). It is therefore important to determine the processes apprentices use, and to explore their commitment and how they fit into work. In this project, notions of occupational identity development are

collated from almost all the research participants. For individuals, matching perceived affinities to self-selected trade/craft practice may be an indication of self-direction towards attaining an occupational identity. However, the ways apprentices in this project approach attainment of an occupational identity seem to be premised either on (a) the need to obtain a secure career or (b) as a means to further a lifestyle beyond just an emphasis on work.

## *Maintain engagement and momentum for apprentices to complete apprenticeship*

This project explores the first-year experiences of workplace learners. As an environment for learning, workplaces have many inherent challenges including:

- Workplace relationships and workplace learning affordances for the learner and their co-workers (Billett, 2001; Moses, 2010)
- Workplace learning is often reliant on a covert curriculum (Billett, 2006)
- The workplace is where learning a trade or craft skill is often based on maxims (Farrar, 2008), acquisition of tacit knowledge (Gamble, 2001), and vocational identity formation (Billett 2006; Chan, 2008) with novices' access to experts' knowledge sometimes made difficult.

The effectiveness of workplace learning (Billett, 2006) and vocational identity formation within a sociocultural framework (Billett, 2006) is reliant on personal agency on the part of individuals and includes contributions of support from the communities of practice (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995) within which apprenticeships are enacted (Chan, 2008). Apprentices may be classified as novice learners. As such, there are differences between the needs of novice and experienced workers (Cornford & Beven, 1999; Filliettaz, 2010; Smith, 2003) and for novices who move from a formal learning environment into the workplace (Dahlgren et al., 2005).

### Role of individual apprentices' agency on retention

The work of Vaughan et al. (2006), a study of over a hundred school-leavers, provides metaphors for categorising school leavers by their career choice process. Four clusters – anxious seekers, hopeful reactors, confident explorers, and passion honers – were identified by Vaughan et al. and are used to impart direction to this project and assist with understanding young people's career choices. Both anxious seekers and hopeful reactors

are unsure of career direction. Confident explorers and passion honers are clearer about their occupational choice.

Another important aspect requiring apprentices' agency is the need for apprentices to be motivated to learn. Moses (2010) provides an overview of factors affecting workplace learners' motivation to complete qualifications. In the main, the project's apprentices expressed clear goals and commitment towards completing a qualification. For many of the participating apprentices, the contribution of extrinsic motivators in the form of material support, provided via employers or ITOs, was expressed as an important supporting factor in decisions to continue through indenture.

### Role of workplace to assist with retention

According to Australian research (National Centre of Vocational Education Research [NCVER], 2003) pre-requisites for good workplace training are: (a) workplaces that increase innovative capacity; (b) organisational cultures that support and value training and learning; (c) a training and learning culture that is part of normal business, valued in its various forms, and customised to individuals; and (d) workplaces where networks, partnerships, and supply chains are used to facilitate training. Additionally, quality relationships must be forged between employers, apprentices and training providers to support the conduct of good workplace training (Schofield, 2001). All three parties are required to work together to ensure shared understandings about expectations, roles, and responsibilities. These factors are also reported in a smaller New Zealand survey (Curson, 2004).

Other influences on workplace learning may be the: (a) supervisor (Hughes, 2004), (b) impact of the manager (Eraut, Alderton, Cole & Senker, 2002), (c) enthusiasm, standards, knowledge, attitudinal values and skills of workplace-based mentors (Evanciew & Rojewski, 1999), and (d) contributions of institutional and workplace learning environments (Harris et al., 2001). Unwin et al. (2005), in exploring the different approaches people use to engage in workplace-based teaching and learning, place emphasis on workplace-relationship practices that affect workplace learning. These include: (a) organisation of the work, (b) level of employee involvement, (c) organisational performance, and (d) economic, regulatory, and social context within which organisations operate. Therefore, workplaces play important contributing roles in young peoples' induction into a trade.

In this project, the perspectives of apprentices on access to workplace training were sought. Workplaces involved in this project ranged from very small owner-operated businesses to large organisations with dedicated training departments. Workplaces, such as dairy farms, hairdressing salons, restaurants, and building firms were generally small businesses. Larger organisations included boat-builders, glazing manufacturing and installation, engineering and manufacturing, and joinery factories. In general, this project's apprentices – both first year and discontinued – reported good access to training. Workplace training tended to include aspects of 'guided participation' (Billett, 2002; Rogoff, 1995; Vaughan, O'Neil & Cameron, 2011) involving extended one-on-one training sessions with skilled trade workers, opportunities for apprentices to learn, practice and hone skills, and feedback from the trainer.

In particular, apprentices in this project working in small businesses (for example, dairy farms, hairdressing salons and restaurants) were cognisant of the need to maintain equitable workplace-based relationships. These apprentices seem to be aware that an amicable workplace environment would provide better learning opportunities. Several apprentices provided examples of the techniques they used to maintain workplace relationship equilibrium.

### Role of ITO to assist with retention

ITOs represent their industries and support the training and skill needs of industry. Over the last two years, the NZ government, through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has emphasised the need for all tertiary providers to provide support to learners and to ensure retention and eventual completion of qualifications. Each of the ITOs participating in this project had structured methods to support apprentices through indenture. All these ITOs deploy field support personnel, who visit apprentices in the workplace and liaise with both employers and apprentices, thereby ensuring apprentice training and assessments are provided and completed. However, extensive support structures have sometimes not led to correspondingly high numbers of apprentice completions (Mahoney, 2009). This could be because ITOs have no control over workplace training approaches that are influenced by business imperatives. The majority of apprentices involved in this project train in workplaces that are small businesses. These apprentices have to contribute, often as early as possible in their work trajectory, to workplace productivity.

## Findings

In this section findings from this project are presented. The section begins with presentation and discussion of demographical profiles of research participants, first-year apprentices, workplaces of first-year apprentices, and discontinued apprentices. Case studies and interview/focus group comments are also presented to provide apprentices' perspectives.

### *Profiles of apprentices*

Apprentices' profiles are detailed in Table 1 (Appendix 1), and summarised visually in Figure 1 below. In total, 251 people took part in the project. These include:

- 116 pre-trade students participating in focus group meetings
- 86 first-year apprentices participating in focus group meetings
- 56 of the above apprentices were also interviewed either face to face or through telephone interviews
- Of the 56, 7 were Gateway students (supported by the Building and Construction ITO) completing 1 to 2 days a week work placement while still enrolled at school
- Of the 56, 15 did not participate in a focus group as AgITO apprentices/trainees and BCITO Gateway students were too geographically dispersed to convene effectively for focus group meetings
- Ten months after the initial interviews carried out in mid-2010, 4 of the above group, excluding the Gateway students, had discontinued and were re-interviewed through telephone interviews
- 34 apprentices who had discontinued their apprenticeship at the beginning of 2010 were also interviewed by telephone.

Figure 1: Distribution of research participants

### *Gender distribution*

As summarised in Figure 2 below, despite many years of affirmative action towards gender equality in occupational choice (Higgins, 2002), the project's apprentice cohort represents traditional gender distributions. All the traditional male-occupational trades (boat building, engineering, joinery, and glazing) did not acquire female participation in either the pre-trade or first-year apprentices groups. Female apprentices represented hairdressing, with one male pre-trade student and one 'discontinued' male apprentice. Exceptions were found in the dairy industry and cookery, where the gender distribution was even. However, there were more female than male among the discontinued dairy and cookery/food and beverage apprentices interviewed. Pre-defined social expectations on gendered occupation roles as reported overseas (Fuller, Beck & Unwin, 2005) and in New Zealand (Roberts et al., 2008) seem to have been reflected in the occupational choice of the projects' participants.

Therefore, the main point arising from the analysis of apprentice profiles is the continuing influence of gender on young peoples' occupational choice. In the main, the research sample reflects traditional distributions of gender across trade occupations.

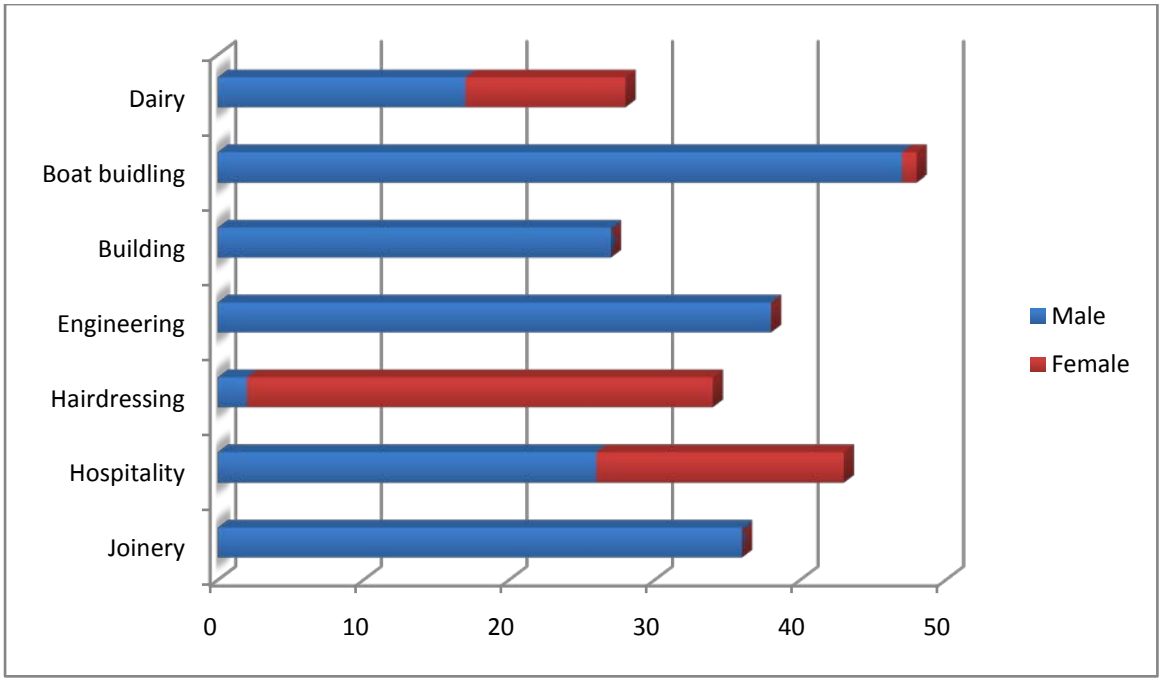


Figure 2: Gender distribution

## First-Year apprentices

Demographical information of all the interviewed apprentices from the trades participating in this project is summarised in Table 2 (Appendix 2).

Points to consider from the information on apprentices demographics are the effect of school qualifications, apprentices' prior connections to the trade, and their mode of entry into apprenticeship. Each of these is now discussed.

### *School qualifications*

As illustrated in Figure 3 below, most apprentices had completed at least National Certificate in Educational Attainment[1] (NCEA) level 1 or level 2. Apprentices with no school qualifications were found predominantly in the agriculture/dairy, cookery or joinery/glazing industries.

[1] In New Zealand, the NCEA qualification is assessed across the last 3 years of school students' 13 years at school. NCEA level 1 is a foundational level school leaving qualification. To qualify for entry into further tertiary study, a minimum of NCEA level 2 is required, with entry into university study requiring completion of NCEA level 3.

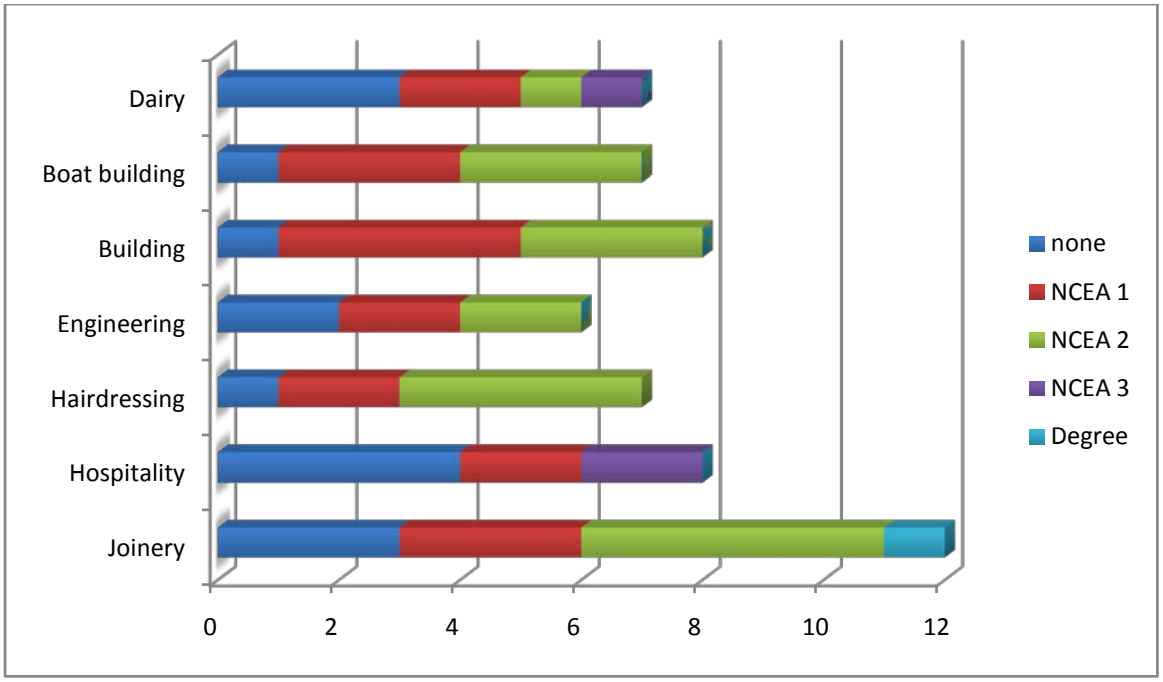


Figure 3: School qualification of first year apprentices who were interviewed

## *Connections with the trade*

Agricultural apprentices/dairy farm trainees had strong connections with the rural community and lifestyle. Many lived on farms and worked either on the family farm or on a family friend's farm. Across the research participant cohort, 40% of apprentices knew friends who were working in the industry before they began apprenticeship.

## *Mode of entry*

The overall pattern of entry into an apprenticeship for apprentices is recommendation through family, friends or employers or workplaces. The modes of entry into an apprenticeship are summarised below in Figure 4. Many of the apprentices interviewed, had some inkling of the industry, either through family/friend connections, work experience or part-time work while still at school, or through completion of pre-trade courses. Only small numbers of these apprentices formally applied for a position, for example, through responding to a newspaper advertisement.

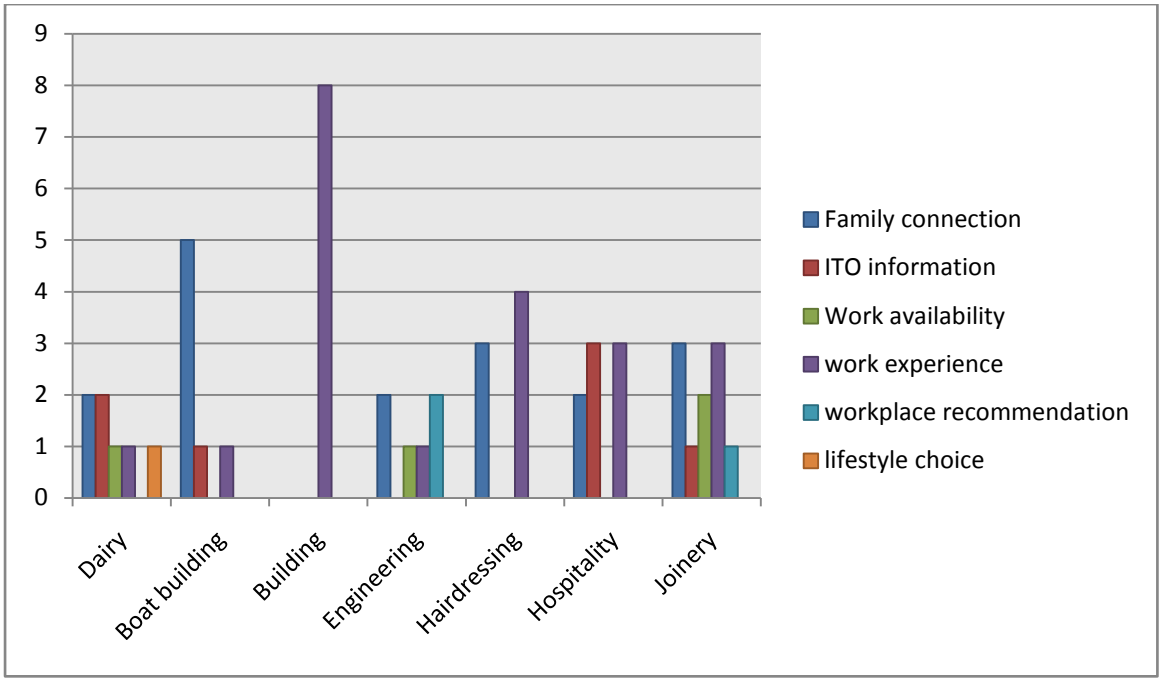


Figure 4: Mode of entry into the trade

## Profiles of first-year apprentices' workplaces

Information about the workplaces of apprentices is summarised in Table 3 (Appendix 3). The main points arising from these apprentice profiles are the size of apprentices' workplaces, hours of work and opportunities for training.

### *Size of workplace*

As illustrated in Figure 5 below, most workplaces with apprentices participating in this project were small–medium-size enterprises (SMEs). Exceptions were in boat manufacturing, engineering, glazing, and joinery. Several apprentices in these industries worked in companies with over 100 employees. Engineering had the greatest diversity in terms of range in workplace size.

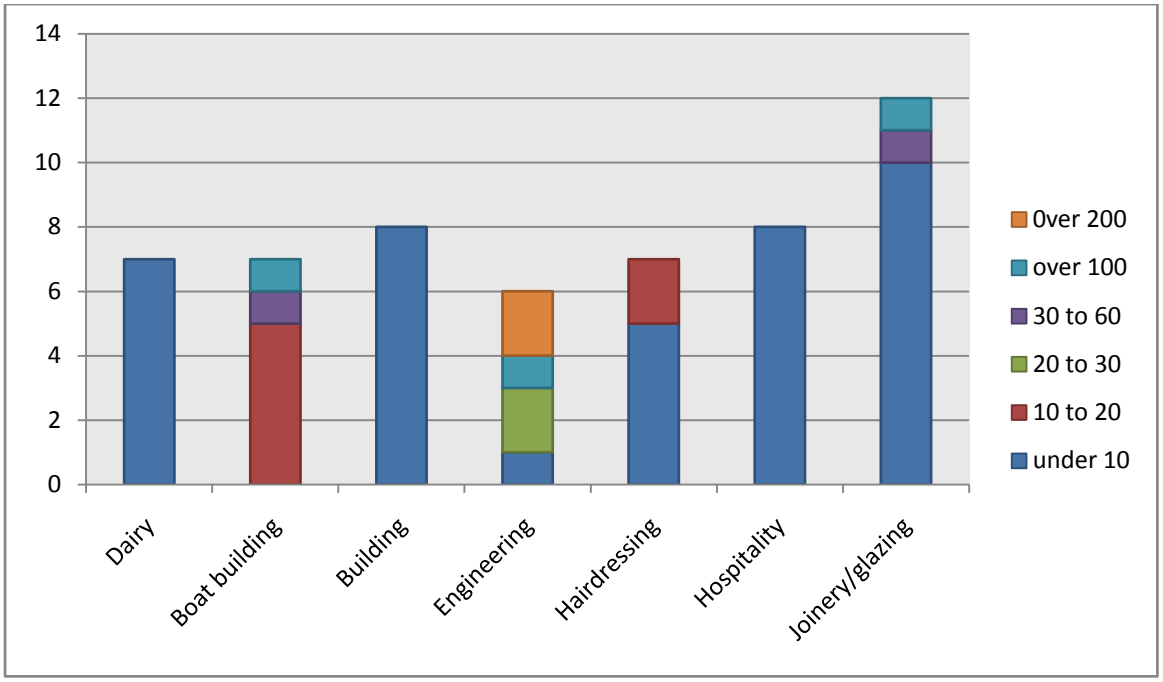


Figure 5: Size of workplaces

## *Hours of work*

As detailed in Table 3 (Appendix 3), apprentices working the longest hours were from the dairy, hairdressing and hospitality industries. In the dairy industry, many apprentices were not only on duty for 12 hour days, but also worked up to 10 days before a 1- or 2-day break. Hairdressing apprentices worked long hours and most Saturdays, with some using their day off work to attend off-job training courses. Many hospitality apprentices worked 'split shifts', with a break of 3–4 hours between the morning/lunch shift and the evening/dinner shift. Long hours of work may assist with rapid induction into workplace culture, provide ample opportunities for practising and learning new skills, and improve wage returns. However, for some apprentices, having to complete off-job training through correspondence courses or other forms of self-directed activity, long work hours impinge on availability of time to complete these.

## *Training opportunities*

In general, apprentices learnt on the job through engagement in workplace activities. Guidance was usually from workers and supervisors or from senior apprentices. Of note is the provision of 'training nights' in the hairdressing industry. These were most commonly held on Wednesday evenings. Each salon had a semi-structured training schedule and training nights were used not only to up-skill staff but to also carry out workplace-based assessments with apprentices.

The only mention of integrated assessment activities came from engineering apprentices, who gathered evidence of their work and then had the evidence 'signed off', across a range of unit standards, either progressively or once projects were completed.

## Information on apprentices who have DISCONTINUED

Demographic information on apprentices who had terminated their indenture is summarised Table 4 (Appendix 4). The main points arising from these apprentice profiles are apprentices' school qualifications, method of entry into the apprenticeship and a continuing attachment to the occupation despite discontinuing with the apprenticeship.

### *School qualifications*

In general, the school qualifications of discontinued apprentices, as illustrated in Figure 6 below, were lower than for the project's continuing first-year apprentices (see Figure 3 above). Just over half of the discontinued apprentices began their apprenticeship with no formal school qualifications and only two of the discontinued apprentices (in engineering) had completed NCEA level 3. The low school qualification profile of discontinued apprentices signals the need to provide immediate targeted support to apprentices with lower school qualifications.

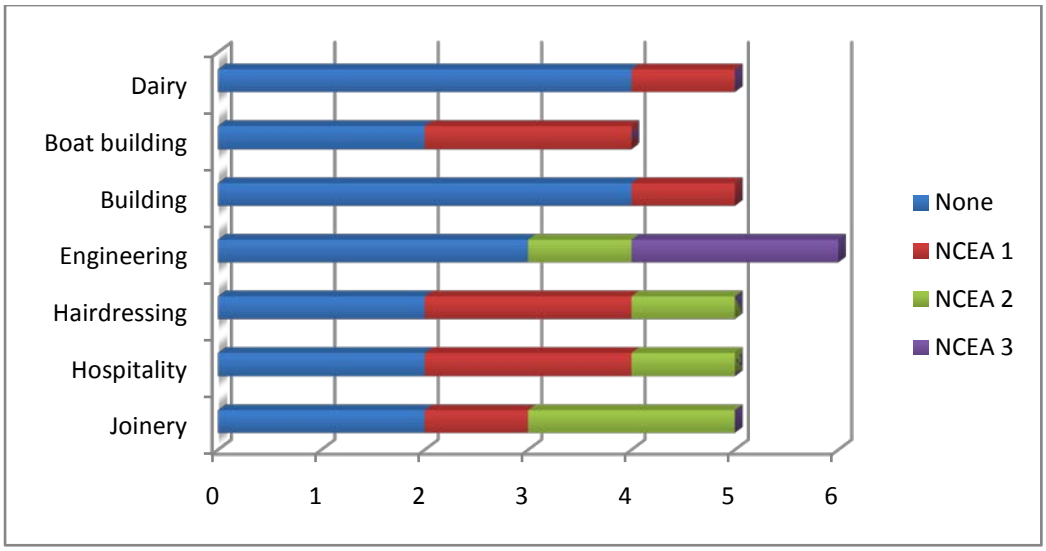


Figure 6: School qualifications of discontinued apprentices

### *Mode of entry*

As summarised in Figure 7 below, discontinued apprentices entered an apprenticeship by applying for a position (work availability) as an apprentice or through recommendations from school, workplace or employer. In comparison, many of the first-year apprentices interviewed (Figure 4 above), had begun an apprenticeship through family or friends' connections with the trade. Again, this signals the need for greater support of apprentices with no initial connections with the industry, at the start of apprenticeship.

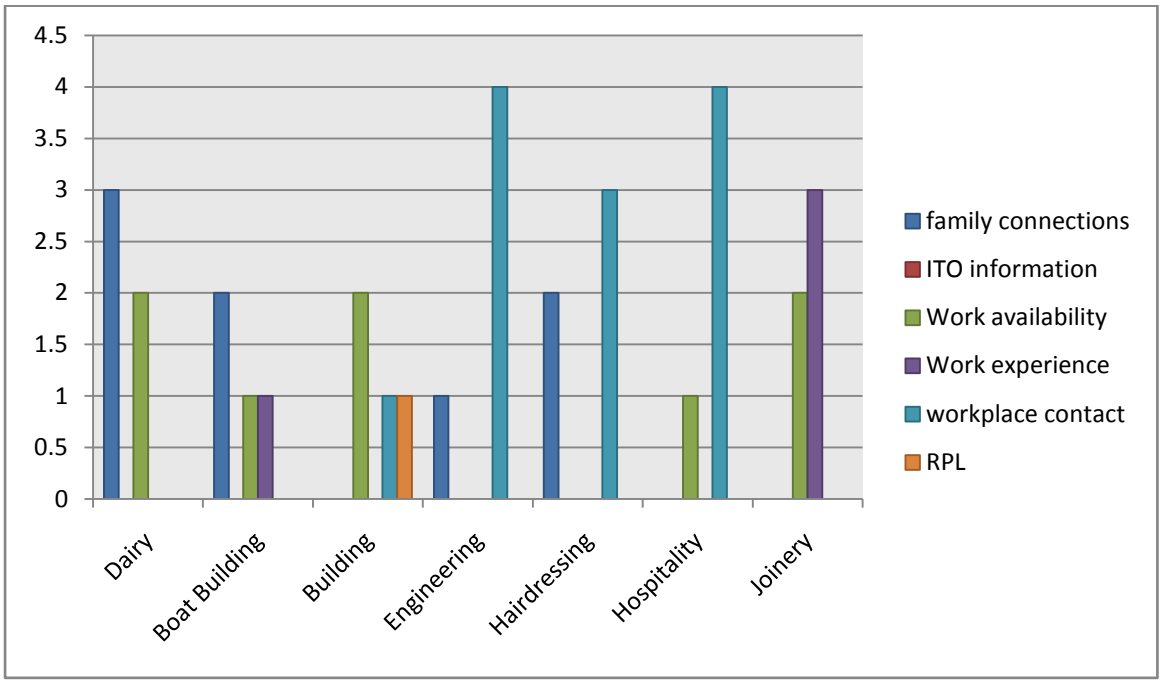


**Figure 7: Mode of entry into the trade for discontinued apprentices**

### *Attachment to the industry*

Regardless of the circumstances leading to apprenticeship discontinuation, 73.5% (24 out of 35) of discontinued apprentices had either re-entered the industry, embarked on further studies in the trade or a related industry or were working on re-employment in the trade. This indicates initial interest in the work provided by the trade is still vibrant. Many discontinued apprentices were still motivated to continue work in the trade, albeit in a different workplace or with a different employer.

## *Survey of information provided to apprentices*

A survey of information accessible to apprentices was conducted and is summarised in Table 5 (Appendix 5). The main themes arising from this survey are: information presentation

method, and the actual information provided to apprentices on structure and responsibilities of apprenticeship.

### Presentation of information

In general, information provided was visually attractive and well laid out. The volume of information varied between ITOs. AgITO and BCITO conveyed information to apprentices orally with ITO training advisors briefing apprentices and employers at the start of indenture about their responsibilities as apprentices and on-the-job assessment requirements. Several ITOs, for example, BITO/NZMITO, Competenz and HSI, provided apprentices with large folders containing assessment sheets and workbooks. The assessment 'log book' provided by HITO was especially visually attractive and because of its compact nature and relevance seemed to be well used by apprentices.

### Actual information provided on apprenticeship

There was a predominance of assessment material in the form of common assessment tasks (CATs), evidence guides, and information on unit standards completion. In trades such as by boat building, engineering and cookery, apprentices were issued with workbooks or text books pertinent to the knowledge aspects of their trade. Two ITOs, BITO/NZMITO and JITO, provided students with a generic modern apprenticeship brochure, providing information on the responsibilities and rights of apprentices and their employers.

## Findings from interview and focus group data

In this section, the findings collated through a study of the focus group sessions with pre-trade students and first-year apprentices and through interviews with first-year apprentices and discontinued apprentices are presented and discussed. The themes presented in this section include:

- Decision-making processes to enter the trade
- First-year apprentices' perspectives on workplace learning and training
- Decision-making processes on continuing with the apprenticeship

### *Decision-making process to enter the trade*

In this section, the reasons apprentices provide for choosing a specific trade are presented and discussed. To begin, the case study of Cheryl is presented below. Cheryl's story of entry

into dairy farming is typical of many apprentices in this project. Her entry decision was based on finding work in which she was interested in engaging. In particular, finding work that would complement her strengths, perceived career direction, lifestyle, and life story.

***Case study: Cheryl, dairy farm trainee – a typical apprentice trajectory***

*Cheryl lives and works on a dairy farm in the South Island. She started the traineeship after leaving school on completion of Year 11 without completing NCEA. Her grandfather and a brother are farm workers, and through contact with the ITO at school, she obtained the traineeship.*

*Cheryl's love for the land and farm animals stems from her visits to the farms of family friends during school holidays.*

*"Well, I just, I just grown up around it, been around it and I just, I really like it."*

*"I was always going there on holidays and stuff."*

*"Well, of course you have to like animals first off. Um, I don't know, I suppose it's the good lifestyle and things like that. It's outdoors."*

*Cheryl is progressing well through her traineeship on a farm that employs two other workers and a manager. She has found the ITO to be helpful and supportive. She works from 5 am to 5 pm for 8 days and then has 2 days off. Most of her learning is through the work completed on the farm. She has also found off-job training courses to be useful. These provide an opportunity to network with other trainees and to complete the 'bookwork'/theory sections of her qualification.*

*"I get a visit now and then from [ITO person], and just the courses that I go to. [ITO person] goes over all my course workbooks, on-farm stuff and goals and stuff like that."*

*Cheryl is focused on completing her apprenticeship and continuing with work on dairy farms.*

A discussion of the sub-themes from analysis of the data now follows. These indicate how apprentices made a pragmatic decision to match their perceived affinity to a type of work or to lifestyle choices towards occupational choice, deciding on an occupation beyond just affinity, to a specific type of work and the need for persistence to find an apprenticeship.

### Pragmatic matching of affinity to the trade and lifestyle choices

The predominant reason for selection of a particular trade by both pre-trade students and first-year apprentices was interest in the work tasks; in particular, if the work matched the individuals' perceived affinities. This is an example of a form of evaluative career decision making (Bimrose, Barnes & Hughes, 2008), with apprentices being good examples of 'confident explorers' (Vaughan et al., 2006). The aspect of occupational/career choice offering a preferred lifestyle was evident in two trades – dairy farming and boat building.

Two examples are provided in the case study of Cheryl (above) and in Andrew's case study, presented below. As summarised through collation of focus group responses from pre-trade students and apprentices participating in this project, the start of apprenticeship was the beginning of a steady, reliable source of work satisfaction and income. These types of responses came predominantly from apprentices in the 'traditional' trades of building, engineering, glazing, and joinery.

### Beyond just affinity

For some apprentices, occupational choice was also premised on the need for a job that would lead to forms of personal fulfilment and provide challenge and enjoyment.

***Case study: Andrew, apprentice boat builder – an apprentice influenced by lifestyle choice and future career prospects***

*Andrew has always led a lifestyle that revolved around boats, fishing, and sailing. He left school after completing Year 12 with NCEA level 2. He worked in several part-time jobs in engineering before his father heard of a boatbuilding firm looking for apprentices. The company Andrew works in is a large boat building and repair company.*

*As an apprentice, Andrew works with a variety of trade workers, learning various boatbuilding jobs.*

*"Yeah. Learn quite a bit, especially lately. I got to know quite a bit for someone who's only been here a year and a half. Normally I get put on a job with somebody and it would be different people and probably be taken under their wing and train with them for that particular job. At the moment, it would be a lot of composite work, fibre glassing and things, as that is the sort of work we have on at the moment."*

*He is happy with the work as it fits in with his perceived affinity to practical work.*

*"Well, you know, I am good with my hands and boats sort of fit in."*

*To Andrew, boat building is a good trade that provides possibilities for future travel and prospects.*

*"You work in the marina, next to the ocean. You can travel the world really. Um, there are a lot of varieties of the job, it's not like the same thing every day, there is something new all the time."*

Three industry groupings of pre-trade students and apprentices provided indications of a strong sense of purpose and 'passion' for their chosen trade. These pre-trade students and apprentices were training to become boat builders, hairdressers or cooks/chefs. Both, pre-trade students and apprentices in these three trades saw the industry to be 'more than just a job'. In particular, they could see opportunities for advancement beyond apprenticeship and many spoke about opportunities to travel, once apprenticeship was completed. Their

career making process may be described as strategic (Bimrose et al., 2008), as the trade would provide apprentices with the qualifications to progress in work and future opportunities for travel.

### Persistence required to find 'correct' apprenticeship

Persistence in seeking out an apprenticeship was reported, with many apprentices seeking an occupation that would be 'more than just a job'. Many hairdressing and cookery apprentices participating in this project reported completing pre-trade training courses, working in part-time positions and various related occupations (e.g., kitchen hand for cooks, receptionists for hairdressers) before finding an employer who would offer them an apprenticeship. This is illustrated through the story of Lily below. Her case study is common for many apprentices seeking entry into 'high profile' occupations, defined as 'not just an ordinary job'.

***Case study: Lily, apprentice hairdresser – persistence with obtaining an apprenticeship***

*Lily completed NCEA level 1 and left school at the beginning of Year 12. In common with many other hairdressing apprentices, Lily worked in several salons before finally obtaining an apprenticeship. She also worked part-time while still in school at the 'local'/neighbourhood salon.*

*"I have always wanted to do hairdressing. I think I have very much to offer to the industry. I think I am very much a people person, um, I am very much into hair and I enjoy talking to people all day. Yes. Always, there was never a plan B."*

*"If you are looking for an apprenticeship, you really gotta put yourself out there and if you are not getting anywhere, you gotta ask. Don't just expect it to be handed to you. You really gotta work for it."*

*Lily works in a small salon, well-recognised for quality work. She is progressing well in her training and happy with the workplace opportunities provided.*

*"I have training usually at least once a week; generally my boss, who will take me through training and show me what I need to do."*

*Despite the Christchurch February earthquake damaging the premises of her salon, Lily is still engaged in her apprenticeship as the salon has managed to shift to alternative premises.*

## *Perspectives on workplace-based learning and training*

In this section, the perspectives on workplace learning and training for first-year apprentices are reported and discussed.

### Workplace learning opportunities afforded

Focus group comments and contributions from individual apprentices indicate all first year apprentices reporting good access to workplace training. This occurred through engagement with purposeful work, sometimes structured around the capabilities of novice trade workers. Workplace learning was provided through observation of work, guided practice, and gradual scaffolding towards full responsibility for job tasks. In the case study below, David, a Gateway student, talks about the variety of things he learns during his 1-day-a-week placement at a building firm that specialises in home building.

***Case study: David, Gateway student learning about the building trade – an example of school to work transition***

*David was still at school (year 13) when he participated in the BCITO Gateway programme. He has completed his NCEA level 2 qualifications. Although academically able, David is more interested in working in a practical trade.*

*"A couple years back, I realised I enjoy working with my hands a lot. And I did a, I was introduced by one of my teachers, at school, to the building class last year in level three building and construction and I completed the course and I enjoyed it a lot."*

*David works 1 day a week with a builder, and his comments show how much he is enjoying the work. The building firm David works for is involved with building houses and commercial buildings. He learns through working with the other builders on the worksite.*

*"Another journeymen, he, like, shows me the basics if, like, I am not sure how to work some things. He helps me with that."*

*In particular, work on the building site provides opportunities to see a range of trade workers' practice.*

*"I am pretty glad I did that 'cos I get to meet a lot of different trades people. I am exposed to what they doing and I can see what they do and see if I am interested in that. Ah, plasterers, electricians, um… building inspectors, plumbers."*

*This year, David is studying at a polytechnic to become a builder. He plans to begin an apprenticeship on completion of the course.*

Of note in the above case study, is the opportunity for David not only to experience the builder's trade but also to observe other trade workers in action. From this 'proximal participation' (Chan, 2009) position, David is able to evaluate his career choices and is provided with an opportunity to make a more studied decision on the type of trade he would seek an apprenticeship in.

Through the interview data, it was established that training support was provided not only by assigned workplace trainers, but often through peer/senior apprentice support.

An example is provided here:

*"I found some things helpful. Like, there is another apprentice at work. She is also about the same level as me; she went to course just before me. She is able to show me techniques that help me before I have a go. Ah, but my actual trainer, I don't find that helpful because he's often doing his own thing."* – apprentice cook.

Workplace support included reports of employer/trainer support, reliance on peer support, learning from peers/senior apprentices, and progression into positions of responsibility as skill levels increased. Workplace conferment of responsibility was reported to occur in the first year of apprenticeship for glazier and cookery apprentices. In these trades, sole charge responsibility, owing to the nature of the work environment, was expected of apprentices from an early stage.

One of these experiences is documented here:

*"Well, I get, I have just taken over my own section, at the moment which is larder, cold larder. And, I was trained for a week before I took it over but I have been, like, kind of around that section since I started. So it is more of a watch and learn and ask questions if you need."* –apprentice cook.

Tony's case study, presented below, is of interest as it represents a story from an apprentice who was prepared to surmount difficult workplace circumstances to retain an indenture, or to find another indenture to replace one that had not been supportive.

***Case study: Tony, apprentice chef – persevering in an apprenticeship despite poor workplace support***

*Tony left school at the end of Year 12 after completing NCEA level 1. He has always been interested in cooking.*

*"I didn't do too well at school and the only subjects I really liked was PE and cookery. I had a really good cookery teacher and she got my interest into chefing and it kind of just picked up from there."*

*He completed a full-time level 2 cookery course and then started work as a dishwasher in a hotel. His mother knew the owner of his first workplace, a fine dining restaurant. He was able to obtain an apprenticeship after working there as a dishwasher for 3 months. As an apprentice chef, he starts work at 11 am, but at least 1 day a week he starts work earlier, at 9.30 am. His workday does not usually finish until after midnight. He works Tuesday to Sunday with a day off on Monday and another rostered day off every fortnight.*

*During the interviews, Tony revealed he had to fall back on the training he had completed during his full-time course as he was not receiving sufficient training.*

*"I have to say no, unfortunately. There are quite a few reasons but I would probably say, the biggest one at the moment is our business is going under and there is a lot of pressure. I would also say lack of communication between the owners and the head chef."*

*When contacted almost a year later, Tony was still working in the trade but at a different restaurant. His present workplace is providing Tony with the type of training he missed out on in his first workplace.*

The stories in this section summarise common themes collated from first-year apprentices' experiences of deciding on a career direction based on perceived affinity to selected types of work. To meet their career direction expectations, apprentices displayed persistence in finding an apprenticeship position and resilience by coping with imposed workplace learning regimes, some of which were not ideal. However, owing to many of these apprentices' agency to 'become a trade worker', personal motivation is focused on completing an apprenticeship in order to achieve an occupational goal, that fits with their 'vocational imagination'.

### Contact with ITO

ITO contact, mainly through training advisors visiting the workplace, was reported as satisfactory. Many apprentices reported the training advisors' visits as helpful, in particular to assist apprentices with meeting assessment goals and to remind employers of their responsibilities for providing apprentices with appropriate workplace learning and timely assessment opportunities.

## *Decisions on staying on in the trade*

In this section, factors supporting apprentices' decision to continue with indenture are presented. The following case study provides an example of some of the themes contributing to apprentices' decisions to continue or to seek termination/discontinuation of their indenture. These themes include how apprentices deal with a mismatch between their expectations for workplace learning or lifestyle and workplace reality, and the need for on-going workplace support.

***Case study: Nathan, apprentice engineer – discontinued – an example of mismatch between what an apprentice perceives needs to be learnt and the learning offered at the workplace***

*Nathan completed University Entrance (the equivalent of NCEA level 3) several years ago. He worked in a series of engineering-related occupations and studied for some years at university before obtaining an apprenticeship through an apprenticeship company.*

*"There is a company called [ ] who look after apprentices. I have been doing the apprenticeship for a year and it got to a point where I thought to myself, if this doesn't change then I am going to leave."*

*Nathan found he was not obtaining any training at all and that the tasks he undertook had nothing to do with learning to become an engineer.*

*"The actual crux of the thing, with the company I was with, had me involved in just labouring tasks. Not related to engineering whatsoever, so like a bun boy. And that is understandable as an apprentice, you get a bit of that. For a year or so it's alright and then it's time to learn a bit more."*

*He perceived that he had little support from with the apprenticeship company or the engineering company. Therefore, Nathan decided to terminate his apprenticeship.*

*Currently, Nathan is working for a work agency that places workers into engineering-related jobs.*

### Mismatch between expectations and reality

As shown through Nathan's case study, a number of apprentices discontinued their apprenticeship because of a mismatch between their expectations for workplace-based learning and the actual workplace training provided. Nathan found he was not provided with workplace tasks beyond those of a novice trade worker. His story was common among many discontinued apprentices – lack of opportunity to engage with purposeful work as befitting the occupation was the main reason provided for terminating indenture.

### Lifestyle mismatch

For some dairy farm trainees, there was a mismatch with their lifestyle expectations. As detailed in this interview vignette:

*"Basically, sort of, I kinda, what would I say, got sick of being on my own in the middle of nowhere and with the people, the type of people who worked on dairy farms, and not seeing friends and, yeah, and family often enough"* – dairy farm trainee (discontinued).

Therefore for occupations with high potential for required lifestyle adjustments, targeted information is required for potential apprentices with little knowledge or exposure to the occupation.

***Case study: Joe, apprentice joiner – discontinued – continuing in the trade despite poor apprenticeship experiences***

*Joe has always been interested in working with wood. While still at school, he was inspired by a woodworking teacher. He left school at the end of year 12 after completing NCEA level 2. Joe lives and works in a small town in the South Island and has had two employers through his apprenticeship. The first workplace had to make him redundant due to the economic downturn. He had to leave the second workplace when workplace relationships could not be reconciled.*

*"The first place that I was at was really supportive. They were all about apprentices and all that, which was really good and they got me through all sorts of work. The second place I went to, not so great. It was a good joinery – don't get me wrong – but it wasn't really a nice place for apprentices."*

*Interest in woodworking has sustained Joe through challenging times. At the time of the interviews, he was looking for another job in the joinery industry.*

### Need for positive workplace support

As shown in Joe's case study, workplace support in the form of supportive supervisors, trainers, and workers was an important factor in encouraging apprentices to continue with indenture. Additionally, apprentices who worked in small workplaces reported on the need to maintain equitable workplace relationships.

# Discussion

## *Similarities between pre-trade and first-year apprentices*

### Reasons for entering trade

The reasons for choosing a specific trade were similar across the three types of research participants, pre-trade students, first-year apprentices and discontinued apprentices. Interest in occupational tasks and some form of life-style match were primary reasons provided for choosing a specific industry.

In this respect, 'vocational imagination' (Higgins et al., 2010) was apparent, with many apprentices matching a 'passion honer' or 'confident explorer' profile (Vaughan et al., 2006) and utilising positive forms of career decision making based on evaluative and strategic processes (Bimrose et al., 2008). In essence, these apprentices were focused on becoming trade workers in a craft/trade aligned to their affinities, attributes and perceived future goals.

## *Differences between first year and discontinued apprentices*

### Demographic differences

The most distinct difference between first-year apprentices and discontinued apprentices was the pattern of lower school attainment by apprentices who had discontinued. Therefore, apprentices who begin indenture with low school attainment may require greater support at the start of apprenticeship, to help with the continuation of workplace training.

### Mode of entry into the workplace

Comparisons between first-year apprentices and discontinued apprentices indicate that many discontinued apprentices have more tenuous initial contacts with industry than those who continued. The majority of first-year apprentices entered the trade through contacts between workplaces and apprentices' family members or friends. Many of the discontinued apprentices applied for apprenticeship positions through newspaper advertisements or found out about apprenticeship opportunities through school teachers or career advisors. Therefore, for apprentices with no direct prior contact with an industry, the unfamiliar new environment may have been a difficult initial barrier to surmount.

# Answering the three research questions

A summary of the findings is now provided through answers to the three research questions.

## *Factors influencing young people to enter a trade*

Individual choice by research participants features strongly as a theme through the data gathered over the course of this project. Pre-trade students, first-year apprentices, and discontinued apprentices were all able to articulate clearly the reasons for their occupational choice. In so doing, they exhibited high levels of 'vocational imagination' (Higgins et al., 2010). Of note is the focused enthusiasm and interest in occupations such as boat building, cookery, and hairdressing. Apprentices in these three trades had to work hard to obtain an apprenticeship. Thus, the indenture was an important part of the 'vocational imagination' equation and the strategic career decision-making process. Without completion of an apprenticeship and qualification as a trade worker, their future career goal or direction would not proceed. As a consequence, these apprentices placed high expectations on workplace learning. Therefore, if anticipated opportunities for skill learning

and practice did not eventuate, these apprentices decided to discontinue. They then chose to embark on further training through training providers or searched for a workplace that would provide the necessary training opportunities that agreed with their expectations.

For apprentices seeking a worthwhile career in an established trade, secure work with a low risk for future work redundancy was often used to establish occupation choice. These apprentices chose equitable workplaces providing opportunities to learn the trade and earn a steady wage, thus making evaluative career choices (Bimrose et al., 2008). Pre-trade students, apprentices and discontinued apprentices in the traditional trades of building, engineering, joinery, and glazing focused on this aspect of career decision making. For these apprentices, a trade qualification would lead to a 'trade for life' and something to 'fall back on' as they progressed up the career pathway or moved on to another occupation.

## *Initial induction factors*

In the main, first-year apprentices expressed enthusiasm for engaging with the work tasks of their chosen industry. For most apprentices, induction into the workplace was a process of 'learning by doing'. Many of the ITOs in this project supported new apprentices by organising initial meetings between the ITO representative, employer and apprentice. For some ITOs, information on apprenticeship was provided in written form. For others, an oral introduction was provided. In general, apprenticeship information was focused more on assessment rather than on workplace learning issues. This is evidenced by the large amount of assessment information that made up the bulk of information presented to apprentices at the beginning of indenture.

Initial apprentices' induction was therefore reliant on extant workplace practices and supervisor/trainer preparedness to induct novice workers into the workplace. The induction practices reported by the project's apprentices varied from structured employee induction programmes in some large organisations where safety training was emphasised, to 'informal' approaches used by smaller businesses. For many apprentices participating in this project, induction into apprenticeship consisted of:

- being participant workers from the first day on the job
- a formal meeting between an ITO representative, company representative, and the apprentice to formally sign training agreements

- support material provided by the ITO usually in the form of a large stack of workbooks and assessment material
- an emphasis during the formal meeting and in the support material on assessment of on-job attained skills.

There is therefore a need to review apprentices' induction process within workplaces; in particular, to improve and broaden the provision of information to apprentices and their workplace managers/supervisors/trainers. Information on workplace learning processes and the needs of novice learners should take precedence over assessment material at the initial stage of apprenticeship. Once an apprentice has been well inducted into a workplace, the information on assessments and assessment processes can follow.

### *Support factors enhance 'belonging'*

As has been shown in other studies on apprentice support in the workplace (Industry Training Federation, 2007), support from the workplace is an essential component for apprentices' continuation, retention and completion. The other important factor is individual agency or the need for the apprenticeship to complete, given extrinsic motivational factors including the perceived reward at the end of apprenticeship. Almost all apprentices, both first year and discontinued, reported good access to workplace learning. In particular, apprentices indicated an understanding of the need to put time and effort into learning, practising and honing practical skills, the need to complete underpinning knowledge requirements, and the need to apply theory learnt through 'bookwork' to practice. However, for some apprentices, there was a definite mismatch between what they perceived was required to be learnt and the training opportunities offered by the workplace.

Therefore, to provide authentic learning experiences for novices who aspire to become not only competent but excellent and capable trade workers, workplace support needs to qualify as being appropriate in content and quality. The discussion in this section leads to recommended guidelines based on a synthesis of the data with the current literature on workplace and apprentice learning.

## Recommended guidelines for assisting first-year apprentices

The various findings are now consolidated to provide three major guidelines to help the induction and retention of first-year apprentices:

## *1) Matching vocational imagination to vocational identity*

The pre-trade students and apprentices participating in this project portrayed a strong sense of 'vocational imagination' (Higgins et al., 2010). However, for some apprentices who decided to discontinue, there was a mismatch between what they envisaged the apprenticeship would provide and what occurred in reality. In particular, apprentices were sensitive to access to training. If the training provided did not lead apprentices towards attaining their vocational goals, they were more likely to dis-engage and explore alternatives.

Several recommendations to help potential apprentices make accurate occupational choices are now discussed. These recommendations involve the need to provide clearer information on the merits and realities of individual trades.

### Provision of information to potential apprentices (and their supporters) of both the merits and realities of the trade/industry

A survey of the information provided to potential apprentices, through a comparison of ITO websites and the Careers Rapuara website, reveals the general objective of careers information from these sources as having a marketing focus. Narratives of successful apprentices were used on many ITO websites to provide information on the positives of an apprenticeship. On some websites, the disadvantages of an occupation, including long hours of work, are provided. However, the portrayal of advantages far outweighed the reporting of the realities of work. In order to temper the strong "vocational imagination" of aspiring apprentices, it is perhaps important to provide an opportunity for industry outsiders and potential apprentices to evaluate occupations from more balanced descriptions.

### Firm goals and strong affinity to industry

The findings indicate apprentices make a concerted choice to 'learn while they earn' to become a trade worker. However, when workplace learning opportunities did not reach apprentices' expectations, they were positive in looking for alternative solutions. Hence, almost three-quarters of the discontinued apprentices interviewed, some of whom had to leave the trade owing to circumstances beyond their control, had either re-entered with another employer or were looking for options to re-enter a similar industry. Almost a quarter of the discontinued apprentices had moved into formalised training to ensure they were able to learn the skills of the trade through an alternative delivery method. This aspect indicates the firm commitments made by these apprentices to an occupational choice.

Therefore, those discontinued apprentices who are seeking re-employment within the industry, should be supported by ITOs to reconnect with appropriate employment opportunities.

As discussed above, all research participants were able to articulate clear purposes and goals for occupational choice. Many had chosen trade-based occupations because of their perceived 'non-academic' dispositions. These apprentices were keen to 'work with their hands' and chose occupations aligned to the skills they felt they could attain. All apprentices were able to express a sense of 'loyalty' to their chosen trade.

Research participants also had clear direction and views about future career plans beyond apprenticeship. Many had goals to travel, and several had plans to become self-employed. For these apprentices, completion of indenture was to lead them to a secure and interesting future.

### Clearer and more accessible information for apprentices and employers on workplace learning

A comparative survey carried out in this project revealed that the information provided to apprentices on entry into the indenture mostly consisted of assessment requirements, marking schedules and content for off-job training. This material did not provide the apprentices with a reliable source of information about their responsibilities as apprentices or clear expectations from the workplace on workplace-learning organisation. Through interview data, many apprentices revealed they had received little information about the apprenticeship process from within their workplace or were reluctant to explore training-related issues with their employers. Many apprentices in this project obtained clearer information on the apprenticeship process only when they made contact with their peers, for example, at block courses. For some first-year apprentices, block course participation was often the first opportunity to make contact with peers. This led to sharing of information on apprentices' workplace experiences.

During focus groups, apprentices brought up several inequities regarding apprenticeship, for example, some apprentices' employers subsidised block course fees, while other apprentices had to pay for block courses, and, in some cases, apprentices had to attend block course training while on leave without pay or during their annual leave. Clear and

accessible information for both apprentices and employers on rights, responsibilities, and support is certainly required on induction. This information may need to be provided orally at the first formal meeting between apprentice, employer, and ITO to sign the training agreement, reiterated in written material provided to apprentices, and made available to apprentices and employers through digital media on ITO websites. Information, as described in the next section, also needs to be easily accessible.

### Reality not always portrayed of industry and apprenticeship

Survey of the information provided to apprentices at the beginning of indenture and information to potential apprentices on ITO websites, indicates industries utilising 'best practice' exemplars. The promotion of the advantages of an occupation is a natural outcome of ITOs representing industries keen to attract motivated potential apprentices. Information about the realities of certain industries (long hours of work, potentially hazardous workplace conditions, etc.) are also mentioned on many ITO websites. However, these are perhaps not recognised by novices who are focused on obtaining a foothold into work. It may be important at the outset of indenture for apprentices to be better inducted with relevant information about both the advantages and disadvantages of an occupation. In particular, it is important to provide relevant support to young people, where social isolation (dairy farm trainees), long hours of work (dairy farm trainees, hairdressing, cookery) and potential workplace hazards (building, joinery, glazing, engineering) are industry norms. Provision of information on strategies apprentices could use to cope with and surmount these occupational challenges is also recommended.

## *2) Establishing a sense of belonging*

As summarised in the literature review section, recent studies indicate the need for newcomers into a practice community to establish a sense of belonging. In this section, factors that support apprentices belonging to a workplace are presented and discussed.

### Role of workplace relationships

Many of the apprentices interviewed provided examples of adjustment of their behaviours and beliefs to accommodate workplace relationship requirements. This is particularly the case with apprentices who work in very small workplaces. Support for apprentices from small workplaces may require prompt and targeted assistance when workplace relationship challenges arise; otherwise, there is a potential for small misunderstandings between

employers/supervisors and apprentices, who are often disadvantaged by being novice/learners and new employees, to rapidly become irreconcilable differences. As ITOs and Modern Apprenticeship coordinators often cover large geographical areas and may not always be accessible, phone assistance should be provided promptly from within ITO regional or national office structures. In summary, support from employers, family, ITOs, and training providers is crucial for apprentices' resilience. Prompt and relevant support may prevent apprentices discontinuing an apprenticeship.

### Need for workplace support

Concurrently with apprentices' recognition of the need to maintain good workplace relationships with co-workers, peers and supervisors, there is a need for workplaces to be more conversant with the learning needs of novice workers. As detailed above in the short literature review, novice workers often need more time to become acquainted with specialised workplace practices and expectations. A recent example of a mismatch between workplace culture, objectives and values and a new apprentice's need to learn is reported by Filliettaz (2010). Additionally, as reported by Vaughan et al. (2011) workplace trainers have not been supported as a group of professional practitioners. Therefore provision of training opportunities for workplace trainers may help better and more equitable deployment of workplace learning opportunities for workplace learners. Consequently, importance needs to be placed on helping workplace trainers become not just effective assessors, but better trainers.

## *3) Maintaining engagement and momentum towards apprenticeship completion*

In this section, the recommendations to help apprentices continue with apprenticeship are discussed. These include the need to extend recognition of skills acquisition beyond competency-based approaches, the provision of incentives to apprentices, and support for apprentices' vocational/occupational identity formation.

### Setting goals and objectives aligned with vocational imagination

As discussed above, large numbers of the pre-trade students and apprentices participating in this project articulated clear understandings of occupational choice and possible opportunities beyond apprenticeship. However, as demonstrated by some of the discontinued apprentices, long-term goals were often stymied by an inability to complete

short-term goals, for instance, completing on-job assessments or 'bookwork'. It is important, therefore, for the goals and objectives of indenture to be couched in terms of becoming a trade worker and not solely based on completion of unit standards and credits.

An example of applying the precepts of 'learning as becoming' is to use the 'old' pre-competency era designation of apprentices as junior/first year, intermediate/second year and senior/third year and beyond. This establishes reachable goals, often observable through the workplace tasks apprentices are assigned and/or become responsible for. Progress forward is thus measured by apprentices moving through skill acquisition, as recognised by their ability to undertake more complex tasks and transition into becoming independent workers, rather than mere completion of unit standards and the accompanying credits. Validation of skills by workplace assessors/trainers/peers and through documentation of work completed over the course of each year of apprenticeship may provide a more holistic recognition of apprentices' progression from novice to trade worker. This approach will also bring industry training in line with current approaches undertaken at the NZQA, to base qualifications on 'graduate profiles' (NZQA, 2010). In the 'graduate profiles' approach, emphasis is placed on ensuring learning and assessment processes match the types of activities graduates will need to be able to perform (occupational tasks) on completion of a programme of study. In the workplace, work tasks are already exemplars of 'situated learning' and 'authentic assessments', providing apprentices with real-world learning environments and assessments integrated into work. A structured process for validation of workplace-based skill attainment and application, supplemented by methods to quantify 'underpinning' knowledge, is a step beyond current reliance on competency-based approaches; the proviso is that implementation of the recommendation in this section, will, as noted in the section above, require capable workplace trainers.

### Providing sufficient incentives

'Learning while earning' is an important aspect of apprenticeship, attracting young people into apprenticeship as a form of initial occupational training and education. However, the exigencies of production-focused workplaces often mean that training is 'side lined' as more important commercial objectives are undertaken. Added to this are aspects of certain workplace objectives that require apprentices to work long hours. This makes it difficult for apprentices to complete 'bookwork'. For some apprentices, off-job training is undertaken

either as unpaid leave/annual leave or as part of apprentices' weekly day off. Apprentices therefore sacrifice much in terms of lifestyle accommodations to complete an indenture.

Apprentices are also often paid 'training' wages. For many first-year apprentices, this means an hourly wage that is below the minimum wage. From this wage, many apprentices are expected to pay for tools required to work in the trade, their off-job training fees, resources, and travel/accommodation costs to block or day-release courses, etc. Some, but not all apprentices, receive monetary support from their employers or have fees reimbursed if off-job credits are completed. There are areas of inequity. In particular, due to their motivation to obtain an apprenticeship to meet vocational goals, individual apprentices sign indenture agreements without complete information about their rights and responsibilities.

### Vocational identity

As discussed in the first recommendation to match vocational imagination to reality, there is a need to help apprentices acquire a vocational identity that is compatible with their vocational imagination, or to adjust their vocational imagination to account for the realities of their chosen industry. The literature provides several recommendations. These are:

- Assist potential apprentices with clarifying occupational goals by having them answer the question 'who do I want to be?' rather than focus on the question 'what do I want to do' (Higgins et al., 2010)
- Utilise opportunities for workplace attachment/experiences while still at school, as exampled through the Gateway programme or part-time work. Ensure students are provided with structures to reflect on these workplace experiences. In particular, have structured guided sessions to understand better the advantages and disadvantages of entry into work, workplace learning possibilities, and post-school options (Billett & Ovens, 2007)
- Provide opportunities to discuss the positives and negatives of occupations, which can lead to a better understanding of benefits and pitfalls, not only for potential entrants, but also for the industry at large
- Match perceived strengths to envisaged occupational goals (Vaughan et al., 2006) through guided activities provided at school, career fairs or through ITO information and websites.

These recommendations will help potential apprentices affirm career choice, which will lead to positive engagement with the task of attaining skills, knowledge and dispositions that not only help with learning a trade, but also transform novices/apprentices into skilled trade workers, with clear occupational identities.

## Conclusion

The transition from school to apprenticeship, the journey from novice to trade worker, and the boundary crossing involved for adults to change from one occupation to another, all require skill acquisition, knowledge application, dispositional/attitudinal change, and transformation of vocational identity. All these aspects of learning, change, and transformation require individual agency (choice and intrinsic motivation) and support from workplaces, trade workers, training providers and ITOs. When apprentice agencies, ITO, and workplace support work together, industries that foster apprentices gain through the initiation of new, skilled, knowledgeable and innovative trade workers. To achieve better apprenticeship and qualification completions, positive apprentice experiences, as identified and analysed in this study, will help ensure better understanding of both apprentices and workplace support contributions.

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# Appendix

## *Appendix 1*

### Overall summary of demographic details

Table 1

| ITO | | Focus group – pre-trade students | First-year apprentices – focus group | First-year apprentices – interviews | Discontinued with (first-year discontinued) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AgITO** | Males | 11 | n/a[4] | 3 | 3 |
| | females | 4 | | 4 | 3 (1)[1] |
| | total | **15** | | **7** | **7** |
| **BITO / NZMITO** | Males | 20 | 23 | 7[3] | 4[2] |
| | females | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | total | **20** | **23** | **7** | **5** |
| **BCITO** | Males | 14 | n/a[4] | 8 [2] | 5 |
| | females | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | total | **14** | | **8** | **5** |
| **Competenz** | Males | 19 | 14 | 6 | 5 |
| | females | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | total | **19** | **14** | **6** | **5** |
| **HITO** | Males | 00 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | females | 17 | 11 | 8 | 4 |
| | total | **17** | **12** | **8** | **5** |
| **HSI** | Males | 13 | 12 | 6 | 1 |
| | females | 7 | 5 | 2 | 5 (1)[1] |
| | total | **20** | **17** | **8** | **7** |
| **JITO** | Males | 11 | 20 | 12 | 5 |
| | females | 00 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | total | **11** | **20** | **12** | **5** |
| **Totals** | Males | 88 | | 42 | 19 |
| | females | 28 | | 14 | 15 |
| | total | **116** | **86 + 15** | **56** | **34** |

[1] number in brackets denotes interview carried out 2011 with first-year apprentices who discontinued their apprenticeships after the 2010 interviews were carried out.
[2] an apprentice has decided to not have their contributions revealed.
[3] BCITO sample were gateway students and not apprentices.
[4] Focus group not conducted due to difficulty in convening these groups – AgITO apprentices were spread across wide geographical area and BCITO Gateway students from throughout South Island.

## *Appendix 2*

### First-year apprentices profiles

Table 2

| ITO | School qualifications | Relatives in trade | Friends in trade | Mode of entry trade |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AgITO** | None – 3<br>NCEA 1 – 2<br>NCEA2 – 1<br>NCEA3 – 1 | 5 | 4 | Family business – 2<br>ITO information – 2<br>Lifestyle choice – 1<br>Part- time work – 1<br>Work availability – 1 |
| **BITO / NZMITO** | None – 1<br>NCEA 1 – 3<br>NCEA2 – 3 | 1 | 4 | Family / friends contact – 5<br>ITO information – 1<br>Work experience – 1 |
| **BCITO- (Gateway students)** | None – 1<br>NCEA 1 – 4<br>NCEA2 – 3 | 1 | 3 | School – Gateway– 8<br><br>Eventually 4 in trade + 1 still trying to obtain apprenticeship |
| **Competenz** | None – 2<br>NCEA 1 – 2<br>NCEA2 – 2 | 1 | 3 | Friends contact – 2<br>Work availability – 1<br>Work experience – 1<br>Workplace/employer recommendation – 2 |
| **HITO** | None – 1<br>NCEA 1 – 2<br>NCEA2 – 4 | 1 | 3 | Family contacts – 3<br>Part-time work – 2<br>Previous work experience in salon – 2 |
| **HSI** | None – 4<br>NCEA 1 – 2<br>NCEA3 – 2 | 0 | 5 | Applied for job – 3<br>Gateway – 2<br>Family contacts – 2<br>Part-time work – 1 |
| **JITO** | None – 3<br>NCEA 1 – 3<br>NCEA 2 – 5<br>Degree – 1 | 4 | 7 | Family contacts – 3<br>ITO information – 1<br>Work availability – 2<br>Work experience – 3<br>Workplace/employer recommendation – 1 |
| **Total = 56** | None – 15 (27%)<br>NCEA 1 – 18 (32%)<br>NCEA2 – 19 (34%)<br>NCEA3 – 3 (5%)<br>Degree – 1 (2%) | 10 | 22 | |

## *Appendix 3*

### Apprentices' workplace profiles

Table 3

| ITO | Workplace type | No. of staff | No. of apprentices | Hours of work |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AgITO** | Dairy Farms | 2–4 | 1 | 6.30am – 6.30pm or 3.30am – 3.30 pm<br>7 days a week with every second weekend off |
| **BITO / NZMITO** | Custom build yachts – 6<br>Repairs and maintenance - 1 | 20 or under – 5<br>40–50 –1<br>Over 100 – 1 | 3–8 | 7.30am – 5 pm<br>Monday–Friday |
| **BCITO- (Gateway students)** | Home builders – 5<br>Commercial – 2 | 3–4 | 1 | 7am – 5 pm<br>Monday–Friday |
| **Competenz** | General engineering – 5<br>Others – 2 | Under 10 – 1<br>Under 30 – 2<br>100 + – 1<br>200 + – 2 | Between 1 and 11 | 7.30am – 4 pm<br>Monday–Friday |
| **HITO** | Hairdressing salons | Between 1and- 11 | Between 1 abd 6 | 9am – 5.30pm<br>8am – 8pm on late night<br>6 days – late nights Thursday & Friday |
| **HSI** | Café – 1<br>Family restaurant - 1<br>Fine dining – 3<br>Pub – 3 | Between 2 and 7 in kitchen | Between 1 and 3 | 8.30am – 10.00 pm<br>Tuesday–Sunday |
| **JITO** | Glazing – 8<br>Joinery – 4 | Glaziers – under 10 – 6<br>60 – 1<br>Over 100 – 1<br>Joiners – around 10 – 4 | Between 1 - 5 | 8.30 am– 4.40 pm – glaziers<br>7.30 am – 4.00pm - joiners |

## *Appendix 4*

### Profiles of apprentices who had discontinued in 2010

Table 4

| ITO | School qualifications | Relatives in trade | Friends in trade | Mode of entry | Reason for discontinuation | Post-indenture destination |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AgITO** | None – 4<br>NCEA 1 – 1 | 1 | 5 | Applied for job – 1<br>Friend/family contact – 3<br>Work availability – 1 | Farm shift – 2<br>Lifestyle – 2<br>Redundancy – 1 | Apprenticeship in *another* trade – 1<br>Restart in farm apprenticeship – 3<br>Lifestyle change – 1 |
| **BITO / NZMITO** | None – 2<br>NCEA 1 – 2 | 0 | 2 | Applied for job – 1<br>Friend/family contact – 2<br>Worked in related trade – 1 | Family commitments – 2<br>Redundancy - 2 | Lifestyle change - 1<br>Work in *related* trade – 2<br>Work in *unrelated* trade – 1 |
| **BCITO** | None – 4<br>NCEA 1 – 1 | 1 | 3 | Applied for job – 2<br>Needed RPL – 1<br>Workplace/employer recommendation – 1 | Family commitments – 1<br>Unable to RPL – 2<br>Low wages – 1<br>Redundancy – 1 | Lifestyle change – 1<br>Work in *current* trade – 4 |
| **Competenz** | None – 3<br>NCEA 2 – 1<br>NCEA 3 – 2 | 0 | 4 | Friend/family contact – 1<br>Workplace/employer recommendation – 4 | Paperwork incomplete – 1<br>Under-trained – 3<br>Workplace relationship – 1 | Looking for job in same trade - 1<br>Work in *current* trade – 4 |
| **HITO** | None – 2<br>NCEA 1 – 2<br>NCEA 2 – 1 | 3 | 1 | Friend/family contact – 2<br>Workplace/employer recommendation – 3 | Under-trained – 5 | ACC – 1<br>Full-time training in trade – 1<br>Work in *current* trade – 3 |
| **HSI** | None – 2<br>NCEA 1 – 2<br>NCEA 2 – 1 | 3 | 1 | Applied for job – 1<br>Workplace/employer recommendation – 4 | Under-trained – 3<br>Workplace relationship – 2 | Full-time training in trade – 2<br>Lifestyle change – 1<br>Work in *unrelated* trade – 2 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **JITO** | None – 2<br>NCEA 1 – 1<br>NCEA 2 – 2 | 1 | 0 | Applied for job – 1<br>Workplace/employer recommendation – 3<br>Work availability – 1 | Better position – 1<br>Redundancy – 1<br>Under-trained – 1<br>Workplace relationship – 2 | Full-time training in trade–- 1<br>Looking for job in same trade – 2<br>Work in *current* trade – 1<br>Work in *related* trade – 1 |
| Total = **34** | None – 19 (56%)<br>NCEA 1– 8 (23%)<br>NCEA 2– 5 (15%)<br>NCEA 3 – 2 (6%) | | | | | |

## *Appendix 5*

### Information provided to apprentices at commencement of indenture

Table 5

| ITO | General Information | Agreements | Assessment material | Apprenticeship information |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AgITO** | Provided verbally | | | Provided verbally during first and subsequent visits to workplace. |
| **BITO / NZMITO** | Letter detailing costs to apprentice and apprentice/company block course / short courses/ night school content<br>field officers – role and introductions | Training agreement | Training records – including all assessment results sheets | Study skills check<br>Standard / generic modern apprenticeship brochure.<br>MACs code of practice.<br>Unit workbooks |
| **BCITO** | Expenses and unit standards required for qualification<br>Letter which lists costs involved. | No sample | No sample | Completed at first meeting between skills broker and apprentice.<br>Brochure – information on carpentry – case study of carpentry apprenticeship & national certificate info. |
| **Competenz** | Understanding assessment guides – quick reference.<br>Responsibilities of apprentices and employer also included. | Included in in-job manual | Workplace (on-job) assessment manual – contains assessment guides and reference material | |
| **HITO** | Brochure – your career in hairdressing starts here<br>Information letters – detailing visits by coordinators and costs | Training agreement – details costs<br>Training dates<br>Salon readiness to take on apprentices checklist | Training achievement guide | Training record book – log book<br>Training requirements for hairdressing industry |
| **HSI** | Letter | Training agreement | Manual of on and off job | Text book and workbooks. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | assessments. | |
| **JITO** | becoming a joinery /glass industry apprentice – details costs<br><br>generic – secondary school qualifications – guide for students letter – detailing items provided | Training agreement - | Progress chart<br>Training handbook - | JITO – becoming a joinery/glass industry apprentice<br>Taking on a joinery apprentice (for employers)<br>Standard/ generic modern apprenticeship brochure.<br>For glass – health & safety guide |

www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz/apprenticeships