

learning@work

Good Practice in Workbased Learning

Peter Skippington

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Arts Training New South Wales in association with the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABC) Centre for the Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL),
Wide Bay Institute of TAFE
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The Evolution of Workplace Learning

The potential of workbased learning as a useful model of staff development in the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector has been widely recognised for over a decade (Carter & Gribble, 1991; Field, 1998 & 1999; Mitchell, 2000; Henry, 2001). During that time, the concept of workbased learning has been the subject of specific attention by researchers and policy makers concerned with the evolution of the methodology. In particular, there has been a growing interest in the way workbased learning is applied in contemporary settings to meet the changing needs of VET practitioners operating in new contexts and facing new challenges.

Mitchell (2000) found that the definition of workbased learning was being re-interpreted by many proponents as they applied a range of learning approaches and strategies to achieve meaningful and relevant learning outcomes. Anecdotal evidence from the Reframing the Future national project team also noted a wide variety of interpretations of the methodology by its project teams. Based on these findings, Mitchell, Henry and Young (2001) examined the evolution of workbased learning to investigate:

- Ways in which the workplace learning methodology is applied and practised in contemporary VET staff development programs.
- The appropriateness of the methodology in meeting the challenges facing VET in the twenty-first century.
- The implications for the way workplace learning is designed and supported in the future.

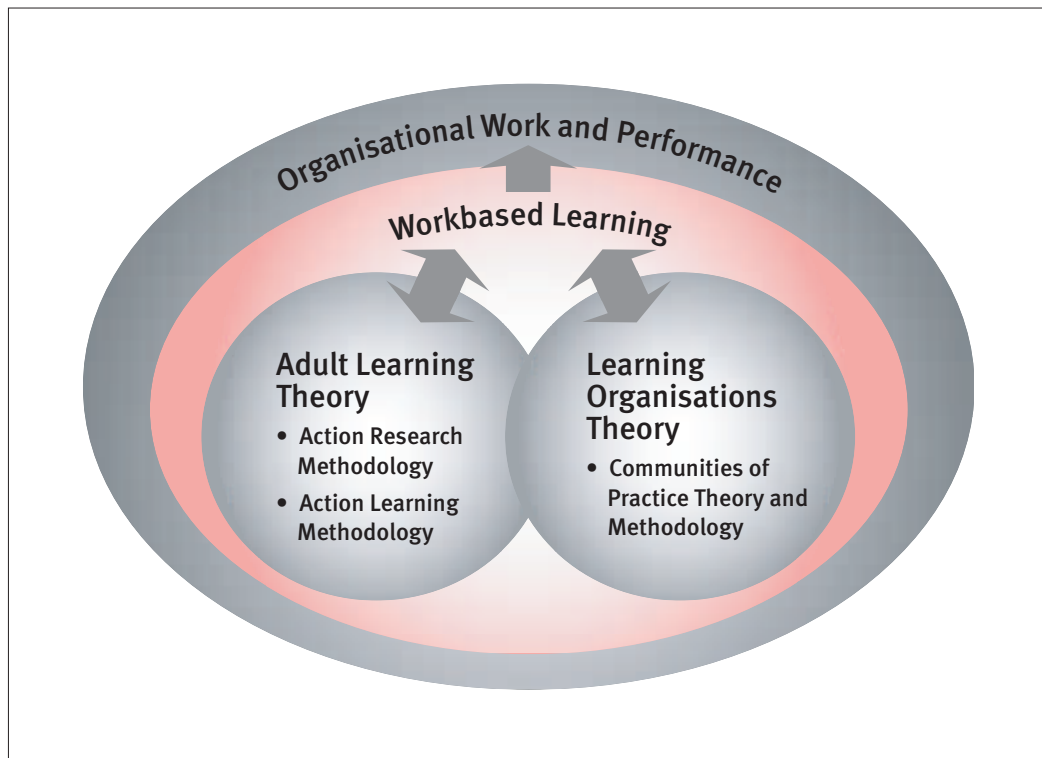
The resulting report, *A New Model of Workbased Learning in the VET Sector*, proposes a model of workbased learning that integrates ideas from adult learning, learning organisations and action learning.

Drawing from an extensive literature review¹, the study suggests that workbased learning is an evolutionary theory which has been deepened and enhanced by the ongoing refinement and extension of theories concerning adult learning, action learning and learning organisations. The authors concluded that the dynamic nature of the methodology ensures that workbased learning will continue to play an important role in VET staff development programs well into the twenty-first century (Mitchell, Henry & Young, 2001).

The model proposed by Mitchell, Henry and Young provides the framework for this project. Five case studies were examined in the context of the evolutionary, theoretical framework proposed by Mitchell, Henry and Young based on an integrative image of workbased learning centred on adult learning theories and theories of learning organisations. This framework is reproduced in Figure 1.

¹ The literature review which informs the Mitchell, Henry & Young report was prepared by Henry (2001) and is available at www.reframingthefuture.net.

Figure 1: Representation of the Interconnectedness and Dynamics between Andragogically-informed Workbased Learning (Action Learning/Research), Learning Organisations and the Learning and Working Performance Domains with an Organisation. (Mitchell, Henry & Young, 2001, p. 34)



1.1 Workbased Learning and Reframing the Future

Since 1997, workbased learning has been the underpinning methodology of Reframing the Future (formally Framing the Future) projects with 770 workbased learning projects being funded from 1997 to 2001. The key feature of approaches to workbased learning in Reframing the Future projects has been the strong link between organisational practice and the national policy goals of vocational education and training; that is, the achievement of the goals of the National Training Framework (NTF).

With the support of the Reframing the Future national project team, these projects have not only used workbased learning in a variety of contexts but have also interpreted the concept in a number of different ways. Through the use and adaptation of the workbased learning methodology, the projects have actively contributed to the continuing evolution of workbased learning as a staff development model. The evolution of workbased learning practices have ensured that the methodology continues to:

- Cater for both individual and organisational learning needs.
- Integrate a range of learning processes and strategies.
- Promote behavioural, attitudinal and organisational change in the workplace.
- Address real workplace issues and problems linked to the NTF.

In many ways, current Reframing the Future projects reflect in practice the findings of the review and reappraisal of workbased learning theory and practice conducted by Mitchell, Henry & Young. (2001).

1.2 Case Studies of Contemporary Applications of Workbased Learning

As stated above the case studies presented in this report have been examined within the context of the evolution of workbased learning presented by Mitchell, Henry and Young

(2001). They describe practical and successful approaches that demonstrate the dynamic, evolutionary nature of contemporary applications of workbased learning in VET.

Furthermore, this report recognises that workbased learning will continue to play a central role in VET staff development programs and it supports recommendations from Mitchell, Henry & Young that improved benefits from workbased learning will be experienced if VET staff development practitioners become more familiar with new theories that inform contemporary approaches to workbased learning. Therefore, the case studies aim to provide practical information on the application of workbased learning in a variety of contexts and settings to inform future practice.

In this context, the case studies provide concrete examples of innovative and integrated approaches to workbased learning that benefit both individuals and organisations. The case studies are characterised by:

- Learning processes and approaches that focus on learning by doing.
- Workbased learning methods that are flexible and responsive to the needs of individual learners working in groups to find solutions to workplace problems.
- Approaches that take account of work contexts and workplace cultures.
- The adoption and integration of appropriate learning strategies and techniques that incorporate facilitation, mentoring, and action learning.
- The adoption of learning processes that are iterative and involve cycles of planning, taking action and reflecting.

In addition, the facilitators, managers and participants involved in each case study demonstrated a knowledge and appreciation of contemporary workbased learning approaches and a readiness to apply approaches in innovative ways. The richness of workbased learning methodologies with their inherently flexible and adaptable methods allowed each participating organisation to develop specific approaches that suited both the particular requirements of individuals and the unique context of each workplace.

Introduction to the Case Studies

The purpose of this report is to highlight successful staff development activities adopted by individuals and organisations to meet the challenges presented by the National Training Framework (NTF).

Each of the case studies selected has applied workbased learning in ways that allowed participants to learn about the NTF through strategies that not only suited their individual learning styles and also took account of organisational cultures and the business directions and goals of the workplace.

2.1 Selection of Case Studies

The project selected five applications of workbased learning in five different learning and working contexts. The case study sites were selected to reflect the diversity of workbased learning approaches adopted by Reframing the Future project teams. Additional selection criteria included the following:

- The cases studies would be selected only from the 2001 Reframing the Future projects.
- The case studies would reflect different contexts and settings for workbased learning.
- The case studies would illustrate different interpretations of the workbased learning methodology.
- The case studies would highlight the links between workbased learning, change management and organisational improvement.
- The case studies would accurately reflect the population of *Reframing the Future* projects conducted during 2001.

2.2 The Participating Organisations

Five organisations participated in the project:

1. Arts Training New South Wales (in partnership with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation).
2. The Centre for the Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL), Wide Bay Institute of TAFE in Queensland (working with TAFE Institutes across Queensland).
3. Compass Training Australia – a small Registered Training Organisation specialising in maritime training (New South Wales).
4. The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation in rural Victoria.
5. The School of Marketing at the Chisholm Institute of TAFE, Victoria.

2.3 A Brief Overview of the Case Studies

This section of the report provides a brief introduction to each of the five case studies.

Arts Training New South Wales and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

This project aimed to develop the skills and knowledge of key personnel in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in relation to the National Training Framework. It used the launch of the Film, Television, Radio and Multimedia Industry Training Package as a catalyst to address key issues in enterprise-based training.

The Training Package also provided a framework through which the ABC could design and implement a workbased learning model that:

- suited the learning requirements of key staff members
- supported the enterprise's strategic goals and directions
- supported the goals of the National Training Framework (NTF).

Both proponents, Arts Training New South Wales and the ABC, saw the project as complementing two key organisational goals:

1. to achieve national recognition for employees in the film, television, radio and multimedia industry
2. to increase practical skills and resources required to implement Training Packages.

Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL), Wide Bay Institute of TAFE

This project was managed by CAIL from the Wide Bay Institute on behalf of TAFE Institutes across Queensland. Through this approach the project contributed to the development of an integrated approach to the delivery of the Business Services Training Package across Queensland Institutes of TAFE.

The project built on existing support structures to create a collaborative learning environment across Queensland to identify macro issues and outcomes associated with the implementation of Training Packages.

Collectively, TAFE staff across Queensland examined the structure of the Business Services Training Package to identify underpinning knowledge that was common across five domains – Administration, Management, Human Resources, Business Development and Small Business.

The project analysed the identified underpinning knowledge to develop delivery and assessment strategies within and across the five domains.

Chisholm Institute of TAFE

The purpose of this project was to facilitate a smooth transition by the Chisholm School of Marketing Practice Team into delivery and assessment of new Training Packages covering the areas of Marketing, Sales and Advertising.

The project adopted workbased learning approaches to:

- Familiarise staff with key aspects of the Training Package
- Provide opportunities for staff to identify and examine challenges arising from the implementation of the Training Package
- Provide forums for the discussion of new ideas and insights
- Facilitate the development of a team approach to future delivery and assessment
- Support and guide the adoption of new and emerging roles for teachers as they move to more flexible methods of delivery and assessment.

Compass Training Australia

This project was designed to develop materials and learning strategies to support the interpretation and implementation of the Maritime Training Package. There was a strong project focus on the development of strategies and systems to support workplace assessment.

On completion of the project, Compass Training was in a position to improve the flexibility of delivery options available to its clients and to implement assessment strategies to enable workplace assessment in both AQF Levels 2 and 3. Other outcomes of the project included:

- Enhanced relationships with employers and employees within the Maritime industry
- Improved understanding of the needs of the industry in relation to delivery and assessment.

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, in partnership with the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the Victorian Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (ETTE), has built an indigenous training centre at Barmah in Victoria. This Reframing the Future project supported the Yorta Yorta community in its preparation for the operation of the new centre through staff development programs to train and mentor key people within the community to plan and develop training programs in Koorie Education, Business Administration, Horticulture and Aboriginal Cultural Site Conservation.

The project used workbased learning approaches to develop:

- A better community understanding and appreciation of the national Training Framework (NTF)
- Knowledge and skills in using Training Packages effectively for positive community outcomes
- Community skills in researching and auditing training resource; assessment frameworks; and, culturally relevant training programs, learning processes and resources.

Workbased Learning – Structures, Strategies and Processes

The five case studies on which this report is based are each defined by the organisation and climate of the workplaces in which they operated. The design and operation of each was a response to particular challenges of applying learning to real issues and problems in the workplace.

The case studies are also representative of the diversity of training organisations operating in the contemporary vocational education and training sector in Australia. This diversity is a key feature of the current environment and consequently, each case study adopted unique approaches to the design and implementation of workbased learning.

While respecting this diversity, it was possible to examine each case study within a broad framework that incorporated three key aspects of workbased learning. The three aspects were defined by the project as being:

1. **Learning Structures** that encompass the way that workbased learning in each case study was organised and supported. Variations in learning structures among the case studies affords recognition that the workplace influences both the composition of learning activities and the way in which these activities are implemented and supported. The workplace provides the context for learning, governs how the learning is organised, and, creates the climate which impacts on the type of learning activities that are undertaken. In short, the learning structures influence what is learned, when it is learned and how it is learned.

The case studies show that learning structures may vary considerably. While not usually prescriptive or regulated, they may be ordered and controlled. At the other end of the spectrum, they may be flexible and loose but are not usually unconstrained.

2. **Learning Strategies** are the specific approaches adopted by the case studies to facilitate and support workbased learning. The cases studies adopted and applied a full array of learning strategies appropriate to the needs of adults learning in the workplace.
3. **Learning Processes** are the activities and experiences of individuals and groups of workbased learners. These activities and experiences are the processes through which learning is assimilated, interpreted and applied in the workplace. They result from and are supported by the collection of learning strategies adopted to facilitate and support learning but they impact at the personal level by allowing individuals to discuss, debate and reflect on issues and concerns.

Each case study developed and applied these aspects in differing ways based on the requirements and culture of their workplaces. All three aspects were strongly interrelated – the design and development of learning structures informed the selection and application of learning strategies, which in turn impacted on the adoption of learning processes. All three aspects were influenced by the environmental context of the workplace – its philosophies, strategic directions, opportunities, challenges and problems. Conversely, all three impacted on the development and continuous improvement of the

workplace as each encouraged learners to review, modify and test new approaches and practices.

Characteristics of the three aspects are further described in Table 1.

Table 1: Three Key Aspects of Workbased Learning Used to Examine and Report on the Case Studies

	Learning Structures	Learning Strategies	Learning Processes (Learning Experiences)
Workbased Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Action Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge Building
Learning in, with and for the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Broad Learning Approaches (Structured, Semi-structured, Flexible) – Learning Environments and Support Mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mentoring – Communication Networks (internal and external / electronic and face-to-face) – Facilitation – Mentoring – Workshops – Conferences – Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reflection – Practice – Testing – Discussion – Debate – Team Building – Critical Thinking – Problem Solving – Sharing

(Note: While all the strategies and processes presented in this table were applied across the five case studies, not every case study used every one.)

3.1 The Workplace Provides the Context for Learning Structures, Learning Strategies and Learning Processes

A further explanation of the structures and organisation of workbased learning and the way they were developed and used by the case studies is necessary.

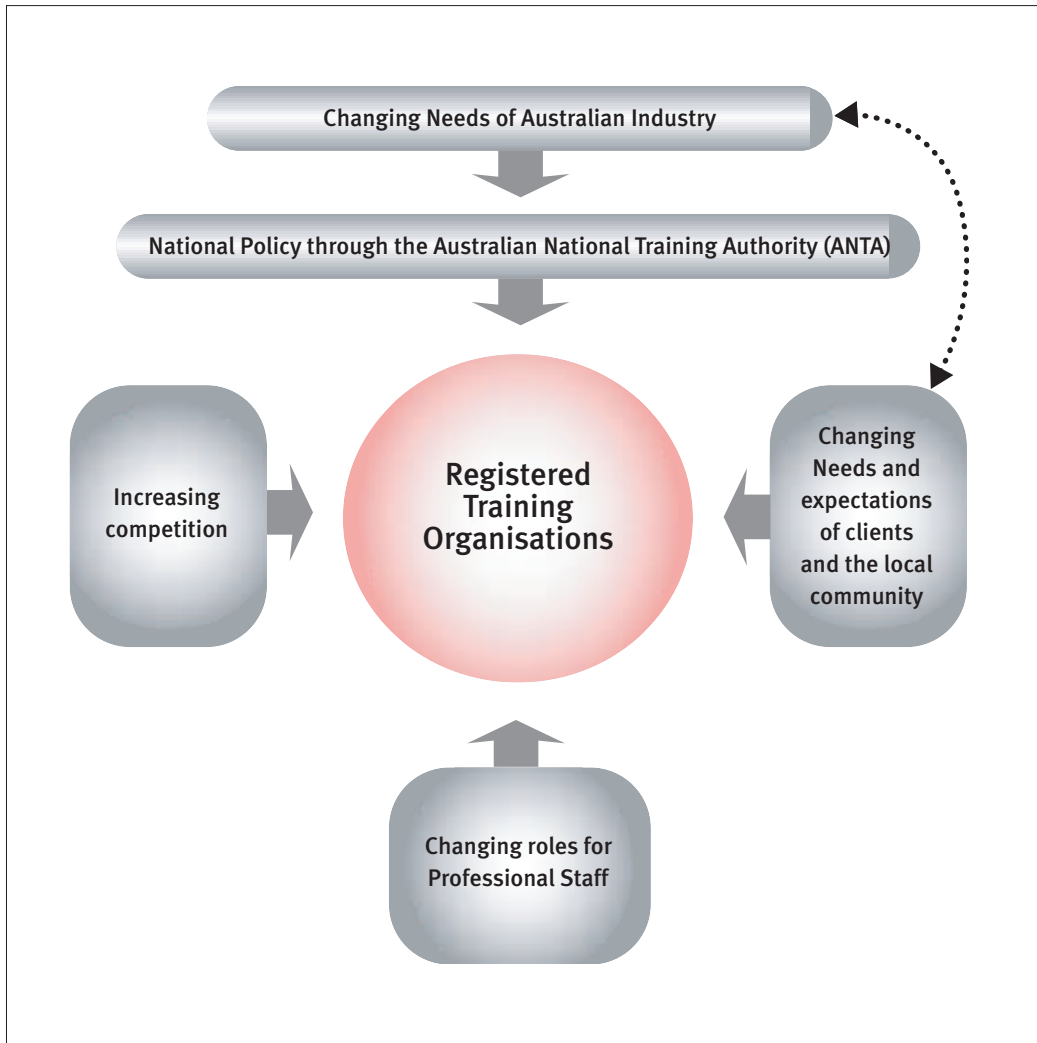
The learning structures applied in the case studies resulted directly from the contexts and complexities of the organisations in which the case studies operated. That is, variables within the workplace influenced the way learning was structured. These variables ranged from simple logistical problems to complex cultural issues and included the following:

- Size of the workplace (the cases studies included small private training organisations, multi-campus training organisations, community-based organisations, and national organisations with distributed workforces)
- Number of participants (learners)
- Learning experiences of the participants
- Availability of learning support structures and processes
- Strategic directions of the workplace
- The nature of the challenges and opportunities facing the workplace
- Complexities of workplace organisation
- Culture of the workplace.

3.2 Commonalities of the Workplaces

While the organisations studied in the project operated in different contexts and applied different strategies to workplace issues and problems, they were all operating in a complex environment characterised by new policies, changing expectations and needs of clients, changing professional roles and mounting competition. The commonalities of the environment in which the case studies operated are outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Operating Environment of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)



At the macro level, this environment influenced all three aspects of the cases studies – learning structures, learning strategies and learning processes.

The structure of workplace learning was influenced by significant external influences; significant organisational pressures affected learning strategies; and learning processes were influenced by the changing roles of staff. While each case study responded to the macro environment with unique and individual methods, there were certain commonalities guiding workbased learning approaches that characterised all case studies. These included the following.

- Recognition that learning could be structured and organised to reflect the complexity of the working environment by adopting and using principles and approaches from a range of recognised learning models and strategies.
- Recognition that both internal and external pressures influenced the workplace and that both could be accommodated in learning structures and approaches.
- Acknowledgement that support for workbased learning could be provided by both internal and external people and agencies.
- Acceptance that learning strategies may involve a range of approaches (including learning events that are external to the workplace - conferences, workshops, site visits etc – but still support workbased learning.)

These commonalities allowed each case study to operate flexibly and innovatively within the context of workbased learning recognising that it is ‘an umbrella term that arches over a range of different staff development methodologies and techniques...’ (Mitchell, Henry and Young, 2001. p 37). The integrative approaches adopted by the case studies are summarised and illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Integrative Approaches to Workbased Learning



Figure 3 highlights that learners (individual learners and learning groups) are at the centre of the learning process – this is the core at which the learning occurs. The workplace, or the organisational context, surrounds the learners and influences how they learn, what they learn, when they learn. Just as importantly, the learning that occurs at the core (by the learners) impacts on the organisation through new insights, practices and processes that contribute to organisational improvement and growth. The needs and culture of the workplace as well as the needs of learners govern the selection of strategies to support learning. The external environment also influences the selection of strategies by providing the broad operating context for the organisation.

Successful applications of workbased learning demonstrated by the five case studies provided timely and relevant staff development that:

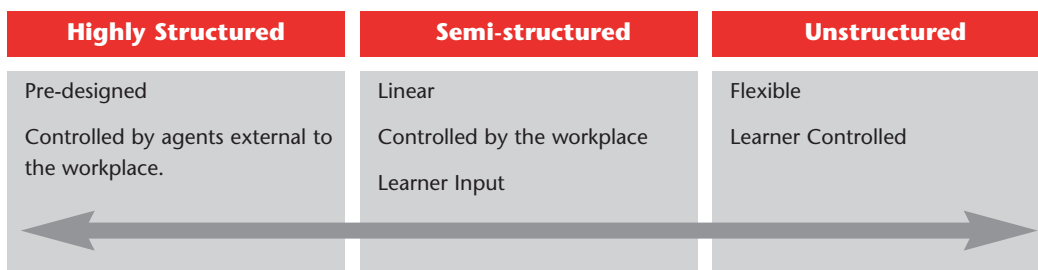
- Embraced national training policies and initiatives
- Responded to state, regional and local needs
- Adopted learning approaches and strategies appropriate to local needs
- Focused on the needs of learners who were at the centre of the workbased learning process.

Learning Structures

The way in which the case studies were designed and structured varied considerably. One operated within a learning structure imposed by having to cater for the demands of a learning group distributed over multiple campuses. Another structured their learning program to cater for the needs of a group comprising full-time, part-time and sessional staff. One designed a program to be flexible and responsive to the daily pressures of operating a small business. Still another organised their learning structures to cater for the values and culture of the community in which it was operating. All in all, the different learning structures adopted by the five case studies were indicative of approaches that reflected the differing needs and requirements of the workplace.

Learning structures can be placed on a continuum from highly structured to semi-structured through to flexible, unstructured approaches (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Continuum of Workbased Learning Structures



If placed on the continuum presented above, all five case studies would lie from the centre to the right, representing semi-structured to flexible approaches. Their position on the continuum reflects the appropriateness of approaches and does not represent a judgement about their relative values. The value of the learning structures that were designed and applied by the case study organisations relates to their usefulness in guiding and supporting learning appropriate to the culture and organisation of each workplace.

4.1 Learning Structure – Chisholm Institute of TAFE

Chisholm Institute of TAFE was one of the case studies that developed a semi-structured, linear approach to workbased learning to ensure it responded to organisational opportunities arising from the implementation of the National Training Framework and, at the same time, that it catered for the needs of participating learners. It developed a learning structure that took account of:

- The needs of a mix of full-time, part-time and sessional staff spread over three campuses
- Links with existing good practice within the Institute that could support learning
- Opportunities to share information and resources within the Institute.

The structure adopted by the Chisholm Institute of TAFE is presented in the following table.

Table 2: Learning Structure developed by the Chisholm Institute of TAFE

Project Stages	Project Activities
<p>Stage 1 Introduction to Training Packages.</p>	<p>In this stage of the project, relevant sections of the Training Package were distributed to each workbased learner.</p> <p>Each learner reviewed and analysed the implementation issues associated with the Training Package. A checklist was provided to guide the review and to facilitate analysis – the checklist was provided as a guide only suggesting approaches rather than prescribing them. However, there was a time frame imposed for participants to complete the review process.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Knowledge Building Task Orientation Team Building</i></p>
<p>Stage 2 Small Group Focus Sessions and/or Individual Consultations.</p>	<p>Following the completion of Stage 1, the Project Facilitator visited all campuses of the Institute to discuss issues and concerns arising from the initial review of the Training Package. Commonly, small focus group sessions were held but on occasion, individual face-to-face discussions were also used. The outcomes of the consultations resulted in the identification and documentation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Issues impacting negatively and positively on the implementation of the Training Package – Concerns of staff across the Institute – Problems/barriers associated with the Training Package and its implementation within the Institute – Benefits of the Training Package – Innovative opportunities for teaching/learning associated with the implementation of the Training Package. <hr/> <p><i>Facilitation Team Building Discussion/Debate</i> <i>Problem Solving Critical Thinking</i></p>
<p>Stage 3 Synopsis of Issues/Concerns</p>	<p>A summary of staff views was prepared and distributed to all staff</p>
<p>Stage 4 Workshop</p>	<p>A day-long workshop was held for all project participants from all campuses. Participants included full-time, part time and sessional staff – other key stakeholders from within the Institute were invited to attend.</p> <p>Key stakeholders were invited in order that they could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – report on plans and strategies being adopted by the Institute that were related to or had a bearing on Training Package implementation – participate in and contribute to discussions and planning sessions. <p>Information sessions were held at the commencement of the workshop. The remainder of the day was devoted to the development of implementation strategies and delivery strategies.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Knowledge Building Sharing Discussion/Debate</i> <i>Facilitation Team Building Problem Solving</i> <i>Critical Thinking</i></p>
<p>Stage 5 Review</p>	<p>A review day was held at the completion of the project. Participants presented their plans and strategies for the implementation of the Training Package.</p> <p>The group then worked to refine strategies based on whole group discussions to avoid duplication. Plans were consolidated and a workplan for 2002 devised for the whole faculty/cluster.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Reflection Testing Sharing</i> <i>Facilitation Discussion / Debate</i></p>

4.2 Learning Structure – Arts Training NSW and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Arts Training New South Wales working with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) also developed a learning structure that was semi-structured and linear. It focused on the identification of specific tasks relevant and appropriate to the requirements of staff at the ABC. The design of the learning structure took into account the particular organisational requirements of the enterprise including:

- The need to introduce key features of the National Training Framework to staff who had limited experience with accredited training and who were not yet appreciative of its potential opportunities and benefits
- The need to adopt flexible approaches that cater for workplace pressures on staff
- The opportunity to use existing communication networks to promote workplace collaboration.

The approach adopted by Arts Training New South Wales and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation is documented in Table 3.

Table 3: Learning Structure adopted by Arts Training NSW and ABC

Project Stages	Project Activities
Stage 1 Launch of and Introduction to the Training Package.	Formal launch of the Film, Television, Radio and Multimedia Industry Training Package at the ABC. The launch provided a platform for an exposition of the benefits and opportunities offered by accredited training.
Stage 2 Establishment of a Workbased Learning Communication Network and the Allocation of Learning Tasks.	<p>In the second stage of the project, an e-mail-based learning network was established.</p> <p>The network was used to share information and to facilitate team building and workplace collaboration. Workplace tasks were developed and allocated to learners to ensure a task-oriented approach was established with a view that these would provide a framework for discussion and stimulate collaboration and networking.</p> <p>The project facilitator developed the tasks in line with the project aims and the demands of the workplace. The facilitator also coordinated and monitored communication.</p> <p>Two main workplace actions were completed prior to the national workshop (see Stage 3) - a further two tasks were allocated following the National Workshop. The tasks were also used as a trigger to generate discussion, raise issues and provide positive action in relation to implementation of the Training Package and the NTF.</p>
Stage 3 One-day National Workshop.	<p>A one-day national workshop was held midway through the project.</p> <p>The workshop developed the parameters and framework for an implementation model of accredited training within the ABC. The workshop utilised problem posing and problem solving and action learning principles and approaches with the key stakeholders in the ABC's Training and Development unit, namely Development Advisers and State Development Coordinators.</p>
Stage 4 Implementation Model	<p>ABC Development Advisers and State Development Coordinators documented local components of an enterprise based and agreed implementation model within the ABC.</p> <p>Ways of communicating the benefits of accredited training to other staff was also planned and documented. Models and plans will be implemented during 2002.</p>

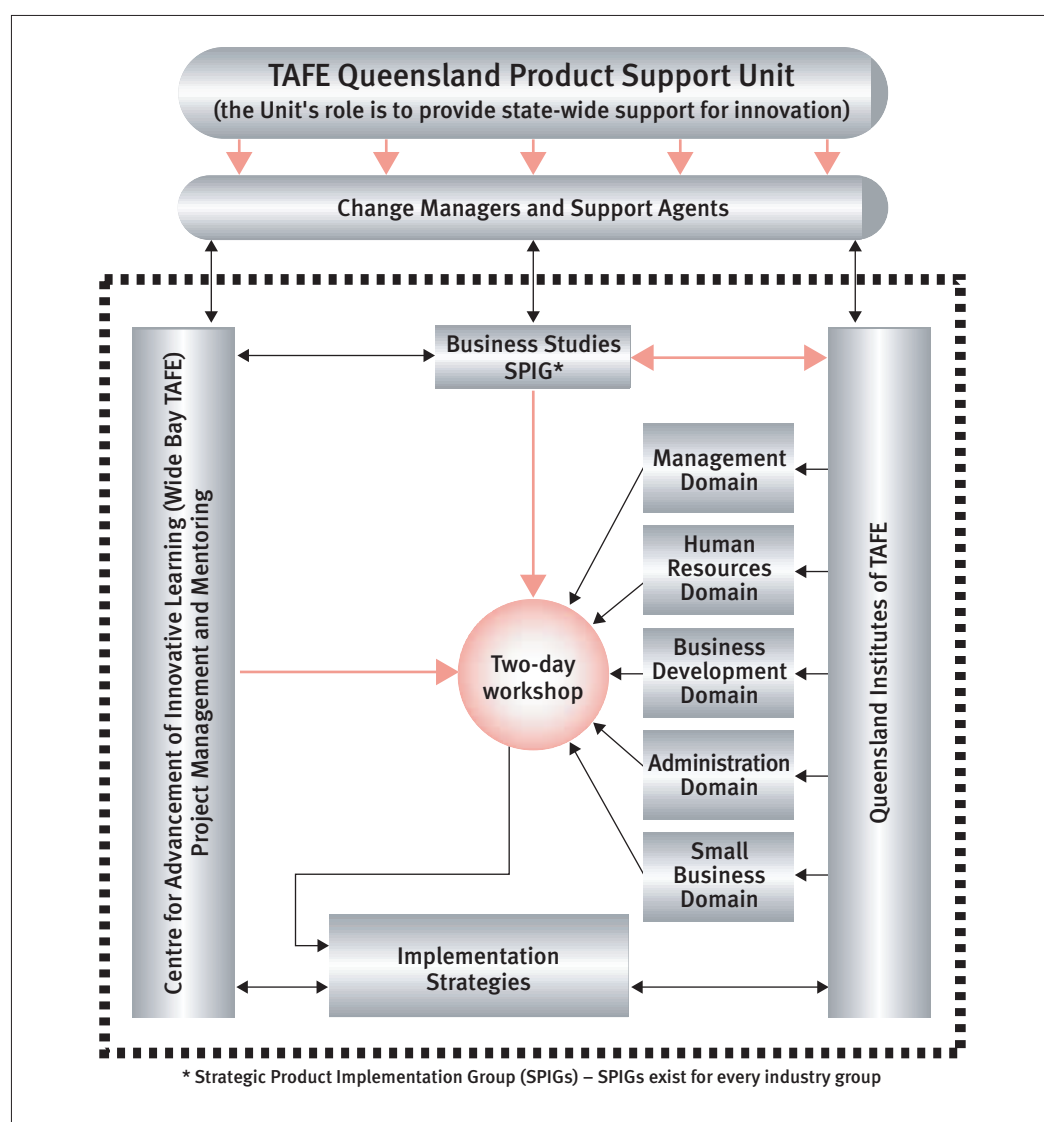
4.3 Learning Structure – Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL), Wide Bay Institute of TAFE

The Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL) at the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE built on existing structures operating within TAFE Queensland to develop a learning structure for the project that complemented existing networks of facilitators, support personnel and change managers.

By linking existing structures with the Reframing the Future staff development initiative, the project developed an approach that achieved two outcomes. Firstly, the broad TAFE Queensland support infrastructure provided an operating framework for the project allowing project-based learning activities to be structured and supported across the state. Secondly, the structure facilitated a flexible approach to learning across all Queensland TAFE Institutes through the use of *learning domain groups* that allowed people to work in small learning groups on areas of specific interest.

The learning structure designed and used by CAIL and TAFE Queensland is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Learning Structure developed by the Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (Wide Bay Institute of TAFE).



The heavy dotted box marks the Reframing the Future project activity. The information above the dotted box presents the existing TAFE Queensland support infrastructure.

A features of the support infrastructure are Strategic Product Implementation Groups (SPIGs) that work with TAFE Institutes across all industry groupings. This project drew on the expertise and resources of the Product Support Unit through the Business Studies SPIG to provide

expertise to workbased learners. The learners themselves formed learning groups called domain groups that addressed five key areas of concern within the Training Package – management, human resources, business development, administration and small business. The domain groups were identified and established by CAIL, the Business Studies SPIG and the learners themselves. The domain groups became action learning groups working on the identification of issues and concerns as well as developing strategies through which to address concerns. Each domain group was supported by CAIL and the Business Services SPIG.

A two-day workshop allowed the learning groups (domain groups) to come together to share information and refine implementation strategies. Another key function of the workshop was to ensure consistency of approaches across domain groups and to avoid unnecessary duplication. Following the workshop, strategies were reviewed and finalised for implementation during 2002.

4.4 Learning Structure – Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

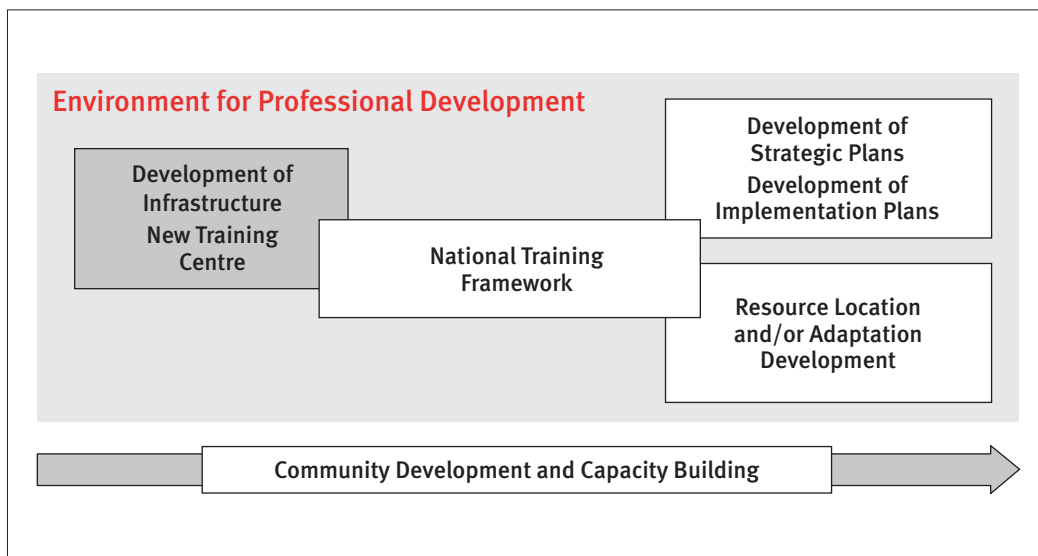
The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation developed an approach to learning that reflected community culture. The approach was flexible and responsive to the needs of the community and incorporated learning strategies that reflected the preferred learning styles of community members.

The Yorta Yorta Reframing the Future project was a component of several interconnecting initiatives occurring within the community. To fully appreciate the learning activities undertaken by the Yorta Yorta people, it is important to understand the environment in which the learning took place.

The community was undergoing significant strategic planning for community renewal and sustainable development. Implementation of some plans had commenced with the building of a Community Training Centre. As this physical infrastructure was being built, the community was developing training plans and programs to implement following the opening of the centre early in 2002.

Figure 6 presents the broad level of activity occurring within the community during 2001.

Figure 6: Community Development – Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation



Within this context of community development and sustainability, there was a need to ensure that workbased learning supported community ownership and that training plans and resources developed through the program would not only meet community expectations but also that the community had the knowledge and skills to successfully implement the plans.

The learning structure developed to support workbased learning was consequently designed to achieve learner empowerment and independence. To reflect these aims the program was designed to commence with a semi-structured approach to learning and move to approaches that provided greater learner autonomy and responsibility.

Table 4 presents the learning structure adopted to support the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

Table 4: Learning Structure developed by the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

Project Stages	Project Activities
<p>Stage 1 Identification of Issues and concerns</p>	<p>All learners were brought together into one group for a face-to-face, facilitator-led, examination of training issues and concerns.</p> <p>In this highly structured session elements of the National Training Framework (NTF) were introduced and explained using approaches based on graphical information. Discussions revolved around benefits arising from the NTF for the implementation of training programs within the community. Links between community strategic plans and training activities were also discussed.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Reflection on Issues</p>	<p>Learners were left to reflect on issues arising from Stage 1 and to identify areas of interest and areas where their expertise and experience could be best applied.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Introduction of Training Packages</p>	<p>Relevant Training Packages were introduced to participants in a face-to-face session. Key features of the Training Packages were presented and discussed.</p>
<p>Stage 4 Reflection on Training Packages</p>	<p>Learners were left to examine the Training Packages and reflect on issues arising from their implementation. No time limits were imposed on this activity and the facilitator (while available on request) did not intervene in this activity, leaving the learners to work autonomously either individually or in groups.</p>
<p>Stage 5 Structured Exercises</p>	<p>Following the completion of Stage 4, learners were brought together to discuss issues arising. They were then given a structured exercise to complete based on implementing the Training Package within the community.</p>
<p>Stage 6 Trial Implementation Plans and Pilots</p>	<p>Small-scale training Implementation Plans were developed and tested within the community.</p>
<p>Stage 7 Review, Analysis and Reflection</p>	<p>Learners reviewed and analysed the outcomes of the pilot activity and reflected on future directions.</p>
<p>Stage 8 Implementation Plans</p>	<p>Learners developed Implementation Plans for 2002.</p>

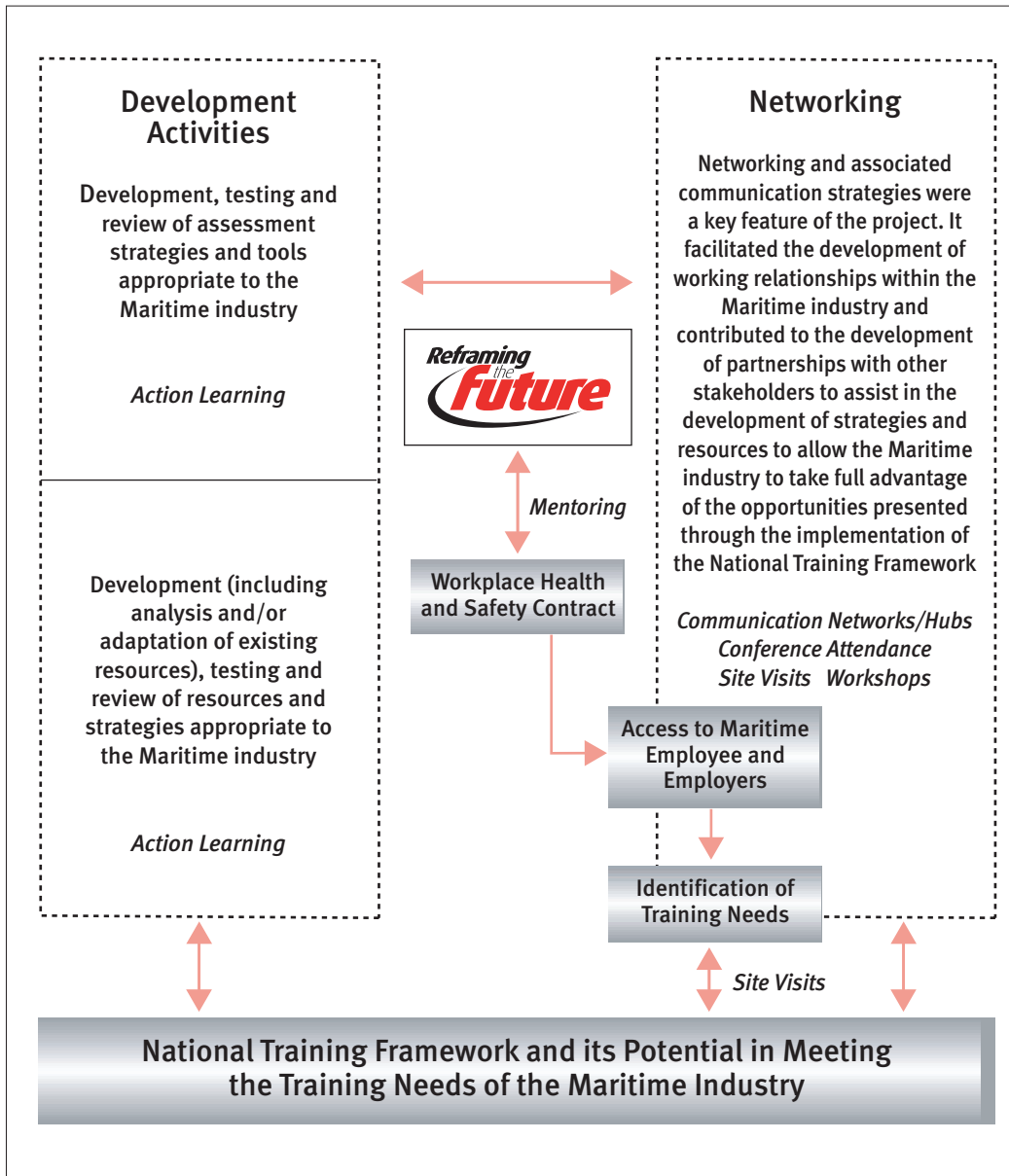
4.5 Learning Structure – Compass Training Australia

The learning structure developed and applied by Compass Training Australia was considerably different from those adopted by the other case studies.

Compass Training Australia is a small private training organisation specialising in the design and delivery of training and assessment for the maritime industry. It has a small staff and a strong focus of the provision of flexible and responsive training. It required a learning structure that reflected its operation – one that was self-directed and controlled by the learning participants; unstructured and flexible enough to cater for unforeseen opportunities; and, responsive to the diverse needs of the maritime industry.

The learning structure adopted by Compass Training is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Learning Structure of Compass Training Australia



Unlike the other case studies, the approach was non-linear and able to respond to opportunities and events as they occurred in the project. The project started with the aim of introducing the benefits of the National Training Framework to employees and employers within the Maritime industry and to work with them and other stakeholders to develop implementation models within the industry.

The flexibility of the learning structure allowed Compass Training to accommodate a range of learning opportunities, many of which were unforeseen at the commencement of the project. These included:

- Establishing new networks
- Developing new partnerships and alliances
- Building knowledge from a range of key experts
- Building stronger relationships within the industry.

4.6 Summary

In summary, all case studies developed learning structures that were customised to suit organisational cultures and were organised to match the learning requirements of individual learners.

The development of various learning structures to support workbased learning illustrates the impact of the workplace in creating learning environments. Each workplace is different and this difference impacts on the design and implementation of good workbased learning.

Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are the specific approaches adopted by the case studies to facilitate and support workbased learning. The five case studies adopted and applied a full array of learning strategies appropriate to the needs of adult learners and suited to the organisational requirements of the workplaces in which the learning occurred. Strategies included:

- Action Learning
- Facilitation
- Mentoring
- Establishment and maintenance of communication networks
- Networking
- Workshops
- Conferences.

All the learning strategies adopted by the case studies were underpinned by adult learning principles including the following:

- Learning is an active, empowering pursuit that involves people working separately or in groups to debate issues, solve problems, develop and test solutions, and evaluate, review and refine solutions
- Learning occurs in environments that provide relevant and meaningful contexts for personal and professional growth
- Learning is a continuous process.

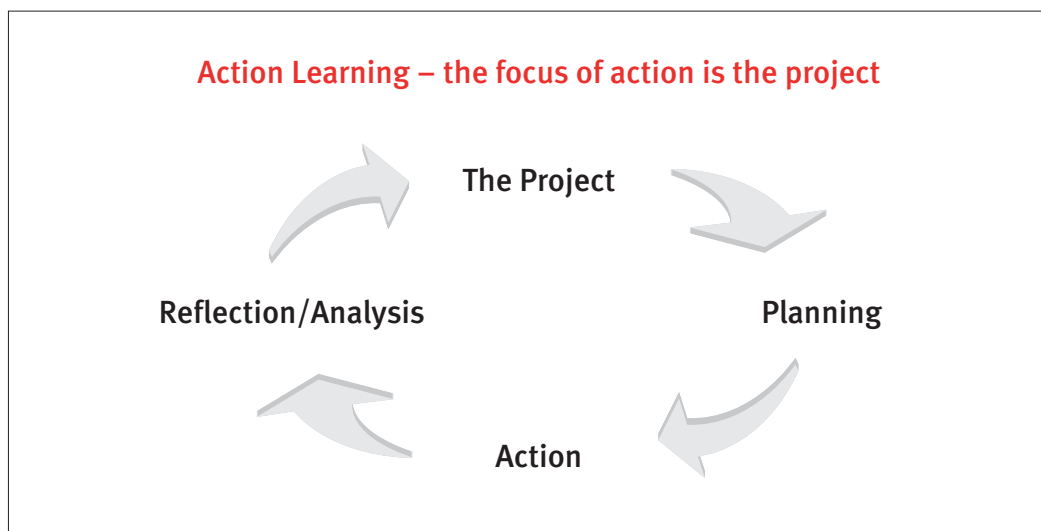
5.1 Action Learning

Action Learning is a systematic process through which individuals learn by doing. Through the process, people increase their self-awareness and develop new knowledge, attitudes and behaviours as well as skills for making changes and redefining their roles and responsibilities within new or changing workplace contexts.

Applied in the workplace, it usually involves the members of an organisation working in groups to find solutions to real challenges facing themselves and their organisations. Learning occurs with colleagues who are collaboratively involved in facing new challenges impacting on the workplace. Everyone involved is responsible for overcoming problems and, importantly, for moving beyond stages of discussion and analysis to implementing actions in the workplace.

Central to the practice of Action Learning is the concept of a cycle of learning involving (i) planning for action, (ii) taking action and testing plans, and (iii) reflecting and analysing the outcomes before (iv) refining plans and repeating the cycle. The action learning cycle is presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The Action Learning Cycle



At the heart of the process presented in Figure 8 is the *learning from experience* model popularised by Kolb (1984, p 21).

Action learning was the key learning strategy for all five case studies. All case studies reported that the action learning projects undertaken by the learners were based on the principles of adult learning. That is:

- They were selected, directed and controlled by the learners themselves
- They were based on finding solutions to real workplace problems that impacted on the learners and their organisations
- They recognised the skills, knowledge and experiences that each learner brought to the learning process.

While there are strong commonalities across the case studies in their broad approaches to the use of action learning in the workplace, each case study applied action learning in unique ways suitable to the needs of learners and the organisation of the workplace.

Vertical Integration of Action Learning Groups

The project managed by the Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL) at Wide Bay Institute of TAFE adopted what might be called macro and micro approaches to action learning.

At the macro level, agencies with statewide responsibilities for the successful design and implementation of new approaches related to the National Training Framework worked together in an action learning framework to identify key issues and develop broad frameworks within which individual TAFE Institutes might develop innovative approaches. The frameworks were tested and revised through action learning approaches.

Also operating at the macro level were action learning approaches specific to the implementation of the Business Services Training Package. CAIL and the Business Services Strategic Implementation Group (SPIG) worked together to develop, test and refine approaches through which the Business Services faculties of Institutes across Queensland could work together to solve workplace problems arising from the implementation of the Training Package.

At the micro level, learners from across Queensland Institutes formed small action learning groups (called domains by the project) to plan, test and refine specific approaches to the implementation of the Training Package within the contexts defined by each domain.

In effect, action learning cycles worked vertically at every level of development within the project.

	Agencies involved	Action Learning outcomes
Macro Level	Product Support Unit Agencies with state-wide responsibilities for the implementation of the NTF	Macro state-wide frameworks and strategies across industry groups
	CAL Business Services Strategic Product Support Group	State-wide strategies and approaches based on macro frameworks for Business Service Training Packages
Micro Level	Learning Domains – small self-selected groups of learners focuses on specific areas of interest	Institute (workplace) based strategies for the implementation of aspects of the Business Service Training Package

Another case study used action learning approaches to facilitate and encourage learning across the workplace.

Supporting and Modelling Action Learning

Arts Training NSW and the ABC recognised the need to facilitate and encourage learning across the whole enterprise and developed and implemented a *whole-of-workplace* action learning approach that used existing telecommunication networks within the workplace. Using the networks, structured action learning tasks were developed and distributed to learners. The project facilitator modelled and supported good practice in action learning by using the network to stimulate debate and discussion, promote collaboration and encourage reflection.

Modelling of action learning approaches, coupled with a recognition of the expertise and skills of participants, encouraged learners to identify their particular skills and areas of interest and to pursue specific problems related to their working environment. As a consequence, smaller action learning groups evolved and operated within the context of the whole-of enterprise approach. In effect, the modelling of good practice allowed the development of groups within groups and contributed to the development of a fledging action learning culture within the enterprise.

Another case study allowed small action learning groups to self-select at the commencement of the project and then put strategies in place to facilitate sharing and networking between the groups.

An Integrated Network of Action Learning Groups

The experience of the learners in the application of action learning was recognised at the outset of the project at the Chisholm Institute of TAFE. The retail and sales staff had been applying action learning approaches with students within Practice Firms for several years.

The project facilitator allowed action learning groups to evolve at the commencement of the project. Learners self-selected groups based on common interests, individual skills, expertise and experience, and existing workplace groupings.

In this context the facilitator applied her skills to encouraging collaboration between groups to ensure consistency, to avoid duplication and promote sharing. This resulted in a fluid operation of groups, with knowledge and expertise being shared between groups – in short an integrated network of action learning groups.

Regardless of the organisation of action learning, all case studies reported that their applications resulted in the following outcomes:

- Learners developed practical solutions to real workplace problems
- Learners developed a good understanding of their ongoing roles and responsibilities in applying their solutions in the workplace

- Learners became proactive and took charge of their own learning
- Critical reflection was recognised as a key element of the action learning process by all learners (but in practice the process usually required intervention by the project facilitators as workplace pressures sometimes distracted learners from allocating time for reflection)
- Action learning resulted in the development of creative and innovative approaches to workplace problem solving.

5.2 Facilitation

One of the aims of workbased learning is to allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning by deciding what they will learn and how, where and when they undertake the learning. To assist this process, learning facilitators are usually used to guide and support the learning process and to encourage independence in learning. The case studies have illustrated that the role of the learning facilitator varies considerably depending on the needs and experiences of the learners themselves and the operation and organisation of the workplace. Some facilitators focused strongly on encouragement, motivation and support while others adopted a more interventionist and structured approach to develop appropriate frameworks for workbased learning.

A successful facilitator must be sensitive to the needs of the learner and the requirements of the workplace so that they can adopt approaches that allow both learners and workplaces to grow and develop.

All the facilitators involved in the five case studies demonstrated several key aspects of successful facilitation:

- Sensitivity to the needs of learners
- Respect for the culture and organisation of the workplace
- Knowledge of the aims and processes of workbased learning
- Knowledge and experience in appropriate learning strategies and processes
- Ability to model good practice in learning
- A strong commitment to lifelong and continuous learning
- Recognition of the skills and experiences that individual learners bring to the learning process.

Across all case studies, the facilitators applied these aspects in order to:

- Assist workplace learners to identify, develop and test strategies to support and encourage learning through a range of approaches including experiential learning, action learning, team learning and other appropriate learning approaches.
- Assist learners to identify, build on and extend the *incidental learning* which occurs in the workplace.
- Support and motivate individuals and groups of learners to participate in learning – participation promotes workplace cohesion, inclusiveness and opportunity.
- Promote, encourage and facilitate the development of learning partnerships and networks. (Both internal and external to the organisations).
- Help workplaces to promote positive attitudes to learning by promoting the outcomes of learning to all stakeholders.
- Assist learners and workplaces to continually evaluate performance and associated learning outcomes.

This last point requires some elaboration as it aims at helping workplaces to learn how to learn and is key to the success of the case study projects. Successful facilitators help workplaces to reflect on and evaluate their learning by encouraging continuous examination of:

- how and what learners have learned about the changes faced by the workplace
- how much has been learned
- how much value has been added to the workplace.

5.3 Mentoring

Successful mentoring in workplace learning maximises the outcomes for each learner. The role of the mentor is to help learners to assess their own progress, to reflect on their experiences, to solve problems as they arise, and to provide a degree of external stimulus and motivation. The mentor also suggests resources, information and activities that will help learners develop their skills and knowledge and complete their projects.

In many ways mentoring and facilitation are closely related – a good facilitator is also a good mentor. But mentors provide additional support and advisory services and may be workplace colleagues, supervisors, experts from outside the workplace or just trusted friends. The principal attributes of the mentor are the ability to listen perceptively and reflect back to participants a commentary on their progress, together with a willingness to share understanding gained from their own professional experiences.

In the cases studies, successful mentoring relied on the development of a strong working relationship and an active learning partnership between all participants in the mentoring process. Mentors worked with learners to support the development of relationships based on mutual respect and a strong commitment to the outcomes of the learning program. Collectively, they fulfilled a range of functions:

- They contributed to the development of a supportive climate to assist learners develop and upgrade their skills
- They contributed to the improvement of learners' self-esteem and confidence
- They helped learners to participate fully in all the opportunities provided through learning at work
- They provided expert advice to learners.

Individually, the case studies illustrate the varied ways in which mentors support workbased learning.

Mentors Review and Monitor Progress

At the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, people from all levels of the community provided mentoring services to learners. As the learning project was directly linked to the broader community strategic directions, mentors provided assistance to learners by encouraging them to reflect on progress and to continually revisit their goals and plans to ensure the relevance of links with broader community development issues.

Community-based mentors also encouraged learners to consider alternative approaches and to identify new approaches and new opportunities for development. Alternatively, mentors also helped learners identify times when planning had come to a close and that testing and piloting (action) was now required.

Perhaps, most importantly, mentors within the Yorta Yorta community helped learners reflect on their learning to discover not only when and why difficulties were being experienced but also to recognise the new discoveries and learnings that had occurred during the learning process.

A feature of mentoring in the Yorta Yorta community was that it occurred formally and informally. Some of the most important individual learning occurred through discussions with mentors at barbeques and social functions.

Mentors help Identify Resources

The flexible, unstructured approach to workplace learning adopted by Compass Training Australia, allowed mentors to be used in similarly flexible ways. Mentors were used to solve problems as and when they occurred.

Mentors used by Compass Training included industry experts, fellow trainers, employers and employees within the maritime industry, fellow conference attendees, Government workers, colleagues and friends. The strong networking focus that was a feature of the project provided a rich pool of mentors offering a wide range of advice, support and guidance to the project.

Of particular note was the use of mentors in helping to identify relevant and useful resources. Mentors facilitated access to resources and references and provided useful contacts to support the project.

Mentors also helped the project participants to identify new opportunities to gain greater access to industry members. In particular, mentors assisted with the identification of an opportunity to plan and deliver industry-relevant Workplace Health and Safety Services to the industry. Mentors helped the Compass project team to prepare and lodge a detailed proposal for the delivery of Workplace Health and Safety Services to the Maritime industry. The success of the proposal provided a catalyst for Compass Training to improve their access to maritime employees and employers through the delivery of essential Workplace Health and Safety Services. This provided an avenue through which the company introduced key aspects and benefits of the National Training Framework to the industry.

Mentors Provide a Sounding Board

A feature of the project conducted by Arts Training NSW and the ABC was the recognition of the existing knowledge and skills of the learners and, collectively, of the enterprise itself. This recognition was one of the reasons for developing an enterprise-wide learning network based on the existing national e-mail network. The network provided not only a platform for debate and discussion of issues and problems but also an avenue for collaboration in workplace problem solving.

In this environment, mentors, among other things, became 'sounding boards' for learners to test ideas and concepts. Mentors brought their own workplace experiences to discussions and used them as a basis to examine both positive and negative aspects of the workplace and to seek solutions to current workplace problems. Mentors used their experience to probe beneath the surface of problems and to theoretically test potential solutions before implementation.

Mentors as Critical Friends and Allies

Mentors are also critical friends to learners and allies in the learning process. This aspect of mentoring was illustrated at the Chisholm Institute of TAFE. Mentors within the Institute made themselves readily available to workshop tasks and ideas, discuss, read documents, and talk through problems with the learners. Mentors at Chisholm worked with learners to help them achieve quality outcomes by:

- Encouraging learners to make and trust their own judgements on issues relating to the implementation of the National Training Framework on the workplace
- Making constructive critical comments where necessary
- Encouraging learners to make periodic reality checks on solutions for workplace problems especially in relation to future workplace roles and responsibilities
- Being a friend and advocate for the learners in reporting to others and communicating on a broader front within the Institute.

Mentors Challenge and Stimulate Learners

Staff at the Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL) provided an ongoing mentoring role to learners within the project. While a range of other people provided mentoring services, the Centre guided and supported learners by:

- Encouraging learners to move out of their comfort zones and look for challenging and innovative solutions to workplace problems
- Adopting alternative points of view to encourage learners to test the validity of their proposed solutions
- Being co-learners and thus learning themselves throughout the program and being prepared to be challenged on their own approaches to the implementation of the National Training Framework
- Encouraging learners to look for ways to maximise the enjoyment and rewards of the project.

In all the case studies mentoring contributed significantly to workbased learning. The mentoring component of all the projects had the following good practice characteristics:

- *Advocacy* – an ability and willingness to assist with promotion and communication of the project processes and outcomes to all stakeholders.
- *Accessibility* – an ability and willingness to make time to be available to learners through visits, phoning, sending e-mail and other appropriate communication approaches. Mentors made time to ask questions, read proposals, offer advice, recommend resources, and review progress.
- *Networking* – Mentors used their own network and contacts to help extend the professional network of learners.
- *Independence* – Mentors provided independent advice to learners.
- *Excellence* – Mentors maintained high standards support, advice and guidance.
- *Evaluation* – Mentors contributed to the reflection and evaluation processes inherent on the learning programs.

5.4 Communication and Networking

Effective communication and networking are key features of a successful workbased learning program. Of course, good practice in facilitation and mentoring are key components of communication and networking but effective communication and networking strategies do more than just complement facilitation and mentoring, they also extend into the areas of partnership development, professional networks and promotion of learning processes and outcomes.

The establishment of collaborative partnerships through effective communication and networking strategies has been a major outcome for the case studies. This has been particularly the case for Compass Training Australia where networking was adopted as a key feature of their learning program.

Networking in the Maritime Industry

The focus of the Compass project was to promote the benefits of the National Training Framework (NTF) to the maritime industry. There is a strong culture of training in the industry but little knowledge about the operation of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. Through open communication and networking, Compass Training developed a partnership of stakeholders to work with them to promote the NTF within the maritime industry.

The resulting network allowed Compass, a small Registered Training Organisation (RTO), to learn and develop in a range of areas resulting in:

- An improved recognition of the diverse needs of the industry
- A better appreciation of the approaches required to promote the benefits of the NTF.

New understandings combined with new networks brought about the following outcomes for Compass.

- Improved access to employees and employers within the Maritime industry
- Partnerships with industry stakeholders to promote the benefits of the NTF; to manage flexible assessment within the industry; and, to develop and/or source appropriate learning resources.

While Compass Training used networks to improve learning and expertise, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, used communication and networking strategies to promote its project and to broaden its impact not only within the enterprise but throughout the industry.

As Australia's lead agency and largest employer in the film, television, radio and multimedia industry, the ABC has a role to play in modelling good practice within the industry. It was planned that the workplace learning strategies used in the project could provide a model for other organisations within the industry to adopt the training frameworks provided by the National Training Framework. Therefore the ABC adopted a two-prong communication and networking strategy:

- Promotion of the project processes and outcomes within the organisation
- Promotion of the project outside of the organisation.

Communication and Networking Within the Workplace

From the commencement of the project, Arts Training NSW and the ABC recognised the importance of 'selling' the project to prospective participants. There was a need to ensure that potential learners knew that their participation was voluntary. There was also a need to ensure they understood the roles and responsibilities they would accept as workbased learners. Most importantly, the potential participants needed to have a good appreciation of how participation would benefit them as individuals and how they could contribute to workplace improvements.

To sell the project to potential participants and to the enterprise as a whole, Arts Training and the ABC designed, printed and distributed promotional material inviting staff to participate in the project. Invitations included an overview of the program and its aims. The documentation made it clear that participation in the project was a staff development and a networking opportunity. This strategy not only allowed interested people to become involved in the program, it also ensured that all key staff knew about the program and its aims and processes. The promotional material deliberately avoided jargon related to training, as many potential participants were unfamiliar with and unresponsive to the language of the National Training Framework (NTF).

The enterprise was also kept informed of progress throughout the project through updates in the internal newsletter.....

The first phase of the new accredited radio training is in its final stages with the new Radio Training Project team now in the third week of a four-week trainer development session. The four senior broadcasters, selected from 40 applicants are developing course assessment and training material and acquiring national trainers' qualifications.

AbcXchange, 11 September 2001

Communication and Networking outside the Workplace

The ABC also recognised the benefits of communication and networking externally. One of the key longer term objectives of the project is to develop working relationships with SBS, regional TV stations, community broadcasters and the Sydney Opera House. It is hoped that the workplace learning model adopted by the ABC will be able to be used and/or adapted by these and other organisations within the industry.

To this end, communication and networking strategies were applied outside the organisation. Strategies included meetings with other organisations, inviting other organisations to participate in aspects of the project and keeping external organisations updated regarding project progress. Information on the project was also published in external newsletters and journals.....

ABC arms for brave new media world

Australia's national public broadcaster is equipping its people for the 'new media' world via a new national Training Package.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation has launched wholeheartedly into the implementation of the Film, Television, Radio and Multimedia Training Package and expects its own trainers to be delivering Certificate IV in Broadcasting (Radio) to new recruits to regional ABC stations by 2002.

ABC TV head of training and development Jenny Ferber says the ABC is "100 per cent behind" the Training Package.

"Our Directors acknowledge that training and development of our people is essential to our success in this new environment," she says.

"The ABC has already made a commitment to spend a minimum of two percent of salary budget on training and development for staff.

"We have to keep the lead in developing content for a whole range of new platforms. We are embracing digital technology and learning to use the new tools to produce more content."

Implementation will be a massive exercise at the ABC, where more than 2000 ABC staff members work in areas covered by the package.

Many will already have the competencies covered and the ABC will offer formal recognition of those skills.

As well, the ABC's existing internal training systems, including its previous traineeship systems, will need to be redeveloped against Training Package qualifications.

Jenny Ferber says the Package also offers new opportunities for the organisation itself as a registered training organisation (RTO), delivering the training it helped to develop as a key player in the Training Packages creation.

She says the ABC has the potential to work in partnership with other media or RTOs to deliver training to school students, industry partners and international students.

"We are keen to maintain our place as a trainer for the industry," she says.

Australian Training

5.5 Workshops and Conferences

Workbased learning is often considered to be learning solely undertaken in the workplace. Indeed there is a danger that any activity undertaken in the workplace can fall within the ambit of workbased learning. This assumption fails to take account of useful activities aimed at the improvement of organisational performance that take place away from the workplace. Externally located events such as conferences and workshops provide an opportunity to escape the *mindset* of the organisation and access new ideas, approaches and values that can become a springboard for organisational improvement.

The Role of Workshops and Conferences in Workplace Learning

Compass Training Australia incorporated externally organised workshops and conferences into their workplace-learning program. The workshops and conferences provided a range of learning opportunities that contributed directly to learning and workplace improvement including:

- Access to new ideas
- New networks
- New opportunities for collaboration
- New resources.

Learning Processes

For the purposes of the case study, learning processes were defined as the activities and experiences of individuals and groups of workbased learners. These activities and experiences are the processes through which learning is assimilated, interpreted and applied in the workplace. They result from and are supported by the collection of strategies adopted to facilitate and support learning but they impact at the personal level by allowing individuals to discuss, debate and reflect on issues and concerns.

6.1 Reflecting

Reflection is a learning process that is sometimes considered to be so obvious and automatic that few people bother to think about how to do it or to consider that there may be some benefits in actually being trained in how to do it properly. In some instances the process of reflection takes a back seat to what might be considered the more active processes of discussing, planning and taking action. But reflection is an essential and powerful learning process that is often the basis for achieving new insights and developing innovative responses to both new and old challenges.

While all the case studies recognised the importance of reflection in the learning process, some experienced difficulty in overcoming factors that operated against the achievement of its full potential. Firstly, some participants failed to do it regularly because of everyday work commitments and pressures. Secondly, some participants used it defensively solely as a means of justifying their plans for the adoption of Training Packages thus limiting real learning and growth. Two of the case studies reported that one of their biggest challenges was to convince participants that their arguments about time constraints and institutional barriers were the greatest barriers to learning and institutional improvement. The facilitators in these case studies stressed the benefits of critical reflection including professional satisfaction, self-determination and a sense of personal value achieved through a heightened sense of professional worth. Despite these problems, the case studies placed a strong emphasis on learning through reflection and their experiences provide valuable insights.

Critical Reflection in a Community Context

At the Yorta Yorta community reflection is a key part of day-to-day indigenous life. It is a natural and accepted part of living to take time to reflect on community directions and the individual's role in them. Reflection as a key aspect of action learning was a natural and fundamental process in learning within the community.

The workplace learning facilitator accepted that reflection was a natural part of community life and used various social occasions to stimulate discussion and encourage all community members to reflect on future directions for learning in the community. Reflection on plans and future directions was not limited to participants of the workbased learning project; the whole community was encouraged to learn about the plans and to contribute to the learning process through reflection and discussion.

Critical reflection was also stimulated and encouraged at social functions.

Reflection through Exposure to a Wide Network

Compass Training stimulated critical reflection and self-analysis through exposure to a wide network of people and agencies. New ideas were gained through meetings with stakeholders, attendance at workshops, attendance at conferences and through informal conversations with interested parties.

Reflection on the potential of new ideas and insights was stimulated by the learning team through questions such as:

How can we use this idea to improve our services? If we pursued this idea, would it lead to benefits for the industry and for us? If we worked in a partnership, what would be the benefits? What can we learn from pursuing this idea? What new skills would we need to develop this idea?

Individual reflection on these and other questions occurred at quiet times when learners were alone – driving home from meetings, walking, or simply having a cup of coffee. The workplace team also reflected on issues and opportunities collaboratively while eating lunch or having a glass of wine.

In this way, Compass Training used reflection as a key part of the learning process. It not only became a regular feature of their approach to learning but their networking strategies ensured that reflection was stimulated continually through strong associations within the whole industry.

Reflection through Peer Interaction

Group work and peer interaction is a major stimulus to encouraging critical reflection. Arts Training New South Wales and the ABC stimulated reflection through the establishment of a communication network based on the existing enterprise e-mail system.

The network was used to encourage learners to take alternative viewpoints and to question the directions of each other. Initially this was stimulated through structured tasks prepared and presented by the project facilitator. However, the network expanded rapidly and was used by the learners to reflect on and discuss real dilemmas of training in the workplace and strategies for dealing with them. Such discussion and reflection contributed significantly to empowering learners and encouraging independence of thought and action.

Encouraging Critical Reflection through Workshops

A key feature of most of the case studies was workshops involving all participants of the project. Commonly, these were held in the middle of the program and usually aimed to stimulate debate, present and challenge ideas and commence the development of implementation plans. Some case studies used the workshops as mechanisms to stimulate critical reflection.

The Chisholm Institute of TAFE and the Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL) both used workshops to encourage reflection. Of course, reflection as a key learning process was undertaken throughout the project in small group activities through peer interaction. Learners, however, were reporting difficulties finding time to reflect due to workplace pressures and commitments. The workshops provided an opportunity to remove learners from their day-to-day environment and, consequently, provided good opportunities to motivate group discussion, challenge ideas and strategies and thereby stimulate critical reflection and self-evaluation.

Workshop strategies adopted to achieve these aims centred on developing an environment that encouraged open discussion. Strategies allowed learners to freely communicate and exchange ideas, analyse and evaluate proposed strategies, challenge assumptions and broaden perspectives.

The platform for critical reflection that was developed during the workshop was supported during the remainder of the programs through facilitation and mentoring. That is, facilitators and mentors worked with learners to help the process of reflection through direct and indirect questioning to challenge assumptions, illuminate potential problems, encourage self-evaluation and recognise and reward learning 'breakthroughs'.

All case studies reported that reflection was the most important learning process and, when successfully used by learners resulted in the development of key skills, attitudes and understandings of value firstly to each individual's personal and professional development and, secondly, to the growth and improvement of the workplace.

Critical reflection contributed significantly to the development of the following skills, attitudes and understandings.

Skills

Interpersonal skills
Organisational skills
Communication skills
Decision making skills
Research skills
Collaborative learning skills
Self-assessment skills
Planning and implementation skills.

Attitudes

Respect for the viewpoint of others (including people at all levels of the organisations)
Commitment to learning (especially continuous or lifelong learning)
Willingness to consider the medium and long term impacts of plans of action
Readiness to review, test and refine actions.

Understandings

Understanding of organisational interdependence
Understanding of workplace diversity.

While these skills, attitudes and understandings were identified as outcomes of critical reflection in the case studies, all project facilitators stressed the importance of maintaining realistic expectations to realise that learning is an evolutionary process. All outcomes may not be achieved in the period in which the case studies have operated.

6.2 Knowledge Building

To achieve the full potential of workbased learning, it is important to ensure that participants have the knowledge and resources necessary to undertake effective planning, action and learning. At an operational level, all the cases studied ensured that participants had ready access to relevant Training Packages, organisational strategic and operational plans, national policy documents and other resources.

While access to these resources was critical, successful workbased learning required more than access to manuals, guides and other such documentation. Participants were challenged to look at their situations from broader perspectives and encouraged to examine their challenges using different assumptions and new values.

Successful knowledge building also relied on the recognition that learning takes account of the existing knowledge and skills of all participants. Workplace learning is only possible because of the skills, knowledge and experiences of the participants. All the case studies built on the existing skills, knowledge and experiences of the learners that became a key platform for collaborative learning and sharing.

6.3 Communicating, Discussing and Debating

Workbased learning in the context of the case studies revolved around the learning processes of communicating, discussing and debating. While these processes are related strongly to both reflection and knowledge building, there are aspects of the processes arising from the case studies that provide further insights into successful workbased learning.

When disparate groups of people are brought together to learn in the workplace, the nature and style of communication between people will impact significantly on their

ability to learn both individually and collaboratively. An environment that facilitates open, honest communication encourages people to participate actively in the learning process and gives them the opportunity to explore issues and concerns that are relevant to them and to their workplace.

Project facilitators were concerned to ensure that communication encouraged participation and adopted approaches that contributed to open discussion and debate.

Simple and Jargon-free Communication

Arts Training NSW and the ABC adopted approaches to communication that aimed to encourage participation.

Throughout the project, communication (whether oral or written) was:

- Simple, direct, accurate and appropriate to the workplace
- Free from jargon (including jargon associated with national training policies and procedures)
- Timely and responsive to learner needs
- Inclusive of both individuals and groups.

By modelling specific communication approaches, the project encouraged significant levels of participation and involvement across the organisation; facilitated collaboration in the development of plans and activities; avoided unnecessary conflict; assisted the development of a harmonious learning environment and contributed to the development of respect and trust within the group.

Communication processes are also important in developing learning environments where all learners are involved in planning and decision-making. The case studies recognised that an effective way of learning is through problem solving and discussion. This was found to be particularly the case in the context of the National Training Framework, where workplace learners are confronted with new problems and where there is not one right approach but several possible solutions.

All five case studies approached workplace learning not by trying to 'teach' the participants the knowledge and skills they would need to implement Training Packages but by facilitating discussion and debate through which learners may develop insights and understandings through interaction with peers and colleagues. The case studies used a variety of forms of discussion and debate including electronic communication networks, small group discussions, seminars and workshops.

Learning through Layered Discussion

The Centre for Advancement of Innovative Learning (CAIL) at the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE worked with other stakeholders to develop and implement a layered approach to discussion and debate.

Small groups addressing specific areas of concern (called domains by the project) were formed and became a basis for the discussion of issues and concerns relating to specific areas of the Training Package. Each small discussion group or domain developed specific insights, ideas and strategies related to their area of interest. About half way through the project these groups were brought together in a workshop to present and discuss approaches and strategies. The resulting discussions between all learners in one large group provided opportunities to test ideas, collaborate on approaches, and refine strategies and implementation plans.

A significant feature of this approach was the development of new networks and alliances between the learners. Common interests across domains were identified and new groupings emerged. People came to the workshop as a member of a specific domain but left with connections across several domains. These informal linkages resulted directly from discussion and debate and contributed greatly to the richness of learning across all domains.

Learning Outcomes

The impacts of Reframing the Future projects have been identified and documented in several evaluations and reports (Field, 1998 & 1999; Mitchell, 1999). The case studies further confirm the findings of these earlier reports.

The major outcomes of the case studies can be presented under the following headings:

- New mindsets to support the implementation of the National Training Framework
- New skills and knowledge to implement Training Packages
- New approaches to learning
- Professional and personal development
- Skills contributing to improvements in workplace performance
- Collaborative links and partnerships.

7.1 New Mindsets

A key outcome identified and reported by all case studies was the development of new mindsets regarding the National Training Framework and the implementation of Training Packages. As one participant at Chisholm Institute of TAFE stated...

At the beginning of the program I just thought that the new policies and directions would have little impact on me. I considered myself a fairly innovative teacher and would just continue to do what I thought was helping my students.

I not only learned about the Training Packages and how to implement them but I understand what's behind the thinking of new directions.

I really have a new approach to teaching and learning. I feel I have more control and can really apply some new approaches that I feel positive about and I know my students will enjoy.

I've also developed a new insight into how my skills and teaching experience can be used to help others – and how I can learn from others. We've already developed a follow-on action learning project – we each bring our own skills to the group and we'll develop a new program together.

Other participants in the case studies also reported an enhanced appreciation of the flexibility provided through Training Packages. The Yorta Yorta community in particular view the implementation of Training Packages and accompanying learning strategies as a key to community empowerment and sustainable community development.

7.2 New Knowledge and Skills to Implement Training Packages

All case studies identified the development of new skills and knowledge in the implementation of Training Packages as a key outcome of their projects. The studies show that learners have increased their knowledge of Training Packages and the policies underpinning their introduction. The TAFE Institutes participating in the case studies

(Chisholm and Wide Bay Institutes of TAFE) particularly noted that new knowledge and appreciation of Training Packages had done much to allay fears and concerns regarding implementation. That is, case study participants applied their new knowledge of the policy underpinnings of the National Training Framework to develop a new appreciation of the central role of teachers in transforming competency outcomes into effective learning. They realised that the new approaches allowed them to apply their existing knowledge and experience to develop new and innovative ways of learning.

New skills developed by participants in the case studies to assist in the implementation of Training Packages were many and varied reflecting the diversity of the workplaces studied. The following list is a compilation of new skills reported across all case studies.

- Tailoring Training Packages to meet the need of students
- Skills in creating simulated workplaces for meaningful learning and assessment
- Skills in workplace assessment and the management and recording of assessment outcomes
- Skills in developing partnerships and in establishing and maintaining collaborative networks
- Skills in matching / adapting existing resources to new requirements
- Skills in designing and developing appropriate resources
- Skills in identifying and developing workbased learning methodologies suitable for particular organisations and workplaces
- Skills in customising learning programs and strategies to suit workplace and community needs
- Skills in Resource mapping.

7.3 New approaches to Learning

The case studies also provided some evidence that, from their experiences in the projects, participants were developing new appreciations of the applications of action learning and associated methodologies. Not only were they active participants in the learning processes adopted by the projects, they have begun to apply new skills and experiences in their workplaces. Some employees were adopting action-learning methodologies to other work-related issues. As one participant reported...

I had another problem at work that wasn't related to the implementation of Training Packages but I used an action learning approach with the group I was working with and we came up with some pretty innovative solutions. I even provided some mentoring to a colleague who was appointed to oversee the project.....

In another case study, mentoring has become a key process across the workplace.

It's going to be hard next year but I have two people who have agreed to mentor me through the whole process. I really value their input and am fairly confident that I can do the job.

A major result across all case studies was the development of a strong commitment to continuous learning and recognition of the value of a range of workplace learning strategies in a wide variety of contexts for personal development and workplace improvement.

7.4 Professional and Personal Development

The programs implemented by the case studies also contributed significantly to the professional and personal development of individuals. The learning strategies and processes used by the case studies allowed some individuals to develop higher levels of autonomy and self-confidence.

I was a bit reluctant to take part in the program, I didn't think I would have anything to contribute but I've learned a lot. My skills are of use to other people and I'm pretty good at helping others – not by giving advice but by helping them through the mazes. I've been approached by a colleague to mentor him through a course he's doing.

I'm much more confident than I was six months ago...not only can I help implement Training Packages but I provide help to lots of people right across the organisation.

Evidence from the case studies suggests the projects contributed to personal growth and professional development. The following list is a compilation of perceived outcomes reported across all case studies.

- Higher levels of self-confidence among some learners
- Recognition of the value of existing skills and experiences
- Positive attitudes to change
- Improved personal communication skills
- Skills in self-assessment
- Skills in collaborative learning and working in a group
- Improved attitudes to responsibility and accountability
- Greater willingness to accept change.

7.5 Skills to Contribute to Improvements in Workplace Performance

Participants in the case studies practiced and refined skills that have the potential over time to contribute significantly to improvements in workplace performance. These included:

- Skills in accessing timely and relevant information to support planning, developing, delivering and assessing learning
- Project Management skills
- Learning facilitation skills
- Working effectively in groups or teams (collaborative learning and working)
- Networking (within and outside the organisation)
- Partnership building
- Mentoring skills
- Skills in promoting learning and disseminating information on the benefits and outcomes of specific learning approaches.

7.6 Collaborative Links and Partnerships

Reframing the Future projects often result in the development of new forms of collaborative networks (Mitchell, 2000). The development of collaborative networks and partnerships (formal and informal) was also a feature of the case studies. The collaborative networks developed through the projects addressed particular needs of relevant industries and workplaces. The networks also took different forms to suit the differing contexts.

Industry Networks

Through their work together Arts Training NSW and the ABC combined their knowledge of the film, television, radio and multimedia industry to promote the processes and outcomes of their *Reframing the Future* project across the industry.

Both organisations believed that the training processes adopted by the ABC and the solutions developed have relevance throughout the industry. Key players in the industry were kept informed of project progress and were also invited to participate in workshops. Both organisations believe that the ABC has an ongoing role in modelling good practice within the industry. Therefore, a proactive stance was taken in stimulating industry networks in order to make the knowledge and experiences gained through the project widely available within the industry.

Relationships are emerging with SBS, regional broadcasters, regional TV stations, community broadcasters and the Sydney Opera House.

Partners in Training

The focus on networking by Compass Training Australia has led to the development of formal and informal partnerships. Compass has developed a range of partners to work collaboratively on the design, development and delivery of training to the maritime industry.

Partnerships included:

- Partnerships with key stakeholders within the industry to plan new approaches to training delivery and assessment to meet the requirements of Training Packages and the unique needs of the industry
- Partnerships with resource developers to share and adapt learning resources for the industry
- Partnerships with technology developers to manage assessment and facilitate flexible approaches to delivery
- Partnerships within the industry to ensure the needs of employers and employees are addressed in the design and delivery of training programs.

Lessons from the Case Studies

The case studies illustrate that workplace learning in vocational education and training continues to provide a dynamic approach to staff development. Workbased learning is applied in a variety of settings to achieve particular outcomes for individuals and their workplaces.

Within this context the case studies provide insights not only into the way workplace learning is currently applied in vocational education and training; they also provide information that may guide and inform future workbased learning applications.

There are a number of findings from the case studies that provide the foundations of a framework for supporting and managing future workbased learning projects.

8.1 Skilled and Knowledgeable Facilitators and Learners

Successful workbased learning projects require high quality facilitation. Facilitators not only need to have a thorough understanding of the learning theories and processes underpinning workbased learning but they also need to be experienced in modelling and applying the processes in real work situations.

Based on the experiences of the case studies, successful workbased learning programs and applications ensure that facilitators have the following attributes:

- Expert knowledge of the workbased learning methodology and the contemporary theories and approaches that underpin it
- Experience in applying and modelling workbased learning strategies and processes in workplaces
- Appreciation of the benefits of workbased learning for individual learners and their organisations
- Ability to assist in the identification of links between individual learning and workplace improvements
- Ability and willingness to reflect on and self-evaluate their own actions in facilitating learning and to encourage critical reflection in learners
- Ability and willingness to involve learners and other stakeholders in the design, development and implementation of workbased learning
- Ability to recognise the existing skills and experiences of learners and to use them to support collaborative learning
- Ability to support and encourage learners through the processes of learning associated with workbased learning.

Learners also need to understand and appreciate learning theories and processes underpinning workbased learning. Workbased learning programs can help learners to more fully appreciate the benefits of contemporary workbased learning theories and practices by:

- Recognising and building on existing knowledge and experience
- Facilitating and encouraging peer mentoring
- Modelling good practice in workbased learning
- Encouraging critical reflection as a key part of learning
- Supporting concepts of continuous learning and lifelong learning.

8.2 Integrated Approaches to Workbased Learning

Successful workbased learning integrates a range of strategies including action learning, mentoring, networking and facilitation to support a suite of appropriate learning processes including self-evaluation, critical reflection, problem solving, team building, decision making and discussion.

Future workbased learning projects should be encouraged and supported to:

- Examine and adopt, where appropriate, contemporary theories that enrich workbased learning as a methodology for staff development – including interconnecting core ideas from the theoretical perspectives of adult learning, action learning and learning organisations as proposed by Mitchell, Henry and Young (2001)
- Use approaches arising from contemporary theories to support individual and group learning that contributes to individual empowerment and organisational growth.

8.3 Experiencing the Full Benefits of Workbased Learning

The case studies already suggest that the results of the projects have gone well beyond the individuals who have undertaken the workplace learning activities. These include improvements in work performance and organisational effectiveness; the development of new forms of collaborative networks; and, plans and strategies to support organisational change.

Based on the case studies, future workbased learning projects can ensure the development of a platform for organisational growth and improvement by:

- Encouraging and facilitating the development of critical reflection as a key learning process. Learners who regularly reflect on their changing role within their organisation develop new insights into themselves and their relationship to the organisation and are likely to share these insights and work to bring about improvements for themselves and the organisation
- Encouraging and facilitating collaborative learning approaches which contribute to workplace cohesion and the development of team approaches to solving workplace problems
- Ensuring that learning frameworks, strategies and processes are suited to the needs of individual learners and to the context and culture of the workplace.

8.4 Learning Processes for Enhanced Learning

The case studies adopted learning processes to suit the particular needs of learners and the contexts and settings of the workplaces in which the learning was occurring. For example, action learning strategies were used by all case studies, but, the processes supporting the strategies were adapted to suit specific learning environments. Processes of reflection, team building, problem solving and others were used to support learning at workshops, electronic communication networks, small group meetings and social occasions.

Future workbased learning projects should be encouraged to apply learning strategies in new and creative ways that suit learners and the requirements of the workplace.

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