Exploring the impact of mentoring training on the quality of mentoring engagement and provision in the ITO context

Full Report

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"We've got to enjoy our job. If the apprentice is enjoying the job, he will stick around longer. I will always ask them if they are enjoying a job and if not I change tasks for them. I want to see them progress in a day not get stuck with something and get nowhere."

Working with apprentices to support their training and assist them to establish a strong foundation for a vocational career is an integral part of the job for employers and training advisors in the industry training organisation (ITO) sector. Yet often there is little consideration given to just how these employers and training advisors develop the essential skills and attributes to become an effective mentor for their charges. The purpose of this project was to investigate whether the provision of mentoring training for ITO apprentices, employers and training advisors (TAs) would positively influence the success of the apprentice's learning journey.

The Building and Construction ITO (BCITO) and the Hairdressing ITO (HITO) partnered with the lead researcher using a participatory action methodology, to develop resources, facilitate mentoring training workshops (Central North Island and Wellington regions), and support and monitor apprentices' progress over a one-year implementation period. Data was gathered from workshop feedback, apprentices' journals, and multiple individual interviews at set points in the project with the three participant groups: employers (n=20), training advisors (n=10) and apprentices (n=20).

The overwhelmingly positive responses by all participants about the value they perceived in engaging in a mentoring relationship alongside the training programme are described in this report, including observations attesting to the value of the training workshop process for mentors. The report also outlines six key themes related to the use and delivery of mentoring in ITOs: mentor attributes; benefits of mentoring; mentoring support; logistics of mentoring; changes made by the apprentice; and support for the mentor.

Feedback from the three participant groups helped to inform the development of a mentoring model (*Figure 1*), mentoring training programme (*Figure 2*) and mentoring

resources as formal support mechanisms that can be customised for and integrated into apprenticeship schemes in ITOs (*Appendices One and Two*).

A number of recommendations resulted from this project that provide a guide for the two participating ITOs and other tertiary education providers in future apprentice mentoring activities. The key recommendations include:

1. Development of a Mentor's Information [induction] Pack;
2. Inclusion of a copy of the Mentee's Handbook in the apprentice induction and enrolment pack;
3. Encouraging employers to establish guidelines regarding the training advisor (TA) involvement in apprentice mentoring and the relationship and expectations of the relationship with the employer;
4. Providing new employers and TAs with an opportunity to attend a mentoring training workshop at the start of their mentoring role, with a follow-up refresher workshop after two-three years to extend and enhance their practice;
5. Explore further research avenues which could include a statistical analysis of the link between mentoring provision and learner achievement in ITOs, and an investigation of different strategies and approaches for working with Māori, Pacific Islanders and English as Second Language speakers.

INTRODUCTION

The value of mentoring – both in the workplace and in training organisations – is well-established and probably common practice in most Aotearoa New Zealand organisations today. As Nicholls (2006) states, "Mentoring can greatly enhance the process of making tacit knowledge explicit" (p. 165) and this is as true for theoretical concepts and understanding as it is for skills development and on-the-job performance. Yet despite a large and growing literature attesting to the benefits of mentoring programmes, the researcher identified two apparent gaps in reporting which this project sought to address.

First, whilst mentoring is acknowledged as a mechanism to support the apprentice in making connections between the theoretical and practical aspects of their learning (Vaughan, 2012), the available evidence-based literature on mentoring as a valid support mechanism for apprentices in the New Zealand ITO context is minimal.

Second, the issue of how mentors and mentees develop the requisite mind-set and strategies to optimise the learning from their mentoring experience is frequently only briefly addressed, if at all, in published studies (Clutterbuck, 2004).

The aim of this project, therefore, was to determine the impact of mentoring training on the quality of mentoring support provided by employers and TAs within BCITO and HITO. A parallel objective was to capture key enablers for the process from the perspectives of both mentors and mentees. The use of participant voice to describe the relevance and impact of mentoring on the learning experience and learning outcomes has therefore been incorporated as fully as possible throughout this report, with verbatim comments.

Findings from the project have been used to help develop a number of resources and a recommended training framework (see Appendices) to guide mentoring processes and practices in apprenticeship programmes across the ITO and larger tertiary vocational education sectors.

LITERATURE SCAN

Given the gaps identified in the larger body of literature identified above, a scan of available studies into the impact of mentoring in higher and vocational education settings was conducted to inform this project. Mentoring is well-recognised as a mechanism for supporting formal, non-formal (Doyle, Simota & Werquin, 2009) and informal learning, three categories of learning which will occur in the apprentice's programme of study both on and off the job. Although Doyle et al. (2009) define formal learning as learning which leads to nationally and internationally recognised qualifications, non-formal and informal learning are also critical aspects of the apprentice's learning.

Mentoring can be seen as an axis connecting and supporting these three types of learning. Malcolm et al. (2003, as cited in Vaughan, 2012) also emphasise the need to balance the formal and informal aspects of workplace learning through focusing on learning processes, location/setting, purpose and content. Mentors can be one conduit to achieve this balance.

Whilst there is extensive literature on mentoring spanning a wide range of industries and disciplines, there appears to be little consensus about its definition and meaning (Petersen, 2011). Additionally, there is a significant focus on mentoring training for the mentor but minimal reference to the importance of training for the mentee in order to enable the mentee to understand and engage in the mentoring partnership and therefore gain benefit from this type of support (Petersen, 2011). Hence the alignment of mentor and mentee training for the apprentice, the TA and the employer as the underpinning conceptual framework for this project's aim and purpose.

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE THREE PARTICIPANT COHORTS

In their report on successful workplace learning, Vaughan, O'Neil and Cameron (2011) identify that shared understandings of learning goals and processes between learners and mentors is a key pedagogical dimension of good workplace learning. As they state, "Unless learners have a chance to practice what they are learning in the workplace and

get useful feedback on their progress, the intended outcomes of learning are unlikely to be achieved" (p. 27). Vaughan et al. then specify that supervisors (employers) have a responsibility to provide workplace cultures and conditions that support learners in their learning, "such as goal-setting and mentoring" (p. 27).

Understanding the workplace as a teaching and learning context needs to take account of the relationship between the organisational structures and processes, such as mentoring and individual engagement (Vaughan et al., 2011). Organisational structures are defined by the authors as structures which set up expectations and support for learning. They conclude that ITOs could consider some form of professional development for trainers which may not necessarily have to be a formal qualification, but could be delivered as workshops or on-site coaching via professional conversations.

THE NEED FOR MENTORING TRAINING: TRAINING FOR ALL LEARNERS

Although references are made throughout the New Zealand workplace learning literature to the advantages of apprentice mentoring as a support mechanism, there appears to be minimal information or evidence-based findings as to how the people involved in the mentoring process – the apprentice, the TA and the employer - can be supported to build their mentoring capabilities. Yet confidence and competence in the process directly influence all participant groups' engagement in the mentoring process and the quality of the mentoring which occurs throughout the apprentice's learning journey. In her ITO Literacy and Numeracy Good Practice Project, Holland (2009b) argues that ITOs have a role in training mentors as much as training trainers (p. 10). She includes suggestions for this such as ongoing professional development in the form of workshops, networking opportunities for mentors to build communities of practice and the design of templates and other tools to support workplace mentoring.

Developing integrative pedagogies within the apprenticeship programme of study can facilitate the learner's ability to make connections across their various learnings. (Griffiths & Guile, 2003), and help them develop an internal locus of control (Vaughan, 2012). This project aims to establish mentoring as an integrative pedagogy which facilitates the apprentice's holistic learning experience, journey and outcomes. In order for mentoring to be a pivotal pedagogy interlinking the participants in this journey (the

apprentice, TA and the employer), the quality of the mentoring support and the relationship developed in the mentoring partnerships must be a key focus of intent and training.

An important component of mentoring training is the inclusion of cultural considerations, in particular, mentoring for Maori and Pasifika apprentices. From her project Whanga Ka Tupu, Ka Puawai, Holland (2012) advocates for mentoring of Maori and Pasifika students to be based in community settings rather than (just) the workplace. The findings from her project identified that this approach to the mentoring heightened the apprentices' trust in their mentors, increased their levels of confidence and the apprentices remained in their apprenticeship. Mentoring practices that reflect culturally appropriate ways of working (Holland, 2012) are imperative and therefore a significant focus and consideration in this project.

Holland (2009a) advocates for the provision of ongoing support for new mentors over a period of one year, to help them recognise and work with learners who are struggling with expectations of the trade, the coursework and study. Whatman, Potter and Boyd (2011) also stress that the relationship between the organisational structures and processes need to be taken into account, such as mentoring and individual engagement. Organisational structures are defined by Vaughan et al. (2011) as structures which set up   expectations   and   support   for   learning.

BACKGROUND

ITOS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

The Modern Apprenticeship scheme was introduced in NZ in 2001, providing on-the-job training for 16-21 year olds to undertake a National Certificate at Levels 3 and 4. This system differs from standard or non-targeted industry training in that apprentices and employers are supported by Modern Apprenticeship Coordinators (Vaughan, 2012). Another key advantage of New Zealand's apprenticeship system is the emphasis on learning-as-participation (Vaughan, 2012) rather than learning-as-acquisition-of-knowledge. The former approach emphasises the importance of relationships between people, for example in this project, apprentice-TA, apprentice-employer, apprentice-apprentice. Vaughan points out in her working paper on the integration of work and learning in New Zealand that attrition and non-completion are key concerns in apprenticeships. However these rates are lower in some industries where workplace attitudes towards learning recognise the range of needs learners may bring with them, and cater for these through targeted learner support systems and processes.

Recognising this positive impact on learner achievement, the ways in which apprentices are supported has recently been the subject of renewed government focus. On 25 January 2013, Steven Joyce, the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment, explained how the expected increase of subsidy payments by around $12 million in the first year of the new nationwide NZ Apprenticeship Scheme would be a means to enable ITOs to invest in the quality of education for apprentices. Then on 1 January 2014, the Modern Apprenticeship scheme was replaced by the New Zealand Apprenticeships. There will be a four-year transition (through to the end of 2017) to allow those Modern Apprentices still in training to continue with their current arrangements, including support provided from their Modern Apprenticeship Coordinator (TEC, 2015). The first key difference which impacts the context of this work is that under the new regime, apprenticeships are available to anyone over the age of 16 (rather than being restricted to people between 16 and 21). A second change is that under the Modern Apprenticeships scheme trainees could work towards a Level 3 national certificate, but

now will need to work towards a minimum of a Level 4 national certificate (CareersNZ, 2015).

The coordinator (TA) role has evolved alongside the policies, but the requirement remains that an apprentice must be supported throughout their apprenticeship by a training plan agreed by the apprentice, the employer and the organisation arranging the training. Currently, TAs oversee this aspect of the apprenticeship experience, visiting workplaces to help employers develop a site training plan to meet all stakeholders' needs. Along with employers, TAs act as mentors to the apprentices across a spectrum of informal and formal approaches, linked by a commitment to ensure apprentices achieve the learning goals and qualifications on their career pathway.

BCITO

The BCITO provides the largest number of construction trade apprenticeships in New Zealand, supporting fifteen trade specialisations (aluminium joinery; brick and block-laying; carpentry; concrete; construction management; tiling; flooring; frame & truss; glass and glazing; interior systems; kitchen and bathroom design; masonry/stonemasonry; painting and decorating; exterior plastering; and timber joinery). The ITO develops qualifications and arranges training to ensure "highly skilled tradespeople required to meet tomorrow's needs" (BCITO, 2014, p. 6). The TAs regularly visit apprentices and their employers in the workplace to listen, support the apprentice's progress, help set goals and facilitate high-quality training and assessment towards achieving nationally recognised qualifications.

The BCITO is experiencing an increasing number of people in training, with a growth of almost a third from 2013 to 2014 (BCITO, 2014, p. 17). Alongside this strong growth is a commitment to research to ensure best practice is incorporated in all aspects of their training delivery. An example is the project reported in the 2014 annual report, of research about the journey to an apprenticeship. The aim was to find out more about where apprentices came from, who they were, what they did before they signed up and what was the best way to reach more people like them using the most appropriate channels (BCITO, 2014, p. 18). The BCITO has also supported research into advances and developments in the use of technology in the education sector. A second driver

behind BCITO's interest in research is the continuing work on reviewing qualifications in the second phase of New Zealand Qualifications Authority's Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ), in which the BCITO is playing a leading role, along with industry partners, to ensure the best array of qualifications and pathways for apprentices.

HITO

HITO is New Zealand's hair and beauty industry training organisation, charged with developing and implementing industry qualifications for the hair and beauty sectors and overseeing the standards for ten qualifications within the hair and beauty industries. HITO manages the apprenticeship programmes for hairdressing and barbering in New Zealand. This includes assisting employers with apprentice selection, and apprentices with applications, as well as moderation, quality assurance of assessments, producing training products and publications, and liaising with their industries to ensure that unit standards and qualifications stay current and relevant.

Currently, the TRoQ process to reduce the duplication and proliferation of qualifications in the areas of Nails, Makeup and Special Effects, and Beauty Therapies is being led by HITO. As with BCITO, the review must ensure that qualifications are useful, relevant, easy to understand, and valuable to learners, employers, and other stakeholders, and involves engagement with research from both New Zealand and overseas. Particular challenges for this sector relate to apprentices' skill sets on entry. The industry usually attracts a predominantly young female workforce that requires upskilling and training in the area of generic 'soft' skills like customer service and sales skills. The propensity for individuals to exit the workforce early in order to take on family caring duties and work part-time is another factor that needs to be considered in the design of training programmes (HITO, 2013).

BCITO AND HITO INTEREST IN MENTORING RESEARCH

As described above, both ITO partners in this project have a well-established interest in research to inform and guide their work with apprentices. An integral component of the apprentice learning journey in both BCITO and HITO is mentoring, which is used as a key support mechanism by the TAs in their quarterly meetings with the apprentices. An expectation is that employers also mentor their apprentices on-the-job, however this is

not a formal requirement of employers nor a formal process embedded within the apprenticeship scheme. Also, there is no formal process for preparing the apprentice to engage in mentoring partnerships with their TA and/or their employer.

This lack of a formal structure and training for mentoring which prepares the apprentice, the TA and the employer to be able to engage in and provide quality mentoring is evident across the NZ ITO sector. The partners in this research therefore hope that the findings contained in this report will have immediate value to ITO and vocational education trainers in the wider New Zealand tertiary sector, as well as improving practice and outcomes in their own multi-site delivery.

METHODOLOGY

Participatory action research provided the methodological framework for the project and was deemed by the project team to be a good fit, given the focus on partnership and participation by several groups of stakeholders (the two ITOs, TAs, apprentices, employers and the lead researcher), all of whom were actively involved in the mentoring training as part of the planned change process. Typical descriptions of participatory action research note that "research and action must be done 'with' people and not 'on' or 'for' people" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The focus is therefore on understanding a setting or structure and implementing interventions in order to transform it, rather than simply observing and studying behaviour and views and reporting on what needs to happen (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). One of the expressions of this methodology in the project was the iterative reviewing by the lead researcher as the project progressed, for example, the formative interview questions were based on the feedback received from the bi-monthly communication between the researcher and the employers and TAs.

The project commenced with mentoring training workshops in the Central North Island and Wellington regions for BCITO and HITO TAs and employers. These three-hour workshops run at the beginning of the one year project time-frame were facilitated by the lead researcher, Dr Petersen, who has particular expertise in this area. A key aspect

of the training was the incorporation and trialling of three specific mentoring interventions aimed at enhancing the skills and therefore quality of the apprentice-employer and apprentice-TA mentoring partnerships during the one year period. The three interventions included:

1) The DEVA Model for Effective Questioning;

2) The 3Es Questioning Continuum;

3) The Mentoring Partnership Cycle.

The D.E.V.A. model and the 3Es continuum provide a range of questions and question starters which the mentor can use during the mentoring meetings. Both models use a range of question 'types' including paraphrasing, probing, clarifying, summarising, open-ended and closed. The Mentoring Partnership Cycle provides a framework for both the mentor and the mentee to decide how they can effectively use the mentoring meeting times, different actions and activities they can engage in as the partnership continues and how they can finish the mentoring partnership.

These tools have been developed by Dr Petersen as part of her business consultancy and were used in the training workshops following discussions with the other project partners. Pre- and post-workshop evaluations were completed by all attendees as a key data source.

The original intent had been to run similar workshops for mentees, however it was evident early on in the project implementation phase that organising apprentices to attend a mentoring training session was not logistically possible. Time away from the workplace was not a favourable option for the apprentices or their employers. An alternative strategy was developed whereby the TAs assumed responsibility for coaching the apprentices in the expectations of their role as a mentee in the mentoring partnerships. Consequently, a key aspect of the mentoring training workshops was a focus on how TAs could coach the apprentices. A Mentee's Handbook was developed to assist in the coaching role and also guide the apprentice in their role as a mentee (*refer Attachment I*).

In addition to workshop participants' feedback, a second source of data came from interviews with each stakeholder group. Twenty employers of apprentices in workplace settings (employers, foremen, supervisors) and ten TAs were interviewed three times during the project: following the workshop, midway, and at the end of one year time-frame. Communication was by phone and email at specific checkpoints during the one year period to gain their perspectives of the mentoring support they were providing and its influence on the apprentice's learning. These checkpoints aligned with the quarterly meetings between the apprentice and the TA, the ongoing workplace mentoring provided by the employer and block courses attended by the apprentices. Twenty apprentices completed face to face or phone summative interviews with the researcher. The apprentices, some in their first year and some in their second, were asked to reflect on their quarterly meetings with their TAs, at which time mentoring was a key activity, as well as the mentoring received from their employer in the workplace throughout their programme of learning.

In keeping with the usual approach to qualitative data analysis, data collected from the workshop feedback, formative discussions and summative interviews outlined above were reviewed from an inductive perspective. That is, the lead researcher identified important categories, patterns and relationships in the data, through what Schutt (2011) calls "a process of discovery" (p. 322), reading and re-reading the textual data and coding the emerging themes.

Throughout the project, and in all phases of the data collection, the usual ethical framework of social science research was observed. That is, all participants were informed about the purposes of the research at the time they were invited to participate, and assured that their contributions would remain anonymous and confidential, with any identifying items removed from direct quotations or paraphrased reporting prior to publication. Participants were able to view transcripts of their interviews, or on request, preview the report before submission – although none chose to do so.

FINDINGS

Findings resulting from the project are reported according to the seven key themes identified during data analysis. The first finding describes the training workshop process and its intended influence on the apprentice mentoring partnerships which subsequently occurred over a one year period. The remaining findings describe the outcomes of the workshop as they influenced the apprentice mentoring. The project was conceived and implemented as a partnership in which all participants would be actively involved. We wanted to position the apprentice voice as central to an inquiry about mentoring practices which work best for them. Therefore the findings are supported by direct quotations from participants, allowing them 'to speak for themselves' (Reason & Bradbury, 2008) wherever possible.

1.1 MENTORING TRAINING WORKSHOPS

"*I was thinking positive thoughts after the workshop. I came back and talked about it with my staff and they all got on board with the whole mentoring idea*" (Employer participant)

Although the apprentices had not been able to attend a training workshop, they were asked questions about their understanding of mentoring and how they thought it had helped them in their on-job and academic learning in their summative interview. Their responses indicated concepts of mentoring as being a way to get support on the job, getting guidance in their academic learning and a definite support for building their confidence and capabilities on and off the job.

The templates included in the Mentee's Handbook (*Attachment 1*), such as the Goal Setting form, the Mentee's Journal and the Record of Learning, were also reviewed with the apprentice during the interview to see how useful these had been in helping them engage in the mentoring partnership with their employer and TA. The apprentices commented that although they had not been able to attend preparatory workshops themselves, they had found these templates useful in helping them identify goals for their learning and keeping them "*on track*" with achieving these. As one apprentice said, "*The journaling has been really helpful to identify what I need to work on. I can look back on this and it reminds me what I need to do*".

The employers and TAs collectively identified key benefits of participating in the mentoring training workshops before embarking on the mentoring partnership with their apprentices as "*a refresher*" and "*a timely reminder of effective mentoring skills and processes*". They described the training as confirming the mentoring they were already providing for their apprentices, with one employer saying, "*It backed up what I was already doing and confirmed that mentoring is working*". Other positive aspects of the training workshop were identified by the employers such as, "*A good opportunity to share and listen to other people's ideas and opinions*" and from one of the TAs, "*A good way to start the project otherwise you wouldn't get the same engagement from employers*".

As with the Mentee's Handbook, a variety of resources were provided for the employers and TAs which they received at the commencement of the training workshop. These included templates such as goal-setting sheets and monitoring evaluation check-in forms (*Appendix I*), as well as listening and questioning techniques which they practised during the workshop. The resources were viewed favourably by the participants as they could be applied immediately in the apprentice mentoring relationship as well as long-term. Some of the feedback from the employers included, "*I found the mentoring resources and questioning techniques really useful. I am using these at each meeting to help structure the conversation*" and "*Good resources to refer to and I refer back to them often*".

During the three hour workshop, the employers and TAs were encouraged to consider what support might be required by their apprentices, both in the workplace and academic settings. They were also prompted to think about the skills and qualities they needed as mentors to provide this support and the ideal environment within which mentoring takes place. This latter point was an important discussion and identified a number of constraints such as regular but infrequent visits by the TAs through the year; busy, noisy worksites with no quiet place to meet; and on-job demands for the employer and the apprentice. Having ready-made resources on hand, which they knew how to use, was seen as a way of mitigating these challenges and ensuring that mentoring stayed at the forefront of their interactions with apprentices.

1.2   MENTOR ATTRIBUTES

"The mentor needs to be willing to ask questions if they want to go further. If the apprentice is shy and lacking confidence it is easy for them to lag behind. It's up to the mentor to see this and do something to help them" (TA participant)

A key section of the training workshop covered the attributes desirable in a mentor. Employers and TAs worked in small groups to discuss and agree on the skills, knowledge and interpersonal qualities they believed important in a mentor. This activity encouraged self-reflection on previous practice and areas in which they could make changes to improve the apprentice mentoring relationship. Additionally, as part of the interview process over the one year period, they were asked what skills and qualities they were bringing to the apprentice mentoring relationship. While the data was not separated into discrete sets for each interview phase (following the workshop, midway, and at the end of the one year time-frame), the research team did note a growing confidence and certainty in the number and manner of items identified by the mentors as helpful.

Their responses included:

- *Give regular feedback. Tell them that they are doing a good job. You see them pick up considerably when you do this*
- *Build rapport. The apprentice becomes open and honest, asks questions. A relationship is built on this*
- *Encourage critical thinking so that the apprentice can start taking responsibility for themselves more*
- *Establishing boundaries is important both for the apprentice and the employer*
- *Ask good questions*
- *Definitely be there to help*
- *Be available to help and advise*
- *Use of humour*
- *Challenge them*
- *Be straight up*
- *Have a joke, make it fun*
- *Respect – it's two way*

Although the apprentices were not specifically asked about mentor attributes and what they thought were desirable qualities and skills of the mentor, during the summative interview they did identify a number of attributes that they appreciated in their employer and the TA, for example:

- *Easy to talk to*
- *Easy to get along with*
- *Shares their knowledge and wisdom*
- *Gives me regular feedback*
- *Asks me lots of questions*
- *Asks me what I think instead of just telling me*
- *Encourages me*
- *Helps me set goals and meet my objectives*
- *Passes on his knowledge*

1.3 THE BENEFITS OF MENTORING

"*Mentoring is an important role in my business. I need apprentices to feel like they are learning and feel important; they are not just doing another job and left alone with this. Mentoring is all about role modelling*" (Employer participant)

The benefits of mentoring can be appreciated at different levels: by the individual mentee, the mentor and by the organisation. Asking the mentee about what benefits they think they have gained from the mentoring recognises the essence of mentoring as being a mechanism for the mentee's personal and professional development. However it is equally important for mentors to consider how they are benefitting from providing mentoring support. The interview process provided an opportunity to prompt the apprentices, employers and TAs to identify the benefits they had gained over the one year period. Table 1.1 presents examples of the feedback:

Table 1.1   Mentee and Mentor Benefits

Mentee Benefits (apprentice)	Mentor Benefits (employer and training adviser)
Good to get constructive feedback. You have to have this in the workplace	*Keeps the apprentice and the team on track with their work and where we want the business heading*
Has helped with my planning; gives me focus and direction	*Motivation – my apprentice motivates me as much as me him!*
Having time allocated to help me	*High retention of staff*
It makes the apprenticeship easier. I get support in obtaining standards and getting direction	*Cohesion in the team*
It is easier to get up in the morning and go to work	*It's a good feeling when you know that you are providing someone with skills*
Confidence building. I feel much more confident	*Being part of helping them get somewhere*

Using the mentoring meeting time to identify what I need help with	*It inspires and motivates me to want to do more for them*
Once a month we go through the bookwork. Normally I get stuck and just leave it. He helps me be more prepared for night classes	*See them build confidence. The apprentice has been able to manage the client interface a lot sooner in her apprenticeship*
I am more motivated. I struggle with motivation, especially doing the theory part of my learning. At the end of a work day this is the last thing I feel like doing	*Personal satisfaction in seeing them achieve, complete, gain confidence and get qualified*
Time to run through the things I need to learn and do	*Mentoring develops a secure relationship between yourself and the apprentice*

1.4 MENTORING SUPPORT

"The support from my boss has been great here. The job gets me up in the morning." (Apprentice participant)

It was apparent in the interview feedback from the employers and TAs that they recognised the multi-layered nature of mentoring support they needed to provide for their apprentices, substantiating the reality of the apprentice learning in multiple contexts for multiple purposes, therefore requiring multiple areas of support (Doyle et al., 2009). For example, the employers commented on how they helped their apprentice with the on-job learning aspects as well as working through the workbooks with them, helping them identify, set and achieve goals, developing practical work-based skills, developing self-discipline, and building a professional client base. One employer discussed how they assisted their apprentice with their academic learning whilst on the job, "*The bookwork is hard for them to do at home after a full day of work, so we go over the work he hasn't done and help him out where he needs it. I give him time to do the bookwork. In fact two or three of us will work through this together with him*".

When the apprentices were asked what had been the main ways in which their employer and TA had supported them during the one year mentoring programme, they talked about receiving a wide range of support, as shown in these representative comments:

- *She shows me what to do, lets me practice and observes me while I do it, then has me practice again*
- *Ongoing evaluation; feedback on my progress*
- *Support in setting and achieving my goals; meet my objectives; manage my time*

- *Encouragement; I can absolutely ask for help at any time*
- *Clarifies diagrams in the workbooks*
- *He shares his stories*
- *Helps me put the theory in to practice and explains this*

The employers and TAs were then asked how they thought the mentoring was supporting their apprentices. This prompted them to consider the impact of the mentoring on the apprentices' learning and a range of responses ensued, for example:

- *Knowing where she is at. The mentoring is providing a structure where she can check in and get feedback*
- *The mentoring support has definitely made a difference and a lot of this has to do with the structured time for it rather than just floating along*
- *Building their confidence; technical skills; keeping motivation up; set goals on a regular basis*
- *Teaching them how to communicate with people*
- *It is helping them to shift from a position of uncertainty to taking responsibility and feeling confident to do so*
- *She knows she is not on her own*

1.5   THE LOGISTICS OF MENTORING

"*I provide extra support when the apprentice is struggling. This costs me time but it helps them out. They can't manage the learning requirements if you leave them for three months or longer*" (Employer participant)

Putting structure around a mentoring relationship can positively influence the effectiveness and successful outcomes of mentoring (Petersen, 2011). The training workshop facilitated at the beginning of the project incorporated a focus on the concept of mentoring, mentor skills development such as effective listening and questioning techniques, and the logistical considerations to 'make mentoring work'. This latter point prompted a lot of discussion about the key logistical considerations of the partnership, such as the frequency and timing of mentoring meetings, and the meeting environment.

The employers and TAs discussed how they could approach the use of meeting time and considered strategies for clarifying the mentor and mentee roles and responsibilities. They also considered whether a formal or informal structure worked better, and explored how to achieve 'value for time' in the mentoring partnership. A key understanding is reflected in this workshop participant's comment: "*The mentoring*

partnership is a cycle in which the mentor and mentee need to know how to start, how to keep the relationship going and how to end".

The feedback from the employers and TAs regarding the reality of how the mentoring occurred was quite varied and reflective of their particular ITO context. Indicative of the realities of the work contexts, some employers implemented a formal structure for the mentoring such as set times away from the shop floor, whilst other employers followed a more informal process, described by one employer as "*mentoring on the run*".

Within the apprenticeship scheme structure, TAs in the BCITO visit their apprentice on a quarterly basis; in the HITO, these visits are six weekly. Interestingly, a number of the TAs mentioned how they often met with the apprentice in between this time-frame and how they made themselves available for the apprentice to contact them at any time. A comment made by one of the TAs reflects this attitude of 'being there for the apprentice': "*It's important to not leave the contact and encouragement of the apprentice until the last minute - the assessment time - but rather doing this regularly and consistently*". Table 1.2 summarises the different logistical aspects of the apprentice mentoring and the range of processes applied by the two ITOs.

Table 1.2   The Logistics of Mentoring

Logistic	Processes
Frequency of meetings	• Employers' timetabled mentoring sessions with apprentices varied from fortnightly to every six or eight weeks, but a monthly meeting was a common pattern. Most noted that there were frequent additional informal interactions as well: "*I ask every two weeks minimum how the apprentice is going and how he is feeling about the job.*" • TAs usually scheduled formal meetings with apprentices on their six weekly or quarterly site visits, but many were also in regular phone or email contact, as indicated by this apprentice's comment: "*He (the TA) checks in every month for 10-15 minutes and challenges me to get things done.*"
Meeting duration	• Employer-apprentice meetings were usually from 30 minutes to one hour • TA-apprentice meetings tended to be longer, one to one and a half hours
Meeting environment	Most mentoring activities occurred onsite, often at the end of the day, and depending on the site, might be in an office, or on the 'shop floor'. In the BCITO context, conversations in the van on the way to a worksite were also common

Meeting and relationship structure	Separate one-to-one mentoring sessions that focussed on the learning tended to be more formal, and in some cases in the BCITO context, these were attended by the foreman too: *"We talk about the apprentice's progress and how they (the foreman) are supporting this"* (TA participant). On-the-job mentoring, either by the employer or by delegation to another staff member with expertise in a particular area, tended to be incorporated in teaching skills, avoiding a sense of separation between the knowledge and the job. A typical intent behind the mentor-mentee relationship was summed up by one TA as *"forming a friendship with boundaries"*
Use of meeting time	These were generally around reviewing goals and checking progress, then planning for the next learning targets. Mentee journals and assessments were discussed, as were areas in which extra assistance was needed. Apprentices found regular meetings useful for breaking down their journey into manageable milestones: *"Chunks the focus of the mentoring – what we need to work on right now and what we will look at in the next meeting. We also go over what we covered in the last meeting."*
Formal vs informal	Most mentoring activities contained both formal and informal aspects. All participants valued a structure with scheduled meetings and a written, or understood agenda, so that meetings actually occurred and didn't get interrupted by other demands. Two TAs shared approaches they found worked well: *"The meeting is structured to capture what I need to record, then the floor is open for questions, whatever they may be"* *"I have changed the structure in regards to having the first 20 minutes with the apprentice only, to allow them to talk freely and open; then I engage the employer"*
Achieving value for time	Useful strategies here were: • Keep good written records and review goals at the start of each meeting • Discuss how their week has been first, then what the week ahead looks like and identify any training needed • Be clear about the expectations of the job and of the apprenticeship. Review this regularly • Pre-book each meeting once the current meeting has finished, so everyone knows three months in advance
Useful activities and approaches	• Scenarios and examples to help understanding and subsequent application of learning, especially where the apprentice is in charge: *"This gives him a push, makes him a leader instead of a follower all the time so he starts to feel and become competent"* • Rewards/incentives relative to the reality of their performance. Identify and highlight achievements and jobs well done • Give a reason for doing a particular task and help them think about the consequences and what's required in the job task • Regular debriefing after a job - ask them questions, get them to problem solve/identify areas for improvement • Provide plenty of opportunities for practice

1.6   CHANGES MADE BY THE APPRENTICE

"*I remember the stories and examples my employer gives me and apply these to the job tasks. I am feeling much more comfortable with the job now, I don't feel in the deep end*" (Apprentice participant)

The final round of interviews with the employers and TAs included a question about the changes they had observed in their apprentices over the project time-frame and how the changes had been influenced by the mentoring support they had provided. The apprentices were also asked what changes they had made as a consequence of the mentoring. It was apparent from the apprentices' responses that building confidence and feeling able to manage job tasks on their own were high on the list of positive changes they had made. These shifts in the apprentices' abilities and thinking were mirrored by the employers' and TAs' comments, summarised in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3   Apprentice Changes as a result of Mentoring

Mentor Perspective	Apprentice Perspective
Building confidence	*I am achieving assessments on time*
The mentoring has made my apprentice realise the purpose of doing the training and doing the tasks to industry standards	*The mentoring has made me more confident in the bookwork*
Great to see that they have learned and can do the job – they also get huge satisfaction from this	*I now I need to be a little braver and ask for more help if I need it*
More confident in the team – able to speak up at team meetings	*I am more organised*
Growing as a person	*I ask for help when I need it now*
You could tell by his body language that he was really enjoying his day and was able to do the job on his own	*I have built up my own knowledge. I can see that for myself as well as from the feedback I get from them (the employer and foreman)*
Depending on the task, you see them take initiative, even if it's asking the employer what they think – I always tell them "if you are not sure, ask"	*I am better at jobs now, more independent working around the worksite*
Her individuality/personality is coming through	*I think I am improving in all areas*
Increased confidence, especially with clients (she really wanted to work on this)	*I don't rely on asking him what to do so much anymore*

Managing the people side of the business – feedback from clients, models and other team members confirms this	*I am more confident, especially when dealing with customers*
He is a lot more confident in himself and his work abilities. He has built the skills and knowledge to be able to progress on to year two	*I am not scared to give things a go and I as for feedback all the time*
Both apprentices were quite shy at the start, now they are able to talk to clients	*My employer lets me do a lot of work on my own; I can show him that I am capable*
He is starting to put his own ideas forward rather than waiting to be told	*I know what to do and don't have to wait and ask anymore*

1.7   SUPPORT FOR THE MENTOR

"*Tools for myself to analyse what I am listening to as well as knowing that what I am saying and doing are the right things*" (Employer participant)

Employers and TAs were asked to reflect at the end of the year-long project about what they thought would support them further in the mentor role. Ongoing development of effective communication skills was a common theme, encompassing how to have good conversations, getting ideas about how to check things out with the apprentice, asking the right questions and how to keep the conversation going. One of the employers talked about the usefulness of the questioning techniques and wanting more training in this area.

Receiving more training in mentoring, such as a refresher course, was also highlighted as a key area for ongoing mentor support. This was described as learning more about the mentor role, more mentoring scenarios to practice with, learning how to build the mentoring relationship and the influence of personality types in the mentoring partnership. An additional area of interest for one employer was material about the younger generation and how they think and communicate, so that in their mentor role they "*feel more equipped around the psychology*".

DISCUSSION

A comment made by one of the employers indicates that the conception of mentoring can differ significantly, as noted in the literature (Gibson, 2004; Sweeney, 2003). As this employer stated in their interview, "*We didn't go through with the mentoring as we are only a small team and I found this challenging to do. We are both very busy people*". Interestingly, as the interview progressed it became obvious that mentoring support of the apprentice was actually happening, as the employer described a range of interventions they used such as providing regular feedback on the apprentice's progress, providing them with opportunities to practice and giving feedback on this, and working with the TA to assist the apprentice with completing their assessments.

Clearly, if people are to engage in and optimise the benefits of a mentoring partnership, whether as a mentor or a mentee, they need to understand the concepts and practices of mentoring, in particular their unique role and responsibilities (Petersen, 2011). This observation has implications for the wider ITO sector to consider in general, as well as indicating the need for targeted mentoring training.

A MODEL FOR APPRENTICE MENTORING IN THE ITO CONTEXT

A clear definition and understanding of mentoring will enhance the level and quality of engagement in mentoring by a mentor and a mentee (Nicholls, 2006). An important contributing principle, illustrated and confirmed by the findings from this project, is that mentoring is contextually determined (Clutterbuck, 2004; Petersen, 2011). Firstly, there wasn't a right or wrong way for the employers and TAs to mentor their apprentices, nor only one way to develop a quality mentoring relationship. This was summarised well by one of the TAs in their final interview, "*There are a lot of individual differences in the apprentices regarding what support the apprentice needs and then the type of support provided*".
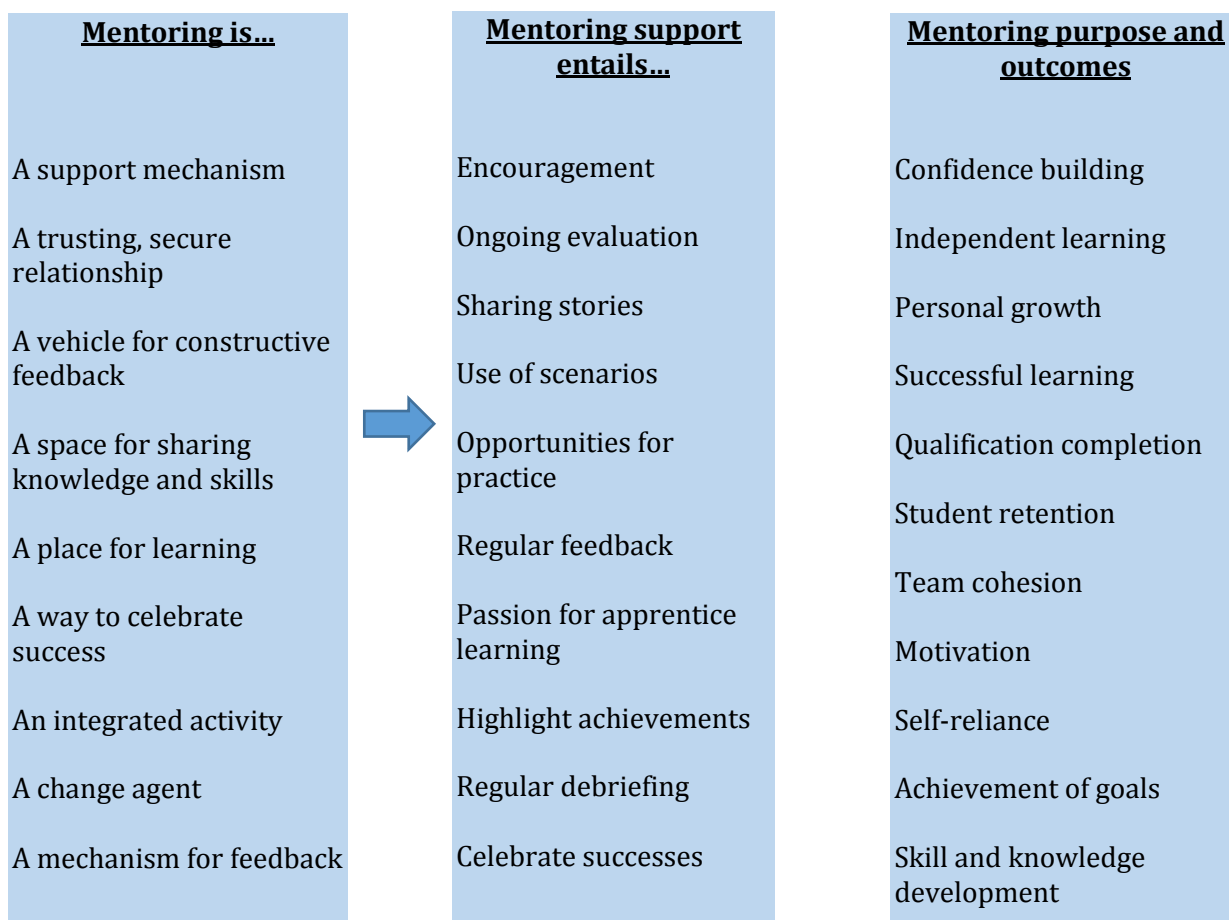
Secondly, the structure of a mentoring relationship can be dyadic, involving a mentor supporting a mentee, or it can be a collective team approach. This was certainly evident

in some of the employers' feedback as they emphasised the importance of mentoring being a whole team approach, "*I have received positive feedback from my other team members about this mentoring project and the whole concept of apprentice mentoring. There is definitely a place for it*".

Additionally, the effectiveness of mentoring isn't necessarily determined by the level of formality or informality of the mentoring process. For example, whilst some employers established specific times and set agendas for the mentoring meetings with their apprentices, other employers described their mentoring approach as being integrated as part of the on-job learning – however, most used a combination of the two. And feedback from the TAs identified that although the expected schedule of apprentice meetings is quarterly, many of them were in regular contact with their apprentices and made themselves available by phone or email at any time.

Above all, mentoring was an integral part of the employer-apprentice relationship. If a person has to find time to 'do mentoring', perhaps too much emphasis is being placed on getting the process and technical aspects of mentoring right, for example setting up the partnership, scheduling mentoring meetings and filling in forms versus focusing on developing a quality relationship. These considerations and the findings from this project have influenced the development of a mentoring model which reflects the contextual realities of the BCITO and HITO, and is likely transferable to other ITO settings. The model illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page establishes what mentoring is for the apprentice and how it can be provided by the key participants, namely the employer and the TA.

Figure 1   A Model for Successful Apprentice Mentoring

Mentoring is...	**Mentoring support entails...**	**Mentoring purpose and outcomes**
A support mechanism	Encouragement	Confidence building
A trusting, secure relationship	Ongoing evaluation	Independent learning
A vehicle for constructive feedback	Sharing stories	Personal growth
A space for sharing knowledge and skills	Use of scenarios	Successful learning
A place for learning	Opportunities for practice	Qualification completion
A way to celebrate success	Regular feedback	Student retention
An integrated activity	Passion for apprentice learning	Team cohesion
A change agent	Highlight achievements	Motivation
A mechanism for feedback	Regular debriefing	Self-reliance
	Celebrate successes	Achievement of goals
		Skill and knowledge development

As the model shows, multiple definitions are ascribed to apprentice mentoring, acknowledging the range of conceptual understanding and application of mentoring support occurring across the two ITOs. These definitions are represented in the first column and provide the foundation of the model as it guides the engagement in mentoring by all relevant stakeholders. The definitions encompass the core elements of mentoring and helps to create a common understanding of mentoring for the apprentice, the employer, the TA and the organisation. Key apprentice support strategies provided by the employer and the TA are identified in the second column whilst the third column summarises key purpose statements which indicate the desired outcomes of mentoring for apprentice learning. The model encapsulates the feedback received from the apprentices, employers and TAs inthis project, acknowledging mentoring as a meaningful mechanism for supporting the apprentice's personal and professional growth.
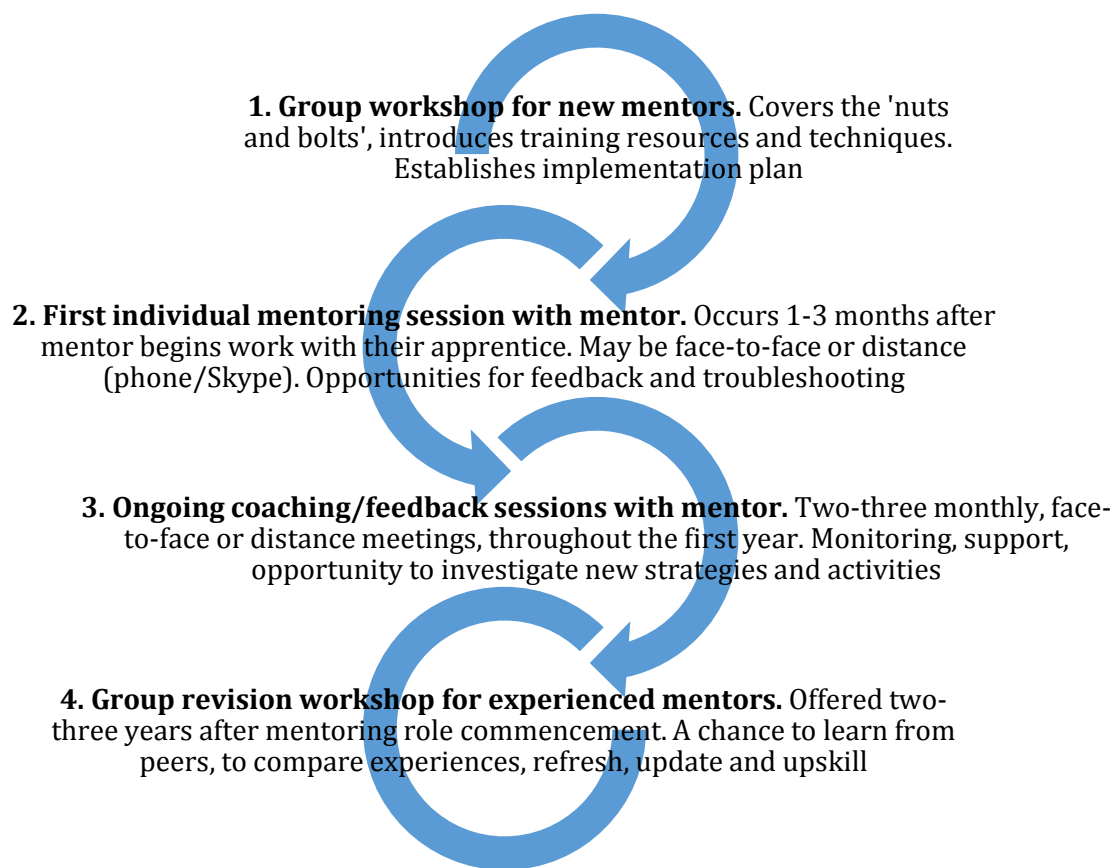
THE VALUE OF TARGETED MENTORING TRAINING

One of the conditions to maintain an effective mentoring programme is the organisation establishing clear criteria for mentor selection that includes a commitment to initial and ongoing mentor training (Clutterbuck, 2004; Gibson, 2004; Griffiths, & Guile, 2003; Petersen, 2011). The mentoring training workshops facilitated at the commencement of the project provided the foundation for the ensuing mentoring activities between the employers, TAs and apprentices. The aim of the training was to equip the employers and TAs with a toolkit of mentoring strategies and resources as additional support mechanisms for the apprentice mentoring they were going to engage in.

The training also provided the opportunity for participants to explore the meaning and purpose of mentoring, which helped frame the mentoring relationship. Although it was not possible for the apprentices to attend a mentee training workshop, they received a Mentee Handbook and relevant resources which their employer or their TA worked through with them. This was to ensure that the apprentices had a clear understanding of their role as a mentee, what to expect from their employer or TA as a mentor and how they could benefit from mentoring support. The ongoing contact with employers and TAs throughout the project's lifespan by the lead researcher, in effect, 'mentoring the mentors' was valued by these participants; as one TA said, *"This project is making me reflect on what I am doing with the mentoring instead of just doing it".*

The training package provided for mentors in this project appeared to have been highly effective as a framework to manage new learning and provide support. The timeframe worked well for the lead researcher as facilitator, as well as for the employers and TAs who took part – an important consideration when introducing external professional development offerings into busy workplaces. The training approach is reproduced here as Figure 2, with an additional fourth 'revision' phase, based on the feedback from participants:

Figure 2   **A Model for Mentor Training in the ITO Sector**

1. Group workshop for new mentors. Covers the 'nuts and bolts', introduces training resources and techniques. Establishes implementation plan

2. First individual mentoring session with mentor. Occurs 1-3 months after mentor begins work with their apprentice. May be face-to-face or distance (phone/Skype). Opportunities for feedback and troubleshooting

3. Ongoing coaching/feedback sessions with mentor. Two-three monthly, face-to-face or distance meetings, throughout the first year. Monitoring, support, opportunity to investigate new strategies and activities

4. Group revision workshop for experienced mentors. Offered two-three years after mentoring role commencement. A chance to learn from peers, to compare experiences, refresh, update and upskill

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this project was to determine the impact of mentoring training on the quality of the mentoring support provided by TAs and employers and whether this contributed to successful apprentice learning outcomes. As well as substantiating training as an important tool for preparing people to successfully engage in mentoring and create quality mentoring relationships, the findings highlight a wide range of mentoring benefits, and, importantly, significant changes made by the apprentices as a result. Key conclusions about the purpose, process and outcomes of apprentice mentoring in the ITO context are:

- Participating in mentoring training before commencing a mentoring partnership is an invaluable strategy for determining the success of the mentor-mentee relationship;
- Mentees need to be equipped with the knowledge and understanding of mentoring and how they can get the most out of mentoring support;
- Clarifying the purpose and focus of the mentoring support is essential to value-for-time in the mentoring meetings;
- The mentor's interpersonal qualities and capabilities play a significant role in the mentoring relationship;
- The benefits of mentoring that can be gained by the mentee, the mentor and the organisation described in the literature were evident in the findings from this project;
- The logistical considerations of establishing and sustaining the mentoring partnership need to be determined to fit the context; and
- Both mentors and mentees in this project saw the substantial and meaningful changes made by the apprentices as being directly related to receiving mentoring support from their employers and TAs.

The project results therefore provide the BCITO, HITO and the wider tertiary education sector with evidence that mentoring is a valuable and valid mechanism for providing another level of support for the apprentice as they journey through their apprenticeship. A selection of resources have been created from the project, attached as appendices to this report. Additionally, a number of recommendations are made which propose further development of mentoring resources and activities by the BCITO and HITO, and other tertiary education providers interested in establishing good mentoring practices in their institutions. These recommendations are:

1. Development of a Mentor's Information [induction] Pack, which includes:
   o A toolkit of templates and forms
   o An employer agreement to provide mentoring support for their apprentice/s
   o A set of scenarios which evidence apprentice success stories through engagement in mentoring with the employer
   o Questioning techniques and exemplars

2. Establish guidelines regarding the TA involvement in apprentice mentoring and the relationship and expectations of their relationship with the employer

3. Include a copy of the Mentee's Handbook in the apprentice induction/enrolment pack

4. Provide new employers and TAs with an opportunity to attend a mentoring training workshop at the start of their mentoring role, with a follow-up refresher workshop after two-three years to extend and enhance their practice.

A final consideration is the need for ongoing research about mentoring in the ITO and vocational training sector. A larger-scale inquiry seeking correlations between institutions and organisations offering mentoring to apprentices, and the success and completion statistics from these learners compared to national results would provide additional support for the need to place mentoring at the forefront of apprentice training programmes. A second direction could pursue the variances in efficacy of mentoring models and strategies, according to demographic items such as gender or ethnicity – picking up the work of Holland (2009a; 2012) outlined in the literature scan. Groups could include Māori, Pacific Islanders and English as Second Language speakers as well as the issue of non-stereotypical gender participation – such as males in the hair and beauty industry, or females in construction trades.

While these considerations fell outside the scope of the current project, it is hoped that the strong endorsement of both mentoring as a mechanism to promote learner change, and mentoring training as an important ingredient in a successful mentoring engagement, will encourage further projects which build on the powerful results offered by BCITO's and HITO's leadership in this field.

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ATTACHMENT I   MENTEE'S HANDBOOK

Refer Attachment

APPENDIX I MENTORING RESOURCES

Record of Mentoring

This form is a useful way of recording what is discussed at the mentoring meetings. Photocopy as many forms as you need (at least one per meeting).

Name: _____

Date: _____

Issues/Questions/Discussion raised at meeting:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Actions (What are you going to do after discussion with your mentor?)	To be done by? (Date)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Date of next meeting:_____

MENTEE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This form is designed to help you identify what you would like to achieve in your apprenticeship and how mentoring can support you in this. Your mentor will work through these questions with you.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN	
Name:	**Date:**
Goal:	
What date will I achieve this goal?	
What outcomes do I want to achieve?	
What skills will I have developed when I achieve this goal?	
List three things you would like your mentor to help you with 1. 2. 3.	
Challenges along the way – how can my mentor support me?	

MENTEE'S TASK CHECKLIST

This checklist is a useful tool for both you as the mentee and your mentor to identify specific tasks which you can work on and complete as you progress through your apprenticeship. Identify tasks which will help you achieve your goals. It is a good idea to discuss this checklist with your mentor at each mentoring meeting.

MENTEE'S TASK CHECKLIST		
Plan To Do ✓	**Done** ✓	**Task**