



Filling the knowledge gap for administrative professionals undertaking their National Diploma in Business Administration Level 5

Linkages between workplace assessment and formal tertiary level training

Vivienne Kermode – Waiariki Institute of Technology
Eth Lloyd – Enderby Associates Ltd

August 2011



An Ako Aotearoa publication.
This project output has been funded by
Ako Aotearoa through the
Regional Hub Project Fund.



This work is published under the Creative Commons 3.0 New Zealand Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike Licence (BY-NC-SA). Under this licence you are free to copy, distribute, display and perform the work as well as to remix, tweak, and build upon this work non-commercially, as long as you credit the author/s and license your new creations under the identical terms.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study shows that independent workplace assessors and ITPs can work together to fill the knowledge gaps for administrative professionals who undertake a National Diploma in Business Administration Level 5 (NDBA L5) in their workplace. Linking theoretical learning with workplace assessment opportunities for a NDBA L5 ensures that already held skills and newly acquired knowledge go hand in hand with the work carried out every day by administrative professionals in their workplace environment.

Two groups were identified for the research. The first group who made up the ‘former learners’ group consisted of 35 candidates/students who had completed the NDBA L5 over the previous three years while working. They had undertaken their qualification either individually with Enderby Associates Ltd (Enderby) or Waiariki Institute of Technology (WIT) or through the collaboration of both organisations.

To provide information in a broader context and to provide balance and credibility to the research, a wider spread of data for comparison was sought. The Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc (AAPNZ) was selected to make up the second group ‘AAPNZ members’. AAPNZ represent administrative professionals in a variety of roles throughout the country and have a membership of approximately 600 spread nationally.

An on-line survey was used for both groups; 35 in the ‘former learners’ group and the 600 ‘AAPNZ members’. Twenty-three in the former learners group responded and 103 AAPNZ members responded. Participants in the ‘former learners’ group were given the opportunity to take part in structured interviews leading to case studies, eleven offered to participate, six were approached and five were actually interviewed.

Data was collected through the surveys and from each structured interview. Using qualitative research methods, the researchers then focussed on “themes” that came out of the data. These themes were discussed, refined and finalised during the analysis process.

Administrative professionals hold a wide range of qualifications, however many of these qualifications do not specifically relate to the business administration work the respondents are doing. The most predominant qualification is noted as being the NDBA L5. Importantly many administrative professionals hold no qualifications or no relevant qualifications at all. For those undertaking the NDBA L5 using an independent workplace assessor and filling identified knowledge gaps through blending formal tertiary new learning with independent workplace assessment, was shown to be a successful approach.

Once a gap has been identified in a candidate’s knowledge and practice and the requirements of the NZQA unit standard(s) the candidate can be referred to an IPT/PTE with advice about which courses/modules to complete to meet the requirements. This means the candidate is receiving targeted training which aims to fill an identified knowledge gap. It also demonstrated the value of a close working relationship between an ITP/PTE and an independent workplace assessor.

If the administrative professional wishes to gain a NDBA L5 in the workplace there is advantage to them if the ITP/PTEs modules/courses have embedded unit standards within them. The value of this to candidates/students is that it allows for cross crediting into a workplace assessed national qualification and it also allows portability between ITPs/PTEs if ever required.

Flexibility and co-operation between independent workplace assessors and ITP/PTEs can ensure that the knowledge gaps for administrative professionals are filled supporting them to attain their NDBA L5. Using this model has allowed for efficient and effective learning and the application of enhanced or new skills.

The value of the administrative professional's day to day work was demonstrated through the study except for the one younger participant who felt a disconnect between some of her work and what was required in the unit standards. However it is suggested that this disconnect reflected her lack of experience and was met by a variety of measure, her own research and formal new learning.

An additional theme came through in the study which demonstrated that there are barriers to many administrative professionals obtaining professional development. The barriers outlined in this project were primarily from either the internal beliefs of an individual or the attitudes and expectations of their workplace. However, achievement of a qualification had a very positive effect on the individual, which was enhanced if the workplace also recognised the achievement.

Recommendations

It is recommended that ITPs recognise that there is a potentially untapped market of administrative professionals who are in employment, do not require full-time or whole course study with an ITP and would benefit from access to some formal new learning in specific 'knowledge gap' areas. The following recommendations may assist the ITP/PTE to provide support and opportunity to that pool of potential students.

1. Flexibility in the enrolment process for an ITP/PTE to easily allow single-course one-off enrolments would greatly assist the administrative professional with an identified knowledge gap when they are in the workplace.
2. Flexibility in transfer arrangements between semesters, outside of normal withdrawal periods would be very helpful. This flexibility would acknowledge that those undertaking qualifications while in the workforce may not be able to complete due to environmental changes outside their control and could assist completion.
3. Support or pastoral care for administrative professionals undertaking a qualification while employed in the workplace is as important as it is for younger candidates/students, especially when they are part-time or one-off students. The responsibilities of full time work, life and family responsibilities can be very heavy for this largely mature female part of the workforce. Recognition of these complex environments within which administrative professionals work and live, ensuring that their enquiries and concerns are handled promptly and sympathetically, can make a significant difference to completion.
4. That the recognition of the value of a qualification and skills and knowledge held was important to administrative professionals. A lack of recognition of skills and knowledge and of qualifications achieved contribute to some of the barriers in the workplace perceived by those in this profession and is observed as being a lack of value of self and the role. The value of self and of the role was demonstrated as being greatly enhanced through the achievement of a NDBA L5.

5. Embedded unit standards in relevant courses/modules especially in the NZQA Field Business, sub-fields Business Operations and Development, Environment, and Management would also be of value. In a NDBA L5 qualification there is a requirement for 30 credits from these sub-fields. These courses would provide options for the administrative professional to complete their NDBA L5 where a knowledge gap has been identified.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
Recommendations.....	3
CONTENTS.....	5
Table of Figures	6
DEFINITIONS.....	7
INTRODUCTION	9
Background.....	9
Qualifications.....	10
Industry Training Organisations	11
Aim	11
Case Study	12
Brenda – EA and Committee Advisor for a Local Government Council.....	12
METHODOLOGY	15
Participants.....	15
Analysis process.....	16
Case Study	17
Anna – Service Delivery Administrator in a Maori aligned organisation	17
FINDINGS/DISCUSSION	20
Demographics	20
Qualifications achieved.....	21
What qualifications.....	21
Process for achieving qualifications	22
Experiences.....	23
Knowledge gaps.....	23
Value of workplace tasks.....	25
Environment.....	26
Support.....	29
Recognition.....	30
Effects	31
Barriers - negative attitudes	31
Motivation – positive attitudes	31
Confidence/knowing what I know and recommendations.....	32
Case Study	32
Joanne – PA to an Operations Manager in a government health organisation.....	33
LIMITATIONS.....	35

Case Study	35
Mary – Administration and Facilities Manager in a government agency	35
CONCLUSIONS.....	38
Case Study	40
Sarah – School Administrator Manager in a tertiary institution.....	40
REFERENCES	42
APPENDICES	43
Appendix A – ‘Former learners’ group survey.....	43
Appendix B – Structured interview questions	46
Appendix C – AAPNZ Members survey	47
Appendix D – “Other” qualifications held.....	49

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Demographics of administrative professionals who replied to survey.....	20
Figure 2: Former Learners - qualifications held	21
Figure 3: AAPNZ Members - qualifications held.....	21
Figure 4: Formers Learners - How NDBA L5 was achieved	22
Figure 5: Former Learners - How gaps were filled for NDBA.....	24
Figure 6: Conceptual framework of the interrelationship between value of self/value of role, professional development and career pathways (Lloyd. 2012)	29

DEFINITIONS

Administrative professional	This term covers the wide range of roles of those who provide administration support in any organisation. Additionally NZQA Unit Standard 21862; Demonstrate knowledge of <u>management administrative services</u> is a foundational unit standard for the National Certificate in Business Administration L4 and the National Diploma in Business Administration L5. Unit Standard 21862 covers a significant number of the tasks performed by the administrative professional. Administrative professional is also the term used internationally to define, in general, the work roles formerly covered by the titles secretary, clerical worker, office worker and receptionist. This can mean on occasions the term secretary may appear in this report due to context.
Knowledge Gap	This is a gap between the skills and knowledge a person can demonstrate as part of their day-to-day work and what the NZQA L5 NDBA requires.
ITP	Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics
PTE	Private training organisation
Assessment by Professional Conversation (APC) TM	APC TM is an assessment methodology based on behavioural interviewing and discourse analysis. Those who use APC TM as an assessment methodology need to have been endorsed by Competency International Ltd as it is trade-marked.
Formal new learning	This term is used to cover new learning undertaken through a tertiary provider leading to a formal qualification which is assessed or examined and registered with NZQA. Usually this new learning is completed face-to-face or by distance but may include on-line learning.
Formal on-line (internet based) new learning	This term is used to cover new learning undertaken through a NZQA registered tertiary provider on-line as distinct from distance learning. This learning is assessed or examined and leads to a formal qualification.
Distance new learning	This term is used to cover new learning where the training provider sends out reading lists, workbooks and assignments, which the student then completes and returns for marking. May involve assessment and/or exams.
Informal learning	New learning undertaken through in-house, on the job or a training provider, however not assessed or examined, not leading specifically to a qualification and not necessarily registered with NZQA.
Blended learning	Blended learning to achieve a qualification is a process of blending two or more different approaches. In this study the term is used to cover the blending of formal on-line new learning with a variety of workplace assessment tools. Workplace assessment using an independent workplace assessor is one of those tools.
Candidate	The term used for those completing a qualification through an independent workplace assessor.

Student	The term used for those completing a qualification through an ITP/PTE.
Embedded	NZQA unit standards which are inside (embedded in) an ITP/PTE course/module and can be assessed simultaneously with the other course criteria, providing the student meets all the criteria for the unit standard (competency based).

INTRODUCTION

Background

Administrative professionals are people who provide administrative support in businesses. This is not a clearly defined group in the workplace however the term covers personal and executive assistants (roles formerly often covered by the term secretary) through to clerical and reception staff. The small amount of research undertaken to date into this section of the workforce has been almost exclusively into secretarial staff, a term not commonly used in the workforce today but which is encompassed by the term administrative professional. The use of administrative professional internationally is confirmed by the change of name for relevant professional associations, for example, in the United States in 1998 from Professional Secretaries International to International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP), and in 2000 from the Society of Executive Secretaries New Zealand Inc. to Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc. (AAPNZ). (Lloyd, 2010)

Pre-First World War administrative work (i.e. secretarial) was a male role and was considered to be quite prestigious. Since the First World War this part of the workforce has become predominantly female (Golding, 1986) with no formal qualification required. In New Zealand there are 240,000 listed in this field (clerical/administrative) of which four-fifths are female showing this role as primarily female. The lack of a required qualification to be an administrative professional has contributed to the perception that this type of work (provision of service) is largely considered non-professional or even unskilled (Department of Women's Affairs, 2003).

The 2009 report by Truss, Rosewarne, Alfes & Parr raised various considerations for management and tertiary providers. This report identified that there was a demand by secretaries (administrative professionals) for a professional qualification which was recognised by employers. The report also identified that employers need to better understand the skills and competencies that these administrative professionals hold and that their status, both in the workforce and in their own perception of themselves, needs to be raised reflecting the skills and competencies the role requires. Further it is noted that there is a requirement for more effective management of administrative professionals within organisations including professional development opportunities, rather than it being solely within the hands of line managers. This management of administrative professionals also should recognise the need for career pathways allowing a workplace to make the best use of the skills and capabilities they hold. (Truss et. al., 2009)

Recent work by Lloyd showed that there has been very little research into this sector of the workforce (Lloyd, 2010). Lloyd's research focussed on the professional development opportunities and career pathways of administrative professionals and looked at the research both in New Zealand and internationally. Earlier research reinforces the view that there is an undervaluing of the administrative role, and there are limitations around the career pathway options for administrative professionals (Cavanagh, 2007; Golding, 1986; Maguire, 1996; Pringle, 1988; Truss et.al., 2009). Both of these factors are enhanced by the lack of a required qualification for the role which of course also adds to the lack of value placed on the administrative role both by others and by administrative professionals themselves.

The value of a relevant qualification to administrative professionals is outlined in Truss et. al.'s work in the United Kingdom where the following comment is made

“Three-quarters of secretaries wish that there were a professionally recognised PA qualification and four-fifths believe that such a qualification would raise the status of secretaries. Over half, 52%, feel a professional qualification would make it easier for secretaries to be promoted.” (Truss et.al., 2009, p.15)

There is a clear message here that the administrative professional (Truss uses the word secretary) is seeking professional development, has skills and knowledge that must be recognised and the potential to move into other roles including management. The 2009 findings by Truss et.al from the United Kingdom were supported by the findings in Lloyd 2010 in New Zealand. There is the risk of not developing the potential in this sector of the workforce if the above implications are not taken into account by management. This wish for qualifications must also be recognised by ITP/PTEs who need to provide the learning opportunities that best suit these candidates/students.

Qualifications

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has in place qualifications in Business Administration. These qualifications cover Certificates in Business Administration (CBA) and Computing Levels 2 and 3, CBA Level 4 and Diploma in Business Administration (DBA) Level 5. They enable administrative professionals to train to become effective and efficient in their roles and/or reflect the skills and knowledge they already have. Business administration qualifications, both before and after the changes to competency based unit standards, have been offered by tertiary providers. The ability to achieve these qualifications through workplace assessment while an administrator is working has been a valuable process for making qualifications available to administrative professionals.

Level 2 - 4 certificates are commonly delivered by ITP/PTEs to those who are new to the workforce; Levels 2 and 3 to either school leavers, or those returning to work, L4 to either those with higher level school qualifications or as a progression from levels 2 and 3. The Level 5 diploma is also delivered by some ITPs and PTEs.

In the workplace a Level 3 certificate is often used for those in the public sector modern apprenticeship programme or those who have only a very few years actual work experience. It is considered to be a “beginners” qualification.

The NCBA L4 is often used in the workplace as a staircase to the NDBA L5. Both qualifications are valuable to those who wish to gain recognition of higher level skills. Knowledge gained through new learning at an ITP/PTE, recognition of current competency in the workplace through workplace assessment, or a blending of both helps to demonstrate those higher level skills if required.

Both authors of this report assess against the requirements of the NDBA L5 using different assessment methods. Vivienne Kermode is both tutor and assessor for the WIT on-line DBA L5 programme. The WIT DBA L5 on-line course had 76 students enrolled between 2007 and 2011. Of these 26 (34%) have to date completed successfully, 35 (46%) are still working to complete their DBA L5 and 15 (20%) did not complete.

Eth Lloyd of Enderby Associates Ltd is an independent workplace assessor specialising in Business Administration and First Line Management. Eth uses both unit standard by unit standard assessment processes and Assessment by Professional Conversation™ (APC™). Enderby assessed 77 clients between 2003 and 2011 for CBA and Computing L3 (3), CBA L4 (10) and the NDBA L5 (64); the majority undertaking the NDBA L5. Of all 77 clients only 4 (5%) did not complete and 4 (5%) had not yet completed.

	Enrolled	Completed	Still to Complete	Not Completed
Waiariki	76	26(34%)	35(46%)	15(20%)
Enderby	77	69 (90%)	4(5%)	4 (5%)

Between 2007 and 2011 eleven of Enderby’s clients were referred to WIT for formal new learning to fill an identified knowledge gap. This gap was due primarily to their working environment, current and recent past, not requiring or providing all the knowledge and evidence to complete the achievement of the qualification in the workplace. This formal new learning provided underpinning theoretical knowledge and was undertaken through on-line learning.

Industry Training Organisations

Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) were set up to support workplace training opportunities for all industries. A separate ITO was not set up for business administration as it was not considered an industry; it was seen to be covered by all industries. Some ITOs do offer Business Administration qualifications however, out of 37 ITOs only eight offer business administration and only five of those to Level 5 (Lloyd, 2010). This means that there are many administrative professionals who are not covered by an ITO which makes reporting their achievements through workplace assessment in the workplace complex and often more expensive than for those who are part of an ITO.

Those who undertake their business administration qualifications in the workplace draw on the work and knowledge they have gained during their working lives. However this can leave knowledge gaps if the working environments do not allow for sufficient breadth or depth of experience. These knowledge gaps may be due to the nature of their various roles where they are not exposed to a wide variety of learning experiences. This is where workplace assessment and formal new learning can work together. The workplace assessment can provide acknowledgement of the skills and knowledge already held by an individual and formal new learning can provide new theoretical knowledge and skills.

Aim

This project aimed to identify the knowledge gaps which occur between the work administrative professionals undertake in their place of work and the requirements of the NDBA L5, how these gaps may best be filled and the value of day to day work practices in providing evidence towards achieving unit standards for the NDBA L5.

In summary administrative professionals are a part of the workforce that is primarily female and for which there has been little consideration or activity to ensure there is a career pathway or professional development opportunities. For those administrative professionals who wish to undertake professional development through completing a NDBA L5 in the

workplace there may be some knowledge gaps which can prevent them completing. These knowledge gaps are most often due to the nature of their various work roles which do not provide opportunities to gather knowledge in sufficient depth or breadth in some areas. This study aims to explore what those knowledge gaps are and how they can best be filled

The case studies throughout this report describe the differing experiences of some of those who undertook a NDBA L5 in the workplace. They used various methods to achieve their qualification; however most had some blending of workplace assessment and formal new learning. The data gathered from these interviews is incorporated throughout this report, however the individual case studies set out how the experience worked for these individuals. They discuss the different methods used, their environmental circumstances which affected their situation, and the effect on them of their success.

This report will include an outline of the methodology used, the analysis of the findings, discussion of the findings, and a conclusion. The conclusion will outline how ITP/PTEs may consider expanding their delivery options of the NDBA L5 to candidates/students (administrative professionals) who are already in the workplace.

Case Study

This first case study is someone who used all methods of assessment discussed in this report, all of which worked to differing degrees for her. However the most profound affect was in her development of value of self and confidence through appreciating her own skills and knowledge gained through her day-to-day work and new learning. She is now taking on new tasks to support her Manager.

Brenda – EA and Committee Advisor for a Local Government Council

Brenda has been in her role as Executive Assistant to the Corporate Services Manager and Committee Advisor (which involves taking Minutes for all Council meetings) for 18 years. She is responsible for recording the minutes at the various committees which make up part of the Council's roles in the community. She has worked for council for over 35 years starting as a typist. Since then she has taken on a variety of roles developing the skills and knowledge base required to manage her current role.

While Brenda has had a long history with the council she never had any formal qualifications that supported her skills and knowledge. In 2003 she started on her pathway to achieving the L5 National Diploma in Business Administration in 2010.

Brenda initially achieved her L4 Certificate in Business Administration with a mixture of workplace assessment through a local polytechnic and one semester of classroom learning. It is important to note that Brenda indicated that she found the classroom very challenging due she felt to her being a mature student among much younger ones, and the length of time since she had been in a classroom.

Of particular interest was her comment that she also found that much of what was being delivered in the classroom differed significantly from her own work practices and this proved to be a significant difficulty she had to work through with her tutor. We note that unit standards always state “as required by the organisations policies and procedures”

therefore the course should offer different ways of doing a task but should not imply that those different ways are the “right way”.

Brenda then completed a Certificate in First Line Management, an area of new learning, through on-line training with her local polytechnic which she found worked very well for her. This second experience of formal new learning was one she found very beneficial and which encouraged her to continue with her qualifications. She went on to further undertake a Certificate in Local Government Committee Management which was specific to her role within local government.

Brenda finally undertook and completed her L5 Diploma in Business Administration through cross crediting unit standards from her earlier certificates and workplace assessment with an independent workplace assessor. Her Diploma was completed using APC™ recognising her experience and skills gained over a large number of years with her employer and the roles she undertook within AAPNZ.

Brenda attained her final goal in her professional development plan over the past eight years, her AAPNZ Certification which she received in July 2011.

Brenda commented that she does get a lot of support to undertake professional development from her workplace, however while they supported her through payment of her fees for her qualifications which she appreciated, for her it was a case of *“they supported me in the way that they paid the fees but it was very much unrecognized, so for me, I did it for me...”*. Recognition of her success from within her workplace primarily through verbal acknowledgement from her Manager and her co-workers would have made a difference to how she felt about her achievement however; personally she is very proud of what she has achieved for herself.

Brenda had good strong personal motivation but she valued being able to check in with her workplace assessor once a week to make sure she was on track. She said *“I found that was really, really good to know that I had access to somebody to say, yes – you are on the right track – or no, hang on a minute, come back a bit.”*

Brenda found that her day to day work was relevant to achieving her L5 qualification as she said *“It was very relevant because of the {unit} standards I was doing. It was very relevant to my work.”* She indicated that both her workplace and AAPNZ provided her with the evidence she required to complete her qualification. From her workplace she said:

“A lot of it I was able to do through my workplace work that I do already. There was a lot of meeting procedure, agendas and minutes and reports that sort of thing. ...because with the Council ones I don’t actually set them – I gather the information and prepare them all.”

Where she used her involvement with AAPNZ to provide evidence she said:

“... Also AAPNZ as I was President of the Nelson Group where I gained skills such as speaking in public....running meetings, I don’t actually do that in my role but because of my role in AAPNZ I know how to do it. I used chairing meetings and setting agendas ..., all the follow up work after the meetings.”

Brenda found she was amazed at what she did know and felt proud and excited:

“... gosh, I know all this and now it can be turned into a qualification. You don’t know what you know really. You get on and do your job but you just aren’t aware of the knowledge that you have got.... I found it really exciting.”

Brenda says that having achieved her qualifications she is feeling much more confident about her abilities and is willing to take on higher level work, which has led to some acknowledgement from her Manager:

“And several reports that I wrote for him {her Manager} and he has recently told me I have done excellent work and I know I can do it. My confidence is such now where I’m asking for more and in some cases my manager is not even seeing some stuff that is coming in as I am dealing with it for him.”

METHODOLOGY

The methodology chosen for this study aimed to gather information from a range of people, some of whom had undertaken the NDBA L5 while in work. To achieve this aim, two qualitative research methods were used. One, a survey providing a general coverage with a range of questions which aimed to find out what qualifications the respondents hold, how they achieved them, whether they knew of any knowledge gaps they had and, if they did, how those gaps were filled. The questions also encouraged opinion on participants' achievement and those participants who chose to take part in the second method, case studies, provided more in-depth data based on the individual's actual experience of the process of achieving their NDBA L5.

Participants

Two groups were identified for the study. The first group, the 'former learners', consisted of 35 candidates/students who had completed the NDBA L5 over the previous three years. Each member of the 'former learners' group had undertaken their qualification individually, either with Enderby or WIT, or through the joint team of Enderby and WIT. Those in the former learners group were asked if they wished to participate in the study and only those who indicated an interest were formally approached with the on-line survey.

The second group, the 'AAPNZ members', consisted of members of the Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc (AAPNZ). As the 'former learners' group were all known to both researchers, we believed that information from a wider group would provide context, balance and credibility to the study due to a wider spread of information for comparison. AAPNZ represents a significant number of administrative professionals in a variety of administrative roles throughout the country with a membership of approximately 600 in 13 groups spread nationally. Permission to approach the membership of AAPNZ was received from their National Executive Committee.

Data was gathered in two stages; the first stage was the surveys of the 'former learners' group and the 'AAPNZ members' group. The second stage was the structured interviews of those from the 'former learners' group who volunteered to participate in the interviews.

The survey of the 'former learners' group provided initial data from a range of questions which aimed to find out qualifications held, how they achieved them, what knowledge gaps they had and, if they did have gaps, how those gaps were filled (Appendix A). The participants were also invited to make any other comments on study for or achievement of any qualification in an open question. Survey Monkey was selected as the tool providing an easy method of gathering information from a number of geographically spread people while also providing the option of anonymity to their responses.

The members of the 'former learners' group were provided with an opportunity to take part in the second stage of the research. This second stage involved a structured interview to develop case studies. These case studies aimed to develop more understanding of the value of day-to-day work in filling knowledge gaps and the value/effect of the process they used to achieve their qualification. The case study questions (Appendix B) were developed to be used by an independent interviewer.

The survey of the ‘AAPNZ members’ group (Appendix C) was aimed at gathering data which would provide a context and comparison for the ‘former learners’ group.

Data was collected through the on-line surveys and from each interview. The structured interviews led to the development of a case study of the individual and the environment in which they undertook their study. These case studies are set out throughout the report.

Analysis process

Survey Monkey provided a summary of the demographic data collected which was then converted into the graphs used in this report. The demographics provide context only and use two wide age ranges reflecting the known age ranges of the participants, general location and gender.

Once the survey data was gathered we developed initial themes as a “start list” (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 58) for provisional coding during analysis. This ‘start list’ was developed by us individually looking for themes from the text data provided in the open ended questions in the survey and initially included Qualifications Achieved, Knowledge Gaps and Effects and assisted with analysing the data gathered. We then compared our individual themes and found they were largely similar and through discussion we were able to confirm initial themes.

Reviewing the themes and coding during data analysis, for relevance and usefulness, was continuous. This is a recognised and accepted data analysis process in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The themes can be refined and modified to ensure they are fit for purpose, truly reflecting what was within the data. A single piece of data might relate to more than one theme and working in a spreadsheet allowed the placing of these items under more than one theme when appropriate.

The researchers then shared their findings and discussed any discrepancies. Through working with the data in this way we added to our familiarity and deepening knowledge of the data. The environments an administrative professionals lives and works in was discussed many times in the structured interviews and was therefore included in the themes as something which impacts on them and their study. This included support that had helped them and the value of recognition of their achievement. During the data analysis both ‘Qualifications achieved’ and ‘Effects’ evolved into several sub-themes each. The following table lists the themes and sub-themes:

Themes	Sub Themes
Qualifications achieved	What qualifications Process Experiences
Knowledge gaps	Value of tasks in the workplace
Environments	Support Recognition
Effects	Barriers - negative attitudes Motivation - positive attitudes Confident/knowing what I know - recommendations

Analysis involved reading and re-reading the data as grouped under the themes and gaining an understanding of how the different pieces fitted together. With the case studies we sent the write-up of each back to the individual interviewees for confirmation that we had interpreted their views appropriately to assist with reliability. The results from this analysis provide the basis for the written material in this report.

In summary the methodology used was qualitative to explore the experiences of those administrative professionals who have achieved a NDBA L5 in the workplace and the effectiveness of that process for them. On-line surveys and structured interviews were used to gather data. Two groups were selected for the first stage, former candidates/students of Enderby Associates Ltd and Waiariki Institute of Technology and members of the AAPNZ Inc. In the second stage, from those who volunteered to be involved, structured interviews were held with five participants to gather more personal stories and develop case studies. Analysis was undertaken through reviewing and coding the data gathered.

Case Study

The following case study shows the experiences of a younger worker in the administrative profession. She undertook her NDBA L5 in her current workplace after having previously completed her NCBA L4 in her former workplace. She achieved her qualification after using a blended approach with a variety of providers and her experiences demonstrate the effects of these differences. This case study demonstrates the value of support from her assessor and tutor in assisting her to complete and the value of the achievement itself. It also discusses the value of her day-to-day work in helping her to achieve her qualification.

Anna – Service Delivery Administrator in a Maori aligned organisation

Anna works as a Service Delivery Administrator in a Maori aligned organisation. She has worked as an administrative professional for seven years and has been with her current employer for almost five of those years. While she wasn't sure what she wanted to do when she left school she took a contract role in administration. Having just been through a restructuring in her current workplace she is still working there but also considering what her future options are.

Anna currently supports 34 staff who are actively out in the field and her role encompasses:

“Travel co-ordination is about 50 to 60% of my job, then financial reconciliations, diary management, doing personal assistant duties for my boss and also servicing the service delivery management team of seven people of which I fill the eighth position in that team. As well as organizing meetings across the country and research hui and researching and distributing research documents and map books. So it's very big.”

Anna described that before the restructure there were two people filling this role but now there is only one.

Anna started doing qualifications through workplace assessment with her former employer and made it a priority to continue on when she started in her current workplace. All staff in her current workplace are encouraged to undertake professional development with a set individual funding amount available each year for appropriate training. As she had achieved

her L4 NCBA, with some cross crediting she was able to continue on and complete her NDBA L5.

Anna was also aware of the fact that she was very inexperienced within the workplace so she was open to all new learning. As she says: *“because I was so young – because I didn’t have the background to have the skills to support me, it was really a big learning curve.”*

Given Anna’s relatively short work history and lack of wide experience, there were knowledge gaps that needed filling. These gaps were filled through formal new learning with two different ITPs, one was through distance learning and the other was on-line learning. The remainder of her qualification was achieved through APC™ and unit standard by unit standard assessment. This was a fully blended and integrated approach to support Anna in achieving her qualification given her relative inexperience and her work environment.

Anna particularly enjoyed the on-line work as she believes she is a visual learner. Anna was particularly enthusiastic about this new learning and says: *“I enjoyed the on-line components the best. I suppose because I like interactive things and all that. The course facilitator there was really great. ... I didn’t enjoy the distance learning so much”*

She said she also found it challenging to fit her study in with full-time work:

“I had to find the time to get this done – there is the option of taking study leave at work but my job is too intense and if I go for half a day, I’d have to come back the next day and catch up on that half day’s work. Working full time and studying technically full time at the same time it was hard to balance that out.”

She says her day to day work as evidence was: *Sometimes not very useful at all. I felt like the stuff that I was doing in my day to day job really wasn’t helping in my diploma. ... domestic travel for me was fine, and conferences, I could pull that {evidence} out.”*

She was very aware of the differences between the large government organisation she had worked in previously and this smaller organisation when it came to access to documentation and processes for her evidence. She says *“... I created those process documents to inform my diploma but they weren’t created here as nobody does things like desk files here.”* However, she also felt she learnt a great deal through her own research and gathering together evidence from a variety of sources to meet the requirements of the qualification, whether through workplace assessment or formal new learning.

She is also very strongly supportive of someone undertaking the NDBA L5 and she comments:

“I think it is really important for administrators to want to develop yourself and have something (a qualification) behind you. And that is something that people are looking for in recruiting at present – they are putting in ‘a tertiary qualification would be desirable’.”

Anna also says: “So it’s my diploma and having that on my CV makes things so much better. And a lot of people when you go to recruitment agencies are like ‘we see you have that – that’s great’.”

FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

Demographics

New Zealand administrative professionals are primarily female, four-fifths of the total number in this field (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). These statistics are reflected in both sets of data gathered and indicate the types of candidates/students aiming to achieve a qualification. The respondents were primarily located in the North Island (Fig. 1).

Among the ‘AAPNZ members group’ the majority were aged over 40+ years and resided in the North Island. Five people did not provide either age group or geographical data (Fig. 1).

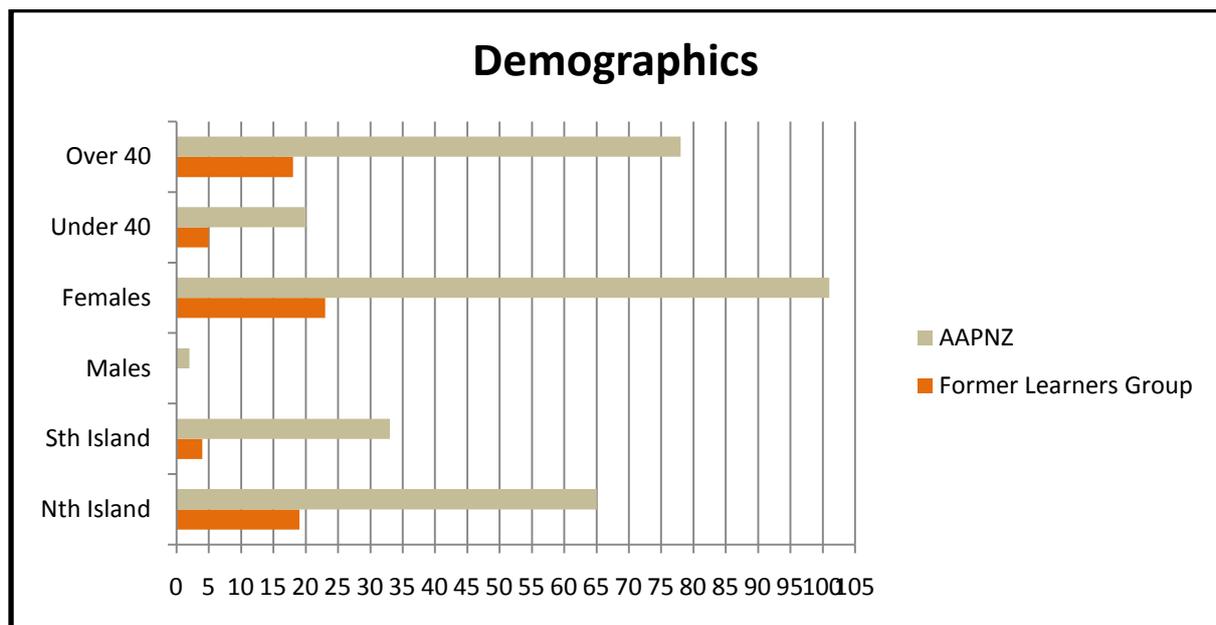


Figure 1: Demographics of administrative professionals who replied to survey.

Approximately half in the ‘former learners group’ came from Wellington, with Rotorua the next largest group with five participants. This reflects the areas where the researchers are based – Wellington and Rotorua even though geography is not a limitation.

The overall geographic spread indicates that the people to whom the NDBA L5 may be of interest are widespread across the country. It is possible that with Government Departments being Wellington based, the qualification is better known by administrative professionals’ there. This could be due to the presence of Learning State Ltd, the Public Sector industry training organisation, which promotes this qualification through workplace assessment.

In summary the demographics showed that the majority of those who participated are female which fits with the statistics nationally and internationally. In this case the majority who participated were based in the North Island and were aged over 40+. This statistic is also reflected in the AAPNZ membership and fits with the researchers’ own experiences.

Qualifications achieved

What qualifications

While the NDBA L5 as expected was held by all of the ‘former learners’ group respondents (Fig. 2 below), six of those in this group also held other qualifications ranging from the National Certificate in Computing to teaching qualifications.

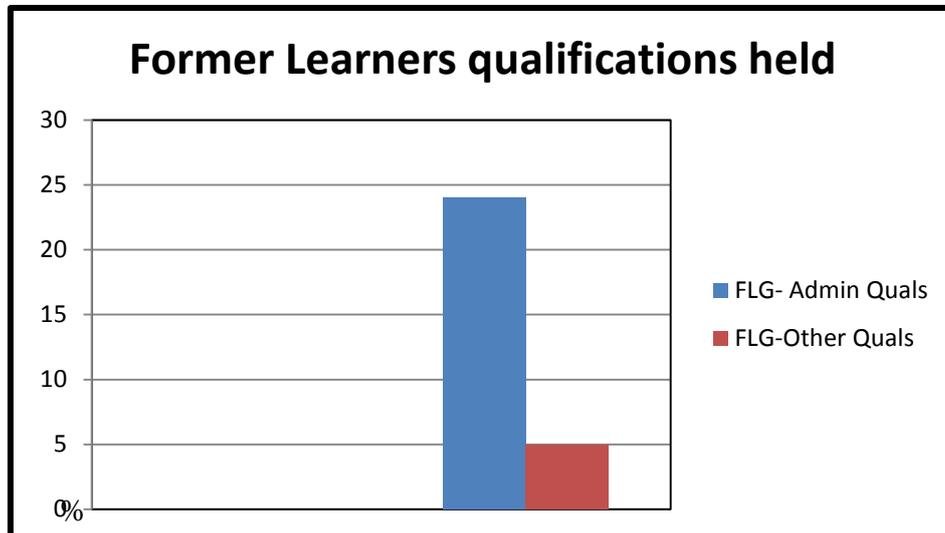


Figure 2: Former Learners - qualifications held

In the ‘AAPNZ members’ group the majority (43%) (Fig. 3 below) of respondents hold qualifications other than the National Certificate or Diploma in Business Administration. Of those respondents with business administration qualifications the majority (59%) hold the NDBA L5. Over a quarter (28%) of respondents hold no qualifications at all.



Figure 3: AAPNZ Members - qualifications held

“Other qualifications” as noted in Figures 2 and 3 are listed in Appendix D. These are qualifications other than in Business Administration.

Process for achieving qualifications

Both workplace assessment and formal on-line new learning were shown to be equally useful options for administrative professionals in the ‘former learners’ group to achieve their NDBA L5 qualification (Fig 4). Achieving this qualification through blending workplace assessing and formal on-line new learning through a polytechnic was also shown to be a very effective tool.

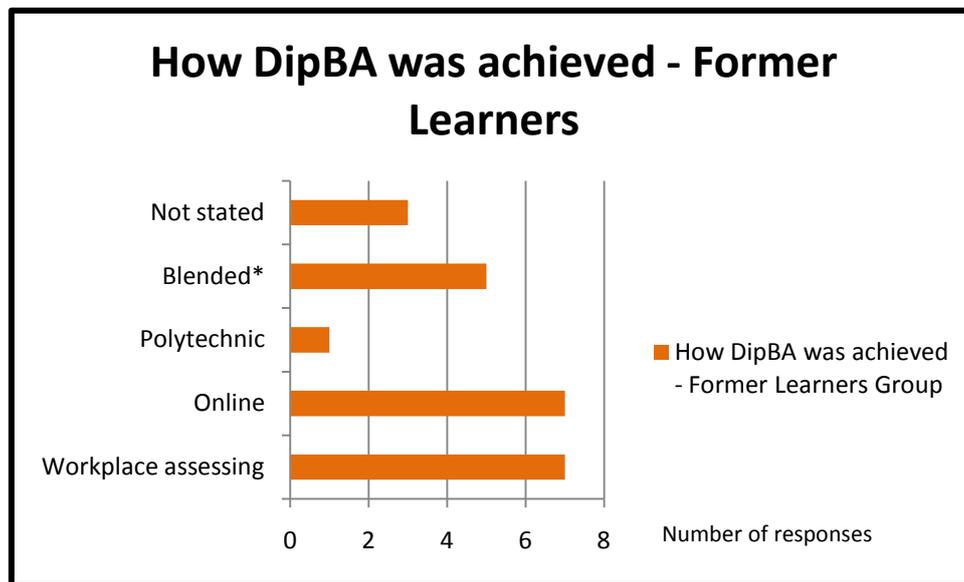


Figure 4: Formers Learners - How NDBA L5 was achieved

*Blended: this term is used to describe a mixture of formal on-line new learning (through an ITP/PTE) with a variety of assessment tools including workplace assessment.

The data gathered from the ‘former learners’ group survey showed that of the respondents 30% indicated that their qualification process had included workplace assessment. Of those, half were by an independent assessor and the other half through a tertiary provider. In the data from the structured interviews the majority achieved their qualification through workplace assessment, one completed fully on-line, and two others through a blending of both workplace assessment and formal on-line new learning.

Blended learning within an ITP/PTE for a whole qualification enrolled student would be part of the routine process for that provider. However, for an ITP/PTE having students enrolled who were to study a single course only (one-off students) might cause complications with EFTs funding. Some ITP/PTEs might therefore see this request for single courses/modules by one-off students as unviable, preferring the complete student i.e. someone studying and completing the whole diploma through them. The ITP/PTE may also not have embedded unit standards in their courses/modules.

If, however, administrative professionals who are working could be seen as a niche market providing these one-off single course/modules could meet a need for targeted learning to fill a knowledge gap for these potential candidates/students. To meet this need three factors need to be in place; embedded unit standards in the courses/modules allowing those unit standards to be credited towards the NDBA L5, the co-operation of the ITP/PTE’s internal administrative and reporting systems, and a working relationship with an independent workplace assessor.

Where a student is referred from an external workplace assessor, specific requirements for their one-off single course enrolment may be required, for example:

- a) the enrolments fit into the calendar year requirements of the ITP/PTE (e.g. perhaps two semesters a year for enrolments);
- b) the student may have to study all NZQA unit standards embedded within a course/module not just one of them.

From the survey participants' perspective all processes involved in achieving their qualification were generally well regarded and of value to them. The most important and significant aspect was achieving a meaningful diploma relevant to their everyday work tasks. It was not clear from those in either the survey or the structured interviews whether they were aware of alternative methods of achieving their qualification. However it was found that generally the processes used to complete their qualification were not of any real concern to them.

Experiences

From all data sources there were a variety of difficulties experienced during the qualification process noted. These difficulties ranged from lack of feedback or any input at all from a tutor, to finding the workplace assessment challenging but real as it related to the work they were undertaking. However overall the 'former learners' all indicated that they found the experience valuable and were pleased they had undertaken achieving their qualification.

In summary the data gathered showed that many administrative professionals hold a wide range of qualifications though few of these are specifically relevant to the work they are currently undertaking. Those in the 'former learners' group, as expected, all held the NDBA L5 and this qualification was achieved through workplace assessment only, ITP only, or a blending of both of those methods. The particular process undertaken to gain the qualification was not as important as the achievement itself. The background to enabling workplace assessed candidates to fill a knowledge gap through a tertiary provider has been outlined. The experiences of the participants in the process to achieve a qualification was generally seen as valuable and worthwhile though a range of difficulties occurred from lack of feedback from a tutor to the challenge of workplace assessment.

Knowledge gaps

Where an individual's day to day work did not readily provide evidence for some of the unit standards/courses being undertaken, the candidate/student required new learning outside of their regular work role. This learning may be informal or formal (Fig. 5). Where the new learning chosen is formal it may be best provided through an ITP/PTE which provides courses with embedded unit standards enabling the learner to fill an identified knowledge gap and cross credit that learning into their national qualification.

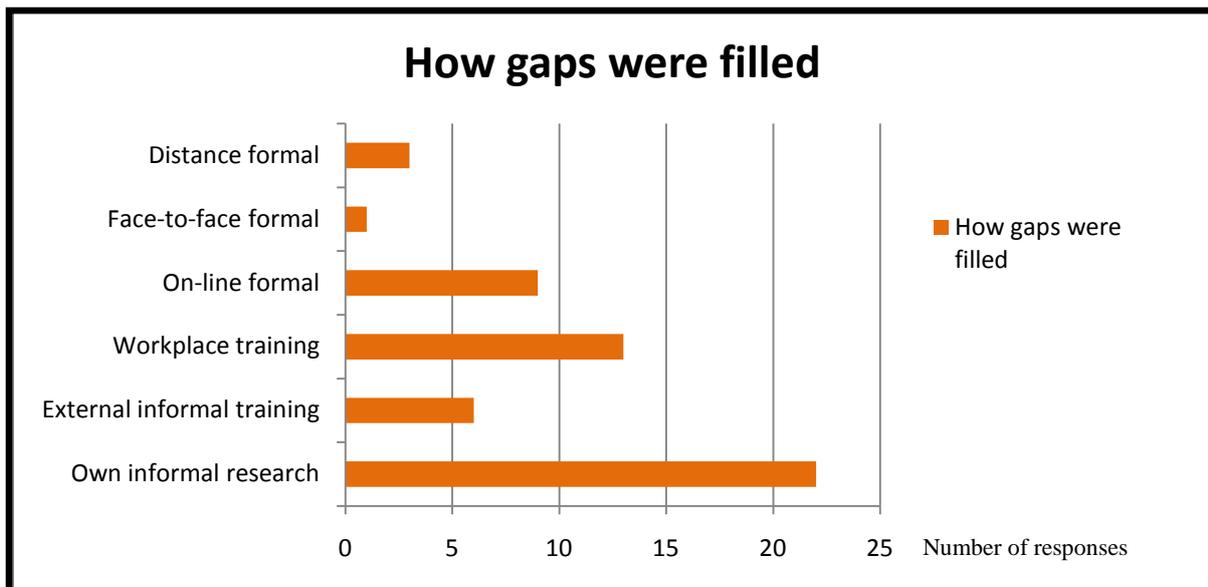


Figure 5: Former Learners - How gaps were filled for NDBA L5

While those participants in this project who had achieved a qualification predominantly did not know whether they had a ‘knowledge gap’, those who did were fairly specific. Many of the skills identified in this study sit in areas that might be considered ‘management’. This is an area where administrative professionals often do not have the opportunity to gain the higher level skills and knowledge required and so constitutes a potential ‘knowledge gap’. This is where ITPs/PTEs with embedded unit standards could provide targeted formal new learning in a course or modular form to fill those gaps.

To meet these identified knowledge gaps outlined in the data for administrative professionals ITP/PTEs could consider providing courses/modules with unit standards embedded covering the following areas:

1. Human Resource processes
2. Staff supervision
3. Conflict resolution
4. Event/Project Management
5. Research skills
6. Financial Administration
7. Meeting Management
8. Technical Skills – up-skilling in computing software (e.g. software upgrades in word processing, excel, etc) rather than continuing to be self-taught and therefore gaining the best use out of the software.

Many of these skills, specifically from items 1 – 5 in the list above, actually come under the NZQA Field Business, sub-fields Business Operations and Development, Environment, and Management (though this sub-field is lapsing). In a NDBA L5 qualification a requirement is 30 credits from these sub-fields.

Item 6 from the list above is part of the sub-field Business Administration.

Item 7 from the list above is usually well covered by ITPs.

Some participants said that they did not have any knowledge gaps. Gaps in knowledge are perhaps not clearly understood by the candidate/student and may not be communicated to them as a specific knowledge gap which is often filled during the process of gaining a qualification. The candidate/student has several options for undertaking their new learning; in their workplace informal learning via training courses or workplace training, or formal new learning via on-line or distance study suggested.

The main method of filling identified knowledge gaps for the nine from the ‘former learners’ group who recognised there were knowledge gaps, was indicated as predominantly being through workplace training. However, external informal training and on-line formal new learning were also important methods. These findings are similar to those of the apprenticeship model which is a recognised and valued process for workplace learning where the outcome is a qualification to apply their trade.

The apprenticeship model is an integrated approach to gaining knowledge in the workplace and combines theoretical and tertiary learning with workplace experience (Billett, 2001). This integrated approach is consistent with the learning undertaken by those administrative professionals from the ‘former learners’ group. They blend informal learning in the workplace through workplace communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), actually doing the work and formal learning. Study of theoretical knowledge through formal learning with a tertiary provider underpins the applied skills already held and leads to achieving a formal qualification.

Value of workplace tasks

The data from the structured interviews provided some information on the value of the tasks undertaken by administrative professionals day-to-day and the provision of evidence for the achievement of unit standards.

However it is interesting to note that Anna who has only worked in the field for seven years felt that the work she did was not very useful towards her diploma. This may indicate that due to her limited experience she was not undertaking sufficient breadth and depth of tasks to provide the evidence required. This would be confirmed by the number of formal new learning courses/modules she required to complete her NDBA L5 and also that she had to do a considerable amount of research to gain the knowledge required. However providing evidence for workplace assessment for domestic travel and conferences were both straightforward for her as she routinely undertook these tasks in the workplace.

The other case study participants generally had extensive experience in the workplace and indicated that the day-to-day work they already do was helpful in undertaking their qualification. Mary did not require any new formal learning as she was able to provide everything required from her day-to-day work. Sarah undertook her whole qualification through formal on-line learning, however indicated that the tasks she undertook every day helped her provide the evidence required. Additionally she reported that reflecting on those tasks helped her to improve her own processes.

The implications here are that those with longer experience in this field will generally be able to provide much of the evidence required from their day-to-day jobs. However there may be restrictions based around their current workplace and it is unclear whether the tasks asked of them in that environment will provide the evidence required.

The table below shows tasks that were specifically mentioned by those in the structured interview as being tasks they undertook in their day-to-day work or through an external opportunity such as AAPNZ and the related NZQA unit standards.

Task performed at work	US
PA services	21862 and 21863
Arranging meetings – procedures and processes	11648
Conducting formal meetings	9678 and 11649
Leading/managing a team	21336, 8496 and 1987
Domestic travel	21864
Conferences/projects (new learning for some)	11650 and/or 7454
Budgets	11620
Staff management	23394, 23397 and 25450
Customer service	8074
Making presentations	9692
Developing desk files	9703

However not all tasks noted above were undertaken by all participants e.g. staff management was undertaken by Mary and Sarah but not the others and has in fact been identified by Joanne as an area for future growth for her.

In summary knowledge gaps for those being assessed for a NDBA L5 within the workplace generally fall in the NZQA areas of Field Business, sub-fields Business Operations and Development, Environment, and Management. These knowledge gaps for the workplace assessed candidate may be best filled by undertaking formal new theoretical learning through a tertiary provider such as an ITP where some underpinning theoretical knowledge can be gained. The provision of single one-off unit standard embedded courses is another example of the flexibility ITPs can provide to help ensure completion of a qualification. This could be a niche market for ITPs of students who would perhaps not participate in the ITP system for this qualification. The mix of workplace learning and theoretical learning works very successfully in the apprenticeship model and would appear to apply to this section of the workforce as well.

Additionally it was clear that the day to day work of administrative professionals was helpful in providing evidence for completing unit standards being assessed whether in formal new learning or through workplace assessment. It was clear though that for the one younger participant there was some disconnect between the work required and what the unit standards were asking for and this may have been due to a lack of experience and understanding.

Environment

The environments in which candidates/students live and work were shown to be very influential. These environments were varied and described in the data as ranging from: ‘good’ to ‘not so good’ work environments, being made redundant during the assessment process, fitting study around family, leisure and work commitments, personal issues, and finally managing the workload for study and not being overcommitted.

As noted earlier, support or pastoral care plays a significant part for the NDBA L5 candidates/ students in the workplace where they often have no control over their environment. Support needs to be provided by both independent workplace assessors and ITP/PTE tutorial staff. The value of this approach is evident through the data gathered. The following quote from Anna's structured interview highlights this:

"My assessor knew me like a book. And when things weren't moving she knew something was wrong. ...But overall the on-line paper was the most outstanding for me because of the feedback I got from my tutor. ...The only people that I got to talk to were my assessor and my tutor – I loved their support because they both have so much background I was happy to talk with them."

The majority of NDBA L5 candidates/students using this blended approach in this project had been in the workforce for 20+ years and have specific and individual needs due to their environments. Whether it was their home life or work-life which changed throughout their study time, both the independent workplace assessor and the ITP must be prepared to make allowances and provide support for these changes. This is demonstrated in Joanne's structured interview when she says:

"...I got made redundant half way through. But that was quite tricky and then finding my feet again and then thinking {much later}, no I was going to carry on."

Providing candidates/students with the support they may require can provide challenges. Many candidates/students of the NDBA L5 are shown to be in the age group 40+ and they are working full time, managing family and home commitments, going through restructuring/redundancies, changing jobs or other personal challenges partway through the learning/assessing processes.

By giving the candidate/student space and taking the pressure off at the time of their change in circumstances, they often find that they can complete their study – just a little later than they had hoped. Where this has happened the candidate/student reports a very favourable response to the whole learning process.

The following quote from the structured interviews demonstrates the benefit of continued support. Joanne was made redundant and had to stop working towards her qualification. She then started a new job and said:

"I felt very supported by my assessor. I felt although there were gaps and I could work through them, that I had that support. And I felt that it was the right thing to do and just gave me a huge amount of confidence. I have grown in two years I suppose in doing this."

Regular contact with candidate/students was shown by those in the 'former learners' group to be valuable. The following quote from Sarah's structured interview supports this approach:

“... but also my tutor’s comments are encouraging. They are motivational for me. Just the things that she would come back with. There was no need for me to not stay motivated. It was where I wanted to go. I had a tutor that wanted me to get there”

This is further demonstrated by the following from the structured interview with Brenda regarding her experience:

“At one stage I rang my assessor as I was just getting a bit anxious and we diaried a time once a week when we would go through what I was doing. I would say am I on the right track? Is this what you are wanting? I found that was really, really good...”

Mary who became pregnant just before she completed said:

“... at one point I was ready to pull out of it as I was going through quite bad morning sickness and I had these deadlines to finish it off my assessors coached me through finishing it which was really good. They were really understanding because they knew ...”

Mary felt that the understanding, accommodation and flexibility supported her through this time enabling her to complete and graduate before her baby was born.

These current findings show that the environment has a significant impact, positive or negative, on the learner. If the ITP/PTE and the independent workplace assessor can accommodate these impacts, especially where they are negative, then those in the ‘former learners’ group indicated it made a significant difference. For example a supportive work environment and/or personal/home environment supports the learner being able to achieve their qualification. Additionally the support by the learning process (ITP/PTE and/or independent workplace assessor) also has a major impact on the candidates/students’ achievements. The impact of the environment on the individual is shown in the conceptual framework from Lloyd (2010) in Fig. 6.

This value of self/value of role is another feature of the Lloyd’s conceptual framework (Fig. 6). It demonstrates that increasing value of self and value of the role is a factor in leading an individual to a stage of feeling enabled; open to transformational and lifelong learning. It also demonstrates that at any time within the process of increasing value of self, the factors of home, office, social and geographical environment can return an individual to a feeling of no value of self/or role. Lloyd’s conceptual framework is further reinforced by the data from this current study where the value of the achievement of a qualification is shown to enhance the feelings of value for the individual.

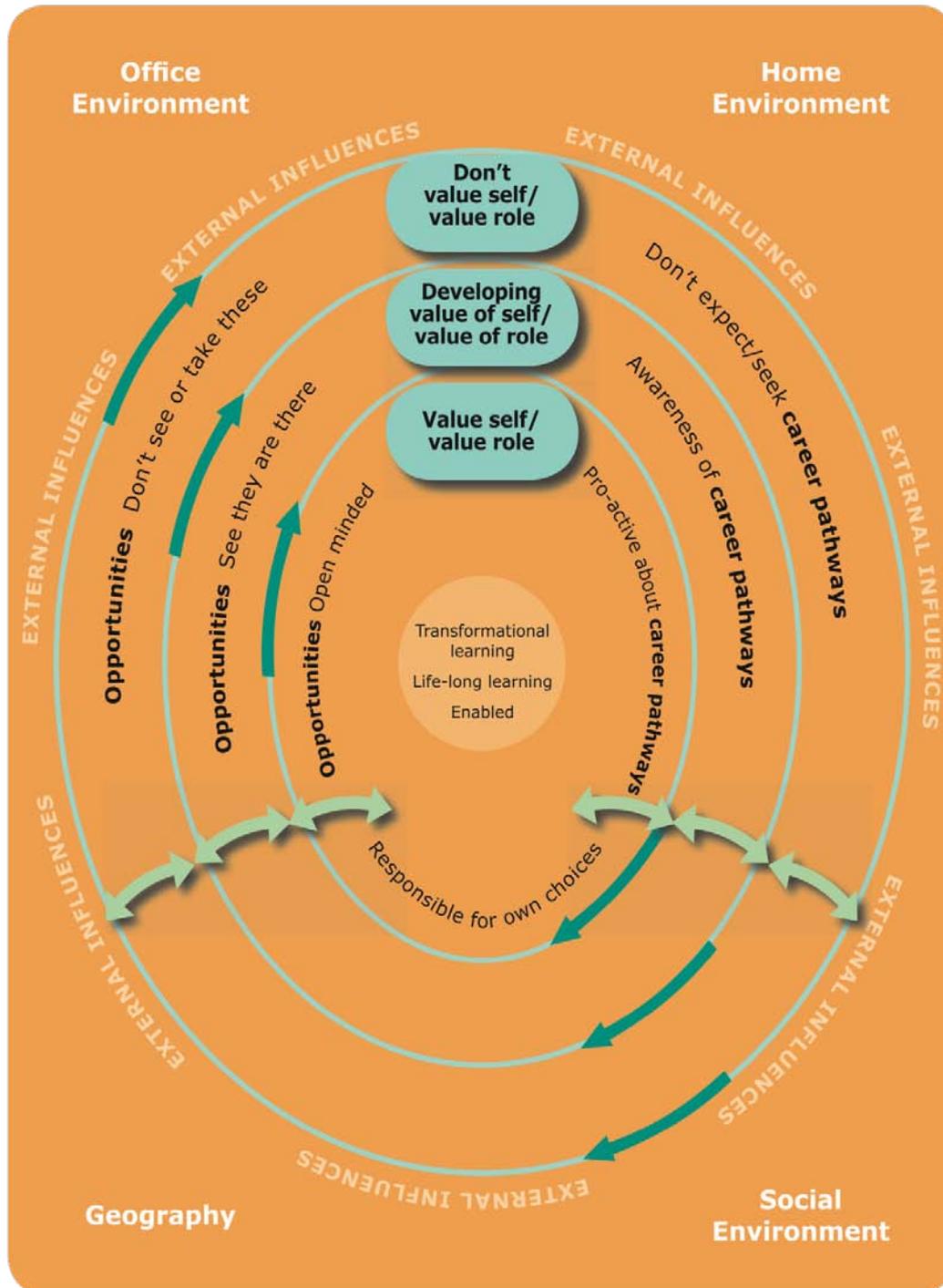


Figure 6: Conceptual framework of the interrelationship between value of self/value of role, professional development and career pathways (Lloyd. 2012)

Support

For many of those who responded to the surveys some support for the candidates/students during the qualification process was provided by their workplace environment. This support came in a variety of ways - financial, time, and emotional. It was noted in all data sources that the support received from their tutor and/or assessor was very important. However, support in all forms assisted the candidate/student in completing the qualification.

One way ITPs are able to provide support to students who are in the workforce is to provide courses and processes that are flexible in their approach. When a student cannot complete within the initially agreed time-frame if the ITP can transfer the student to the following semester/year without additional cost so they can continue to study and complete seems to be very valuable to the student/candidate. Occasionally this will be outside the usual cut-off period so flexibility is important. This is demonstrated by the following quote from Joanne's structured interview:

"I had to delay it – you could either pick a real project or a theoretical project. I started off in Feb with a theoretical project and then this Admin Day came up and I said to my tutor – it's not until September but I would really like to use it for my project. And she thought it was a great project so she gave me an extension of time ... she helped me extend it so I could use it as my live project. ... it was great as I had real people and real meetings ... it became much more useful to me."

On this occasion being able to apply new theoretical learning directly to her workplace activities ensured the student gained important skills and knowledge. It reinforced the course outcomes through being applied in everyday administration work.

Recognition

The data gathered in this project indicated that a lack of recognition or consideration of qualifications held when applying for a job was discouraging for some administrative professionals. Conversely the data also showed there has been an increase in the number of job advertisements, for administrative roles, where a tertiary qualification is asked for.

Additionally workplace recognition of achievement especially at performance appraisal time was particularly noted as being of value, or being looked for. The most significant highlight of this qualification process for many of the respondents was a personal sense of achievement perhaps through a graduation ceremony, along with other external recognition.

Recognition in the workplace of achieving a qualification showed a supportive working environment was a major factor providing a candidate/student with satisfaction. The following comment, from the structured interviews from a manager, is the type of recognition that an administrative professional seeks. Rebecca, Sarah's manager, felt that Sarah had taken on a lot more responsibility as a result of two factors; her own qualities and the impact of the diploma. *"...the sort of qualities that Sarah has as a PA and manager of her team. ...she has worked hard to move herself up the administration ladder."*

Recognition however, does not always come from having a qualification. One survey respondent noted the pride expressed by her CEO and Chairman in her skills and capabilities even though she did not hold a qualification. This would confirm findings from other recent research that it is recognition of skills, capabilities and achievements which has high value for those in administrative roles and is linked to their value of themselves and their roles (Lloyd, 2010, Truss et.al., 2009).

The recent findings in this study also support the research undertaken by Lloyd, that the increase in the 'value of role' is affected by recognition or a lack of recognition of achievement. The positive impact of the achievement of a qualification on the value of self

was the most striking feature in this current research. This is best demonstrated by a comment from the ‘former learners’ group survey:

“I feel my qualification shows that I am a capable Business Administrator. I really enjoyed the study and learning I could take from it. I feel a sense of pride having completed my Diploma.”

In summary the various environments that an administrative professional lives and works in has an effect on their value of self/value of the role. Where the working environment recognises the achievement of a qualification this has a particularly strong positive effect on the administrative professional. To help completion of a qualification being undertaken by an administrative professional the support of the independent workplace assessor and/or ITP/PTE tutor can make a significant difference. This support can most beneficially be in flexibility of timeframes for completion and in support (pastoral care) recognising the lack of control people have over their work, social and family environments.

Additionally recognition in the workplace by managers and co-workers is seen as being important by many of the participants. In particular, the value of the qualification being recognised on CVs and as proof of skill by the recruitment industry was looked for by many.

Effects

Barriers - negative attitudes

Predominantly (just over half) barriers came from within the individual. Barriers were based on their own fear of failing, the belief that a qualification wouldn't help them, the environment in which they lived or worked being unsupportive for a variety of reasons or quite simply that they did not want to undertake "study". These barriers often lead to a lack of value of self and the role.

A significant barrier within a workplace was shown by just fewer than half the responses where the attitudes of organisations (managers or human resource departments) were negative. Some comments from the structured interviews were “*hard to get recognition for the hard work*” (Anna); “*wanted some recognition for the work I do*” (Joanne).

It was noted in the data that there appears to be a perception within some organisations that a qualification is not required by administrative professionals. This lack of recognition of the value of a qualification in this field means that achieving a qualification is not often part of any professional development opportunities for administrative professionals. This lack of managerial/organisational support was also noted in the work by Lloyd, (2010) and Truss et.al. (2009).

Motivation – positive attitudes

The data on motivation to achieve a qualification showed that self motivation was the most important factor in this achievement. Support from others (tutor, workplace assessor, environment) also contributed to maintaining self motivation, leading to achievement. There were comments that tutor or assessor support through the whole process was valuable to maintaining self motivation to complete the qualification and fill any knowledge gaps. It is worthwhile noting that participants in this study felt that the workplace assessor or tutor

really needs to know business administration as it is currently practised, Anna from the structured interviews said “*a workplace assessor really needs to understand your work*”.

Positive attitudes to achieving a qualification were primarily based in building of self confidence and the value of lifelong learning. Joanne also from the structured interviews said “*I would recommend the diploma because it builds your self-esteem and gives you a huge amount of confidence.*”

Other positive attitudes noted were the value of distance and/or on-line learning or workplace assessment and the goal of AAPNZ Certification.

Confidence/knowing what I know and recommendations

Throughout this study gaining a qualification was a strong factor in building self confidence/value of self. A further point which came through in all the structured interviews was an understanding of ‘what they didn't know they knew’. The comment was made that “*I just did it*” so the reflection process as part of assessment while in the workplace created an understanding and appreciation of the knowledge they hold providing an increase in value of self. This reflection could also provide recognition of where further or deeper knowledge would be of value to the candidate/student and an opportunity to improve her processes.

This building of value of self/value of role is best demonstrated by the following from Joanne

“... it was ideal for me. I found out what experience I had and was able to apply it ... knowing that there was such a lot I already knew. I would recommend the diploma because it builds your self-esteem and gives you a huge amount of confidence.”

Of those in the structured interviews almost all recommended undertaking the NDBA L5 and two other comments were made about the value of a national qualification and that pathways of qualifications needed to be clearly understood. These comments are also shown in other research (Lloyd, 2010; Maguire, 1996; Truss et.al., 2009).

In summary barriers and negative attitudes most often come from within the individual and can lead to a lack of value of self and the role. Organisational attitudes to professional development for administrative professionals were another notable barrier. Both having the motivation to complete their qualification and the confidence gained though ‘knowing what I know’, contributed to the value of self and of the role. These positive attitudes led to the participants recommending undertaking the NDBA L5 to others, the value of lifelong learning. They also noted the value of a national qualification, were keen to recommend achieving it and the need for pathways for qualifications to be well understood.

Case Study

This case study outlines the experiences of an experienced administrative professional in undertaking a NDBA L5 in the workplace. It discusses the blended process used where specific knowledge gaps were identified and also the effects of the environment through being restructured had on the individual. This case study also identified directly some of the specific gaps she had and gaps she wishes to fill in the future.

Joanne – PA to an Operations Manager in a government health organisation

Joanne works as a Personal Assistant to the Operations Manager for a large government health organisation. She has worked as an administrative professional for over 30 years and has been in her current role for three of those. Joanne is co-ordinator for 10 administrators within her manager's reporting area and she says her work covers a wide variety of areas including:

Lots of meetings – minutes involved. Coordinating a big furniture inventory {projects} I do performance appraisals, performance management plans, I'm involved in staff investigations with the HR Manager All the usual day to day things that PA's do. I have done some designing of brochures. I helped steer a committee for an administrative professionals day that we had here last year for all our administrators. Getting more into project management now that I have done my study."

Joanne did a one year training course when she left school but since then has had only sporadic professional development. She said she had been looking for something which would demonstrate the skills and knowledge she had gained since her original training "I have to say I had been looking for this type of qualification that I could do within my workplace – that is ideal to me. It was great when I found it."

Joanne has always enjoyed learning she says "I wanted to have that Dip Bus Admin and also I do enjoy learning. It is something I always like to do. And the more you learn, the more confident you get and the more you can use what you learn." Joanne was highly motivated and worked on her own largely completing her initial NCBA L4 qualification through APC™ using evidence from her workplace.

Joanne was made redundant part way through her qualification process which put a halt on things for a year as she regrouped and gained another job. However she then decided that completing her NDBA L5 was really important to her so she re-started and finished the missing unit standards.

To complete her NDBA L5 there were gaps identified which were tasks that Joanne was not at that time doing in her current day to day work. The knowledge gap in project/event management was filled by Joanne enrolling with an ITP for one of their on-line courses. As an opportunity to manage a large event unexpectedly came up through her work Joanne asked for an extension to complete, to ensure the best use of her new learning. This opportunity provided on-the-job experience of an actual event plus the underpinning theory of the ITP course, greatly enhancing the value of this learning and also demonstrating the value of flexibility from the polytechnic.

This blending of formal learning and actual workplace application was a very successful way of filling this knowledge gap. Since then Joanne has gone on to lead another project team for a second event using her newly gained skills and confidence, and cementing her learning. However a knowledge gap she has since identified in human resources is being filled through on-the-job training and advice from her HR Department which is providing learning opportunities for Joanne in her day to day work with specific application to her current employment.

Joanne's current employer has supported her training and this year offered a further training option which she did on managing and supervising people through a seminar provider. This recent training she says will contribute to her completing her qualification in First Line Management. She says her employer is supportive *"I got that funded through my present employer here and that was great. As part of my professional development – my manager here has given me quite a bit of time at work over that time {NDBA L5} and since as well – she sees it as my professional development."*

Joanne feels very strongly that achieving a NDBA L5 is a good thing for administrative professionals to do in the workplace. She says:

"Absolutely – because it builds your own self esteem. I felt very supported ... I felt although there were gaps and I could work through them, that I had that support. And I felt that it was exactly the right thing to do – completely appropriate and just gave me a huge amount of confidence. ... being able to say, hey, this is what I've got. Where to next?"

Joanne plans to complete a National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) L4 and has already identified the areas where she needs up-skilling and is planning on undertaking further new learning through both formal and informal means.

LIMITATIONS

As the two researchers in this project have worked together there is a risk of this influencing the outcome of this project. Steps were taken to mitigate this bias by using the AAPNZ Group to provide contextual data from an external source, however the potential for bias is acknowledged.

Another limitation could be that those in the structured interviews were known by the researchers. This limitation was mitigated to some extent by using an independent interviewer.

It is also noted that it was planned in the original design of this project to interview managers of those who offered to be part of the structured interviews. This however did not eventuate with many having changed manager since the time of achieving their qualification and managers advising they were not available to participate due to workloads. It is acknowledged that the triangulation intended through this source of data is missing. However one new manager was happy to be interviewed and commented on the positive effect she observed and felt could be attributed to completing the NDBA L5.

The successful working relationship between an educational provider and a workplace assessor has almost certainly impacted positively on how students and candidates have perceived and described their training and assessment experience. While this is almost certainly of value it may not always be replicable.

Case Study

The following case study highlights primarily the positive effects of achievement and the environmental factors in undertaking her qualification. It also notes that previously achieved papers at certificate level had not led to a qualification. The interviewee was also unsure initially whether there was value in gaining recognition for skills she already holds, however it demonstrates that the achievement of the NDBA L5 was actually very significant for her.

Mary – Administration and Facilities Manager in a government agency

Mary works as Administration and Facilities Manager for a government agency. She has worked as an administrative professional since the 1980's and has been in her current role for the last five and a half years of those. Her original choice of work was as a chef but was made redundant and needed a job so she decided to use her typing skills in the administrative field. Mary says that her role involves:

... looking after IT, property leased and owned, records management, reception, general office procedures, looking after budgets, staff management and that kind of thing. I have a team of four who help me with that."

Mary indicated that she has done a range of papers at certificate level but that has been about it with regard to qualifications. Her initial concerns about undertaking the NDBA L5 were around whether there was any value in gaining a qualification for skills she already had.

However on completion and particularly in today's world she is extremely glad that she has formal recognition and proof of those skills.

She also noted that being in early pregnancy with morning sickness during this time made completing very difficult and almost caused her to withdraw. However she said she felt very supported by her assessors *"They were really understanding because they knew but I am so pleased that we did it. I suppose it is proving that I can do some stuff."* She completed her qualification through workplace assessment – APC™. In her previous role she was too busy to be able to undertake professional development but with her current employers she has taken advantage of all opportunities and now has a qualification and has also undertaken a range of other training opportunities pertinent to her role and her management requirements.

Mary's life circumstances changed after the birth of her baby and these changes have meant that she has had to continue to work full-time and to raise her daughter; this has enhanced for her how glad she is that she undertook her NDBA L5 when she did. She has been well supported by her employer in her professional development and that too has made a difference to her. Mary's motivation wavered during the time of doing her NDBA L5 due primarily to her pregnancy but the support she received helped her to stay focused and also the tangible result of a qualification which would be useful in the future was in her mind at all times.

Evidence for her assessment for the qualification was from a variety of sources: her and her ex-husband's own business, her full-time work, and also from her time with AAPNZ when she was Group President. Mary says *"I had a big box full of stuff. It was actually quite good as you appreciate things as well."* A sideline from this experience for Mary is that she now has two staff going through a similar process through Learning State Ltd, the Public Sector ITO and she says:

"... it's a similar process to an extent – so what has been really useful to me is having been through this process and knowing the evidence based system and I am also verifying stuff, I have been able to be a little bit more aware of what they have been looking for and in a couple of cases we have had to create some opportunities for that to happen so that's been quite useful. And I didn't have to do that but it's been really good."

Mary did not have any knowledge gaps herself which needed filling and the whole process for her was about deciding where to go next. She simultaneously completed the Certificate in First Line Management L4 and this cemented her interest in continuing on in management and also highlighted her interest in Health & Safety. With staff currently going through a somewhat similar process with Learning State she is very pleased that some knowledge gaps are being outlined and this helps with developing professional development programmes for them.

Mary said the best part of her NDBA L5 for her was:

"To be honest the graduation day. Because I was three months pregnant, I just felt really proud. For me I was always being told that I wasn't going to be good for anything and I actually achieved this ... And I guess it was quite fun in some cases getting some of the evidence together. And actually realizing how much I actually know. ... Because I actually know a lot and I didn't really

realise that. I had to think a lot about my past history and it made me think back to a lot of that ...”

Mary is very supportive of administrative professionals undertaking the NDBA L5 and she made the following comment:

“... for the fact that you get a qualification at the end of it. It does boost your confidence in what you are doing as well. But also it’s a qualification that I think people are looking for. It’s been interesting looking at job advertisements where they say minimum of NDBA would be handy. So that is why I’m encouraging my staff to do some formal learning in this area and they are going to need it (they are a lot younger than me) and they will need it going forward too.”

CONCLUSIONS

Many administrative professionals are able and willing to study, learn and gain relevant meaningful qualifications. As expected all members from the 'former learners' group held a NDBA L5, however some held a range of other qualifications as well. When WIT and Enderby considered how they could fill an identified knowledge gap for an administrative professional undertaking their NDBA Level 5 they found a way to do this. Knowledge gaps between the tasks undertaken in the workplace by administrative professionals and the requirements of the NDBA L5 have been identified, procedures undertaken to facilitate filling these knowledge gaps have been outlined in this report and the value of day-to-day work practices in providing evidence to achieve unit standards for administrative professionals has been discussed.

The number of AAPNZ members holding the NDBA L5 is high possibly due to the AAPNZ Certification process (www.aapnz.org.nz). AAPNZ has worked to ensure administrative professionals who are their members, are aware of the NDBA L5 qualification and how they can achieve it. When AAPNZ members achieve the NDBA L5 and other criteria, they are then able to apply for Certification as a benchmark of the skills and knowledge required for an administrative professional to be able to perform the work required.

There are several ways an administrative professional can study for their diploma in business administration. One participant in the case studies completed her whole diploma through an ITP's on-line programme which incorporates gathering of evidence and using knowledge gained in the workplace. A few used an ITP's modules/courses for theoretical learning to fill their knowledge gaps and the majority had used APCTM workplace assessment.

Many of those in this study who have undertaken their NDBA L5 have 20+ years of work experience in the administrative field and this would indicate that they already have much of the knowledge required, and that workplace assessment may be most appropriate for many of them. However it is also clear that many administrative professionals have knowledge gaps due to the limitations of the work they have undertaken e.g. they may not have had event or project management requirements at work; they may not have had any first line management exposure in the roles they have undertaken. These knowledge gaps may need to be filled to complete the NDBA L5 in the workplace.

Do administrative professionals actually know that they have 'knowledge gaps'? The data would indicate that most do not but for those who are assessed in the workplace these gaps are often there and become apparent during the assessment process as Joanne's case study mentioned. Both the independent workplace assessor and the ITP/PTEs being able to find and offer solutions, to support the administrative professional to fill those gaps, and complete their diploma would be of benefit. While delivery of this flexible process for achieving a qualification may be more complex for an ITP/PTE due to their internal administrative requirements, if they are prepared to work closely with independent workplace assessors who can be flexible, then the best possible outcome for candidates/students is achieved.

There is a recognised formal process for filling the knowledge gaps. Students who study fully through a polytechnic will generally not have knowledge gaps identified as such. They will choose courses/modules (which may have embedded unit standards) in the domains that are set down to gain the qualification selected. They may well choose areas where they have limited or no knowledge as a means of gaining new knowledge and developing their skills.

There are ITP/PTEs who offer their own (local) qualification which may not have embedded unit standards. However, if all tertiary providers have unit standards (or their equivalent post - the NZQA Targeted Review of Qualifications) embedded in their qualifications then there is a greater opportunity for cross crediting into national qualifications or between tertiary providers. This will enable candidates to straightforwardly complete their qualifications through whatever method suits them best and allows for portability of incomplete qualifications when a candidate/student moves geographical location.

All providers of qualifications know that circumstances/environments for candidates/students change during their time of study. This is shown very clearly through the conceptual model in Fig. 5 showing the impact of environment on an individual. Embedding unit standards into courses/modules will enable candidates/students to straight forwardly complete their qualifications through whatever methods suits them best. It allows for cross crediting, facilitating portability of an incomplete qualification when a candidate/student has to change their educational process or moves geographical location if their environments alter significantly.

The data gathered demonstrated that there is a perception of a very positive impact on candidates/students when independent workplace assessors and ITPs do work together. The value of being able to work together provides the ability to offer the best outcome for the candidate/student regardless of the method of achieving their qualification selected. However, unless workplace assessors and ITP/PTEs discuss what they do and how they assess in the workplace with a view to collaboratively working together, it will be hard to develop a working relationship to provide this positive outcome.

The value of a qualification being recognised in the workplace (managers, HR, co-workers) was important to administrative professionals. There appears to be a lack of recognition of the NDBA L5 as a valuable and relevant qualification for administrative professionals. This lack of recognition contributes to some of the perceived barriers in the workplace around professional development opportunities by those in this profession. However the most significant barrier was noted as being a lack of value of self and the role. The value of self and of the knowledge and skills held was demonstrated as being greatly enhanced through the achievement of a NDBA L5 through whatever method of assessment was selected. The self realisation of the skills and knowledge held to be able to do the job was critical to this process.

Administrative professionals are perhaps less likely to choose to undertake a whole qualification where the learning covers knowledge they already have. However they may be more interested to undertake courses/modules to fill an identified knowledge gap if it will enable them to complete a qualification they are undertaking through workplace assessment.

While it is understood that some tertiary providers have workplace assessment services themselves, there are independent workplace assessors whose candidates/students would benefit from being able to undertake single courses/modules to fill an identified knowledge gap allowing them to complete their qualification.

It is worth considering that an organisation which supports their administrative professionals with professional development opportunities may gain benefit from the outcomes as was demonstrated in Brenda's case study where her manager commented on her excellent work as she took on a wider range of tasks to support him. These outcomes come from more

confident administrative staff who value themselves and their role, feel valued and may be able to contribute in a more constructive and effective way.

Case Study

This case study is based on an individual who completed her NDBA L5 fully through on-line formal learning through a tertiary institution. The learning involved use of her day-to-day work and she indicates that she improved her own processes through reflection on them while undertaking her qualification. This highlighted the value of reflection on the work and process used at work and the skills that are required to do this. She found the process challenging but valuable especially the new learning around event management which was a knowledge gap for her and it was to become part of her role.

Sarah – School Administrator Manager in a tertiary institution

Sarah works as a School Administrator Manager in a tertiary institution. She has worked as an administrative professional since entering the workforce after being at home with children. She undertook some training at this same tertiary institution as an adult student to gain office skills, which she loved. She has been with her current employer for 19 years and has been in her current role for three years.

Sarah had always loved education as she says *“I have always loved education – never been good at it myself but always loved it. But the point of it is that just working in the office in an education environment is what really I liked about the whole thing.”* A new Manager is involving some adjustments to her role and the roles of her three staff members but this is proving to be exciting and challenging. Sarah’s role involves:

“... looking after the budgets (for my manager), all the data input for that, managing and supervising the team, helping them with their workload, dividing up the work, helping out the tutors with their administration work. I have a good team. In the future I might be looking at a few more strategic things such as projects which is really what I would like to get my teeth into.”

For professional development Sarah says she has previously done *“... some NZ Dip Bus papers – economics (I didn’t do accounting), communications and the organisation management paper...”* Sarah has completed her NDBA L5 on-line through her employer in the tertiary sector. She says one of the really important skills she gained from this qualification was in event management something she knew would become important to her in the near future.

Her employer has been very supportive of her professional development as there have been no fees and she has been able to have time off when required. Most recently she has *“... done some one-off day workshops., the managerial type stuff, an accounting workshop and I’m currently doing business computing papers to get a bit more skill in the computing line as I know I do need to up-skill in that area.”* She is finding her new skills very useful in her work and is very strongly supportive of the need for administrative professionals to keep on up-skilling, even if they have achieved their Diploma.

Sarah indicated that one of the things about achieving the NDBA L5 was

“... when I did the first paper I realized what I knew, you don’t realize what you know. ... I can study this all on-line; I don’t have to leave my desk to go to classes ... why wouldn’t I do it. ... at my level {with this employer} we need a minimum of a Level 5 applicable qualification.”

Sarah found her interactions with her on-line tutor really helped with her motivation to continue and complete the qualification which reinforced the value of close support between the tutor and/or assessor and the student/candidate.

She also found reflecting about her work situation and processes she had gone through was very valuable. She needed to do this to provide the information required to complete the qualification. Her day to day work was useful in the process and completing the module/course and also helped her to improve her own processes to ensure she had the required documentation. Sarah believed she would have found working with a workplace assessor very stressful so the on-line process through a polytechnic worked particularly well for her.

Sarah would strongly recommend administrative professionals undertaking the NDBA L5 as in her own words *“It’s not just that I’ve got a job in that area but that I have a piece of paper as well to say that I have done my learning, I can do this stuff.”*

REFERENCES

- Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc. (2012). *Certification*. AAPNZ certification - your professional development goal. Retrieved 2 February, 2012, from <http://www.aapnz.org.nz/content/certification>
- Billett, S. (2001). *Learning in the workplace: Strategies for effective practice*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Cavanagh, J. (2007). *Women, work and learning*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.
- Department of Women's Affairs. (2003). *Next steps to pay equity: submissions report*. Wellington: Dept. of Women's Affairs.
- Golding, J. (1986). Some problems in the concept of secretary. *International Studies of Management and Organisation*, XVI(1), 17.
- Lloyd, E. (2010). *Administrative professionals in New Zealand; their professional development opportunities and career pathways*, Master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Maguire, H. J. (1996, December). *Just a sec! A comparative study of the changing role of secretarial staff in Australia and New Zealand*. Paper presented at the Australia New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM) 1996, Woolongong, Australia
- Miles Matthew, B., & Huberman A. Michael (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Pringle, R. (1988). *Secretaries talk: sexuality, power & work*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Statistics New Zealand. (2011). *Clerical-Administrative workers – statistics*. Retrieved 11 July, 2011, from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/AboutAPlace/SnapShot.aspx?type=region&tab=Work&id=9999999>
- Truss, C., Rosewarne, A., Alfes, K., & Parr, R. (2009). *Secretarial work, skills and careers*. Kingston, UK: Kingston University and Global PA Network.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – ‘Former learners’ group survey

Demographic information

When administrative professionals are undertaking a L5 Diploma in Business Administration in the workplace there may be knowledge gaps identified. This survey aims to find if there are gaps between the knowledge requirements of workplace based assessment and the knowledge held by the administrative professional, and how those gaps may be or are being filled.

The information gathered in this survey will be used as part of a joint research project by Waiariki Institute of Technology and Enderby Associates Ltd, funded by Ako Aotearoa.

Full information about this research has been provided in the covering email which included the link to this on-line survey.

This initial section is to gather some basic demographic information from you to provide some context for the remainder of your answers.

**1. Please provide your gender, age range, and general geographical location (there should be three ticks in boxes here)*

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> over 40 yrs | <input type="checkbox"/> Wellington |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Auckland | <input type="checkbox"/> Christchurch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> under 41 yrs | <input type="checkbox"/> Rotorua | <input type="checkbox"/> Other geographical location |

Specify other geographical location

**2. What qualification(s), if any, do you hold and where did you achieve this?(e.g. L5 Dip Bus Admin - workplace assessment, NZDipBus - Massey, L5 Dip Bus Admin - on-line, etc.)*

**3. Was workplace assessment used as part of achieving your qualification?
If so was that workplace assessment provided through a learning institution or an independent workplace assessor? (If you answer "yes" to this question there should be at least two ticked boxes in total)*

- Yes
- No
- Via a formal learning institute
- Via an independent workplace assessor
- Other comments

Methods of learning

If you have achieved a Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration please complete this section, otherwise go to Question 9.

This section seeks information on the methods of learning that were suggested or recommended to you and you may have used, when undertaking your Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration

4. What methods of learning were suggested/recommended to you when you were working to achieve your Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration? (You may tick as many boxes as is appropriate)

- None
- External informal training
- On-line formal learning through a polytechnic/institute of technology
- Workplace based (e.g. on-the-job training, in-house training, etc)
- Face-to-face formal learning at a polytechnic/institute of technology/private training institute
- Distance formal learning
- Other

5. What methods of learning did you actually use when studying for your Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration? (You may tick as many boxes as is appropriate)

- None
- External informal training
- On-line formal learning through a polytechnic/institute of technology
- Workplace based (e.g. on-the-job training, in-house training, etc)
- Face-to-face formal learning at a polytechnic/institute of technology/private training institute
- Distance formal learning
- Other

If you have ticked other, please describe

6. If you undertook your Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration via an independent workplace assessor please answer Questions 6 and 7. Otherwise go to Question 9. Were there knowledge gaps identified between what was required for you to complete your qualification and the knowledge you actually had?

- Yes
- No

If you know what the gap was, can you please note this

7. If gaps were identified, how were these gaps filled? (You may tick as many boxes as is appropriate)

- External informal training
- On-line formal learning through a polytechnic/institute of technology
- Workplace based (e.g. on-the-job training, in-house training, etc)
- Face-to-face formal learning at a polytechnic/institute of technology/private training institute
- Distance formal learning
- Other (please specify)

8. Do you have any other comments to make regarding study for a Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration - through any method?

Further participation

If you have completed a Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration your further participation in this research is invited through taking part in structured interviews leading to case studies. Please note the researchers would also like to interview your Manager as part of this process.

Question 9 however, requires an answer. If you would like to participate further please also answer Question 10 which requests your contact details.

*9. Would you like to participate further by being involved in a structured interview?

- Yes No

10. If you answered "Yes" to the question above, please provide the following information so that we can contact you

Name	<input type="text"/>
Location	<input type="text"/>
Email Address	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>

Appendix B – Structured interview questions

Administrative Professionals - Filling the knowledge gap

Structured face-to-face interviews, questions for the administrative professional:

1. Can you briefly describe to me what led you to work in an administrative role?
2. Can you describe your current role in this organisation?
3. What type of professional development have you had in the past.
4. Is the professional development you currently receive useful in your role
5. How did you find out about the Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration programme?
6. Why did you choose to study for the Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration?
7. Can you describe how you were motivated to keep on track with your qualification?
8. What explanation were you given about the process involved with achieving your qualification?
 - a. Do you believe this provided an accurate picture of the process?
 - b. Can you tell me about your preparation for the process?
9. How useful was the day to day work you do:
 - a. When gathering evidence for assignments or workplace assessing
 - b. When you need to gain further skills and/or knowledge in an area outside your normal administration role
10. If you completed your qualification through a workplace assessor were there gaps in what was assessed in terms of what you think you need to know as part of your job?
 - a. Can you describe what those gaps were?
 - b. Have these gaps been filled in other ways?
 - c. How did you find this method of filling the gap(s)?
11. Is there anything that might have further assisted you in your formal learning portion (whether you actually had one or not) of your qualification process.
 - a. Length of courses
 - b. Enrolment frequency
 - c. Make-up of courses?
12. What were the best parts of your journey in gaining your Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration? Can you describe these?
13. What were the most difficult parts of your journey in gaining your Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration? Can you explain why these were difficult?
14. Would you recommend to others undertaking the Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration? Can you tell me why you would make this recommendation?

Appendix C – AAPNZ Members survey

Demographic information

When administrative professionals are undertaking a qualification (e.g. L5 Diploma in Business Administration) while working, there are different methods of achieving these qualifications. This survey aims to find out what qualifications administrative professionals hold. It also aims to find if there are gaps between the knowledge requirements of workplace based assessment and the knowledge held by the administrative professional, and how those gaps may be or are being filled.

The information gathered in this survey will be used as background context as part of a joint research project by Waiariki Institute of Technology and Enderby Associates Ltd, funded by Ako Aotearoa.

Full information about this research has been provided in the covering email which included the link to this on-line survey.

This first section is to gather some basic demographic information from you to provide some context for the remainder of your answers.

1. Please provide your: a) gender, b) age range, c) general geographical location (Please note: there should be one tick in each column plus your general location in the text box)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a) Male | <input type="checkbox"/> b) under 41 yrs | <input type="checkbox"/> c) North Island |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a) Female | <input type="checkbox"/> b) over 40 yrs | <input type="checkbox"/> c) South Island |

List your geographical location (e.g. Rotorua, Wellington, Christchurch, etc)

2. What qualification(s), if any, do you hold and how did you achieve this? (e.g. L5 Dip Bus Admin - workplace assessment; NZDipBus - Massey; L5 Dip Bus Admin - polytechnic on-line; etc.)

3. Was workplace assessment used as part of achieving your qualification? If so was that workplace assessment provided through a learning institution or an independent workplace assessor? (If you answer "yes" to this question there should be at least two ticked boxes in total)

- Yes
- Via a formal learning institute
- Via an independent workplace assessor
- No
- Other comments

Methods of learning

This section seeks information on what methods of learning were used by you when undertaking your qualification.

4. What methods of learning did you use when you were working to achieve your qualification (You may tick as many boxes as is appropriate)

- Own informal research
- External informal training (e.g. off-site training)
- Workplace based informal training (e.g. on-the-job training, in-house training, etc)
- On-line formal learning through a polytechnic/institute of technology/private training institute
- Face-to-face formal learning through a university, polytechnic, private training institute, etc.
- Distance formal learning through a university, polytechnic, private training institute, etc.
- None
- Other (please specify)

If you undertook your qualification via an independent workplace assessor please answers Questions 5 and 6. Otherwise click "Next" and go to Question 7.

5. Were there knowledge gaps identified between what was required for you to complete your qualification in the workplace and the knowledge you actually had?

- Yes No

If you know what the gap was, can you please note this

6. If a gap in your knowledge was identified, how was this gap filled? (You may tick as many boxes as is appropriate)

- Own informal research
- External informal training (e.g. off-site training)
- Workplace based informal training (e.g. on-the-job training, in-house training, etc)
- On-line formal learning through a polytechnic/institute of technology
- Face-to-face formal learning at a polytechnic/institute of technology/private training institute
- Distance formal learning through a polytechnic/institute of technology
- Other (please specify e.g. own informal research)

Appendix D – “Other” qualifications held

(As provided by the participants in the surveys)

Bachelor of Science in Commerce major in Business Administration	MBA
NZIM Cert. in Management L4	BE
Certificate in Records Management and Te Reo I and II	NZCS – Paramedical and Advanced Trade Cert Farm Business Mgt
Dip of Recreation & Sport,	Cert of Effective Communication
Cert in Adult Teaching	BA - Majoring in Criminology & Sociology
Diploma in Professional Writing and Editing	GradDip Business Studies (L7)
NZ Diploma in Business	NZ Diploma Management, Human Resources Diploma
NZ Cert in Supervisory Management	PG Dip in Business
BA	Diploma in Beauty Therapy
Dip Bus Stud	NC Business (FLM) L4
NC AET (L4)	NC Maori Studies
ND Business L5	Public Sector Core Skills
Post Grad Certificate in Management Studies	Graduate Diploma in Public relations
Dip Small Business Enterprises	Graduate Britannia Royal Naval College
NZCC(Supply) stage 3	National Cert. in Storekeeping and Warehousing
RNZN Supply & Secretariat Officers Administration certificate.	Bachelor of Arts in English
Certificate in Adult Teaching Level 5	Diploma in Adult Teaching Level 6
NZIM Human Resource Development	Business Diploma
Certificate in Treaty of Waitangi	B Com (Management)
PG Dip (Management)	Bachelor in Social Science
Bachelor of Arts	Post Grad Diploma in Teaching
BCom Management	BA
Certificate in Personnel Development	Equality and Diversity
Display Screen Equipment Assessor (DSE)	National Certificate in Computing Level 2
Bachelor of Information and Communication Technologies,	Graduate Certificate E-Commerce
Chartered Company Secretary	NZCE (Civil)
Tourism Technology Certificate	Bachelor of Visual Arts
National Certificate in Office Technology	Bachelors of Commerce
Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing	