



Evaluating a mentoring scheme for trainees in the Primary ITO

Full Report

Primary ITO

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction.....	4
Aims.....	4
Methods	4
Findings	5
1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 Project Objectives	6
1.2 Background	7
1.3 Participant Profiles	8
1.4 Methodology.....	8
1.4.1 Data Collection Methods	9
1.4.2 Data Analysis	9
2. Literature Review	10
Mentoring as a Learner Support Mechanism.....	10
Mentoring for Māori and Pacifica Trainees	11
Mentoring for English for Speakers of Other Languages.....	12
Literacy and Numeracy	12
Evaluation.....	13
3. A Conceptual Framework: A Multiple Network of Support.....	14
4. Findings	15
4.1 Identifying Support for the Trainee	16
4.1.1 Engaging Māori, Pacifica and ESOL Trainees	17
4.2 Mentor Roles & Responsibilities	18
4.3 Supporting the Mentors	19
4.4 Challenges.....	20
4.5 Programme Benefits	21
4.5.1 Success Stories.....	22
4.6 Programme Improvement Strategies & Sustainability.....	24
5. A Model for Trainee Mentoring.....	25
5.1 Volunteer Mentor Recruitment	27
5.2 Mentor Training.....	27
5.3 Mentor Refresher Training	28

5.4	Identify Trainee Needs	28
5.5	Trainee Support & Training.....	29
5.6	Mentor-Trainee Partnership Matching	30
5.7	Partnership Meetings.....	31
5.8	Mentoring Partnership Monitoring.....	31
5.9	Programme Evaluation.....	32
5.10	Recognition and Celebration	32
6.	Conclusion.....	33
7.	Recommendations	35
	References.....	37
APPENDIX A:	Data Collection Process Map	40
APPENDIX B:	Sample Mentor Attributes Profile	42

Executive Summary

Introduction

The advent of the New Zealand Apprenticeship programme in 2014 established an *opportunity for the Industry Training Organisation (ITO) sector in New Zealand to ensure that the quality of their mentoring is meeting the needs of the learners*. The purpose of the evaluation approach taken in this project was to determine the effectiveness of an informal voluntary mentoring programme provided for trainees in the Primary ITO and if any changes or improvements could be made.

Aims

1. To ascertain if mentoring support for trainees by local community volunteer mentors makes a difference to the trainees' learning experiences and outcomes;
2. To identify the impact of mentoring on successful trainee learning experiences and outcomes;
3. To develop an organisational strategic policy for the mentoring programme;
4. To develop a Mentoring Good Practice model as a formalised process-oriented system for mapping how mentoring support for trainees is provided within the Primary ITO.

Methods

The project employed a case study methodology over a five month period in the Central and lower North Island region of the Primary ITO (one of five regions) to evaluate the impact and outcomes of the mentoring programme. This region was selected based on its achievement of successful trainee outcomes including retention, completions and pathwaying to higher levels of study. The participants who were invited to participate in the project included:

1. Fifteen trainees who were either completing or had recently completed Level 3 or Level 4 agriculture qualifications and had been engaged in a mentoring partnership with a volunteer mentor;
2. Fifteen volunteer mentors;
3. Ten Training Advisers (TAs) working across the case study region;
4. The Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) for the case study region;
5. The National Literacy and Numeracy (L&N) Adviser for the Primary ITO.

A first step in the project was to conduct a situational analysis, as a pre-requisite for any decisions made by the Primary ITO to instigate changes or improvements for the

programme's future sustainability based on the project findings. The subsequent evaluation incorporated a review of programme documentation, phone interviews with the project participants, an online questionnaire as an alternative for participants who could not be interviewed, and, identification of case studies which evidenced mentoring impact and outcomes.

Findings

A conceptual framework was developed to articulate the multi-dimensional approach that is taken in the voluntary mentoring programme to support trainees. The framework also provides the foundation for the Mentoring Good Practice model which was developed as a culmination of the project findings.

An analysis of the baseline data, participant interviews and the online questionnaire produced a number of findings and provided a comprehensive account of the Primary ITO's voluntary mentoring programme. The key findings include i) establishment of formal processes to identify trainee needs; ii) development of mentor recruitment processes; iii) clarification of mentor roles and responsibilities; iv) development of mentor support mechanisms; v) identification of programme benefits and challenges; viii) programme improvement strategies and sustainability.

This report offers a number of recommendations for the Primary ITO and other tertiary education providers to consider in relation to providing good mentoring practices to support trainees' learning experiences and outcomes. The findings will inform future mentoring programme design for the Primary ITO and the wider tertiary education sector.

1. Introduction

This evaluation investigated the provision of mentoring support for trainees completing Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications in agriculture in the Primary ITO via a voluntary mentoring programme which the organisation implemented in March 2012. An alignment with the literature available on workplace mentoring for trainees and apprentices in the New Zealand ITO context is made in this study.

Currently there is no strategic policy for the voluntary mentoring programme. Since the programme's inception, the Central and lower North Island Region has been identified as successful in supporting trainees through their qualifications and pathwaying to higher levels

of study. Therefore a significant aspect of the evaluation aimed to investigate the characteristics of this region that established its success in these areas and whether these characteristics were transferable nationally across the Primary ITO context and the wider ITO sector. This would also contribute to the development of organisational policy and strategic alignment of the mentoring programme with other trainee support initiatives.

Dunphy et al. (2008) advise that evaluation of an organisation's operational efficiency to deliver mentoring programmes and monitor student outcomes should occur at six, twelve, eighteen and twenty-four months following implementation, and yearly thereafter. The Primary ITO voluntary mentoring programme has now been in operation for eighteen months, so this project is timely. It provides a first summative evaluation at the eighteen months checkpoint and offers recommendations for changes and improvements to achieve programme sustainability. In summary, the programme's components which were evaluated included the:

- programme framework;
- underpinning model of mentoring provision, for example, peer, expert-novice;
- programme resources;
- mentor recruitment and training processes;
- support mechanisms for mentors;
- trainee (mentee) training for engagement in the mentoring partnership;
- processes for identifying literacy and numeracy needs of trainees;
- systems for tracking trainee coursework and completion rates;
- mechanisms used to evaluate the impact and outcomes of mentoring;
- demonstrable connections between trainee learning outcomes and mentoring provision.

1.1 Project Objectives

The primary objective of this project was to provide an evaluation of the voluntary mentoring programme's impact on a trainee's learning experience and outcome, and identify programme issues and areas for improvement. Secondary objectives included:

- identifying exemplars of 'good mentoring practice';
- determining the sustainability of a voluntary mentoring programme which is dependent on local community volunteers;
- ascertaining what is involved in extending the mentoring programme initiative for Māori, Pasifika and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) trainees.

1.2 Background

In January 2012, the Agriculture ITO merged with three other ITOs to form the Primary ITO (Horticulture ITO, Equine ITO and Sports Turf ITO). The Primary ITO is the standards setting body for these sectors with a key role to work with the industry partners, professional groups and other stakeholders to determine training needs and oversee industry training, develop qualifications with industry participation and manage the quality of these qualifications and programmes.

There is a requirement by Government that the New Zealand ITO sector administer the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool (ALNAT) to all trainees entering training programmes, with the goal to improve trainees' literacy and numeracy skill levels. The voluntary mentoring programme is a key initiative implemented by the Primary ITO to provide literacy and numeracy support for trainees. As the National L&N Adviser explained during his interview, the importance of the mentoring programme is that it provides "*A grassroots-led, tangible form of pastoral care as well as a direct language and literacy and numeracy intervention, that is, a direct act of instruction and support.*" The Primary ITO's mentoring programme can be further described by citing Dunphy et al.'s (2008) definition of youth mentoring,

"Mentoring has the potential to bring about positive change for many young people. Through its use of volunteers, it harvests "social capital" by making the most of the wide variety of experience, training, skills and talents that exist amongst people who want to make a positive difference to their community" (p. 6).

The uniqueness of the mentoring programme in the Primary ITO is the involvement of volunteer mentors from the community. The main attribute sought in these mentors is empathy and the most important contribution is their time. The other voluntary aspect of the programme is the nature of trainee involvement; that is, their engagement in a mentoring partnership with a volunteer mentor is not a compulsory requirement of a trainee's course or qualification completion.

The purpose of the mentoring programme isn't solely focused on retention and completion rates although these are key outcomes for the Primary ITO to meet Government requirements. Rather, the programme is philosophically and fundamentally operating with the intention to provide a holistic mechanism for trainee achievement, positive learning experience and success. Retention and completion rates are important but are parallel with

equally important factors such as building trainees' confidence, improving literacy and numeracy skills and motivating them to succeed and set goals for their future.

1.3 Participant Profiles

The participants involved in this project included fifteen trainees across the case study region who were nearing qualification completion or had recently completed a Level 3 or Level 4 agriculture qualification; fifteen volunteer mentors; and the National L&N Adviser based at Head Office in Wellington, the Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) and eight Training Advisers (TAs).

The National L&N Adviser for Primary ITO oversees the management of the mentoring programme and was instrumental in the programme's initiation in 2012. He maintains ongoing communication with the TAs including regular visits to each regional centre. He also facilitates an introductory training workshop for new volunteer mentors. This incorporates a combination of material on literacy and numeracy, the mentoring programme structure, the role of the mentor and the expectations of mentors in their support of trainees. The LSC works closely with the National L&N Adviser and has a pivotal role in liaising with and coordinating the TAs as well as keeping in regular contact with the trainees.

The TAs play a central role in the trainees' progress through and completion of their qualifications and manage the mentoring partnerships between the trainees and the volunteer mentors. They also organise regular study nights and catch-up days for the trainees as additional sources of support to help them work through their assessments and complete coursework. The volunteer mentors were representative of a range of ages, gender and industry background such as retired farmers, rural women, people who had worked in the agricultural sector or had been in a tutoring role within the New Zealand education system. A number of these mentors also identified themselves as having a "*community attitude*" and "*a passion for agriculture*".

1.4 Methodology

This project employed case study methodology within which impact and outcome evaluation methods were applied over a five month period. An evidence-based mentoring model (Petersen, 2011) was used to guide the evaluation process to ascertain good practices that are positively influencing trainees' learning experiences and outcomes, and broaden the knowledge about mentoring approaches and methods that are effective for trainees.

The use of participatory methodologies in programme evaluations helps to ensure effective involvement of all stakeholders (FAO, 2013). All levels of the Primary ITO stakeholders in the mentoring programme were involved in the data collection phase to provide a complete perspective. This approach is further supported by Tellis (1997) in his description of case study research which he defines as a multi-perspective analysis, where the researcher considers the voices and perspectives of all relevant groups and the interactions between them.

1.4.1 Data Collection Methods

A mixed-method approach was used to collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection methods included:

- i) a comprehensive review of the mentoring literature in the tertiary education context;
- ii) collation of baseline data;
- iii) semi-structured telephone interviews;
- iv) an online questionnaire;
- v) trainee outcome statistics including retention, course and qualification completions, and pathwaying to higher levels of study.

The design and use of a data collection process map (*refer Appendix A*) provided a systematic process for conducting the data collection phase, including the focus of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, data collection methods and sources, and identification of who was responsible for applying these methods. As the process map illustrates, each component of the mentoring programme to be evaluated was itemised, against which a series of evaluation questions were devised. Those questions in turn helped to determine which data collection methods would be most appropriate.

1.4.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative process throughout the data collection phase of the project, which allowed the researcher to identify any data collection issues and modify the process as required. This iterative process also helped to identify and consequently fill any gaps in the original data collection methods decided upon. The methodologies of content analysis and thematic analysis were applied to enable constant comparison of the data, create codes and identify common themes resulting from the participant interviews and online questionnaire responses. A third methodology, context analysis, enabled the internal and external environment within which the mentoring programme operates to also be evaluated.

Thematic analysis categorises pieces of data into meaningful themes (Gibson, 2006). Within each main theme, contradictory, complementary and/or new insights were searched for, with appropriate quotes highlighted to qualify them. Development and refinement of the main themes occurred by repeated studying of the interview transcripts and online questionnaire responses, to consider possible meanings and how these connected with each other and linked to the evaluation objective. This approach is evidenced in the documentation of the project findings further on in this report.

2. Literature Review

Mentoring as a Learner Support Mechanism

The literature on voluntary mentoring programmes offers a wide selection of tools and resources for organisations planning to implement these types of schemes. However there appears to be minimal literature providing examples of programme evaluation in this context, both formative quality evaluation and evaluation of programme sustainability. Certainly there is a lack of evidence-based examples of voluntary mentoring programme evaluation in the NZ mentoring literature and more specifically in the NZ ITO sector. Support for the provision of a mentoring programme in the Primary ITO is underpinned by the ITO Literacy and Numeracy Good Practice Project Guide (2006) which cites evidence of mentoring making “A dramatically positive impact on trainee learning and qualification completion – we got a 90% pass rate – someone has taken an interest in their [the trainee] outcome and therefore they remained more motivated” (p. 2).

It is important to acknowledge the difficulties associated with establishing reliable evidence of mentoring as impacting on student learning in informal mentoring structures (programmes). As Tahau-Hodges (2010) points out, an informal mentoring structure makes it more difficult to demonstrate a positive link between mentoring and student achievement, the impact and outcomes relying mainly on anecdotal evidence. This project gathered both anecdotal and quantitative data as integral data sources for the programme evaluation. The anecdotal data contributes to addressing the question of ‘how’ the mentoring is impacting on the trainee’s learning experience and outcomes whilst the quantitative data provides a direct connection between mentoring support of a trainee and the trainee’s gains in course and qualification completion.

What qualities determine an effective mentor? This is an ongoing discussion in the mentoring literature with many and varied views about the core attributes required of this

role. Clutterbuck (2004), for example, emphasises mentor attributes as needing to encompass effective communication skills, empathy, problem-solving abilities, good listening skills and a desire to help others. This description translates well into the Primary ITO context, where the expectations of the mentors include empathy, patience, listening and asking questions, encouraging the trainee to find solutions, and having a genuine interest in helping young people achieve. The Primary ITO relies on the volunteer mentors to possess those qualities and skills to support the aim of a positive learning experience and outcome for the trainee - qualities and skills which are identified in the literature as desirable in a mentor. The advantage the Primary ITO has captured is that the volunteer mentors who sign up for the programme are also equipped with industry knowledge and experience, some also with extensive experience working in academic environments. In essence, the volunteer mentors are able to assume a multi-dimensional role in supporting the trainees.

Mentoring for Māori and Pasifika Trainees

In the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019, the Tertiary Education Commission (2014) stipulates a core focus for ITOs and the tertiary sector inclusively on strengthening culturally responsive education provision to ensure better engagement and greater success for Māori and Pasifika learners. One mechanism which will contribute to achieving this is mentoring support of those learners. Tahau-Hodges (2010) cites three New Zealand university examples which suggest that Māori learners who participate in mentoring programmes are more likely to complete their courses and qualifications than other Māori learners. The implication is that mentoring programmes for Māori students need to provide cultural support and be underpinned by kaupapa Māori-based and culturally relevant mentoring. Tahau-Hodges clarifies that the key point of difference between Māori-focused mentoring programmes and others is in the values and principles that underpin these programmes and the relationship framework which falls out of these; for example, the use of traditional and contemporary concepts of whanau such as aroha, manaakitanga, rangatiratanga, kotahitanga and kaitiātanga (p. 14).

Similarly, a project to develop an effective model of mentoring for Māori and Pasifika apprentices undertaken by Holland in collaboration with the Skills Organisation (Skills), (2008), advocated for mentoring support of these learners to occur in the community rather than in the workplace, as the apprentices were able to open up more about any workplace issues. The study also found that the Māori and Pasifika apprentices improved their ability to negotiate and advocate because of the mentors' knowledge of Māori and Pasifika world views, which heightened the apprentices' trust in their mentors. These examples - Holland,

2008, Tahau-Hodges, 2010 – have implications for the Primary ITO mentoring programme, in particular concerning the when, where and how mentoring meetings take place as well as the mentor’s knowledge of and intention to understand Māori and Pasifika trainees’ world views.

Mentoring for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Trainees

There is minimal literature in the New Zealand ITO context regarding mentoring as a support mechanism for trainees where English is not their first language. However this cohort of trainees is growing rapidly in the Primary ITO and in the ITO sector more broadly. In their project which trialled and evaluated two initiatives (a language diary and an orientation event) to support migrant dairy farm trainees, Heather and Thwaite (2011) found that migrant trainees have low completion rates in training for NZQA qualifications. This especially at Levels 3 and 4, with the main problems perceived by the trainees being the spoken English language, the terminology used in the farming industry and other aspects of New Zealand farming. The authors recommend identifying appropriate and committed industry staff to ‘come in behind’ the training to provide additional support and suggest that building in mechanisms for ongoing support and encouragement of migrant trainees would make assimilation into the industry and working in the New Zealand context more likely. As they say, “Planning how to effectively work around workplace and communication challenges would help connect with the new migrants who most need additional support” (p. 4).

Literacy and Numeracy

Basic skills in literacy, language and numeracy (LL&N) are essential to participate fully in the modern world and they are a priority across the New Zealand education system (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014). An improvement in literacy and numeracy skills helps not only those seeking employment, but also those already in the workforce. These skills help people to gain further qualifications and improve their career prospects which can lead to more productive, better paid and sustainable employment (TEC, 2014). Kell et al.’s (2009) study of in-house provision of LL&N support identifies how a number of New Zealand organisations are realising the need for the LL&N capabilities of trainees to be widely and actively supported, and identify mentoring as a key mechanism to achieve that. In the Primary ITO, everybody is seen as being on a journey to improving their literacy and numeracy skills (Primary ITO promotional material, n.d.).

The ITO Literacy and Numeracy Good Practice Guide (2006) states, “Mentor support of trainees in literacy and numeracy should be given where the mentor feels confident and able

and has appropriate professional development and other organisational support” (p. 4). The guide also suggests that responsibility for deliberate and specific teaching of literacy and numeracy is likely to need “additional allocated time, expressed mentor interest and further professional development” (p. 9). Evaluation of mentoring programmes is a key focus in the Good Practice Guide as it advocates that ITOs and workplaces need to “monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring to increase learning and understanding of good mentoring practice” (p. 11). These assertions are reflective of the core principles and practices of mentoring in general and therefore applicable in this project context.

Evaluation

Wilce, Weissman, Cooksey & Sunnarborg (2011), in their programme evaluation guide, define a programme as “A set of organised activities supported by a set of resources to achieve a specific and intended result” (p. 3). They also provide a definition of programme evaluation as “The systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the programme, improve programme effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programme development” (p. 3).

Reflective of Wilce et al.’s (2011) definitions, Dunphy et al. (2008) identify two key areas of mentoring programme performance which should be tracked; i) operational performance and ii) outcomes evaluation. Operational performance examines whether a programme’s systems, processes and procedures are optimised to provide the most effective mentoring service. Types of data which may be collected for evaluation in this category include duration of mentoring matches, number of volunteer mentors, and number and types of links with other providers. Outcome evaluation is more concerned with examining whether the programme goals are being achieved through providing the service, for example, the percentage of completions, retention rates, or the meeting of enrolment targets. The authors are definite about programme evaluation being a continual process throughout the lifetime of a mentoring programme.

Impact evaluation also has a role in programme evaluation and consequently this project as it assesses any changes that can be attributed to a particular intervention (Kreber & Brook, 2001). In the case of the Primary ITO’s mentoring programme, this evaluation method enabled assessment of the impact mentoring had on trainees’ learning experiences and outcomes, such as increase in self-confidence, motivation to complete the qualification and decisions to continue on to higher levels of study.

3. A Conceptual Framework: A Multiple Network of Support

The principle of taking a holistic approach to supporting the trainee is demonstrated in the Primary ITO's mentoring programme by the way the trainee is provided with mentoring support from multiple sources which work in partnership, including the volunteer mentors, Training Advisers, tutors, LSCs, the National L&N Adviser, the organisation broadly, and in some cases the trainees' employers. This network enables regular communication, support and the building of trusting relationships at many points throughout the trainee's progression through their qualification.

McManus and Russell (2007) assert that effective mentoring involves the mentee having multiple sources of support and that in fact these mentees "fare better than those who do not" (p. 294). In the Primary ITO programme, when the trainee agrees to receive mentoring support they are assigned a mentor, provided with opportunities to mix with and study alongside other trainees at catch-up meetings and study nights, and are given access to a trained tutor at these events. Trainees also have regular contact with and encouragement from the Training Advisers. Although this structure isn't solely reflective of the definition of distributed mentoring (McManus & Russell, 2007), it illustrates a structure of multiple sources of support for the trainee.

Figure 1 on the following page illustrates a conceptual framework which was developed for this project, reflective of the underpinning philosophy and structure of the Primary ITO's voluntary mentoring programme. This framework shows how the trainee is supported by a multiple-dimensional mentoring approach, reflective of McManus and Russell's (2007) assertion, and emphasises a holistic approach depicted by the construct of stakeholders and their connection to and involvement with the trainee, who resides at the centre of this support strategy. The dual direction arrows connecting the trainee with the various support people and mechanisms denotes how there is an expectation of the trainee to take up these support opportunities as much as the mentoring programme providing them. The larger organisation including managers and the National L&N Adviser are critical players in supporting the programme functions and effectiveness.

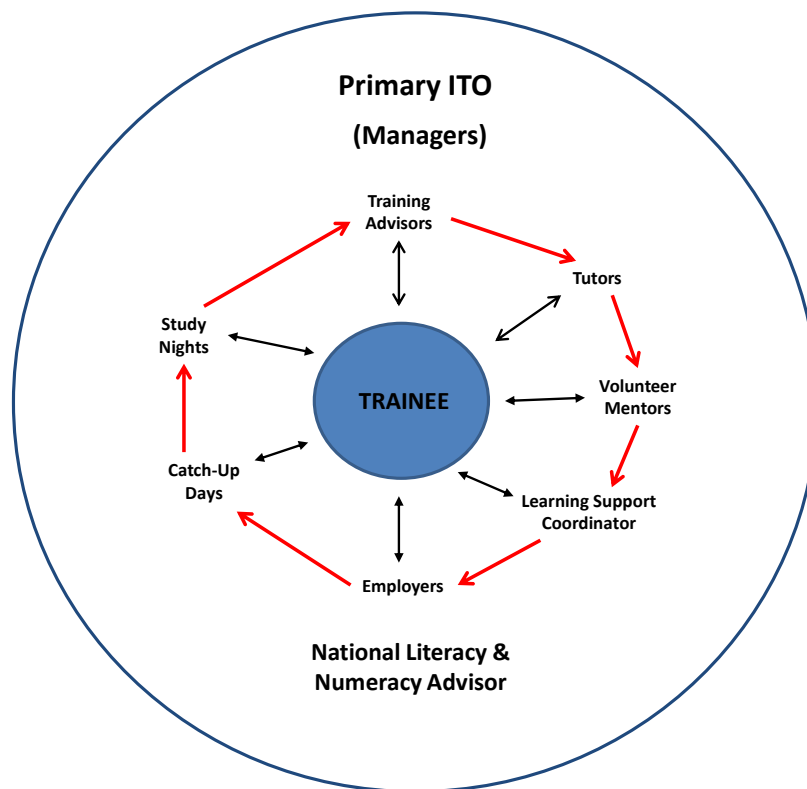


Figure 1 A Trainee’s Multiple Network of Support

The conceptual framework provides the foundation for the Mentoring Good Practice model suggested later in this report (*refer p. 28*). This model was developed in response to the evaluation findings and helps to inform decisions about the purpose of mentoring and where resourcing needs to be targeted in order to support the trainee and produce the desired and intended outcomes of high rates of retention, course completions, qualification achievement and pathwaying to higher levels of study.

4. Findings

The voluntary mentoring programme for trainees in the Primary ITO was established in March 2012, with the primary aim to support trainees in completion of their qualifications. As previously explained, a number of key people are involved in the programme with the intention of supporting trainees through their qualification, including volunteer mentors, tutors, TAs, LSCs and the National L&N Adviser. The Primary ITO has in place a number of systems to enhance the programme structure and support the mentoring activities.

The current mentoring model underpinning the programme is one of traditional-functionalist, where one to one mentoring partnerships are arranged between an experienced older mentor and a trainee, with the main aim being to assist the trainee in comprehending the course requirements and successfully completing their qualification. However, data gathered from the project participants identified that this is not necessarily the only model operating in the programme; for example, a group mentoring model is increasingly being applied with the ESOL trainees.

Although the programme was described by the project participants as relatively informal in nature and needing more standardised practices in place, this evaluation identified several rigorous programme processes and structural elements. A number of common themes resulted from the data analysis which provides a rich account of the current quality practices within the Primary ITO's mentoring programme and suggest areas where changes or improvements may build on those.

4.1 Identifying Support for the Trainee

The Primary ITO has several mechanisms to identify the type of support the trainee will benefit from in order to engage in and complete their qualification. Some of these mechanisms are inherent in the organisation's business as usual practices whilst others are integral to the voluntary mentoring programme.

All trainees enrolled in Levels 1 to 4 courses with the Primary ITO complete the ALNAT as a means to identify their level of competency in literacy and numeracy against the academic requirements of the certificate. Through the use of the ALNAT and asking trainees questions about their confidence with reading and writing, the literacy and numeracy (L&N) needs of trainees are identified early in their programme of study. Mentoring support is then targeted to assist with this.

Early in their study, trainees are invited and encouraged to attend study nights within their area and which are organised by the TAs. These six weekly events aim to provide trainees with a source of support as they work through their assessments and course requirements. The study nights are also an opportunity for the mentors to attend and work alongside the trainees they have been matched with.

Additional to the study nights, the TAs organise catch-up days (currently called "*mop up days*") to encourage and enable the trainees to complete any outstanding coursework and

assessments. Tutors are involved in these interventions and as with the study nights, the mentors are invited to attend and work with their trainees throughout the day as required. A comment made by one of the trainees during their interview indicated that this range of support interventions were *“really useful as I got a lot of support from the tutors and the mentor came and helped me a couple of nights also”*. Another trainee referred to the catch-up days as being *“like school”*, adding *“It’s good to study but I wouldn’t have been able to do it alone”*. The study nights and catch-up days enable the trainees to work with other trainees, as well as more opportunities to get assistance from the mentors, tutors and the TAs.

4.1.1 Engaging Māori, Pasifika and ESOL Trainees

It was evident from the feedback provided by the TAs, LSC and the National L&N Adviser that practices to enable Māori and Pasifika trainees to engage in the mentoring programme are relatively under-developed, however this is a current focus for building the programme’s services to trainees. Cultural sensitivity is touched on in the introductory workshop for new mentors but as the National L&N Adviser stated,

“This programme is a slightly mono-cultural project at this point. Our next goal is tailoring mentoring to specific trainee groups, with the aim to pilot programme activities and approaches that are whanau-based, Pasifika-based and customised for ESOL trainees. We have only had a couple of Māori mentors. I think we need a different mode of recruiting to encourage this more. We don’t have huge numbers of Māori and Pasifika trainees. If we had Māori mentors, we would match them up”.

Whilst two of the mentors emphasised the importance of the mentor having cultural awareness and knowledge of how people learn, the reality for most of the mentors interviewed was that they hadn’t mentored Māori or Pacific trainees at that point in their involvement in the programme. As one mentor explained, *“I haven’t had any contact or experience with this. I assume these trainees would need as much if not more mentoring support, going on what the statistics tell us. They need a big helping hand”*.

For the ESOL trainees, some initiatives are being trialled in the Primary ITO where a group mentoring model is being used, bringing trainees together and having the mentors work with them as a group. One of the TAs described this initiative as *“unique and has to date had a very successful outcome, with a number of the trainees completing their courses”*. Another TA re-emphasised the use of the ALNAT as a mechanism to *“make sure their English is good enough to do the qualification”*. They added that the mentors would often be *“helping these trainees with understanding English as much as anything else”*.

4.2 Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

Based on Petersen's (2011) suggestion that the development of a mentor attributes typology provides a more targeted tool for an organisation's mentor selection process (p. 309), Table 1.1 below illustrates a range of attributes. These were highlighted by the three participant groups as important for the volunteer mentor to possess in order to effectively influence the quality of the mentoring support they provided for the trainee. As the table shows, a mix of interpersonal qualities, skills and knowledge were identified.

Table 1.1 Mentor Attributes

Volunteer Mentors	Trainees	Key Stakeholders (TAs, LSC, National L&N Adviser)
Patience	Know the farming background	Empathy
The ability to create solutions	Explain things to the best of their ability	Patience
Have to be interested in helping others	Confident	Encourager and motivator
Passion for the industry and passion for training	Understanding	People willing to share their time and expertise
Outgoing; it's no use being shy	Someone who can relay words, e.g., complicated sentences, say it more simply	Enjoy working with young people and have a passion for the industry
Life experience	Supportive	Flexibility
Willingness to listen	Motivating	Non-judgemental
Spend a reasonable amount of time to do some research on the course material to ensure the advice is accurate	Clear expectations of the trainee	Accepting of people whose lifestyle is different from theirs
Listening	Encouraging	Discreet - confidentiality
Compassion	Someone who has a bit of knowledge about what the trainee is learning and what is involved	Really good communication skills

The volunteer mentors act as both coach and mentor for the trainees. Given the extensive supply of comparative definitions offered in the literature regarding these two roles, Starcevich (2009) differentiates a coach and a mentor as, "Mentors in either a formal mentoring programme or an informal relationship focus on the person, their career and support for individual growth and maturity, while the coach is job-focused and performance oriented" (p. 1). This description reflects well the dual role the volunteer mentors assume in

their relationship with trainees, as they bring interpersonal and relational qualities as well as assisting the trainee with comprehending and completing their course requirements.

During the interviews, the mentors reported how their role involved a myriad of skills and qualities, emphasising the interpersonal qualities needed such as empathy, patience and an interest in the trainee and their development, as well as industry skills and knowledge. The Primary ITO's expectation of the mentor role is made explicit during the one-day introductory workshop provided for all new mentors. It is emphasised that the core quality of the mentor is to have empathy and to encourage the trainee to set goals for their own learning, as well as provide support with the literacy and numeracy demands of the course.

4.3 Supporting the Mentors

Based on the feedback received from the mentors, the LSC and the TAs during their interviews, Table 1.2 below identifies a range of current and potential programme systems and structures which provide mentors with support in their role as well as a number of suggested strategies for future ongoing support.

Table 1.2 Mentor Support

Current Support Systems & Structures	Future Support Strategies
One day introductory training workshop	Refresher training workshops (<i>Mentor; TA</i>)
Contact and support from the TAs and tutors	Access to the course materials before starting the mentoring partnership with a trainee (<i>Mentor</i>)
Able to contact the TA when required	Create an online 'Mentor Bulletin Board' to keep mentors informed and updated with Primary ITO activities and events (<i>National L&N Adviser</i>)
Attend study nights and catch-up days – opportunity to network with other mentors	Regular training sessions in the Regional Centres (<i>TA</i>)
Receive regional newsletters	Continually build a mentor pool (<i>TA; LSC</i>)
Contact with the LSC and National L&N Adviser	All mentors meet once a year as an opportunity to share what has worked, how they handle issues (<i>Mentor</i>)
Office space provided in the Regional Centres	Attend a class or have a session with a tutor so that the mentor actually experiences what it is like for trainees in this context (<i>TA; Mentor</i>)
Verbal recognition and appreciation – thanked at Awards nights, feedback from TAs and the LSC	Recognition via a certificate (<i>National L&N Adviser</i>)
	Create an online community of practice to connect mentors (<i>TAs</i>)

In addition to the numerous suggestions of how the mentor can be supported within the programme, one of the TAs identified one of their responsibilities in this area is to “*Give the mentors a reason for being a mentor*”. This reflected comments that had been made by some of the other TAs, for example:

- using the mentors as much as possible in supporting trainees;
- training the volunteer mentors so that they understood the concept and practice of mentoring;
- encouraging the mentors to attend study nights and support the trainees in that context;
- making sure the mentors are informed of what is going on within the mentoring programme;
- openly acknowledging the mentors’ contributions.

As shown in Table 1.2, two of the TAs suggested creating an online community of practice where the mentors could interact with each other, and also provide a space for all members of the mentoring programme to communicate across the country. The online space was seen as a way to extend the level of support available for the mentors and supporting all stakeholders in the Primary ITO mentoring programme.

4.4 Challenges

A number of programme challenges were identified across the participant group. Five of the mentors identified geographical distance between the trainee and themselves as a key challenge, they felt there was real value in face to face meetings, however this was often not possible. This challenge was also highlighted by all of the TAs in terms of the trainees not being able to attend study nights.

Five TAs commented on the difficulty of pairing the mentors with trainees on a regular basis to encourage the mentors to remain active in the programme. Three mentors also expressed concern that they had only been paired up with a trainee once or twice even though they were “*keen to mentor trainees as often as possible*” To try and manage this, the TAs emphasised the need to communicate clear expectations to the mentors at the start of their involvement in the programme and that there may not be regular opportunities for mentoring a trainee as this is dependent on trainee needs.

A key focus of the trainees’ learning journey is completing a qualification and for some trainees, pathwaying on to higher levels of study. Two main challenges identified by four of

the trainees included having difficulty with the literacy and numeracy requirements of the course and maintaining motivation in order to continue and complete their qualification. These challenges were also identified by the LSC and the National L&N Adviser. As they commented, a key purpose of the mentoring programme is to support the trainee in managing the course requirements and encouraging them to complete.

4.5 Programme Benefits

Identifying and verifying the benefits of a mentoring programme establishes the value of mentoring as a support mechanism for people’s learning and development. The evaluation identified a number of benefits of the Primary ITO mentoring programme which highlight its positive impact on trainee development and learning outcomes. These key benefits are summarised in Table 1.3 and include examples of the feedback received from the participants and baseline data.

Table 1.3 Mentoring Programme Benefits

Trainee Benefits	Participant Feedback
Receive guidance and motivation	<i>“They can bounce ideas off the mentor and the mentor can help give them direction and set some goals.” (TA)</i>
Increased course and qualification completion	<i>“I had a lot of support from the mentor. It was good to have someone there who has a bit of knowledge about what you are learning and knows what’s involved.” (Trainee)</i>
Receive support and encouragement	<i>“The mentor can give them lots of encouragement. Sometimes the trainee just doesn’t know where to start.” (TA)</i>
Achievement of goals	<i>“The trainees are achieving the goal of completing a qualification. This has a huge impact; many trainees would normally give up.” (LSC)</i>
Increased confidence	<i>“Knowing there’s more support there. A massive confidence boost having someone to call on.” (TA)</i>
Assistance with literacy and numeracy demands of the programme	<i>“Someone is helping them when they are having difficulty with comprehension of questions and the assessments.” (L&N Adviser)</i>
Increased self esteem	<i>“Helps them with their time management; increases self-esteem, makes them feel good to achieve.” (Mentor)</i>
Improved job prospects	<i>“For many this is the first qualification they may have with better job prospects also.” (L&N Adviser)</i>
Sense of satisfaction	<i>“Many who may not have trained or dropped out have been able to complete which gives them a sense of satisfaction. Many don’t have a qualification to their name so it means a lot to them” TA)</i>

Mentor Benefits	Participant Feedback
Being part of the trainee's success	<i>"I enjoy seeing someone succeed and change their thinking, become goal-oriented when they weren't before."</i> (Mentor)
Involvement in something worthwhile	<i>"Doing something I enjoy and can dedicate myself to for someone for the time they need."</i>
Utilising skills	<i>"This has enabled many of them to give back to the industry and the young people we have in it."</i> (TA)
Networking and relationship-building	<i>"Meeting other people through the mentoring programme; networking."</i> (Mentor)
Organisational Benefits	Participant Feedback
Contributing to sector capability	<i>"Gives us a great name in the industry and provides back to the industry. It means we can supply people who are able to help their business."</i> (L&N Adviser)
Relationship-building across the sector	<i>"The programme has encouraged a closer relationship between the Training Advisers and the trainees."</i> (LSC)
Establishing core processes for supporting trainee learning	<i>"A combined impact – bringing purpose to using the ALNAT. If the Training Adviser identifies a problem with the trainee's L&N abilities, we have a solution – the mentoring programme."</i> (L&N Adviser)
Trainee success	<i>"Before we had the programme the Training Advisers worried constantly that the trainees wouldn't cope with just tutor support. There is now a lot more chance that they will do well because they get the extra support."</i> (LSC)

4.5.1 Success Stories

Trainee success evidenced in this project emphasise the positive influence of mentoring support and establish solid grounds for the Primary ITO to continue providing the mentoring programme. For example, seven of the trainees were paired with mentors because of their very low course completions. Five of those trainees suggested that they wouldn't have continued in the qualification if they hadn't received mentoring support. Table 1.4 on the following page summarises these results and highlights the significance of how mentoring can contribute extensively to enabling trainees to succeed in gaining a qualification and have a positive learning experience.

Table 1.4 Mentoring Impact on Trainee Success

Trainee	Level	Date of Mentor Connection	Units Completed Before Mentor	Units Completed After Mentor	Ethnicity
Trainee 1	4	2013	6	13	NZ European
Trainee 2	4	Oct 2012	5	11	NZ European
Trainee 3	4	Nov 2012	1	8	NZ European
Trainee 4	3	March 2013	0	Completed qualification	Māori
Trainee 5	4	Oct 2013	0	2	NZ European
Trainee 6	3	Oct 2013	0	3	NZ European
Trainee 7	3	Oct 2013	1	8	NZ European

As Table 1.4 depicts, each of the trainees made major increases in their course completion rates with one trainee completing their qualification. This person has since taken on a mentoring role for a Trades Academy student.

One of the support mechanisms identified as assisting trainees in their studies which has been described earlier in this report is the regular study nights organised by the TAs. As the LSC explained, these events had been organised in previous years but not on a regular basis, as without the mentors it was too much extra work for the TAs. Mentor involvement in the study nights has provided an additional source of trainee support, alleviated the workload for the TAs and trainee attendance has increased dramatically. The LSC explained how the increase in trainee attendance rates is due to the trainees knowing that there will be people there to support them, stating, *“I would say that we used to get about six to eight trainees attending and most would do a bit of work but not complete anything on the night. Now we have on average fifteen trainees on any one study night.”*

Inviting the mentors to attend the study nights has provided the trainees the opportunity to work in a group environment and get individual mentoring support if and as required. Table 1.5 provides a snapshot of two study night events in this case study region, illustrating the impact of the mentoring programme strategy.

Table 1.5 Study Night Results

Study Night	Attendees	Unit standards completed	Number of additional unit standards
One	6 mentors & 12 agriculture trainees	14 unit standard assessments	14
Two	6 mentors, 2 tutors & 12 agriculture trainees	8 unit standards assessments	10

4.6 Programme Improvement Strategies and Sustainability

In response to the interview questions which asked the mentors, TAs, LSC and the National L&N Adviser what they thought could improve the programme's effectiveness and support programme sustainability, several strategies were suggested. Keeping a record of each mentoring partnership was described by one of the TAs as an important documentation process which isn't currently in place. They viewed this as "*helping with longevity of the mentors remaining in the scheme*" and "*providing a tracking system so that if the trainee moves, they have a record of mentoring activity which informs the next Training Adviser.*" The idea of this documentation process was also seen as a way to make the mentoring programme '*business as usual*' with "*administrative support attached*".

The one-day training workshop for the volunteer mentors was identified by all of the mentors, TAs and the LSC as an important strategy for the programme's effectiveness. To increase its effectiveness, the LSC explained how tutors were now being invited to attend the workshops, providing an opportunity for the tutors to understand the mentoring programme, what a mentor has to offer a trainee and also help identify trainees needing mentoring support.

All of the mentors thought they would benefit from more mentoring professional development activities in addition to the one-day training workshop provided for them at the commencement of their involvement in the programme. They felt that refresher training workshops would be particularly useful as an ongoing support mechanism. This suggestion was also identified by five of the TAs and the LSC as a strategy to improve mentor support and contribute to the sustainability of the programme.

At the organisational level, one strategy suggested by the National L&N Adviser was to view the mentoring programme as "*an integral part of organisational KPIs*". This idea was viewed as a whole-organisation strategy to ensure adoption of responsibility for the programme's sustainability and was supported by the LSC who advocated that "*more promotion within the organisation is important so that everyone buys in to the programme.*"

Several of the TAs thought the programme had great merit and was definitely having a positive impact on the trainees' learning experiences and outcomes, making comments such as "*The programme is hugely beneficial for the trainees as it gets them into the mind-set of doing their qualifications*" and similarly, "*The mentors are a massive part of the programme's success as they are helping the trainees to get assessments done and encouraging them.*" However, they also mentioned the benefits they believed would be gained by all stakeholders if the mentoring programme was positioned within a more formal framework,

seeing this as a way to give the programme more internal and external credibility and contribute to its sustainability.

Petersen (2011) found in her investigation on mentoring as a support mechanism for the professional development of teachers that both formal and informal mentoring structures and processes can co-exist in a mentoring programme framework and provide a more cohesive, acceptable way for people to engage in and benefit from mentoring. The structure of the Primary ITO's mentoring programme reflects this dual framework approach. It has clear processes in place to establish how the mentoring programme is coordinated, plus informal elements such as the way in which mentors and mentees choose to conduct their mentoring meetings, and the meeting frequency and duration.

5. A Model for Trainee Mentoring

Good practice can be defined as the ability of a method or process to consistently show quality results, and a good practice cycle as an iterative, participatory process rather than a linear one (FAO, 2013). These definitions mean using approaches which respect all stakeholders, deliver results and consider sustainability and ongoing development of the method or process. As the FAO outline in their guide, a good practice approach uses step by step processes to tackle challenges, records at each stage what works and what doesn't, shares results and then repeats the successful formulae, which creates consistency, quality and repeatability.

That description accurately describes the Trainee Mentoring Model (TMM) which has been developed as a result of this evaluation project, illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page. At the time of this evaluation, a structured framework to steer and substantiate the voluntary mentoring programme had not been developed. The TMM confirms the current mentoring programme activities and processes and provides an integrated, cohesive approach for them. The model is underpinned by social learning theory which positions the trainee's learning experience and learning outcomes at the centre of the programme's philosophy, goals, purpose, and multi-dimensional mentoring relationships. It offers a formalised process-oriented blueprint for mapping how the Primary ITO provides mentoring support for trainees and substantiates these activities, clarifying the purpose, processes and practices of mentoring within the programme. The integrity of the TMM relies on identifying and acknowledging any areas within the programme which could be enhanced or introduced as new processes and practices.

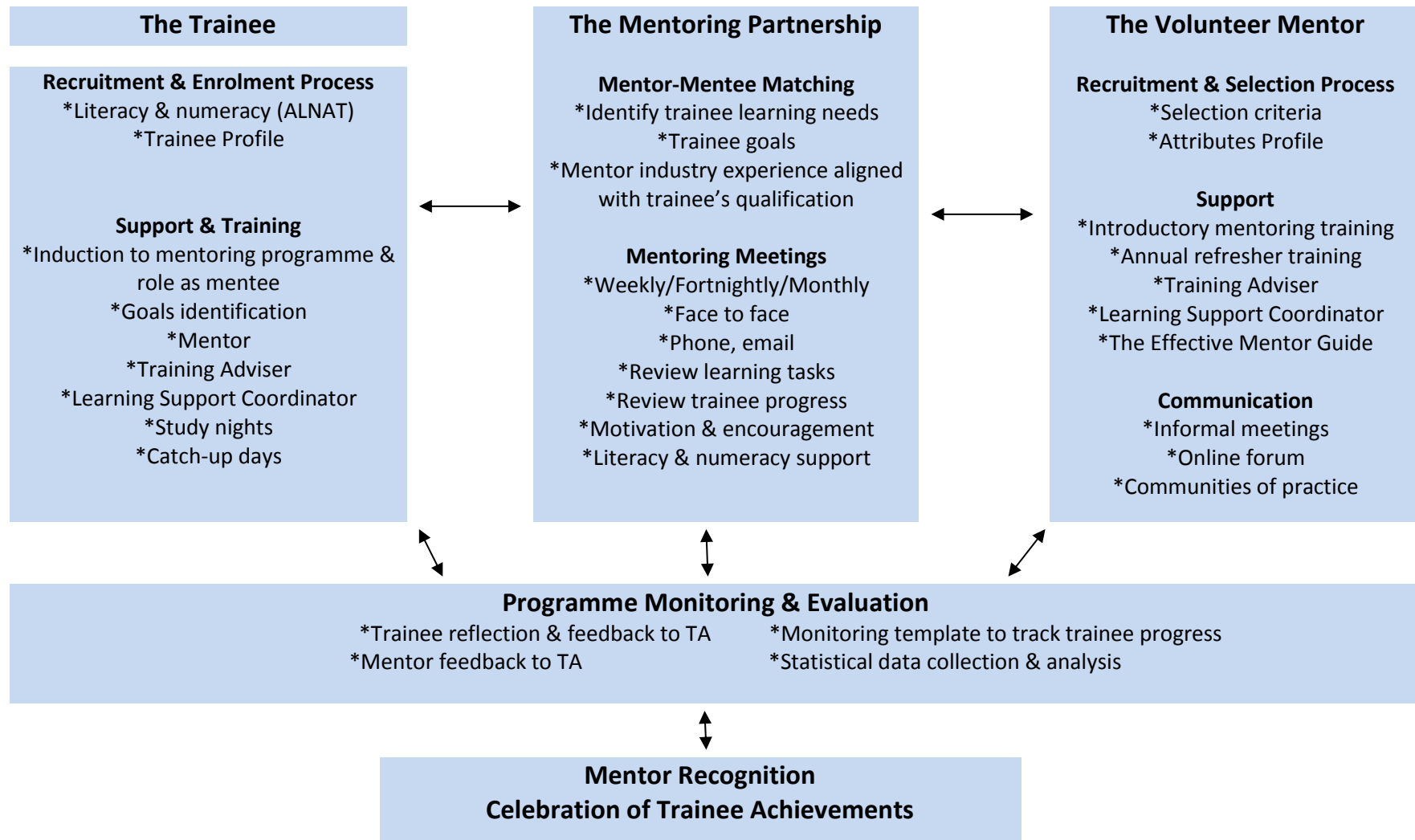


Figure 2 Trainee Mentoring Model (TMM) in the Primary ITO

The following sections provide a more detailed description of the model, expanding on the application of the model into practical contexts and providing guidelines for mentoring good practice. Feedback from the interviews with the three participant groups is interwoven in these descriptions to provide a qualitative evidence base for the inclusion of each component, and an indication of any recommendations for future development or adaptation of the programme.

5.1 Volunteer Mentor Recruitment

The TAs and the LSC play a key role in recruiting the volunteer mentors. Strategies which enable this include word of mouth, talking to people in the community about how they could contribute as a mentor, and talking at community events to encourage people to get involved. Promotional material has been developed by the Primary ITO which outlines the desired qualities of volunteer mentors. This material is advertised in newspapers and community bulletin boards, as well as on the Primary ITO website. Pamphlets describing the programme and inviting people to get involved as mentors are also distributed by the TAs. Continued marketing of the programme as a means to recruit mentors was highlighted by one of the TAs, although they added that lack of time to do so was an inhibitor, as they stated, *“I don’t have the time to market the programme as I am busy recruiting trainees. We have got a core group of mentors; we now need to do more marketing and build our mentor pool.”*

The National L&N Adviser offered an additional concept of the type of people who could contribute as mentors and grow the mentoring programme’s outreach to trainees. He described the growing need for mentors who could support trainees at the higher qualification levels such as the level 5 National Diploma in Agribusiness Management, which is *“a natural pathway for trainees who have completed the level 4 qualification”*.

5.2 Mentor Training

As previously explained in this report, a one day introductory workshop is facilitated for new volunteer mentors, covering a range of topics aimed at clarifying the mentoring programme structure and what the mentor can expect when they become involved in a mentoring partnership with trainees. Participants receive a comprehensive workbook which provides baseline information about the structure of the Primary ITO, focuses on literacy and numeracy and how the ALNAT works, explains the principles of adult learning, outlines the

role and responsibilities of a mentor and the skills of mentoring, and more recently, describes dyslexia and its implications for trainees' learning and qualification completion.

A number of the mentors commented on how useful they had found the one day workshop, emphasising a variety of reasons for this such as meeting other people interested in mentoring, helpful as a refresher, and an opportunity to discover how the mentoring programme works and why it is offered in the Primary ITO. As one mentor stated, "*I would have had no knowledge of the programme if I hadn't gone along. It made me more keen to be part of it.*" The inclusion of conducting refresher training workshops on annual basis would provide an additional source of mentor support and opportunity for continual reflection and up-skilling.

Three of the TAs explained how the training workshop "*ensures that the mentors have the necessary tools to do the mentoring and enabling them to use these tools effectively*". These tools include a Learning Styles inventory, a template for the mentors to identify the logistics of the 'first mentoring session' with a trainee, and guidelines on how to assist the trainee using effective questioning techniques. Recommendations for further tools which could be included in the training workbook are provided at the end of this report.

5.3 Mentor Refresher Training

Feedback received from the mentors and the TAs strongly indicated that there is a need for refresher training opportunities for the mentors, additional to the one day introductory workshop. This was obvious in a number of the TAs comments in response to asking them what other support they thought would be helpful for the mentors. One TA commented, "*We don't have ongoing PD in this area at this stage. It is in the pipeline to call them back in for further PD. This is important if we want to keep the mentors*". Building on this statement, one of the mentors suggested that, "*Mentors should all meet together at least once a year, to play back how they've got on, as an opportunity to share what has worked. We're often ad-libbing*". Incorporating refresher training and informal mechanisms for mentors to meet together as a group would positively build on the programme's effectiveness and its intended impact on trainee outcomes.

5.4 Identify Trainee Needs

All trainees who enrol in qualifications with the Primary ITO complete the ALNAT which helps to identify trainees' literacy and numeracy levels as measured against the steps on the New Zealand literacy and numeracy progressions. This information is useful for the Primary

ITO to create a trainee profile and determine whether and how the trainee would benefit from mentoring support. As one of the TAs explained, *“We identify trainees for the mentoring programme by looking at the units entered and also from the ALNAT assessments that they complete at the start of the qualification.”* Feedback from the trainees during the telephone interviews highlighted how much they needed assistance with literacy and numeracy, with comments such as *“They helped me with the writing; I find this hard. It is easier to discuss with someone else; I know what to write just not how to write it”* and *“It helps much more with the theory and assessments”*.

As well as identifying the literacy and numeracy levels of the trainees, other information about their learning requirements is important to ensure targeted mentoring support is provided as the trainee progresses through their qualification. For example, support with self-motivation and self-directed learning. As one trainee explained, *“In general, if I want to do something I will do it but I switch off easily. Having someone to help me has made it easier to get through the course”*, whilst two other trainees emphasised how their mentors had *“motivated and pushed me along to keep going.”* These comments from the trainees indicate how important it is for the Primary ITO to establish a trainee profile at the programme enrolment stage and identify whether there is a need for mentoring support and if so, what support is required.

5.5 Trainee Support and Training

When asked in the interview whether the trainees received mentoring training or induction before engaging in a mentoring partnership, the TAs and the LSC explained that no formal training is provided. However a number of other mentoring induction strategies are in place, recognising that the trainees need to understand the purpose and process of the mentoring programme and how they can benefit from having a mentor. These strategies include the TA having a discussion with the trainee about the benefits and the type of help a mentor can provide and providing trainees with a brochure which outlines the programme and its benefits. One of the TAs summarised this as,

“The trainees do not receive any formal mentoring training, however we discuss the mentoring programme with them prior to setting up a mentor; the mentor then makes the initial contact. From here we decide with the trainee and the mentor when they will meet, for how long and we are kept in the loop.”

Returning to the conceptual framework suggested earlier in this report, inclusion of the tutors and as much as possible the trainees’ employers were identified as additional sources of

support for the trainees and for the mentors. Part of the TA's role is to ensure that the tutors are aware of which trainees have been set up with mentors and increasingly, the tutors are involved in the study nights and catch up days. Regular contact with the trainee's employer was also identified as an important part of the mentoring programme. One of the trainees identified in their interview how useful these different avenues of support had been to enable them to complete their course, stating, "*The Training Adviser suggested I get a mentor. I was going to study nights as well and it was good to have a mentor there. I could ask questions if I was stuck rather than staying stuck at home.*"

Developing a more coordinated approach to determining a trainee's need for mentoring support by combining the current processes used by the TAs, LSC and the National L&N Adviser is recommended later in this report. As one TA stated, "*It happens anecdotally rather than systematically.*"

5.6 Mentor-Trainee Partnership Matching

The partnership matching of the trainee with a mentor is mainly managed by the TAs, with the LSC also playing a role. Aligning the trainee profile (developed at the start of the trainee's study) with a suitable mentor is one strategy which can influence a successful partnership match. For example, the trainee may require assistance with a specific course topic of which the mentor has industry experience.

Another mechanism for establishing the mentoring partnership is using the study nights, where the trainee can meet and be matched with a mentor. This requires a number of components to be in place such as; a detailed trainee profile which signals the area of need for mentoring support, a sustainable mentor pool, and quality relationships between the TA and the trainee and mentor.

Underpinning the process aspects of trainee-mentor matching is the importance of having mentors who have been recruited because of their interpersonal qualities such as empathy, a desire to help young people achieve and a passion for the industry. These mentor attributes enable the TAs to coordinate the partnership matching with a reduced chance of the partnership not working out.

Managing unsuccessful partnership matches can also be a reality for the TAs and is therefore an additional fundamental role that needs to be undertaken by the TAs and the LSC. As one of the TAs explained, "*If the mentor or the trainee feels that the partnership isn't*

working for them, we can organise a new partnership to take place. The trainees know they can change mentors if the chemistry is not there and this is the same for the mentors.”

5.7 Partnership Meetings

The logistical aspects of the mentoring partnership are largely left to the trainee and mentor to decide what will work best. Formalising the expectation that meetings are weekly or fortnightly would provide a consistent structure and regular provision of mentoring support for the trainee. If it proves difficult for regular face to face meetings, they could also be conducted via telecommunication. The mentors are given a form at their introductory training workshop to use for organising the mentoring meetings with the trainee and identify what support the trainee needs. This form can be reviewed at each meeting, would encourage the trainee to complete set tasks, reflect on their learning goals, and work through their course assignments to discuss at the next meeting. The TA can ‘check in’ with the trainee and the mentor via a text or telephone call as the partnership progresses, providing a valuable source of formative evaluation.

It was apparent from the trainees’ feedback that they appreciated having a mentor who was flexible in when and how they met as well as understanding the demands of their employment. As two of the trainees commented, *“I can contact her at any time, right through the whole course, not just for one paper”* and *“I can text my mentor whenever I need to, she is pretty flexible and makes time.”*

5.8 Mentoring Partnership Monitoring

Although there is no formal process in place, it was apparent from the TAs’ feedback that they realised the benefit of maintaining regular contact with the mentors and trainees. They could check in on the partnership and gauge how it is working out for both parties, as well as identify a need for changing the mentor-trainee match if the partnership wasn’t successful. This is mainly achieved via a telephone call or text, however other mechanisms for monitoring the programme activities and outcomes could include the study nights and catch-up days where the TAs have direct contact with the trainees, the tutors and the mentors who attend.

Asking for feedback from the trainee and the mentor was a common monitoring strategy identified by the TAs, as well as receiving feedback from the trainees’ employers as often as possible. Three of the mentors identified the opportunity for feedback to and from the TAs as useful for gauging how the mentoring support they provided was helping the trainee. A

comment from one of those mentors indicated that although there is no formal structure in place to find out how the trainee is progressing and whether the support they are providing is helpful, they would like to know that. As they stated, *“I don’t know how it went but I would like to know how the trainee is getting on, for example a follow-up from the course coordinator via a short email telling me what the trainee is doing and achieving would be good.”* Developing a feedback loop between the mentor, trainee, employer and TA, and formalising this process, would create a clear system of communication and embed another mechanism for iterative evaluation of the programme.

5.9 Programme Evaluation

Strategies for evaluating the mentoring programme’s effectiveness and the outcomes of this were key questions posed to the mentors and the TAs. It was evident from their responses that much of the evaluation activity is informal in nature and predominantly gathers anecdotal data from the mentors and the trainees via discussion with them regarding the progress and value of the partnership. As one of the TAs described, *“This is done by having ongoing discussions with the trainees, mentors and the tutors. We also engage with the employers where appropriate to discuss how the trainee is doing; they generally know there is a need for a mentor and sometimes tell us this.”*

However, as highlighted in the findings section of this report (*refer pp 24-25*), quantitative data is also collected and collated to gauge the mentoring impact on trainee learning outcomes. A more systematic process to carry out quantitative and qualitative programme evaluation would provide a more robust approach to evidence the programme’s effectiveness and argue for its future sustainability.

5.10 Recognition and Celebration

Prior to 2013 the Primary ITO has held end-of-year awards nights to recognise and celebrate the achievements of trainees. These events celebrated trainees’ achievements as well as provided an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the mentors who had been involved in the trainees’ learning journey and *“let them know they are appreciated”*. Given the awards nights are no longer held, the Primary ITO is currently exploring ideas to acknowledge the mentors. These include awarding mentors with a certificate acknowledging their role and work as a mentor within the programme. As one TA stated several times during their interview, *“It is so important to always be thankful and show the mentors our appreciation.”* The Primary ITO is very clear that recognition of the mentors and ways to celebrate trainee accomplishments are an important component of the mentoring programme.

6. Conclusion

Evaluating the Primary ITO's voluntary mentoring programme has provided evidence of how mentoring is a valid mechanism for supporting trainees in achieving a qualification and thus expanding their employment options. It has also highlighted how the mentoring programme is the centre-piece of the Primary ITO's pastoral care of its trainees. It can be continually developed as a sustainable programme of support in order to contribute to intended and desired trainee outcomes including retention, course completion, achievement of qualifications and pathwaying to higher levels of study. The evaluation discovered a number of good practices in mentoring and trainee support in general throughout the case study region, whilst the development of a Mentoring Good Practice model suggested in this report will enable the Primary ITO to harness what is working well and build on that. The model offers an integrated 'whole' approach for the organisation to provide mentoring support for trainees throughout their learning. It is made up of several components which are not intended to be used in isolation as this would result in a splintering of the mentoring provision and limit the mentoring programme's effectiveness.

One of the questions asked by the National L&N Adviser was, "*Are the volunteers actually 'mentors' or should we be considering an alternative title?*" The answer to this question is twofold. Firstly, the mentoring literature offers a plethora of definitions of mentoring and who the 'mentor' is. However the essence of these definitions have a focus on relationship building, empowering the mentee, listening, effective questioning and empathy; all qualities and functions which the Primary ITO have determined as desirable and sought after in the volunteer mentors they recruit. Secondly, the Primary ITO's mentoring programme has a clear purpose statement in place which clarifies how and why mentoring support for the trainees occurs. And they are recruiting people as volunteer mentors who possess the desired qualities and skills that align with their definition and purpose of the mentoring programme.

Developing a conceptual framework and the Trainee Mentoring Model (TMM) for the Primary ITO's voluntary mentoring programme has created a formalised, concrete structure and process for mentoring as a trainee support mechanism, which can be adopted by other tertiary providers and contextualised for their specific requirements. This is already occurring with a collaboration between the Primary ITO and Downer, where Primary ITO are involved with the development and delivery of Downer's in-house mentoring programme. Formalising

the programme structure and processes will help to mitigate ad hoc practices and therefore provide a collectively consistent approach to supporting trainees. For example, this can reduce duplication of processes and documentation, create real time for the mentoring meetings, and formalise the monitoring and evaluation of the programme's impact on trainee learning outcomes. Additionally, the key stakeholders involved in the trainees' learning journey – the mentors, TAs, tutors, LSC, the National L&N Adviser, and the larger organisation inclusively - are working as a unified whole, establishing good practices across the organisation, learning from and sharing with each other and systematically monitoring and evaluating the programme interventions and outcomes, all for a common purpose and goal.

As previously illustrated in Table 1.4 (*refer p 23*), there are significant connections between the support provided through the mentoring programme and trainees' learning outcomes and experiences. Feedback from the trainees during their interviews highlighted how the trainees recognised the positive influence of the mentoring support on decisions they made about their academic journey.

By finding the language to define mentoring, identify desired mentor attributes, describe who the mentee is and explain the essential ingredients for a quality mentoring partnership, the risk of paternalistic mentoring (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007) can be minimised. This is not a seeking of new language for the Primary ITO's mentoring programme but rather a 'building on' and in some instances 're-articulating' what mentoring means and why it is provided as an integral support mechanism for the trainee's learning journey. This then enables effective mentor recruitment, provision of mentoring training which prepares the volunteer mentors for their support role and creates a common understanding of mentoring for trainee development and learning.

It was obvious from the interviews with all of the project participants that they have a vested interest in the mentoring programme positively influencing the trainee's learning journey, underpinned by a desire to see trainees succeed academically and in their personal development. Evidence that the mentoring programme is having a significant impact on the trainees is summarised well by a TA's comment, "*We are engaging trainees with reading and writing issues and giving them a sense of achievement. Many know it on the farm but have issues putting it on paper. They are more empowered and many more trainees are finishing their qualifications.*"

One intended outcome of this project is for the Primary ITO to roll out the TMM in a phased approach across the other four regions as a whole-of-organisation initiative and intended practice. Establishing a more formal process for identification of good mentoring practices in the Primary ITO's central and lower North Island region will be transferable to the greater Primary ITO sector and other ITO/tertiary education sectors. The evaluation has provided a catalyst for the Primary ITO's systematic and ongoing enquiry into maintaining and continuing to develop mentoring good practice in their voluntary mentoring programme.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from the evaluation of the Primary ITO's voluntary mentoring programme. This section offers suggestions for improvements in some of the programme dimensions as well as recommending the inclusion of other tools and strategies to build on the current programme structure and services to the trainee. Additionally, a better understanding and identification of mentoring practices which meet the needs of a diverse ethnic trainee population is needed as the trainee cohort in the Primary ITO continues to grow.

1. Create a Mentor Attributes Profile for recruiting volunteer mentors; not as a screening tool but rather to provide Primary ITO with a benchmark tool for qualifying their mentor recruitment process and assisting the Training Advisers with a guide for recruiting mentors from their communities (*refer Appendix B*).
2. Design a Trainee Profile template for the Training Advisers to use at the enrolment stage which provides a more systematic approach to identifying and establishing mentoring support that meets individual trainee needs.
3. Incorporate additional resources into the current introductory one-day training workshop for new mentors, such as resources on motivation, the mentee's role, the mentoring partnership cycle, and group mentoring skills.
4. Offer an annual refresher training workshop for mentors to provide the volunteers with an opportunity to connect with other mentors and share their mentoring experiences, including stories of what works, challenges and solutions.
5. Develop customised mentoring packages for specific trainee groups including Māori, English for Speakers of Other Languages and Pasifika.

6. Develop a range of mentoring resources to complement and build on current practices such as:

Mentee Profile

This template would be a tool for the mentor and trainee to use at the commencement of their mentoring partnership. It enables the trainee to understand their role as a mentee, identify how they will productively engage in the mentoring and what support they will need to do so and progress through their qualification.

Mentee Goal-setting Sheet

This form is useful for the trainee to identify and write down their goals and discuss these with their mentor at the commencement of the mentoring partnership. The form can be filled in by the trainee in conjunction with the mentor (prompting them by asking questions about what they want to achieve and why).

Questioning Techniques Template

The provision of a Question Bank resource in the mentor training workshop equips the mentors with a tool to use with the trainee during the term of the mentoring partnership

Formative Evaluation Forms

Evaluation forms could be incorporated into the mentoring programme for the different stakeholders to collect relevant data regarding the impact of mentoring on the trainee's learning experiences and outcomes.

The Effective Mentor Guide

A guide could be developed to provide new and existing mentors with a resource which describes the key components expected of the mentor's qualities, role and responsibilities in the primary ITO programme.

7. Integrate formative evaluation strategies into the mentoring scheme in order to provide a mechanism for all participating stakeholders (mentors, trainees, TAs, the National L&N Adviser, the LSC) to identify:
 - i) How the mentoring interventions are influencing and impacting on learning outcomes and experiences of the trainee;
 - ii) The success of the mentoring partnership, that is, how the mentor supported the trainee and how the trainee contributed to their self-motivation and learning.

A tool to support this could be the development of an evaluation monitoring template for the TAs to; track the progress of the trainee and the mentor's experience working with the trainee, monitor and evaluate the impact and outcomes of the mentoring support and provide a regular check-in and opportunity for ongoing contact.

8. Award active mentors with the NZQA unit standard 25451: 'Provide mentoring in an organisation', as a way of formally acknowledging the mentors' contributions.

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APPENDIX A: Data Collection Process Map

Evaluation Focus	Indicators/Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Methods & Sources	Who
Programme purpose & goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why programme was established What are the desired outcomes Expectation of future sustainability Stakeholder engagement Stakeholder interest and investment Outcomes achieved to date 	Meetings Interviews Baseline data analysis	National L&N Adviser LSC Programme docs
Programme structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline data – programme inception, time-frame Mentoring model/theory underpinning the programme Resourcing Recruitment and selection processes of mentors and mentees (trainees) Regional variations Training Mechanisms for mentoring provision/activities Systems for tracking programme/qualification completion Support mechanisms for mentors Existing programme evaluation strategies 	Baseline data analysis Observation Attendance at training workshop Interviews	National L&N Adviser LSC Training Advisers Programme docs
Participant characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background Demographics Role in the programme Reason for and level of engagement in the programme 	Interviews Baseline data analysis	Trainees Training Advisers National L&N Adviser LSC Programme docs
The Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection criteria Desired characteristics Experience & knowledge Past experience with mentoring Motivation to mentor 	Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual face to face Online questionnaire 	Mentors in each region National L&N Adviser LSC Training Advisers

Evaluation Focus	Indicators/Evaluation Questions	Data Methods & Sources	Who
The Mentee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process for recruitment of • Purpose and motivation to engage • Outcomes 	Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group meetings • Individual face to face 	Trainees Training Advisers National L&N Adviser LSC
Training Advisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role & responsibilities in the programme • Programme coordination role • Retention • Perspective of programme quality and application 	Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual face to face • Online questionnaire 	Training Advisers National L&N Adviser LSC
Programme impact, outcomes and effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the programme being measured for impact on the trainees' learning experiences? • How is the programme being measured for trainee outcomes, including retention, course and qualification completion? • How does Primary ITO know if the programme is effective, measured against the purpose and goals? 	Baseline data analysis Interviews	National L&N Adviser LSC Training Advisers Programme docs

APPENDIX B: Sample Mentor Attributes Profile

Skills	Knowledge	Interpersonal Qualities