

# TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR RESEARCH FINDINGS SUMMARY

## 1. Reason for Research

In response to a new Government Law passed in 2002, research was done by ETITO to look at how ETITO provides leadership in the Telecommunications Industry for their current and future skill needs.

## 2. Research Objectives

The research objectives were to:

- look at how well the national training in the Telecommunications Industry meets the current and future skill needs of the Industry
- find things that can be done to improve the national training

## 3. Research Method

Interviews were done with: employers, employees / trainees, training providers and broad stakeholders. Surveys were done with employees.

## 4. Information Gathered from the Research

Information gathered from the research is broadly summarised below in nine headings.

### 4.1. Recruitment

- a shortage of skilled staff means employers recruit internationally. This results in: a short term solution to skill development in NZ; difficult administration; retraining for a NZ context; an ageing workforce as recruits are older; and different work ethics and cultures
- word of mouth, 'poaching' and incentive schemes are used to attract skilled staff
- there is no systematic contact between schools and employers, other than for employers involved in the Gateway programme
- there are no clear plans on how to progress from school to work

### 4.2. Organisation of work

- productivity demands mean companies need to improve on future resource planning
- skill shortages mean employers find it difficult to meet Telecom's standards and turnaround times
- employers who work in partnerships with other similar companies overcome the negative impact of a contract market place and they report less staff turnover, more informal training and greater job satisfaction

### 4.3. Development and management of staff

- most training is done on the job by a mentor
- vendor training leads to deskilling of employees as they get certificated on specific products only. This stops career progression as there is no link to national training
- there is a lack of formal ways for managing staff's performance and career progression within the industry or into related occupations
- many employees are paid according to their work experience and/or productivity

### 4.4. Trainees and provider companies

- ESITO has more trainees than ETITO
- between 1998 and 2004 ETITO conducted 'recognition of prior learning' for a large number of employers DJC is the only deliverer of the National qualification in Telecommunications level 2 and 3 off-job unit standards and are known for their flexible delivery options

- no provider in NZ delivers the radio strand at level 3

#### 4.5. Quality assurance

- there is a perception that ETITO's quality assurance systems do not lead to a robust, high status national training system
- national certification and provider qualifications do not guarantee skilled people

#### 4.6. Barriers to learning

- national qualifications take too long to get certified
- training is assessment focused as opposed to learning focused
- tutors and qualifications do not keep up to date with technology and what happens at work
- on and off- job training doesn't link due to timing of tasks/training and access to training locations
- some Polytechnics have attempted training for this industry but did not get sufficient uptake
- some feel the theory covered is more suited to Electrical apprentices than Telecommunication trainees who need more emphasis on convergent and overlapping technologies
- national training does not include enterprise-specific needs
- national training does not allow for specialisation as it does not include the depth and breadth of skills and knowledge needed across a variety of Telecommunications industries and related industries
- some companies do not know how to provide for effective workplace learning

#### 4.7. Cost of training

- as training subsidies do not cover training costs and employee wages while training, employers only send trainees on training when they are forced to by skill requirements of a contract
- the government should be investing more in training so that there are experienced staff to provide a good telecommunications infrastructure for current and future technology needs in New Zealand
- if trainees pay more towards training, they will be encouraged to complete qualifications

#### 4.8. Retention of staff

- turnover varies from 1% to 30% per annum
- reasons for turnover include: restructuring, lack of job security, stress, low wages, long hours and low perceived value by the end user of the work completed

#### 4.9. Leadership

- ETITO should design and manage training; and promote the industry
- it is not clear what ETITO is responsible for and how it's training links to career pathways
- ETITO's leadership role would benefit from a review of the services it offers
- the difference between ETITO and TESSO is not clear
- there is a difference between how ESITO and ETITO get funding, design training and share information with the industry on training opportunities

## 5. Recommendations to Improve the Quality and Relevance of Training for Current and Future Skill Needs

These are summarised below.

### 5.1. Improved recruitment

Improve recruitment to consider:

- changing the way this occupation is promoted so that people understand that it is a dynamic and challenging industry to work in both locally and internationally
- providing a clear plan that shows what school subjects relate to the industry
- reviewing relationships between employers, schools and providers
- providing support to employers on how to plan for recruitment and how to recruit appropriate people
- having national training that employers can rely on
- having a clear training and career plan for the industry

### 5.2. A high status training model

A training model that considers:

- reviewing qualifications to ensure they include the skills people need to be employed in the industry and in related occupations
- ensuring ETITO talks to key people to find out what should be included in training
- keeping up to date with technology
- having effective ways of including enterprise-specific skill needs
- including breadth and depth of skills and knowledge
- ensuring effective teaching, learning and assessment for off-job and on-job training
- linking off-job training into the workplace
- providing flexibility in terms of time and region with respect to training
- reviewing types of relationships that could exist between employers and providers
- reviewing the structure and ways of allocating training subsidies
- supporting employers on how to manage the performance, development and payment of their staff
- ensuring continuous upskilling of current employees
- reviewing the length of time it takes to get national qualifications
- reviewing ETITO's role in attracting more trainees
- helping end users understand the role and impact of training, skills and certification in the workplace

### 5.3. Improved quality

Improving the quality and processes of workforce development. This could include agreement on:

- what counts as quality
- how to develop it
- how to measure the characteristics

Areas to consider:

- engaging with key groups on training design
- reviewing workplace practices which support skill development
- ways to gather regular feedback from key groups
- systems to support employers.