

How workplace experiences while at school affect career pathways

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Key messages

This report describes and analyses how work activities undertaken by students while at school affect their post-school pathways into work and between work and study.

- ✧ Workplace engagement while at school provides many benefits, including the development of employability skills, confirmation of skills and interests, specific experiences in preferred jobs, which can confirm or deter entrance to that career, and the potential for gaining permanent employment at the same workplace, or through contacts made at work.
- ✧ The broader the range of workplace experiences, the more options appear to open up for young people.
- ✧ Students participating in school-based New Apprenticeships tend not to undertake other forms of workplace experience. These apprenticeships do, however, lead to positive post-school employment options in the areas with which they are associated.
- ✧ Part-time jobs while at school are important, less as career pathways than as earning opportunities and a means of supporting other study and career options.
- ✧ As part-time jobs often lead to post-school employment in the same industry, industries currently experiencing difficulties in attracting labour should consider making part-time jobs available for students where possible, and where legislative requirements allow.
- ✧ An adaptable model is suggested, which describes the links between school workplace experiences and post-school activities. However, it is important to highlight that workplace experiences are only one group of factors affecting young people's decisions about post-school options and subsequent careers. Workplace experiences are of more importance to some young people than to others.

Executive summary

This report describes and analyses how the work activities undertaken by students while at school affect their post-school pathways into and between work and study. Increasingly, students are involved with workplaces while still at school. The three major ways in which this is happening (in order of extent of engagement) are through work experience, paid part-time work, and VET in Schools programs, which generally include structured work placements (Smith & Green 2001). A special form of part-time work, which also involves gaining vocational education and training (VET) qualifications is a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship (collectively known as school-based New Apprenticeships).

The research questions for the project were as follows:

- ✧ To what extent does involvement with workplaces (including multiple involvement) while at school affect school leavers' subsequent pathways, and in what ways?
- ✧ How can multiple pathways be described and conceptualised?
- ✧ What are the students' views about the worth to them of their different involvements with workplaces? (This question will include exploration of the role of such involvement in the decision about when to leave school.)

A fourth question about equity groups could not be answered due to the lack of respondents from recognised equity groups.

The main research method was a comprehensive survey sent to respondents from two previous projects (Smith & Green 2001; Smith & Wilson 2002) who had indicated their willingness to undertake follow-up research. The first project yielded a database of 424 potential respondents from 13 schools in two states, and the second yielded a database of 375 potential respondents who were school-based apprentices and trainees in three states. Seventy from the first database responded to the survey, as did 56 of the latter (16% response rate overall). The school-based apprentices and trainees were a representative sample of the total numbers of young people in these jobs in the states selected. The vast majority of the respondents had left school in 2001 or 2002, and almost all had completed their schooling to the end of Year 12 (and in a few cases Year 13).

The survey data were supplemented by telephone interviews with 18 respondents. Data from telephone interviews were consistent with the findings from the survey and added descriptive richness to the findings.

The following is a summary of the main findings of the survey.

- ✧ Work experience performed a useful function in opening respondents' eyes to career possibilities.
- ✧ Those who had undertaken school-based New Apprenticeships had a smoother transition into secure and substantial post-school activity than those who had not, but this activity was not likely to be a full-time university course.
- ✧ Even after leaving school, the jobs of both groups were concentrated in the industries of retail and fast food/hospitality, the areas in which school students typically worked.
- ✧ Part-time jobs acquired by students while at school remained important after leaving school, occasionally as the only activity, but more commonly as a supplement to full-time study or another full-time job.

- ✧ A school-based New Apprenticeship could confirm their decision for those who had decided upon their careers; it could also deter them from that career.
- ✧ School-based New Apprenticeships were likely to provide a pathway into apprenticeships or traineeships in a similar industry area, but the long-term career plans of those who had undertaken them were less likely to be within that industry area.
- ✧ Work experience and school-based New Apprenticeships both had some influence on respondents' study intentions. For nearly one-quarter of those participating in school-based New Apprenticeships their participation contributed to a decision to stay at school longer. Work experience was likely, for nearly a quarter of school-based apprentices and trainees and an eighth of the respondents who had not done a school-based New Apprenticeship, to lead to a decision to undertake further study after school. For the latter group, engagement with workplaces while at school, and especially part-time jobs, generally had only a limited effect on study intentions.
- ✧ A high proportion of the respondents held VET qualifications: two-fifths had completed a certificate II and one-quarter a certificate III. About one-eighth were currently enrolled in either certificate III or certificate IV qualifications.

The qualitative data provided the following additional insights.

- ✧ The school-based New Apprenticeship pathways overall showed that this group of respondents were more aware and confident in their decisions, as they knew more about the industry areas of interest and were provided with support and advice through the process.
- ✧ Many respondents from both groups mentioned the potential of more than one pathway and/or involvement with more than one industry in their future careers, with flexibility possible.
- ✧ Those going directly to university, in most cases from the group not involved in school-based New Apprenticeships, mentioned that, in a number of instances, the university course(s) was not what they had expected. Some respondents had changed direction, and others planned to change pathways in the future.
- ✧ Descriptions of individual pathways demonstrated the uniqueness and variety of each respondent's circumstances, opportunities and perceptions.
- ✧ Work experience was of value to respondents, particularly in the group not participating in school-based New Apprenticeships, in both selecting and rejecting career options, despite the fact that work experience was also criticised by many respondents for its brevity and the nature of the experiences.
- ✧ Although perhaps obvious, the qualitative data showed that the more time respondents spent in workplaces during school, the more influence this had on their subsequent choices, particularly on first leaving school.
- ✧ While questions were not specifically asked about resources and opportunities, a number of respondents reported how availability or lack of resources had affected their choices—either directly or indirectly.
- ✧ Part-time jobs were important less as career pathways than as learning opportunities and a means of supporting other study or career opportunities. They also provided significant opportunities for respondents to learn about some of the realities of work.

An adaptable model is suggested in the report. This model can describe links between workplace experiences undertaken by students while at school and post-school activities, but it needs to be stressed that these experiences comprise only one influence on young people's pathways and plans after school.

A number of implications for policy and practice arise from the project.

- ✧ Experiencing the workplace while at school can provide students with a great deal of information about their own abilities and interests prior to their making pathway decisions and career choices. Experiencing the workplace also enables students to make networks of contacts and become aware of a range of opportunities.

- ✧ Workplace opportunities may also provide generic skills which enhance their employability. Employability skills could be fostered, monitored and developed through career education or other school curriculum prior to and in conjunction with workplace experiences of all types.
- ✧ Policy-makers and schools need to ensure that undertaking a school-based apprentices and trainees does not narrow students' options. This can be avoided by ensuring that school-based apprentices and trainees also undertake work experience, and providing encouragement and support to those who wish to continue to aim for university entrance.
- ✧ The learning that many school students experience through part-time work while at school is very influential in terms of motivation and the knowledge to underpin choices of future pathways. Part-time jobs could therefore be formally considered by policy-makers as well as teachers and career advisers as part of a wider network of learning opportunities beyond the classroom.
- ✧ The industry areas school students are able to access through part-time work are limited, typically in many cases to retail and fast food/hospitality. Broader opportunities are only available through VET placements and work experiences. As part-time jobs often lead to post-school employment in the same workplace or industry, industries not currently offering part-time employment to school students might consider the advantages to be gained by creating work opportunities. Industries expecting labour shortages could benefit from this.
- ✧ Apprenticeships and traineeships offer low wages to people in the initial stages of the program and this could affect their ability to live independently, and/or complete the qualification. The findings suggest this did not necessarily deter many respondents, but may have been a problem for some.
- ✧ Many of the respondents continued in their part-time jobs after leaving school in a permanent or interim capacity, or primarily to fund further study. It is important therefore to conduct further research on the significance and effects of part-time student-working. A particular concern may be the disadvantages that may now be associated with the lack of a part-time employment record.
- ✧ There is a perception of a lack of current effective career advice. Comments about deficiencies related both to job information and to university course information.
- ✧ It is important to ensure that careers in the industries in which young people typically work, both during their school years and subsequently, are given equal prominence with other industry areas, in terms of advice and information offered to young people while at school.

Additional information relating to this research (appendices A–F) can be found on NCVET's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>.

Introduction

This project describes and analyses how school students' engagement with workplaces while they are at school affects their post-school pathways into and between work and study. Increasingly, school students are engaging with workplaces while still at school. The three major ways in which this is happening (in order of extent of engagement) are through work experience, paid part-time work, and VET in Schools programs, which generally include structured work placements (Smith & Green 2001).

There is some confusion about the terms 'work experience', 'VET in Schools', and 'vocational placements' (often known as structured workplace learning) (Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce 2003). All Australian secondary schools have work experience programs. These programs were initially introduced to give the school student a taste of the workplace before leaving school, generally in the context of sampling a career area of interest. Students may do one or sometimes more periods of work experience, usually of one or two weeks duration. They are designed less for skills development than for learning about workplaces and about a particular type of work. VET in Schools programs were introduced during the 1990s and provide training in a vocational area and normally lead to a competency-based vocational education and training (VET) qualification or statement of attainment (part-qualification), usually at Australian Qualifications Framework level I or II. The programs also count towards the senior secondary certificate. Students may be trained at school or may attend a technical and further education (TAFE) institute or another registered training organisation for their VET in Schools classes. Such programs often, but not always, include periods of vocational placement in workplaces, where students practise skills learned at school, or in some instances, develop new skills. Vocational placements may also occur as part of other programs, such as city placements for rural and remote students (Smith & Green 2001).

School-based New Apprenticeships cut across part-time work and VET in Schools programs as they involve paid part-time work and are sometimes part of formal VET in Schools curriculum leading to a senior school qualification and an Australian Qualifications Framework qualification. Many school students are also involved independently in part-time apprenticeships and traineeships, generally in the retail or fast food industries.

Types of workplace engagement while at school

The most recognised and researched type of workplace engagement is through VET in Schools programs. There have been considerable developments in VET in Schools (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training 2004). For example, in 2002, over 185 000 students were studying VET in Schools programs (Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 2003)—44% of senior secondary students. Fullarton (2001, p.x) considers that it is 'perhaps the most substantial change that has occurred in post-compulsory study over the past decade'. VET in Schools has been shown to have a variety of positive results for students undertaking such programs, including increased self-confidence, and is particularly beneficial for those students who are not academically strong (Teese, Davies & Ryan 1997). Crump (2004, p.59) argues that VET in Schools enables students to 'further career goals in a way that traditional schools could never assist or enable students'. Participation in VET in Schools is greater in government schools than in non-government, and for students of lower socioeconomic status, although as

Fullarton (2001) notes, the reasons for this have not yet been fully explored. Fullarton (2001) also notes that students who were more confident in their academic abilities tend not to undertake VET in Schools, and that it is more attractive to those who wanted their schooling to be relevant to their careers. Her data, however, are based on 1998 research, and attitudes may have shifted by now.

In the context of the current study it needs to be remembered that by no means all VET in Schools programs include workplace experiences; the study does not examine the effects of VET in Schools participation per se but only the effects of the workplace component of VET in Schools programs. Students were not asked in the current study about VET in Schools participation that did not involve workplace engagement.

While VET in Schools is the most researched form of workplace work experience, the most common form of engagement apart from work experience is part-time work. It is generally accepted that well over half of Australian school students of working age (Smith & Green 2001; Robinson 1999) work part-time, generally for an average of around nine to ten hours per week, although exact figures for both proportion of engagement and amount of work vary considerably, depending on whether only formal or more informal work is counted, and on other variables. The percentage of school students working has grown since the early 1990s from less than one-third (Robinson 1999), and part-time work may commence as early as 13 or 14 years of age. Young workers are thus very immature when they start their working careers (Smith & Comyn 2003). Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data (2004) show that over half of full-time students aged 20–24 (that is, at university and in VET) also work part-time. Part-time work for school and university students has several important effects on young people, including the ‘shading-in’ of work to their lives (Greenberger 1988), such that the transition from full-time study to work is no longer as abrupt as it might have been in the past. However, young people often perceive their part-time jobs as being quite separate from their ‘real’ post-school working lives, although they may have considerable responsibility in their part-time jobs, sometimes more than in their initial full-time jobs (Smith 2003).

School-based New Apprenticeships are a special type of part-time work, often but not always linked to VET in Schools programs. The first school-based New Apprentices commenced in 1997, with numbers growing rapidly to reach 5957 in 2000, with 5755 then commencing in 2001 (Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 2002), 7639 in 2002 (Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 2003) and 12 290 in 2003 (NCVER 2004). Queensland has been the state where these programs have been most enthusiastically adopted, partly as a result of subsidies to participating schools (Smith & Wilson 2002), with Victoria in second place. More girls than boys undertake school-based New Apprenticeships and participation is heaviest in Year 11 of school (NCVER 2004). Reasons for participation vary with intended post-school destination; for example, university-bound young people may undertake them to enhance chances of good part-time jobs while at university (Smith & Wilson 2002). School-based New Apprenticeships have been shown to have beneficial learning outcomes compared with ordinary part-time jobs and VET in Schools (Smith & Green 2001; Smith & Wilson 2002). However, like VET in Schools, participation in school-based New Apprenticeships is sometimes difficult for young people unless school timetables are re-arranged around workplace engagement (Smith & Wilson 2002).

Work experience is comparatively little studied compared with VET in Schools (Green & Smith 2003), despite the near universality of work experience among Australian school students.

Post-school pathways

After leaving school, young people may have a range of initial destinations, which most commonly include full-time or part-time study at university or in VET courses, full-time or part-time work, including apprenticeships and traineeships, or combinations of these choices. A little under a third of school completers go on to university; in 2002 the percentage peaked at 32.5% falling to 27.6% in 2004 (ABS 2004, unpublished data). A primary aim of VET in Schools has been to increase the employment chances of young people and hence a number of studies have examined post-school

pathways of VET in Schools students, including Polesel et al. (2004), Helme and Polesel (2004), Fullarton (2001), several undertaken by Polesel and Teese (for example, 2002, 2003) and a series of destination studies undertaken by the former Enterprise and Career Education Foundation of students enrolled in programs funded by the foundation. Overall, VET in Schools students are found to have lower entry to university than average, but higher rates of labour force participation, enrolment in post-school VET programs and participation in apprenticeships and traineeships (Fullarton 2001). These differences are more marked for males than for females. Johns, Kilpatrick and Loechel (2004), focusing on rural VET in Schools students, found that VET in Schools can assist in retaining students in the community; however, Polesel and Teese (2002) found that, in country areas, regions with high VET in Schools enrolments had higher than average rate of transfer to study. A small qualitative study (Taccori 2004) showed positive outcomes in employment and further study, as well as an employer preference for recruiting students who had undertaken VET in Schools programs. The study also indicated that VET in Schools students were likely to pursue a career related to their VET course, a finding supported by Taylor (2004).

The Department of Education, Science and Training (2004) surveyed over 14 000 young people in 2003 who had undertaken VET in Schools programs that had included work placements, and who had left school in 2002. The study found that these students were more likely than the average school leaver to have full-time work and to be studying at a registered training organisation rather than at university (Department of Education, Science and Training 2004, p.5). There was little difference from the general school-leaving cohort in the proportions who were unemployed and who studied part-time. Overall the study found (Department of Education, Science and Training 2004, p.4) that:

- ✧ Males were more likely to be in full-time work than females, and females were more likely to be in full-time study.
- ✧ Private school students had better overall outcomes.
- ✧ Indigenous Australian students and those with a disability had worse overall outcomes.
- ✧ 19% of the students had gone on to full-time apprenticeships and traineeships.

Students had generally found their placements useful, although only 40% claimed that it confirmed that they wished to study further in that area (Department of Education, Science and Training 2004, p.10).

Some earlier studies in Australia and the United States (for example, Robinson 1999; Greenberger 1988) have indicated that part-time work may affect choice of long-term career and may influence employability and future earnings potential. There have been no recent studies, however, addressing the detailed effects of part-time student-working, although Helme and Polesel (2004) noted in a study of over 2200 school leavers in 2003 that 63% claimed that part-time work had been important in shaping their career decisions. No detailed data were gathered, however, on this issue.

Because school-based New Apprenticeships have been established relatively recently, little has been written about their long-term effects. Fullarton's (2001) study, based on the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, included a small number of school-based New Apprenticeships (less than 1% of her sample of around 6000), but otherwise there has been no longitudinal study of school-based New Apprenticeships. It is impossible to complete an apprenticeship part-time during the two years of senior secondary schooling (Smith & Wilson 2002); hence it has been expected that many students will continue their apprenticeships after leaving school, although this has not yet been confirmed empirically. As most traineeships can be completed in one year full-time, it is more likely that trainees, as opposed to apprentices, can complete their contracts of training while still at school.

While it is taken for granted that work experience is designed to provide a glimpse of a possible career area (Green & Smith 2003), there has been little empirical research into its effects. The Helme and Polesel (2004) study asked one question of the school leavers about work experience,

but the only reported data indicated that school leavers who became apprentices rated work experience more highly than the norm in making their career choices.

Moving from the literature on effects of workplace engagement while at school to more general issues of post-school pathways, there is a large amount of literature on young people's career choices that forms part of the more general development literature.

Writers such as Santrock (2003) argue that career development theory has two broad foci. The first focus is on trait and personality type; the second considers a longitudinal or life-span approach. These two foci have their roots in differential psychology and developmental psychology, respectively.

A trait and personality type perspective emphasises the fact that individuals possess certain traits, and that workplaces and particular jobs require individuals to draw on these traits. Underpinning this perspective is the notion of person–environment fit. The best known example of this perspective lies in the work of Holland (1997). He proposed that six 'personality' types, namely, realistic, investigative, social, conventional, enterprising, and artistic, could be matched to an extensive listing of occupations/job tasks. For example, a person with artistic talent would be well served by choosing to work in a field of the arts. Similarly, an individual characterised by a conventional type would fit well to a job in the public service. A wide range of computer-assisted career programs are based on Holland's typology (McQuillan 1997). The trait-and-personality type perspective has been criticised on a number of grounds. The main criticism deals with the fact that individuals continue to grow and to change, and that their traits are not always constant over time (Santrock 2003).

A longitudinal or life-span perspective stresses the changing nature of the individual as he/she matures. Theorists adopting this perspective have tended to view career choice as a step-by-step process, with individuals initially making decisions somewhat naively (or even irrationally), but finally reaching decisions about a career in a considered and rational fashion based on their reality. Two theorists, notably Ginzberg and Super, best represent this perspective (McQuillan 1997). Their work, however, has been criticised on several levels: one, the timeframes for each step are too rigid; and second, no attention is paid to individual differences.

Both of these perspectives have some relevance for the current study and have been explored to some extent in previous studies. In a study of 1200 Year 9–12 students in three schools, Creed and Patton (2003) found that school students who had part-time jobs were more advanced in their career planning and exploration than those who did not; the findings were related to attitude towards careers rather than actual decisions or career-related knowledge. This notion of career planning maturity is clearly linked to a longitudinal perspective. Taccori's study (2004) indicates that a combination of work experience and a VET in Schools program in one vocational area combined with good careers counselling provides a synergy likely to lead to a realistic careers choice in that area. Such firm vocational choices while at school are likely to resonate with a trait or personality approach. Both Chen (2004) and Gottfredson (2002), however, have noted the multiple factors that need be taken into account when considering the person–environment interactions that occur during work experience opportunities, career counselling meetings, part-time work, and work per se. Woodd (1999) also stresses the importance of contextual factors. Using theories of environmental structures (Bronfenbrenner in Woodd 1999), she claims that people's attitudes to careers may be significantly affected by their actual experiences in workplaces.

Writing specifically about the Australian context, Athanasou (2001) identified three broad factors influencing educational–vocational achievement in adolescents: educational; structural; and preferences. Although some of these factors are directly aligned with the perspectives outlined earlier, it needs to be emphasised that certain elements, including school completion or non-completion, gender, socioeconomic status, parental involvement and ethnicity should also be taken into account when theorising adolescent career development. In other words, neither the vocational content of their in-school or out-of-school experiences, nor the two major career theories can be expected to explain fully an individual's post-school pathway choices. Moreover, the early years after school are characterised by frequent changes in career plans and in actual jobs (Bilsker & Marcia

1991), often referred to as ‘milling and churning’ (Sweet 1995). These changes may reflect ‘opportunity structures’ (that is, the availability of occupations, workplaces and educational opportunities, often in turn affected by socioeconomic status) as much as conscious choices (Roberts 1975).

A final point worth noting from the literature is that young people are almost always reported as dissatisfied with the careers advice they receive while at school (for example, Andres & Wyn 2002). Alloway et al. (2004) found considerable variation among schools in the roles and quality of careers advisers and careers information. They found that careers advisers who offered student-centred advice provided a better service than those who were information-centred.

The current project

Earlier work by the project team in this area has already been referenced. Smith and Green (2001), through a survey administered in schools and through school-based case studies, examined the learning that school students gained from different types of workplace experiences (New South Wales and South Australia). A similar study, carried out by mailed questionnaire (Smith & Wilson 2002), focused on school-based apprentices and trainees only (Queensland, Victoria and South Australia).

The current study was designed to follow up participants in the two previous studies, now two or three years out of school, through a mailed questionnaire. A small number of phone interviews were also added to the methodology. The study is designed to draw links between their workplace experiences while at school and what they have done, and plan to do, later.

Research questions

- ✧ To what extent does involvement with workplaces (including multiple involvement) while at school affect school leavers’ subsequent pathways, and in what ways?
- ✧ How can multiple pathways be described and conceptualised?
- ✧ What are the students’ views about the worth to them of their different involvements with workplaces? (This question will include exploration of the role of such involvement in the decision about when to leave school.)
- ✧ Do different groups of students (for example, equity groups and those leaving school at different year levels) have different perceptions and experiences in relation to the links between workplace experiences while at school and post-school pathways?

The final research question could not be addressed in the analysis and report as there were very few respondents in any of the recognised equity groups and only seven out of 126 did not complete school. The only equity group of any size comprised those from a non-English speaking background. However, the previous projects had demonstrated that many young people from this group came from privileged rather than underprivileged backgrounds and therefore could not be examined as a coherent group.

Methodology

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the way in which the two previous projects produced the sample databases for the current project. The methods used for data collection and analysis in the current project are then outlined. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of the reliability and limitations of the data.

Design of research

The original studies

The populations surveyed in the two previous projects were as follows:

- ✧ Project 1 (Smith & Green 2001): Years 10, 11 and 12 in 13 schools in South Australia and New South Wales during 2000; total responses: 1451
- ✧ Project 2 (Smith & Wilson 2002): A sample of school-based New Apprentices in South Australia and Victoria (50% in each) and Queensland (36%), during 2001. (The lower sample size in Queensland was because the numbers in that state were so high and the budget limited.); total responses: 641 (30%), almost entirely in Years 11 and 12.

Project 1 also contained a qualitative component, with school-based case studies, which validated the findings of the survey. Project 1 was carried out in schools, while Project 2 involved sending a mailed questionnaire to students at their home addresses as recorded by their state training authorities.

Built into the research design of both projects was the construction of a database of students willing to be involved in follow-up research. Four hundred and twenty-four students (29% of the respondents to that project) from the first project and 375 (59%) from the second returned a form with usable details and agreed to be contacted. Since the participants would be in their second, third or fourth year post-school, 2004 was judged to be an opportune time to carry out the follow-up study of these 799 young people. The current study therefore covers students who, at the oldest end of the sample, were in Year 11 in 1999, while the majority were much younger.

The school-based New Apprentice follow-up database was particularly valuable because it represented a large sample of participants during a year when the initiative had just entered a mass phase. It was estimated that responses were received from around 12% of all school-based New Apprentices in the three states, which were the states with the largest school-based New Apprenticeship numbers (Smith & Wilson 2002, p.18). (An exact percentage cannot be given due to database limitations in one state.)

Reference group

A project reference group was selected to represent stakeholders and experts in the school-to-work area. Details of members are listed in the acknowledgements section at the beginning of the report. The reference group met twice during the project: to consider the draft survey instrument and to comment on the data that had been collected. They also received and commented on drafts of the progress and final reports.

Construction and administration of the questionnaire

One problem with previous post-school pathways studies is that their data collection instruments are somewhat simplistic. For example in many studies, students are reported as being engaged in either full-time work or apprenticeships/traineeships, when clearly the latter form a sub-set of the former. The current project used a detailed and thoroughly piloted questionnaire to avoid such confusion and to provide a finely drawn representation of what young people do after they leave school.

Some questions from Projects 1 and 2, such as those relating to location, social class, equity groups, academic ability and so on, were re-used for the new study and the general principles of Project 1 in relation to the three major types of workplace experience (work experience, part-time jobs and vocational placements) have been retained. Other questions were based on the published literature on post-school destinations and on other work by the project team on school-to-work transitions, employability skills and career development. The survey (see appendix F in the support document) contained a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions divided into the following sections:

- ✧ Section 1: About you and your background
- ✧ Section 2: Your first experiences after school
- ✧ Section 3: Your workplace experiences while at school
- ✧ Section 4: Your activities since leaving school
- ✧ Section 5: Your career plans.

The questionnaire was trialled with 13 young people of the appropriate age group in two capital cities and three rural locations. The questionnaire took these young people between 15 and 40 minutes to complete. It was therefore apparent that the length of the questionnaire would probably prove a barrier to some potential participants; this needed to be balanced against the need for depth of responses. It was decided to opt for length and depth at the possible risk of lower returns (Linsky 1975), partly because other research in this area has tended to use short questionnaires that do not provide much detail, ask for reasons for actions, or allow for nuanced interpretations. Response rates were expected to be boosted (Wiersma 2000, p.176) by offering a draw with a substantial first prize and five runner-up prizes for returned questionnaires.

It was decided that telephone interviews would be carried out for additional richness of data, should the survey response rate be low. The telephone protocol (appendix A) was designed to follow up on interesting issues emerging from the survey and to provide further detail about aspects of the research questions that could not be examined in great detail through the survey. Questions probed deeper into the chronology of post-school events and the respondents' reasons for the pathways followed both at school and subsequently. The researchers were also mindful of informing current policy imperatives when framing the protocol, for example, in the questions about careers advice and part-time work. The protocol was trialled with two volunteers.

Data collection

Survey

In mid-September 2004, 799 questionnaires were sent to the young people on the two databases. The two databases had previously been examined to avoid any crossover. Ninety-two responses were received from the first mail-out, and to boost numbers, a reminder mail-out was sent to 676 people in early October (non-respondents whose initial mail-out had not been 'returned to sender'). The 676 second-wave participants comprised 349 from the first project and 327 from the second project. The second mail-out yielded an additional 34 responses.

The total response was therefore 126 or 16%. This represents 70 (17%) of those not having completed school-based New Apprenticeships and 56 (15%) of the school-based New Apprentices. These figures are slightly complicated by the fact that three respondents from the latter database claimed they had not done school-based New Apprenticeships and they were moved into the other

group; and one respondent from the first database had since completed a school-based New Apprenticeship and was moved to the school-based New Apprenticeship group. In total there were 57 ‘return to senders’ from the group who had not completed this VET course and 30 ‘return to senders’ or other notified non-respondents (one overseas and one deceased) from those who had. If these are removed from the original population, the response rate becomes 17%.

Table 1 shows the respondents by gender and by whether they had done a school-based New Apprenticeship or not. The distinction between those who had done a school-based New Apprenticeship and those who had not was used as the coarsest level of data analysis, although it needs to be borne in mind that the population bases were different and therefore direct comparisons must be treated with caution.

Table 1: Survey respondents by gender and type of school workplace experiences

Gender	School-day workplace experience		Total
	SBNA	Non-SBNA	
Female	32	60	92
Male	24	10	34
Total	56	70	126

Note: SBNA = School-based New Apprenticeship

Sixty-seven respondents (25 school-based New Apprentices and 42 who were not) completed a form indicating their willingness to be contacted for a further follow-up study. This number of responses would not support a survey but might support interview research in the future.

Despite its length (44 questions), the survey was well answered, although a few questions proved a little problematic, despite the extensive trialling and multiple re-drafting of the relevant questions. A particular problem was that some respondents (17 [24.2%]) of those who had not completed school-based New Apprenticeships and ten (17.9%) of those who had, failed to nominate one only of each type of school workplace experience; this nomination formed the basis of a number of questions (questions 24 to 28). Where possible, a choice was inferred from other responses or ascertained by telephone; where not possible, a protocol was followed to select a choice that did not advantage one industry area over another. These responses were flagged not to be included in any analysis by industry area.

Telephone interviews

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate their willingness to be interviewed in more depth, and 20 of the 126 agreed to this, including one respondent whose survey form arrived too late to be considered for the questionnaire analysis. Eighteen were successfully interviewed, eight having done school-based New Apprenticeships and ten other. Non-government schools were considerably over-represented in the phone interviews, even taking into account the skewed nature of the original database of those who had not completed school-based New Apprenticeships. The interviews took between 20 and 30 minutes by phone.

Data analysis

Frequency tables were derived for the quantitative questions in the survey. In all tables separate data were presented for those who had done school-based New Apprenticeships and those who had not. In addition, the qualitative comments were gathered together, also differentiated by school-based New Apprenticeship or not. The comments formed a document of over 50 pages.

In addition, 15 ‘mini case histories’ were derived from respondents’ qualitative responses to the survey. These were designed to provide a coherent thread of responses by individual participants and represented the most interesting and detailed qualitative responses. The respondents who were

interviewed by phone were excluded from the group. The 15 mini case histories are located in appendix B and respondents' details are given in the following chapter.

Each of the 18 telephone interviews was written up individually. Details of the respondents are also given in the following chapter. Samples of two interview transcripts (one school-based New Apprenticeship and one not) are provided at appendix C. The data were drawn into a summary table (appendix D) to assist with analysis.

Reliability of findings

With a response rate of 16% it becomes necessary to consider the strength of any general conclusions that can be drawn from the data. As McLennan (1999, p.35) says, a low response rate could result in estimates that are 'biased and misleading'. However, discussion with other researchers who have undertaken recent longitudinal studies of this nature indicated that a 20% response rate would be at the upper end of what could be expected for a mailed survey to this type of respondent, while the literature suggests that 20–30% would be normal for mailed surveys to adults (Linsky 1975).

Four procedures were carried out to enable the strength of conclusions to be supported:

- ✧ triangulation through an extra form of data collection, that is, telephone interviews
- ✧ validation through close monitoring by an expert project reference group
- ✧ evidence that the respondents were representative of the original samples
- ✧ consideration of non-response bias.

Triangulation and validation

The telephone interviews enabled the conclusions to be triangulated. Huberman and Miles (1998) claim that the multiple methods in triangulation may be methods, theory or source. The sources were not different (the telephone interviewees also completed survey forms) but the method was. The general findings from the interviews supported those from the survey, although there was, of course, more detail in the interview findings.

The progress and final reports were read by the project reference group, all of whom had considerable expertise in the area and would have been able to indicate findings that appeared unlikely.

Representativeness of the respondents

Table 2 illustrates the closeness of the responses to the sample (a full profile of the respondents is given in table 4). Comparison was carried out by gender and state as the sample database did not have further identifiers.

While the original databases did not have the type of school recorded, statistics do exist for the respondents to the surveys in Project 1 (those who had not done a school-based New Apprenticeship) and Project 2 (school-based New Apprentices). (The original databases are a subset of those data, consisting of those who agreed to a follow-up study.) The Project 1 responses were biased towards non-government schools (48.7% government; 50.5% non-government) and this was true, but to a much greater extent, of the responses from those who had not done a school-based New Apprenticeship in the current project (22.9% government; 77.2% non-government). Project 2 had 74.4% at government schools and 25.5% non-government; the school-based New Apprenticeship responses in the current project showed 71.1% government and 28.5% non-government, a much closer fit.

These comparisons between the responses and the sample, then, show that the school-based New Apprenticeship respondents were representative of the sample, while those who had not participated

in school-based New Apprenticeships were skewed towards female South Australians from non-government schools.

As well as being representative of the sample, the school-based New Apprenticeship population in Project 2 was representative of the total school-based New Apprenticeship population, at least by state. This is illustrated by table 3.

Table 2: Comparison of responses with original database by state and gender, SBNA and non-SBNA

State/gender	SBNA				Non-SBNA			
	Original sample		Response 2004		Original sample		Response 2004	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
State								
NSW	-	-	-	-	104	24.5	8	11.4
NT	-	-	-	-	2	0.5	0	0.0
QLD	257	68.5	40	71.4	-	-	-	-
SA	46	12.3	7	12.5	317	74.8	60	85.7
VIC	72	19.2	9	16.1	1	0.2	2	2.9
Total	375	100.0	56	100.0	424	100.0	70	100.0
Gender								
Male	155	41.3	24	42.9	138	32.6	10	14.3
Female	206	54.9	32	57.1	280	66.0	60	85.7
Uncertain	14	3.7	0	0.0	6	1.4	0	0.0
Total	375	99.9	56	100.0	424	100.0	70	100.0

Notes: Gender for the sample database was derived from names and some names could have been either gender, hence the 'uncertain' row.
Some respondents had moved state which adversely affects the *appearance* of representativeness.
SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Table 3: Representativeness of school-based New Apprenticeship respondents, as evidenced by distribution across the three states

State	SBNAs in each state as a proportion of SBNAs in the three states (official figures) (%)	Respondents to Project 2 (%)	Sample for current project (the 60% of respondents to Project 2 who agreed to follow-up study) (%)	Proportion of respondents to current project (%)
Queensland	72.6	70.2	66.8	71.4
Victoria	16.6	19.3	18.2	16.1
South Australia	10.9	10.5	11.1	12.5

Source: For the first two columns, Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (2001, p.29); Smith & Wilson (2002, p.12)

Non-response bias

McLennan (1999) suggests that the extent of non-response bias can be investigated through the characteristics of those who responded to a reminder. The latter can be regarded as more reluctant respondents and therefore more characteristic of non-respondents. In this study there were an initial 92 responses with 34 extra being gained through a reminder letter. The profile of respondents as revealed by the 12 'about you and your background' questions was virtually unchanged between the 92 responses and the 34 'reluctant' responses. The reluctant respondents were slightly more likely to have left school in 2001 rather than 2002 or later, but all other differences were statistically all so minor as to be negligible. Although it may be possible, as Williams (1986) has claimed in relation to early years in the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth studies, that non-respondents to mail surveys tend to be those who are less successful in educational terms than respondents, this analysis of the 'reluctant respondents' does not support such a possibility for the current project.

In short, conclusions in the current project about school-based New Apprenticeships can be fairly robust, while those who did not complete school-based New Apprenticeships can claim a lesser degree of representativeness, both of the original sample and, to a much greater extent, of those who had not participated in such programs in general.

In interpreting the survey data, however, the following limitations must be borne in mind:

- ✧ The school-based New Apprenticeship respondents and those who did not complete this program are drawn from different populations.
- ✧ Neither sets of respondents are representative of all Australian states.
- ✧ Non-government schools and girls are considerably over-represented in the respondents who had not completed a school-based New Apprenticeship.
- ✧ The response rates are low, and despite the representativeness of the school-based New Apprenticeship respondents in terms of known characteristics, there remains a possibility that the respondents are not typical; for example, those who responded may be more successful and confident than those who did not.

Findings from the survey

Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the survey are discussed, with a focus on the first and third research questions:

- ✧ To what extent does involvement with workplaces (including multiple involvement) while at school affect school leavers' subsequent pathways, and in what ways?
- ✧ What are the students' views about the worth to them of their different involvements with workplaces?

Question 2 concerning ways of conceptualising multiple pathways is addressed in detail in the following chapter.

Before addressing the research questions, this chapter commences with an overview of the respondents to the survey.

Profile of the respondents

Table 4 provides a profile of the 126 respondents to the survey, as derived from responses to questions 1–12 in the survey. In this table, as in most of those in this chapter, those who had undertaken school-based New Apprenticeships are separated from other respondents. This is because the groups are derived from different data sets and also because involvement in a school-based New Apprenticeship is in itself a very distinct form of workplace engagement which might be expected to have specific effects on post-school pathways.

Table 4 shows that the respondents were as follows:

- ✧ clustered around the 19 and 20 age groups
- ✧ mostly in their third or fourth year out of school
- ✧ more female than male (somewhat but not overwhelmingly disproportionately to the original population)
- ✧ nearly all school completers to the end of Year 12
- ✧ mainly not from ethnic equity groups; those from non-English speaking backgrounds are nearly all second-generation not first-generation migrants
- ✧ not disabled in any way (apart from one with a learning disability).

Table 4: Profile of the respondents

		SBNA		Non-SBNA		Total response	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total respondents		56		70		126	
Age	18	2	3.6	0	0.0	2	1.6
	19	27	48.2	27	38.6	54	42.9
	20	18	32.1	28	40.0	46	36.5
	21	8	14.3	13	18.6	21	16.7
	22	1	1.8	1	1.4	2	1.6
	Other	0	0.0	1	1.4	1	0.8
Gender	Male	24	42.9	10	14.3	34	27.0
	Female	32	57.1	60	85.7	92	73.0
Family background	Aboriginal or TSI	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	English not main language	0	0.0	5	7.1	5	4.0
	Parents born overseas	11	19.6	9	12.9	20	15.9
Disability	Physical	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Learning	1	1.8	0	0.0	1	0.8
Financial family background	Well below average	1	1.8	2	2.9	3	2.4
	Below average	9	16.1	4	5.7	13	10.3
	About average	36	64.3	32	45.7	68	54.0
	Above average	9	16.1	27	38.6	36	28.6
	Well above average	0	0.0	5	7.1	5	4.0
School marks	Well below average	2	3.6	1	1.4	3	2.4
	Below average	0	0.0	2	2.9	2	1.6
	About average	33	58.9	25	35.7	58	46.0
	Above average	19	33.9	27	38.6	46	36.5
	Well above average	2	3.6	15	21.4	17	13.5
School location	Capital city	12	21.4	55	78.6	67	53.2
	Regional city	25	44.6	7	10.0	32	25.4
	Small town	18	32.1	8	11.4	26	20.6
	Remote area	1	1.8	0	0.0	1	0.8
School type	Government	40	71.4	16	22.9	56	44.4
	Catholic	11	19.6	16	22.9	27	21.4
	Independent	5	8.9	38	54.3	43	34.1
State/territory	NSW	0	0.0	8	11.4	8	6.3
	VIC	9	16.1	2	2.9	11	8.7
	SA	7	12.5	60	85.7	67	53.2
	QLD	40	71.4	0	0.0	40	31.7
Level left school	During Yr 10	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	End Yr 10	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	During Yr 11	0	0.0	1	1.4	1	0.8
	End Yr 11	0	0.0	3	4.3	3	2.4
	During Yr 12	2	3.6	1	1.4	3	2.4
	End Yr 12	53	94.6	63	90.0	116	92.1
	During Yr 13	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	End Yr 13	1	1.8	2	2.9	3	2.4
Year left school	2000	3	5.4	7	10.0	10	7.9
	2001	27	48.2	34	48.6	61	48.4
	2002	23	41.1	26	37.1	49	38.9
	2003	3	5.4	2	2.9	5	4.0
	2004	0	0.0	1	1.4	1	0.8

Note: TSI = Torres Strait Islander; SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Differences between the school-based New Apprenticeships and others were as follows:

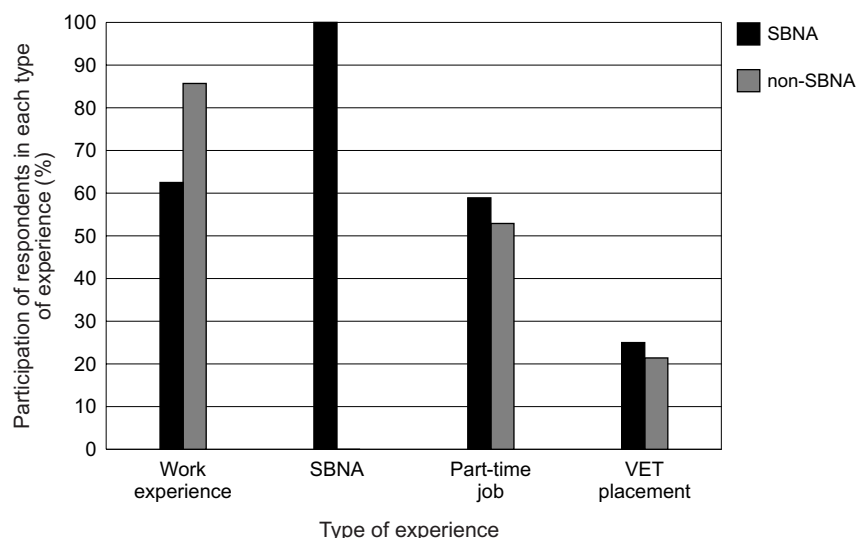
- ✧ School-based New Apprentices self-report as being from lower socioeconomic groups.
- ✧ Those who did not undertake school-based New Apprenticeships self-report as having higher academic ability.
- ✧ School-based New Apprentices were slightly more likely to complete Year12 than those who had not completed this program.
- ✧ Those who had not undertaken school-based apprenticeships were more likely to be in South Australia, from capital cities and from non-government schools (a function of the location and response rates from the original target schools in the first project).
- ✧ Respondents who had not undertaken school-based apprenticeships were more heavily weighted towards females than were the school-based New Apprentices.

These differences need to be borne in mind when interpreting the findings.

Involvement with workplaces while at school

Figure 1 indicates the respondents' involvement with workplaces while at school. As well as the categories of involvement listed, they were also asked if they had been engaged in apprenticeships or traineeships which were not school-based, but since only two school-based New Apprentices and two from the group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships had done so, this category has been omitted from the analysis.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents participating in each type of workplace experience in at least one year



Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Figure 1 indicates some interesting differences between the groups:

- ✧ Work experience was undertaken by the vast majority of those who had not participated in school-based apprenticeships, but less than two-thirds of school-based New Apprentices undertook work experience.
- ✧ Well over half (58.9%) of school-based New Apprentices had additional jobs during their school careers as well as their school-based New Apprenticeships, while only a little over half (52.9%) of the other group had part-time jobs.
- ✧ About the same proportion of school-based New Apprentices as the other group (25% and 21.4% respectively) undertook placements associated with VET in Schools programs.

The distribution of workplace experiences across the Year levels 10–12 was analysed and is presented in appendix E, table 1. Some interesting conclusions may be drawn from the table:

- ✧ Both VET and school-based New Apprenticeships were commenced in Year 10 in a number of cases (8.7% and 7.1% respectively).
- ✧ Additional jobs held by school-based New Apprentices in some cases preceded their involvement in a school-based New Apprenticeship rather than being concurrent.
- ✧ Non-participants in school-based New Apprenticeships were less likely to have had VET placements in Year 12 than Year 11; one explanation is that they may have dropped their VET subjects in Year 12. This trend was not evident for school-based New Apprentices who were also doing VET subjects.

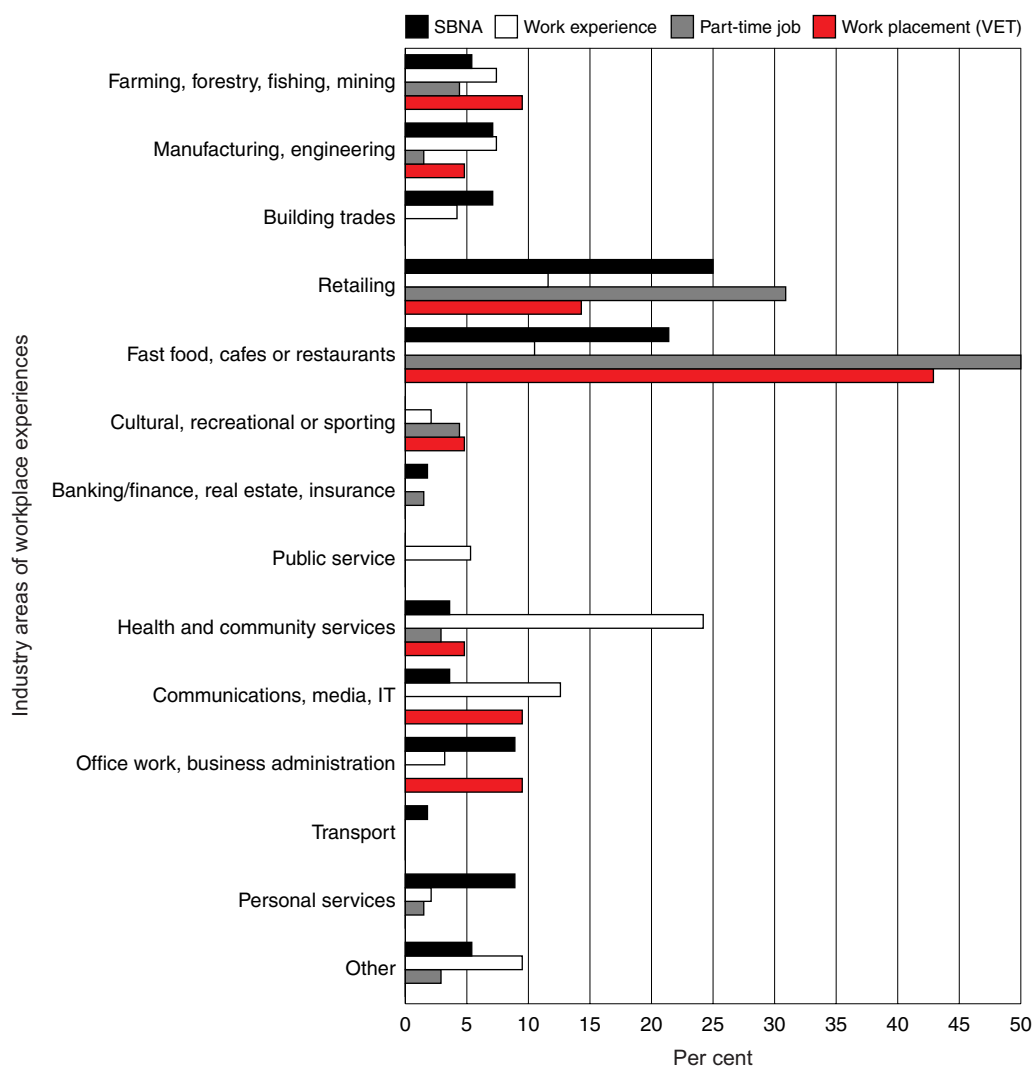
Additional questions about part-time jobs that were not school-based apprenticeships showed that involvement in part-time work could involve quite long hours of work. School-based New Apprentices most typically worked 6–10 or 11–15 hours a week (32.5% and 40.0% respectively fell into these two categories), while those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships tended either to work short hours (60.7% worked 10 hours or fewer) or quite lengthy hours (25% generally worked 16 hours or more per week). The results for school-based New Apprentices need to be seen in the context that many were undertaking their school-based New Apprenticeship at the same time.

Fifty-five school-based New Apprentices responded to a question about completion of their school-based New Apprenticeship. Of 15 who had completed apprenticeships, two-thirds (10) completed while at school. Of 29 who had completed traineeships, 86.2% completed while at school. This discrepancy is to be expected due to the greater length of apprenticeships. Eleven had not completed. Five of these were still continuing (one having converted from a traineeship to an apprenticeship) and six had given up their school-based New Apprenticeship. The latter group cited a variety of reasons, including losing their jobs, completing the registered training organisation part of their certificates but not their contract of training; only one mentioned giving up because of time pressure.

As has been found in previous studies (Smith & Green 2001; Smith & Wilson 2002), there were great differences in the industry area among the different types of workplace engagement (figure 2). Part-time jobs were concentrated (80.9%) in the industries of retail and fast food/hospitality where students typically worked. School-based New Apprenticeships and VET placements alike showed a significant, although lesser concentration (46.4% and 57.2% respectively) in these two industries, while work experience was much more evenly distributed among industry areas. For example, nearly a quarter of work experience placements were in health and community services. Of the four non-school-based apprentices/trainees (not shown in the figure), three were in fast food and one in building.

Respondents reported general satisfaction with their workplace experiences, with reported enjoyment marginally greater in school-based New Apprenticeships than in other forms of workplace engagement. Nevertheless, 10 of the 50 school-based New Apprentices responding to the relevant question reported disliking their school-based apprenticeships.

Figure 2: Industry areas of school workplace, SBNA and non-SBNA experiences



Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Development of employability skills

Participants were asked about the development of employability skills through their workplace experiences as this might affect both their success in achieving desired post-school outcomes and their self-efficacy. The list of employability skills drawn up by the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was used as the basis of the question (Business Council of Australia & Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2002).

Students generally found work experience developed their employability skills ‘a fair amount’ or ‘a little bit’ rather than ‘a great deal’ (table 5) compared with other forms of workplace engagement. More structured engagements (that is, school-based New Apprenticeships and work placement) were valued more than ordinary part-time jobs.

However, when their results were analysed separately, there were some differences between the school-based New Apprentices and the other group in terms of the usefulness attributed to the various experiences

- ✧ Those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships seemed to value placements below their part-time jobs, while school-based New Apprentices valued them less than school-based New Apprenticeships but more than their other part-time jobs.

- ✧ Those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships valued part-time jobs more than did the school-based New Apprentices.
- ✧ Work experience was valued more highly by the school-based New Apprentices than by the other group.

Table 5: Development of employability skills through workplace experiences while at school (all respondents)

Degree of development	Work experience		SBNA		Part-time job		Work placement (VET)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not at all	13	13.5	1	1.9	3	4.5	1	4.8
A little bit	28	29.2	4	7.5	10	14.9	2	9.5
A fair amount	34	35.4	11	20.8	18	26.9	6	28.6
A great deal	21	21.9	37	69.8	36	53.7	12	57.1
Total of type of experience	96	100.0	53	100.0	67	100.0	21	100.0

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Responses could of course be affected by the chronology of the experiences in the individual respondent's career, as well as by the relative length of time spent at each activity.

When asked which employability skill was best developed during their workplace activities, communication came first by a long way (53% on average across the types of workplace engagement), with team work second (15%), and taking the initiative/being enterprising third at 10%. There were differences between the school-based New Apprentices and the other group. For school-based New Apprentices, teamwork was a clear second (19.6%) and problem-solving equal third with initiative/enterprise. For those who had not undertaken school-based New Apprenticeships, teamwork was equal second (11.1%), together with two other employability skills. There is therefore perhaps some indication that school-based New Apprenticeships may be better than other forms of school workplace experiences in fostering teamwork skills.

Qualitative comments about the development of employability skills included the following.

School-based New Apprenticeships	Ordinary part-time jobs	Work experience
There were opportunities to apply skills in practice.	Accruing experience in the one job and setting led to obvious benefits.	It provided an opportunity to develop independence.
Client/customer contact allowed for skill practice and refinement.	Training days linked to the job were very instructive and useful.	It gave me a chance to explore my own learning.
Proper industry relevant training is involved.		I gained confidence and showed me what I was capable of.
A range of skills were covered and fostered in the modules studied.		

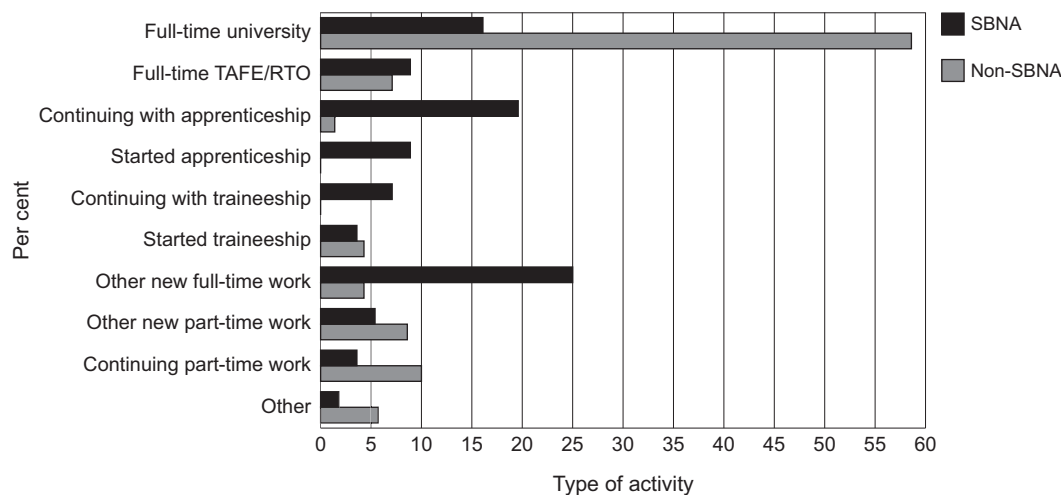
Post-school pathways

Responses to several questions enabled a picture to be built up of post-school pathways. Data were gathered in the following areas:

- ✧ major activity six months after leaving school
- ✧ overview of all activities in years 1 and 2 after leaving school
- ✧ industry area of paid jobs
- ✧ development of thinking about long-term career from the final year of school to year 2 out of school
- ✧ qualifications completed.

Respondents were asked to nominate their major activity six months after leaving school. They were given a list of 13 from which to select. Figure 3 shows the responses for school-based New Apprenticeships and the other group.

Figure 3: Major activity six months after leaving school



Notes: Options of part-time university or part-time TAFE/registered training organisation were not selected by any respondents. The options 'not working but looking for work' and 'other' have been combined as the numbers of responses were very low.
 RTO = registered training organisation.
 SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

These data show that school-based New Apprentices were much less likely to attend university than the other group—only 16.1% compared with 58.6%. While the latter cohort were not typical of all those who did not participate in school-based New Apprenticeships in Australia, the finding for school-based New Apprentices is certainly significant in view of the fact that nearly one-third of all Year 12 or 13 school leavers proceed directly to university (see Context chapter). School-based New Apprentices were overwhelmingly likely to be in full-time work, including apprenticeships and traineeships, with only 10.8% not in full-time work or study compared with nearly one-quarter (24.3%) of those who had not undertaken school-based New Apprenticeships who were not in full-time work or study. Around the same proportion of school-based New Apprentices and the other group were in full-time VET courses. School-based New Apprenticeships, then, appear to lead to excellent employment outcomes but lower participation in higher education. In this respect the findings mirror those of other studies for VET in Schools participants. It should be noted that almost a quarter (23.9%) of school-based New Apprentices compared with one-eighth (12.9%) of the other group said that their major activity was not what they had planned. Roughly 10% of each group said they had not had a plan.

However, these data provide only a coarse and static view of post-school destinations. In order to represent in a more nuanced manner the complexity of young people's pathways after school, they were asked to list all of their activities in the years following school that comprised one month or more full-time equivalent. Table 6 presents the results of school-based New Apprentices and those who had not participated in a school-based New Apprenticeship for the first two years after school for those respondents who gave answers for both years. As multiple responses were allowed, the columns add up to more than 100%. It needs to be borne in mind that activities could be concurrent or sequential during a year.

These tables indicate the diverse combinations of work and study undertaken by young people after leaving school. The group of those who had not participated in a school-based New Apprenticeship shows a shift both into university courses and into full-time work during the second year, suggesting that the relatively large minority who were without full-time work or study at the six-

month period generally found a safe niche by the second year. School-based New Apprentices showed less movement between years 1 and 2 out of school.

Table 6: All activities (of more than one month full-time equivalent duration) undertaken in first two years after leaving school, SBNAs and non-SBNAs

SBNA ¹ Activity	First year after school		Second year after school	
	No.	%	No.	%
Full-time university course	8	15.1	9	17.0
Part-time university course	1	1.9	3	5.7
Full-time TAFE or other RTO course	5	9.4	3	5.7
Part-time TAFE/RTO not connected to traineeship/apprenticeship	6	11.3	5	9.4
Full-time apprenticeship	17	32.1	16	30.2
Full-time traineeship	4	7.5	2	3.8
Part-time apprenticeship	1	1.9	0	0.0
Part-time traineeship	4	7.5	1	1.9
Other full-time work	17	32.1	18	34.0
Other part-time work	13	24.5	16	30.2
Volunteer work	6	11.3	5	9.4
Caring responsibilities (incl. parenting)	0	0.0	0	0.0
Unemployed, seeking work	2	3.8	1	1.9
Unemployed, not seeking work	0	0.0	2	3.8
Other (personal)	4	7.5	1	1.9
Non-SBNA²				
Full-time university course	38	58.5	45	69.2
Part-time university course	0	0.0	0	0.0
Full-time TAFE or other RTO course	7	10.8	4	6.2
Part-time TAFE/RTO not connected to traineeship/apprenticeship	1	1.5	1	1.5
Full-time apprenticeship	0	0.0	1	1.5
Full-time traineeship	2	3.1	2	3.1
Part-time apprenticeship	0	0.0	0	0.0
Part-time traineeship	3	4.6	1	1.5
Other full-time work	7	10.8	12	18.5
Other part-time work	45	69.2	43	66.2
Volunteer work	9	13.8	10	15.4
Caring responsibilities (incl. parenting)	1	1.5	2	3.1
Unemployed, seeking work	4	6.2	4	6.2
Unemployed, not seeking work	4	6.2	1	1.5
Other (personal)	6	9.2	5	7.7

Notes: As respondents were asked to show all activities of one month full-time equivalent or longer, some responses may indicate short-term activity; e.g. they may have dropped out of university or left jobs.

¹ N = 53.

² N = 65.

SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Respondents were asked about the industry areas of their paid jobs since leaving school. Multiple answers were possible. A concentration in retail and fast food/hospitality remained, but this was somewhat diluted compared with jobs held while at school. For ex-school-based New Apprentices, these industry areas accounted for 35% of full-time apprenticeships, 42.9% of full-time traineeships, 33.3% of ordinary full-time jobs and 56.4% of ordinary part-time jobs. For those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships, the two industry areas accounted for 50% of part-time traineeships and 57% of ordinary part-time jobs, as well as 33.7% of ordinary full-time jobs. Office work and administration became somewhat significant in full-time jobs for

both groups, with seven school-based New Apprentices and 13 from the other group having worked in this area. Farming, building and manufacturing/engineering also featured to a minor extent among ex-school-based New Apprentices and the other group, the latter two industry areas generally but not always associated with apprenticeships or traineeships. The continued predominance of retail and fast food/hospitality, however, is the major finding, especially compared with the relative diversity of industries sampled during work experience.

As Woodd (1999) suggests, it is important to understand people's 'careers in the head' as well as their actual careers. Therefore respondents were asked to describe their thinking about their long-term career industry area during the final year of school and the first three years after school. Forty-five school-based New Apprentices and 60 from the group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships gave responses for the final year of school and each of the first two years after school, and these responses were analysed. The third year out could not be analysed, as relatively few respondents were three years out of school. The largest groups across the three years were as follows:

- ✧ school-based New Apprentices: fast food and hospitality; manufacturing and engineering; retail
- ✧ those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships: health and community services; communications, media and information technology; and 'other'.

It needs to be remembered, however, that numbers in all industry areas were low. For example, health and community services was the preferred industry area for more than 20% in all years for the group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships, but only represented 14 respondents at most.

There was a reasonable degree of consistency between respondents' plans up to and including the second year after school, but there were some findings of note that differed.

- ✧ School-based New Apprentices showed a decline in those considering fast food/hospitality as a career from 17.8% in the final year of school to 13.3% in the second year out.
- ✧ School-based New Apprentices showed an increase in those considering each of primary industries and office/business work from 6.7% to 11.1%.
- ✧ School-based New Apprentices showed a peak in 'no clear plans' in the first year out at 13.3% (n = 6). (The other group remained constant at between 6.7% and 8.3%.)
- ✧ The group representing those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships showed:
 - ◆ a decline in those considering retail from 8.3% through a peak of 11.7% in the first year out, to 1.7%
 - ◆ an increase in those considering the public service from 3.3% to 11.7% and in banking/real estate/insurance from 5.% to 8.3%.
- ✧ The group representing those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships considering fast food/hospitality decreased from 8.3% to 3.3%.

In view of the decrease in popularity of fast food/hospitality, it is notable that school-based New Apprentices considering retail were constant over the three years at 11.1% (n = 5).

Questioning about qualifications revealed that completed qualifications were as follows:

- ✧ certificate I: 16.7% of respondents
- ✧ certificate II: 42.1%
- ✧ certificate III: 25.4%
- ✧ certificate IV 3.2%
- ✧ diploma: 4%
- ✧ degree: 4%.

As multiple answers were possible, these figures included some respondents who achieved more than one qualification. While school-based New Apprentices possessed more VET qualifications than the other group, even among the latter, 10% had a certificate I, 20% a certificate II and 17.1% a certificate III.

Respondents were also engaged heavily in current study, with 13.5% enrolled in a certificate III and 12.7% studying towards a certificate IV, diploma or advanced diploma. Ex-school-based New Apprentices were far more likely than others to be enrolled in a certificate III (26.8% of ex-school-based New Apprentices compared with 2.9% of others), whereas at certificate IV, diploma and advanced diploma level, the figures were much more even, although school-based New Apprentices were concentrated at certificate IV level and the other group at diploma level. None was currently enrolled in certificate I or II. Current study was almost all at TAFE or university (46.0% who responded to the question were enrolled in degrees), while completed study was more likely to include on-the-job or non-TAFE registered training organisation modes.

Effects of workplace engagement on subsequent pathways

Continuation in part-time job

An important finding was the extent to which respondents continued with their school part-time jobs. Of the 53.2% who had worked in part-time jobs immediately before leaving school, 44.1% continued with their part-time jobs for 18 months or longer. Those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships were more likely to continue long-term with their part-time jobs (53.6% of these kept their jobs for 18 months or longer compared with 27.5% of school-based New Apprentices); presumably many of these were continuing to work in their school part-time jobs while at university. Only 16.2% of the young people who had part-time jobs immediately before leaving school did not continue at all in these jobs.

Of those who continued, around a quarter worked the same hours as they had while at school, just over half increased their hours, but remained part-time, and about one-fifth became full-time. School-based New Apprentices were much more likely to take up full-time work in their part-time workplaces (32.3% compared with 7.7%). Respondents were also asked whether they had remained in the same position in their part-time workplaces (78.9% did so), while 12.3% moved to a different position and 8.8% to supervisory or management roles.

Effects of undertaking a school-based New Apprenticeship on post-school destination compared with intended destination

To attempt to gauge whether participation in a school-based New Apprenticeship affected outcomes, respondents' major destinations (that is, their nominated major activity) six months after leaving school were compared with intended destinations as stated in the two previous studies (table 7).

Table 7 suggests that undertaking a school-based New Apprenticeship may be associated with a lower than intended university entrance rate. It is well known that those on a university track are less likely to undertake a school-based New Apprenticeship, but these data indicate that, even among those school-based New Apprentices intending to go to university, participation in a school-based New Apprenticeship may affect that outcome. School-based New Apprentices' participation in full-time VET, and apprenticeships and traineeships was in line with intentions, while more were in ordinary full-time work than had originally intended. (This category may primarily account for the 'not sure' intentions.) The figures for those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships are less reliable, as the responses are less representative of the sample, but show that university participation was high compared with intention, especially by second year out.

Table 7: Major activity six months after leaving school compared with intended destination as stated in previous studies

	SBNA intended	SBNA actual	Non-SBNA intended	Non-SBNA actual
Full-time university	22.2%	16.1%	54.7%	58.6%
Full-time TAFE/RTO	9.6%	8.9%	14.4%	7.1%
Continue current apprenticeship/traineeship	26.8%	26.7%	n/a	n/a
Other apprenticeship or traineeship	9.2%	12.5%	6.3%	4.3%
Other full-time work	15.5%	25.0%	4.3%	4.3%
Not sure	14.8%	n/a	16.5%	n/a
Other	1.4%	10.8%	4%	24.3%
Total	99.5%	100%	100.2%	98.6%

Notes: Intended figures are taken from Smith and Green (2001, p.43) and Smith and Wilson (2002, p.20).
 The full-time university participation rates from the answers for 'second year out activity' were 17.0% for school-based New Apprentices and 69.2% for those not participating in school-based New Apprenticeships. These findings take account of gap years which somewhat distort the above table.
 SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.
 RTO = registered training organisation.

Effects of multiple engagement in workplaces on major activity after leaving school

Analysis of initial post-school activity was undertaken to see if there were links between school-leaver destinations and *multiple* workplace engagement while at school. Table 8 provides an interesting picture. In these tables, the major activities after leaving school have been collapsed into a smaller number of choices.

While the numbers in some of these cells are small, there seem to be some trends.

- ✧ For school-based New Apprentices, the greater the number of types of workplace engagement, the likelier the school-based New Apprentice was to go to university.
- ✧ For school-based New Apprentices, having no other workplace engagement beyond the school-based New Apprenticeship is more likely than the average to lead to an apprenticeship after school.
- ✧ For others, having no workplace engagement apart from work experience was much more likely than the average to be associated with going to university.

It is quite probable, of course, that for many of those who had not had any workplace experiences, the lack of engagement with workplaces was a consequence rather than a cause of a decision not to go to university.

Table 8: Major activity six months after leaving school, according to selected variety of workplace engagement while at school, SBNAs and non-SBNAs

SBNA	Workplace engagement type								Total with designated workplace engagement types	
	SBNA only		SBNA and work experience		SBNA, work experience and part-time job		SBNA, work experience, part-time job & VET placement			
Activity	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Full-time university	1	12.5	2	13.3	3	23.1	2	50.0	8	20.0
Full-time at TAFE/RTO	0	0.0	2	13.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.0
Apprenticeship/traineeship	4	50.0	5	33.3	5	38.5	1	25.0	15	37.5
Other full-time work	1	12.5	5	33.3	4	30.8	1	25.0	11	27.5
Part-time work	2	25.0	1	6.7	1	7.7	0	0.0	4	10.0
Total	8	100.0	15	100.0	13	100.0	4	100.0	40	100.0
Non-SBNA	None		Work experience only		Work experience and part-time job		Work experience, part-time job & VET placement		Total with designated workplace engagement types	
Full-time university	4	66.7	14	93.3	16	61.5	1	16.7	35	66.1
Full-time at TAFE/RTO	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	11.5	1	16.7	4	7.5
Apprenticeship/traineeship	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other full-time work	1	16.7	0	0.0	2	7.7	0	0.0	3	5.7
Part-time work	1	16.7	1	6.7	5	19.2	4	66.7	11	20.8
Total	6	100.0	15	100.0	26	100.0	6	100.0	53	75.7

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.
RTO = registered training organisation.

Effects of workplace engagement on career plans

Students had some clear views about the effects of their workplace experiences on their choice of industry area as a career choice. Responses to four provided options are shown in table 9.

Table 9 implies that two-thirds of school-based New Apprentices chose a school-based New Apprenticeship in the career area they meant to be involved in after school. For two-thirds of these young people, their experience in the school-based New Apprenticeship confirmed their decision; but for nearly one-third, the school-based New Apprenticeship changed their mind about entering the industry area. Work experience performed a similar sort of function for those who had not participated in a school-based New Apprenticeship, although with slightly lower proportions. For the school-based New Apprentices, on the other hand, work experience was much more likely to be an experience that opened their eyes to a new industry area. The part-time jobs of the other group performed quite a different function: for this group and school-based New Apprentices alike, their part-time jobs were not seen as long-term career options, although this finding was less strong for school-based New Apprentices.

Table 9: All respondents—effect of workplace experience on view of industry as possible area of career choice

Effect on view of industry	Work experience				SBNA		Part-time job			
	SBNA		Non-SBNA		No.	%	SBNA		Non-SBNA	
	No.	%	No.	%			No.	%	No.	%
Confirmed an existing decision to enter this industry	9	26.5	21	35.6	24	45.3	4	16.7	3	8.1
Thought of industry area as a possibility for first time	15	44.1	11	18.6	12	22.6	3	12.5	2	5.4
Changed mind and decided not to enter	4	11.8	13	22.0	11	20.8	4	16.7	4	10.8
Had no effect, wasn't meant to be a long term career area	5	14.7	14	23.7	5	9.4	13	54.2	26	70.3
Other	1	2.9	0	0.0	1	1.9	0	0.0	2	5.4
Total of type of experience	34	100.0	59	100.0	53	100.0	24	100.0	37	100.0

Notes: Responses about VET work placements were too low to draw conclusions but were distributed evenly among the options. SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Analysis was undertaken of the links between the industry area of work experience (for school-based New Apprentices only) of school-based New Apprentices while at school and the industry area of the career plans of the respondents, both in the final year of school and the first and second years after school. These results are given in tables 10 and 11 and rely simply on coding as either the same industry area or a different industry area.

Table 10 shows that among school-based New Apprentices who had done work experience, half planned to have a career in the industry area of their work experience, and this proportion remained two years after leaving school. Those who had not participated in a school-based New Apprenticeship were more likely to move into a different area of career plan by two years out, although in the final year of school, roughly half were aiming at a career in the area of their work experience. It needs to be remembered however that the proportion of school-based New Apprentices undertaking work experience was much lower than that of the other group.

Table 10: Relationship between industry area of work experience and career plans in final year of schooling and first and second years after school, SBNAs and non-SBNAs

SBNAs	Final year of school		First year after school		Second year after school	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Same industry area as work experience	17	50.0	15	44.1	15	50.0
Different industry area than work experience or no clear plan	17	50.0	19	55.9	15	50.0
Total responses	34	100.0	34	100.0	30	100.0
Non-SBNAs						
Same industry area as work experience	30	51.7	23	41.1	18	35.3
Different industry area than work experience or no clear plan	28	48.3	33	58.9	33	64.7
Total responses	58	100.0	56	100.0	51	100.0

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

For the school-based New Apprentices, table 11 shows a move away from the school-based New Apprenticeship industry area as a planned career area between the final year of school and the first year out. By the first year out only just over half wanted to work in the same industry area as their school-based New Apprenticeship. This finding may have some important and worrying

implications for the industries which see school-based New Apprenticeships as a way of meeting skill shortages.

Table 11: Relationship between industry area of SBNA and career plans in final year of schooling and first and second years after school, SBNA's

Career plans	Final year of school		First year after school		Second year after school	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Same industry area as school-based New Apprenticeship	33	66.0	28	53.8	25	53.2
Different industry area from school-based New Apprenticeship or no clear plan	17	34.0	24	46.2	22	46.8
Total responses	50	100.0	52	100.0	47	100.0

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Effects of workplace engagement while at school on jobs after school

The previous section examined some links between the industry area of school workplace engagement and career plans. This section looks at some relationships between such engagement and actual employment after leaving school.

The relationship between part-time jobs undertaken while at school (excluding school-based New Apprenticeships) and subsequent employment was analysed (table 2 in appendix E). Only respondents who provided an industry area for a part-time job at school and one or more employment types after school were included in the analysis. Respondents may have had multiple responses for industry area of apprenticeship/traineeship or other work after leaving school; these individuals were identified as 'same' if at least one matches the same industry area as the part-time job at school.

The numbers in these tables were low, but there seems to be an indication that, for school-based New Apprentices, their part-time work while at school (which in their case is additional to their school-based New Apprenticeship) was of relatively little importance in the work they did after school, whereas those who had not done a school-based apprenticeship were very likely to continue in the same industry area at least for their part-time jobs.

However, for school-based New Apprentices the industry area of their work after leaving school was much more likely to be linked to the industry area of their apprenticeship, as table 12 indicates. (The table has the same provisos as those mentioned for table 2 in appendix E.)

Table 12: Relationship between industry area of school-based New Apprenticeship and industry area of jobs after leaving school, SBNA's

	Full-time apprenticeship/traineeship		Full-time work		Part-time apprenticeship/traineeship		Part-time work	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Same industry area as school-based New Apprenticeship	20	80.0	10	47.6	6	75.0	19	57.6
Different industry area from school-based New Apprenticeship	5	20.0	11	52.4	2	25.0	14	42.4
Total responses	25	100.0	21	100.0	8	100.0	33	100.0

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Although the numbers are small, there is a clear indication that school-based New Apprenticeships provided a pathway into further contracts of training, both full-time and part-time, in the same industry area.

To provide greater detail and information about the effects of different types of workplace engagement, additional tables in the appendices give detailed information by examining similarities and differences in industry area of school and post-school workplace experiences (table 3 in appendix E). For this table, the industry areas were collapsed into four main categories but nevertheless some of the cell sizes are very low. The four categories were retail and personal services, fast food/restaurants, primary and secondary industries, and financial, public and community services and others.

Table 3 in appendix E suggests that the influence of respondents' workplace experiences while at school on post-school full-time and part-time jobs varied across industry areas as well as across the three types of experience available in the aggregated data. This analysis considers the two most significant industry areas (retail and personal services and fast food/restaurants) in some detail with brief comments on the other areas where the low numbers preclude findings. As could be predicted from the analysis so far, 'fast food/restaurants' dominated the part-time work opportunities of both school-based New Apprentices and those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships while at school, with almost half of the school-based New Apprenticeship group (46.9%) having part-time work in this industry and over half of the other group of respondents (55%) also working in this area while at school. This industry was also the most common industry sector in the post-school work options of the school-based New Apprentice, with 36.4% finding part-time work in this area. A significant number of school-based New Apprenticeship respondents continued or took up an apprenticeship or traineeship in the industry either on a part-time basis (25.9%) or as a full-time option (20%). While being mindful of the small numbers the percentages represent, those from the other group of respondents who began an apprenticeship or traineeship as either a full-time or part-time option post-school, indicate that fast foods and restaurants were the most significant choice, with 57.1% having this as a full-time option and 25% as a part-time option. Interestingly, from the small numbers of respondents who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships but who had undertaken a VET placement while at school, 33.3% had completed them in the fast food/restaurant area. A smaller percentage (29.9%) was involved in fast food and restaurants as part-time work post-school.

'Financial, public and community services and others' (which includes office administration) was the industry sector most commonly experienced by both groups of respondents doing work experience while at school, and this industry area remained significant for the group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships post-school. Just under 40% of this group of respondents had post-school full-time work in this group of sectors, and 35.6% had post-school part-time work in these areas. The school-based New Apprenticeship group also continued or took up options in 'Financial, public and community services and others' when they had completed school. Of the school-based New Apprenticeship group, 33.3% were working full-time in this sector, as well as the 18.5% who were completing or had begun an apprenticeship or traineeship on a full-time basis. The numbers dropped off with part-time work for the school-based New Apprenticeship group, with 27.3% having part-time jobs in this industry area and 30% taking up or continuing an apprenticeship or traineeship in this area.

'Retail and personal services' feature as the most popular option for traineeships or apprenticeships at school for the school-based New Apprenticeship group (33.9%), as well as providing part-time jobs for 37.5% of students while at school. The numbers participating in this industry area post-school for the school-based New Apprenticeship group were lower. This industry area did not feature strongly except as a part-time option post-school, with 27.6% finding some part-time work in retail or personal services. None of the other industry areas has significant numbers for analysis or discussion of findings.

Effects of workplace experiences while at school on decisions about further study

One reason for the promotion of VET programs in schools has been to make completion of schooling more attractive to less academic students who prefer practical activities. Respondents were therefore asked whether their workplace experiences had any effect on their study intentions (table 13). Unfortunately, numbers of students involved in VET placements were too low to analyse, although 5 out of the 19 who had done placements said that their placements had made them decide to stay at school longer. The table does however show that nearly a quarter of school-based New Apprentices had decided to stay at school longer as a result of undertaking the school-based New Apprenticeship. Part-time jobs and work experience were less likely to affect decisions about study.

Table 13: Effect of workplace experience on decisions about study (all respondents)

<i>Effect on decisions about study</i>	Work experience				SBNA		Part-time job			
	SBNA		Non-SBNA		No.	%	SBNA		Non-SBNA	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Stay at school longer	4	12.1	4	7.0	12	22.6	3	13.6	1	2.9
Undertake further study after school	8	24.2	7	12.3	8	15.1	3	13.6	2	5.9
Leave school sooner because of work offer	1	3.0	0	0.0	1	1.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Leave school sooner because dissatisfied	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not undertake further study after school	0	0.0	1	1.8	4	7.5	1	4.5	0	0.0
Didn't affect study intentions	20	60.6	45	78.9	28	52.8	15	68.2	31	91.2
Total of type of experience	33	100.0	57	100.0	53	100.0	22	100.0	34	100.0

Notes: Responses about VET work placements were too low to draw conclusions.
SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Further analysis was carried out to see the overall effects of workplace engagement (irrespective of the type of engagement) on study intentions. The results of this analysis showed that 77.2% of all the respondents to this question said that their workplace engagement had not affected their study intentions. But there were clear differences between the groups: 66.0% of school-based New Apprentices said that their workplace engagement had made no difference to their study intentions, whereas 86.9% of the other group gave this response. Thus it seemed that the students who undertake a school-based New Apprenticeship might be less unsure about their study plans than other students and might be more likely to be affected by what they experience and see in workplaces.

Respondents were also asked to comment on any links between the studies they had undertaken or were planning since leaving school and their workplace experiences. The qualitative comments from the group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships demonstrated the links between study and workplace experiences more strongly, with 18 having positive comments as opposed to ten comments stating there was no link to their workplace experiences at school. However, these links were characterised as slight in some instances or derivative rather than direct.

Seeing poor management and business conduct in retail and fast food has been motivation to understand business and how to manage people in some sense—but generally no other real links.

Others commented more positively where trying an industry area had convinced the respondent that this was the pathway for them.

Work experience made me realise that working in a diagnostic lab was what I wanted to do.

Some also saw the direct links as relating in a sequence.

Slightly. I did work experience at XXX Youth Arts Centre in Adelaide and all my past workplace experiences or where I have worked are all related to my studies—the course I am currently taking at university.

The respondents who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships also mentioned the idea of ruling out possibilities through workplace experiences while at school.

... those experiences helped me decide what I did not want to do.

Others commented on more generic aspects of influence.

It helped me to understand customers' behaviours and the current state of the economy etc.

My work experience at school was certainly a valuable life experience that broadened my mind, giving me better skills for the independent environment at uni.

The school-based New Apprenticeship group's qualitative comments also tended to be slightly more favourable, with the positive comments outweighing the negative comments 15 to 10. There was a group from these respondents who moved directly from school to work in the same industry area, and in some cases the same workplace:

Yes, became apprentice.

Slightly, went from hospitality to tourism.

Some interesting comments showing direct links include:

Yes. Coaching [sports] at school linked to PE degree that I am planning to study.

Yes, my future plans have been based on work experience, traineeship while at school and my year of work after school has guided me to my future profession.

Other influences on post-school pathways

It is important to remember that other factors were involved in respondents' decisions about post-school pathways. Table 14 shows the respondents' answers to provided choices.

In additional comments, the group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships mentioned the influence of parents and family in choosing a university course or in finding employment.

Father completed degree; Mum went to Uni to become a teacher.

Family and friends helped me get a job where they all worked.

The school-based New Apprenticeship group commented on the 'major influence from parents' and 'pressure from family' as well as comments demonstrating the influence of modelling: 'it seemed like the natural progression'.

Table 14: Factor that most influenced the major activity being undertaken six months after leaving school (all respondents)

Q16 Influence	SBNA		Non-SBNA		Combined	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Example of family/friend	7	12.7	10	14.3	17	13.6
A person gave advice	8	14.5	9	12.9	17	13.6
A subject at school	5	9.1	10	14.3	15	12.0
Another experience	8	14.5	6	8.6	14	11.2
Other	27	49.1	35	50.0	62	49.6
Total	55	100.0	70	100.0	125	100.0

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Family also came up as an influence as the ‘person who gave you advice’ in the next category, for example, ‘parents suggested travel’ (had not participated in a school-based New Apprenticeship) and ‘parents showed me a course list’ (school-based New Apprentice).

Those respondents who cited a subject they studied at school as the most influential factor showed the direct links clearly. From the other group there were comments such as.

I was good at art so I decided to try visual arts at uni.

I liked the Humanities subjects so I decided to do a BA

The school-based New Apprenticeship group had already started on their pathway while at school in some instances, as these comments reveal.

I did hospitality and tourism
... metalworking at my school.

In the majority of instances, the experience categorised as ‘another experience’ was work experience. Two comments point to the influence of a medical condition and its treatment.

[I learned about] the role of physiotherapists—experienced them helping greatly with certain medical conditions.

A family member was diagnosed with cancer and I wanted to research ... it.

The school-based New Apprenticeship group included comments which clearly related to school workplace experiences.

Continued apprenticeship from school.
Boss offered me apprenticeship.

Ten of the other comments in this category mentioned work experience and, in one instance, work placement, as being the most influential factor in the first major activity post-school.

The final category, ‘Other’, brought forth a very wide range of qualitative comments including:

- ✧ personal preferences: *I have always loved horses and the TAFE course would allow me to get into the industry.*
- ✧ pragmatism: *Had finished traineeship in this field. Money was a huge factor! and No influence—just what was available for juniors at the time.*
- ✧ ambition: *To get a good job you need a good education and goal since I was young—a career path I'd always dreamed of.*
- ✧ expectations: *Expectations of everybody because I have always done well at school and personal expectations.*

There were many other diverse comments about the influences, opportunities and pathways, once again demonstrating the multiplicity of pathways, reasons for further study and choices and potential selections. The respondents wrote more qualitative comments in this section than in any other. The final word perhaps belongs to the following respondent.

I thought I should take all opportunities offered to me—all contribute to my life skills.

As well as being asked about the major influence on their first activity after leaving school, respondents were asked about the major influence on their career plans since their final year at school. Table 15 shows the findings.

Table 15: Factor that most influenced career plans since final year at school

	SBNA		Non-SBNA		Combined	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Always known what wanted to do	19	35.8	17	24.3	36	29.3
Person gave advice	7	13.2	4	5.7	11	8.9
Subject at school	7	13.2	12	17.1	19	15.4
Another experience	12	22.6	20	28.6	32	26.0
Other	8	15.1	17	24.3	25	20.3
Total responses	53	100.0	70	100.0	123	100.0

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

It is not possible to directly compare the two tables, as the respondents were not offered the choice ‘always known what to do’ when asked about their first major activity after leaving school. Qualitative responses to this question indicate that work experience undertaken while at school and school factors retained some influence during this time. However, some post-school experiences had an effect. Examples of these were diverse and included job, study and personal life.

- Applied for job and got it although I didn’t really know what was involved in dentistry.
- Studying criminal justice at university.
- Growing up, finding out what really interests me.
- Learning what I enjoy doing and whether is it practical as work.
- Work placement in a journalism department.
- My boyfriend at the time—I followed him around the state.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a great deal of information about the respondents to the survey, their school workplace experiences and what they did after school. The school-based New Apprenticeship group displayed a number of different characteristics from the other group; these characteristics concur with the rather limited research literature on school-based New Apprenticeships and more generally are consistent with the characteristics that have been more widely researched of VET in Schools students. As discussed in the methodology chapter, the findings about school-based New Apprentices may be considered as more reliable and more typical of their population than those relating to the group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships. A brief summary of the main findings is as follows.

- ✧ Work experience performed a useful function in opening respondents’ eyes to career possibilities.
- ✧ School-based New Apprentices had a smoother transition into a secure and substantial post-school activity work than their non-participating counterparts, but this activity was not likely to be a full-time university course.
- ✧ Even after leaving school, jobs of both groups were concentrated in industries in which students typically worked—retail and fast-food/hospitality.
- ✧ Part-time jobs gained while at school remained important to respondents after leaving school, occasionally as the only activity, but more commonly as a supplement to full-time study or another full-time job.
- ✧ For school-based New Apprentices, their apprenticeship could confirm their decision about a career, but could also discourage them from that career.
- ✧ School-based New Apprenticeships were likely to provide a pathway into apprenticeships or traineeships in a similar industry area but school-based New Apprentices’ long-term career plans were less likely to be within that industry area.

- ✧ Work experience and school-based New Apprenticeships both had some effects on respondents' study intentions. For nearly one-quarter of school-based New Apprentices, participation in the apprenticeship made them stay at school longer. Work experience was likely, for nearly a quarter of school-based New Apprentices and an eighth of those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships, to lead to a decision to undertake further study after school. For the latter group, workplace engagement at school, and especially part-time jobs, generally had only a limited effect on study intentions.

Findings from the qualitative data

In this chapter the qualitative findings of the project are discussed with a particular focus on the second research question:

◇ How can multiple pathways be described and conceptualised?

The data utilised in this chapter are the 18 telephone interviews (two examples are included at appendix C and a summary of the interviews is at appendix D) and the 15 ‘mini case histories’ included at appendix B). The mini case histories comprised the most interesting and detailed qualitative responses to the survey, but the respondents who were also interviewed by phone were excluded from the group. Thirty-three of the total 126 respondents are therefore included in the analysis in this chapter.

Respondents’ details are given in tables 16 and 17 respectively.

The telephone interviews provided great depth and detail. The interviewees seemed to enjoy the process, in particular, the opportunity to reflect on their own journey in terms of study choices, career directions and their perceptions of the effects and value of the opportunities available to experience workplaces while at school. In interpreting the findings it needs to be borne in mind that those interviewed had agreed on their returned questionnaire to a further interview and are not necessarily typical of all respondents.

Table 16: Telephone interviews—profile of respondents

SBNA or non-SBNA	ID	Pseudonyms	Gender	School type	State	Area	Year left school
SBNA	525	Darren	M	Government	QLD	Regional city	2001
	516	Tim	M	Government	QLD	Small town	2001
	514	Luke	M	Independent	QLD	Regional city	2001
	547	Jane	F	Catholic	QLD	Capital city	2001
	537	Tara	F	Government	QLD	Capital city	2001
	521	Emily	F	Government	SA	Capital city	2002
	554	Ananti	F	Government	VIC	Capital city	2002
	559	Merpati	F	Independent	VIC	Regional city	2001
Non-SBNA	043	Emma	F	Catholic	NSW	Regional city	2003
	019	Marianne	F	Government	NSW	Small town	2001
	023	Will	M	Catholic	SA	Regional city	2002
	040	Oliver	M	Independent	SA	Capital city	2000
	057	Hugh	M	Independent	SA	Capital city	2001
	015	Donna	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2001
	049	Daphne	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2000
	050	Amanda	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2001
	070	Maria	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2001
	063	Sophia	F	Catholic	SA	Capital city	2001

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

Table 17: Mini case histories

SBNA or non-SBNA	ID	Pseudonyms	Gender	School type	State	Area	Year left school
SBNA	545	Mark	M	Government	QLD	Small town	2002
	557	Jon	M	Government	QLD	Regional city	2002
	549	Peter	M	Catholic	QLD	Regional city	2001
	536	Cindy	F	Government	QLD	Regional city	2002
	522	Brydie	F	Catholic	QLD	Regional city	2001
	508	Matthew	M	Government	QLD	Small town	2001
	528	Tim	M	Government	VIC	Small town	2003
Non-SBNA	014	Margi	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2002
	032	Vikki	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2002
	033	Anna	F	Catholic	SA	Regional city	2002
	036	Jenni	F	Government	SA	Capital city	2002
	065	James	M	Catholic	SA	Regional city	2002
	056	Jodie	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2002
	062	Rose	F	Independent	SA	Capital city	2000
	068	Teresa	F	Catholic	SA	Small town	2002

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

The effects of workplace involvement while at school on subsequent pathways

The first research question: ‘To what extent involvement with workplaces (including multiple involvement) while at school affects school leavers’ subsequent pathways, and in what ways?’ may be separated into sub-questions concerning the extent of school students’ involvement with workplaces; the ensuing pathways and choices made by school students; and whether the workplace experiences affected these pathways and choices significantly or not. The advantage of using qualitative data in responding to this set of issues is that the individuality of the students, the potential pathways and their experiences can be explored, described and analysed as exemplars of possibilities. The links between the experiences, the decisions made and the influences underpinning those choices can be seen more clearly.

First experience after school—school-based New Apprenticeship group

The school-based New Apprenticeship group from the case histories was, as might be expected, likely to be continuing the apprenticeship they had started at school. The school-based New Apprenticeship gave them an experience which became the beginning of the pathway. For example in Jon’s case, moving to full-time had a positive effect, as more hours in the workplace meant he had ‘plenty of interesting work’. Partly this was the effect of moving to a larger company as well. Jon commented, as did others, that completing the school-based New Apprenticeship had enabled him to complete Year 12.

A reason given for not continuing in the school-based New Apprenticeship was expressed by Cindy, who ‘had to work to live on my own’. It would be very challenging to live independently with such a low pay rate. In her case, her school-based New Apprenticeship in hospitality fitted well with her part-time job, which became her main activity after leaving school. One respondent, Peter, who continued with his school-based New Apprenticeship for a year after completing school, pointed out that junior apprentice wages are very low, so he chose to leave the apprenticeship in hospitality to seek a full-time position in retail where his pay moved from \$5.50 per hour to \$13.00 per hour. Peter was still very

positive about having completed part of the school-based New Apprenticeship in hospitality as he felt it was: 'good to have two backgrounds of work behind me to fall back on as a safety net'.

Both the low wage rate and the advantages of having experience in more than one industry area recurred in other respondents' comments. Brydie, who also did not continue with her apprenticeship after school, moved about for personal reasons, following her partner, and found she had a series of short jobs as she was 'confused about my career path'. Mark found that, although he did not continue, the traineeship was located in an architectural firm which exposed him to his eventual career path in engineering. He believed that: '... both work experience and the traineeship affected my career path and plans as they gave me a feeling for both engineering and architecture'.

In Mark's case, this ultimately led to university study in engineering after working at the same firm where he had done his school-based New Apprenticeship for another year. He saw his school experiences of the workplace as 'great guidance', another recurring theme. Emily valued the experience of learning from work and attributed very specific advice and assistance to what she termed 'the traineeship people' (presumably her group training organisation or registered training organisation) who: 'taught me how to apply for a job and how to work in a team while learning different skills'.

First experience after school—group who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships

The qualitative comments from the respondents who had not done a school-based New Apprenticeship suggest this group had far clearer ideas about their pathway, in the majority of cases going directly to university or other full-time study. The latter were generally less clear-cut than the former. Teresa, for example, spent her first post-school year studying hospitality at TAFE. Both her work experience and her part-time jobs in the food industry meant she 'kind of fell into the hospitality industry' where she felt she 'was lucky to find a passion for my career' as a chef, although she also envisaged maybe going on to teach in schools or lecture at TAFE in the longer term. One comment echoed by several respondents was that it would have been helpful to speak to people who had experienced some of the courses they were interested in, as there was a perception that the university information was more about selling the courses and places than explaining aspects and features, including the workload, involved in these courses. This lack of information led to course changes. Vikki, for example, did 'one year of a psychology degree' before switching to a degree in physiotherapy, which she intended to complete. Anna also changed direction at university from a Visual Arts degree to a Primary Teaching degree, as one year of the course showed her that 'art wasn't what I wanted to do, and I wanted to teach younger children'.

The effects and influence of workplace experiences while at school

The telephone interview data give a clear picture of individual experiences and the respondents' perceptions of influence. The summary of telephone interviews at appendix D indicates the extent of experiences of these individual respondents, as well as the pathway each has followed since school. This table also demonstrates, when read across rows, the industry areas of the different workplace experiences with any associated influences on these experiences. However, the main impression of this table, and one which was clearly indicated through the phone interviews was the very individual nature of the respondents, the variety of experiences and the influences these exerted, as well as the unique pathway choices made by each. Through an examination of some of the comments made by individual respondents, it is possible to examine some individual patterns and perceptions, with their stories and comments adding richer detail to the quantitative findings, even though it is not possible to generalise from the data. The following section provides some examples of pathways.

Workplace experiences—instances of strong influence

Pathway 1—Tim: Focusing career choices within an industry area

In the school-based New Apprenticeship group, Tim is one whose workplace experiences influenced his choices significantly. As the son of a fishing captain, he worked in fishing as a part-time job and this may well have been his career choice before his work experience at an Aquaculture Research Centre widened his horizons when he had the opportunity to work ‘... with the fish team on a project on increasing yield. It was breeding to get more female offspring’.

As a result of that experience, Tim went on to do a school-based New Apprenticeship at the same site, gaining a Certificate II in Agriculture. He asserted that these experiences: ‘showed me a different way of life compared to commercial fishing’, and he became aware of ‘government and environmental factors affecting the viability of [the] commercial fishing industry’, although the latter was still his part-time job. After completing one semester of a Diploma of Marine Resource Management, he changed universities and courses to work on an Environmental Science Degree, which he was currently completing. He reported that, in this degree, the ‘subjects are linked to the Agriculture traineeship’ and there was some recognition of prior learning given in his degree for the school-based New Apprenticeship competencies gained. From Tim’s perspective, all of his workplace experiences have influenced his choices, and without them he ‘wouldn’t have gone to Uni’. Although his career path was still in the marine area, his focus within that area had changed as a result of his work experience and subsequent traineeship.

Pathway 2—Luke: Diverse industry experiences

Luke’s story, while completely different, also pointed to a significant influence from his workplace experiences while at school. Firstly, his school-based New Apprenticeship in timber and fabrication encouraged him to stay at school, so he completed his traineeship. He then went on to an apprenticeship in the same area; he saw this apprenticeship as a means of ensuring he was ‘very employable’. He used workplace experiences as opportunities to make contacts and try out various options. He completed a VET in Schools course in hospitality, and enjoyed the opportunity to learn both kitchen and front-of-house skills, although he was not intending to choose this industry as a career direction. While he was on the job with his timber and fabrication school-based New Apprenticeship, he met a builder buying materials and asked if he could work on a voluntary basis during the school holidays. As soon as he had finished his current apprenticeship, he intended to find an adult apprenticeship in construction as a different but related career choice. He commented, as did some others, that the low pay rate offered to younger apprenticeships make it ‘too hard to live’, and appreciated the better rate offered to ‘mature aged apprentices’. On top of all these workplace experiences, Luke also had a part-time job which he kept beyond school. This was in retail and was not intended as a full-time choice. Luke also commented, when asked what would have been helpful in making career decisions, ‘more experience in the workplace’. He believed some of the advantages of these experiences were that he could investigate the job ‘before signing up’; he could find out what a job was really like; he could learn to work with and get on with older people and he thought it ‘teaches you what employers expect of a worker’.

Pathway 3—Darren: Continuing directly on a workplace path commenced while at school

Darren, who completed a traineeship in boatbuilding while at school, went on to take up an apprenticeship in the same field with the same employer when he finished school. The company ‘mostly get their people through school-based New Apprenticeships so if I hadn’t done that I wouldn’t have got my apprenticeship after school’. It influenced him to finish Year 12 as he had ‘to finish Year 12 and maintain good grades to be allowed to go into the full-time apprenticeship’. Darren, like many others, had a part-time job, packing at a grocery store, which bore no relation to career choices. Interestingly, although he was very committed to boatbuilding now, he stated that ‘it

wasn't actually what I wanted to do at the time'. He had ambitions to stay with the company and move into management, and he was planning to complete a Diploma in Business Management when he had completed the apprenticeship, to increase his opportunities.

Workplace experiences—other effects

There were two other models of influence recurring through both the qualitative comments and the telephone interviews.

- ✧ Experience, most commonly work experience, made the respondent aware that this career choice was not for them.
- ✧ Respondents found little value in the experience in terms of career decisions.

Many respondents mentioned that tasks given were menial and repetitive, and despite the fact that they might have enjoyed the break from school, as Sophia (who did not participate in a school-based New Apprenticeship) stated.

I enjoyed the week but knew it wasn't what I wanted to do—it was repetitive and would get boring.

There was a feeling of restriction and being forced to the sidelines in some of the comments about work experience, even when the experience did confirm a career choice. Emma (who did not participate in a school-based New Apprenticeship), for example, was interested in nursing and went on to enrol in a nursing degree; on one hand, as she said in her telephone interview, she found the work experience:

... a bit boring as you were making observations only and could not get your hands dirty. Certain training was involved with procedures in the setting so you were very restricted in what you could do.

On the other hand, and this perception came through very strongly throughout the study, the experiences actually showed the participants so much about the reality of the job. Emma stated on her survey:

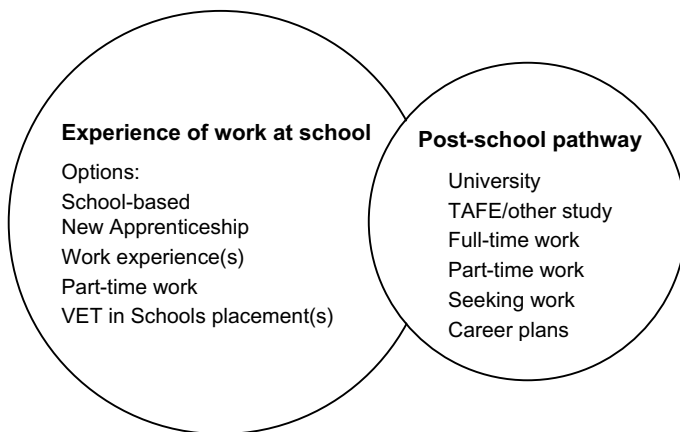
Work experience allowed me to prepare for what nursing would really be like, including the body fluids, surgery, patients, relatives and staff.

Modelling multiple pathways

How can multiple pathways be described and conceptualised? The table in appendix D displays the telephone interview data in an initial analysis of pathway modelling. In this table, reading across provides details of the industry areas and influences, as well as the pathways themselves, so it models the range of experiences of each respondent. Borders have been used in the table to fit the industry areas, and the influences, if relevant, can be read across the rows of the table. The final column shows the future study plans of respondents at the time of interview. Reading down the table demonstrates the extent of experiences and provides a snapshot of each participant's experiences during the school and post-school periods. The models below endeavour to explore these pathways by grouping those with similarities, although the individuality of each pathway needs to be emphasised.

The following models begin with a generic model (figure 4) which demonstrates the way the models are constructed. The first circle indicates the experiences of workplaces at school, while the second circle shows post-school pathways. The arrows in figures 5 to 9 show where influences from school workplace experiences have impacted on later choices. Subsequent pathways in the second or third year post-school are included in the second circle where there are changes, but in most cases the first year after school option continued.

Figure 4: Generic model of workplace experiences and post-school pathways



Each of these models attempts to show the ways in which workplace experiences during school have had an influence, or not had an influence, on choices the student made in the following year. In some cases, the influence may be direct, which is shown by arrows directly linking the two circles. In other cases, the influence is less direct, for example, where the part-time job is funding further study. In this case, although the influence is mentioned in the first circle, the arrows do not appear as it is an indirect link.

The model in figure 5 features mainly respondents whose career choices were little influenced by experiences of the workplace while at school. This group tended to spend the least time in workplace involvement, as they did a minimum of work experience, typically one week at two different workplaces; the majority had a part-time job, but not with extended hours. They described part-time work as a funding source rather than a career possibility. Their career decision-making came from very individual sources; there was much criticism of the lack of formal career advice. Sophia’s comment encapsulated much of the terrain from these respondents.

I went to uni open days, and did trial workshops in fields I was looking into. There was a careers counsellor at school and I talked to my family. I was thinking of doing a Fine Arts degree but decided on something who had a more solid career ... I think there is a real lack of information about what a uni course is actually about for school-aged children. There isn’t information about what the actual coursework is like, and lots of people start a course and are disappointed.

Sophia enrolled in a Design Studies degree, which was partly influenced by some part-time work she had obtained through her parents, who were ecologists, so she decided to approach ecology ‘in a different way’.

Figure 5: Little effect of workplace experiences

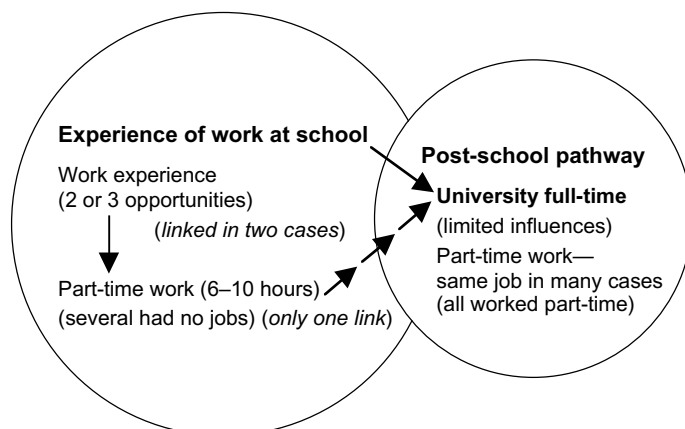
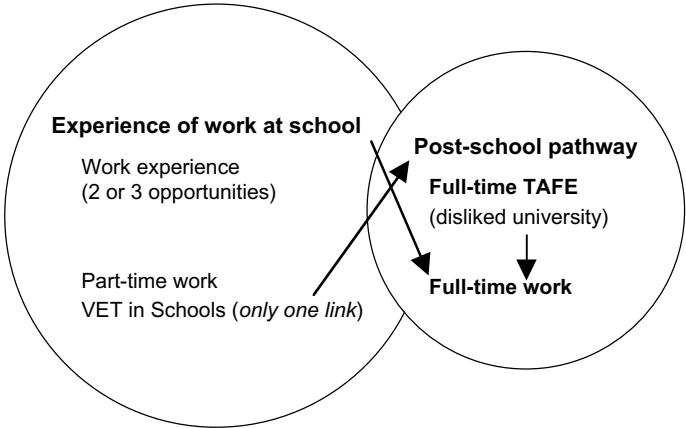


Figure 6 shows a similar pattern and again applies mainly to the group of those who had not participated in a school-based New Apprenticeship. Once again, although the workplace experiences were seen as useful, in particular, that this career was not for them, there was limited influence of their subsequent pathway. Part-time work, often carried on from the part-time job held while at school, funded further study, and those few who did not have a part-time job at school all found part-time work while at university.

Amanda is an example from this group. She changed direction very quickly as she was unable to get into the university course she wanted—teaching—and disliked the one she was accepted for, so quickly withdrew and went to TAFE full-time, with recognition of prior learning for her competencies gained in her VET in Schools course, completing a Diploma of Business before moving on to a full-time job in university administration. Oliver wanted to go to university, but his score was too low, so he worked full-time after leaving school. His major concerns were his lack of qualifications and he was still considering career options.

Figure 6: Stronger influence of workplace experience



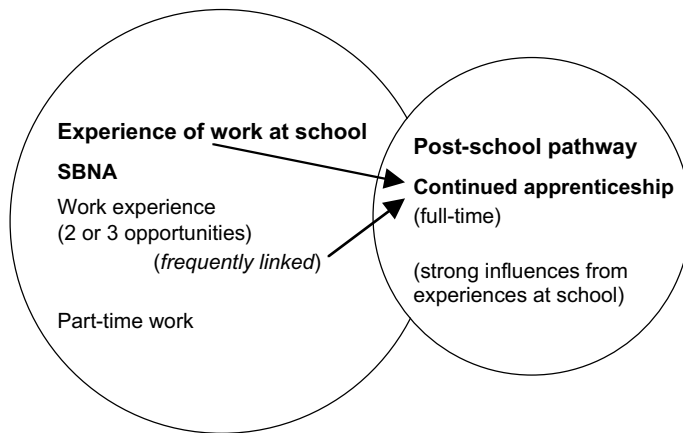
The third model (figure 7) applies to many of those who successfully completed a traineeship at school, and the direct link between the school experiences of the workplace showed the beginning of a direct pathway into an industry area selected in the school-based New Apprenticeship. Part-time work was not continued in most cases as the respondents moved smoothly from the school-based New Apprenticeship to a full-time apprenticeship in the same area, and mainly in the same workplace. Many respondents mentioned the career advice and assistance given by the organisation arranging their school-based New Apprenticeship when they were leaving school. As stated by Tara:

I was doing the traineeship at school, and the traineeship people just asked me if I wanted to do an apprenticeship and transferred me to the apprenticeship board and organised it all for me.

Many agreed with Jane’s comment on the effect of the school-based New Apprenticeship on staying at school.

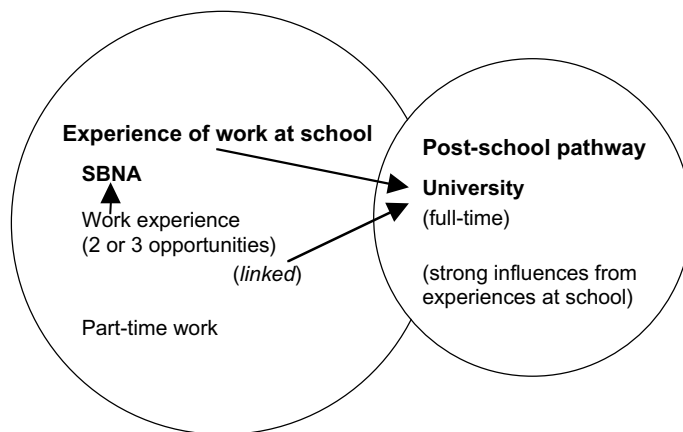
It was the opportunity to do both the apprenticeship and school that made me stay.

Figure 7: Smooth transition from school-based New Apprenticeship to subsequent pathway



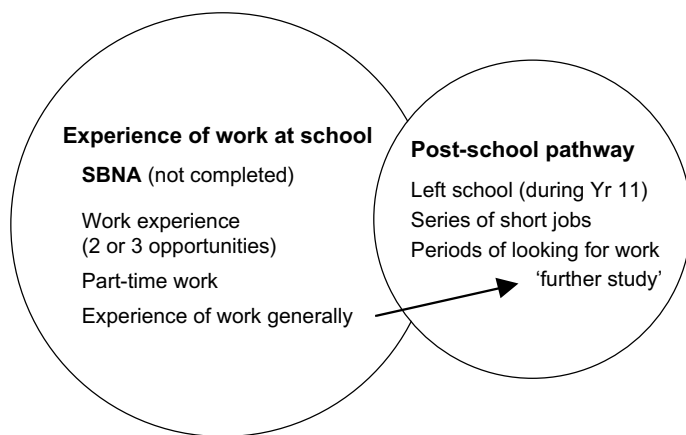
The fifth model (figure 8) depicts only one case, but it is an interesting pathway as it links from a school-based New Apprenticeship (in agriculture/aquaculture) into an environmental science degree for Tim. He was also a fisherman as a part-time job, and this might have been his career path. However, his work experience led directly to the school-based New Apprenticeship, which in turn showed him other career options involving a degree.

Figure 8: Workplace experiences refine career choice



The final model (figure 9) depicts an unusual case in these data, as it was the only example of a young person who did not finish the school-based New Apprenticeship and who has had trouble finding work, suitable study options or a career path. When Merpati was asked, in the questionnaire, to summarise what she had done since she had left school she wrote: 'Nothing. Worked a lot of jobs'. She did not finish the school-based New Apprenticeship because it was 'too repetitive' and she left both school and the school-based New Apprenticeship 'due to health and lack of motivation'. She saw the difficulty of finding work and was worried about the negative effect of having so many short jobs. 'It doesn't look good on your resume if you change jobs too many times, especially when you're young'. She was considering returning to complete a senior certificate so she could study, perhaps in the real estate field.

Figure 9: No clear pathway



Perceptions of the value of workplace involvement at school

Mini case histories

Many of the respondents' views about the worth to them of their different involvements with workplaces were very positive. A brief examination of the mini case histories indicates the importance of authentic experiences in considering options post-school. The following comments refer to the non-participating group.

James found that workplace experiences:

... did make me realise what a real workplace is like, but the chosen work placement area turned out to be an area in which I didn't really wish to pursue a career.

Part-time jobs also had a role, both in funding future or further options and in developing personal skills and aptitudes. Anna's part-time job 'allowed me to realise I like dealing with people' and influences her decision to change direction from visual arts to teaching as a career choice. Many mentioned their experiences at school giving the 'a taste of that career path' (Vikki) and she found that:

... seeing professionals in their careers communicating effectively with other people made me realise even more that I wanted to do something that involved working/communicating with people.

Part-time work also convinced some, like Rose, that 'education is vital' to allow choices of career.

Having my part-time job made me realise how much I would hate to be stuck in that lifestyle.

The school-based New Apprenticeship group had some similar reactions and observations, but many were even more positive about the value of their workplace experiences while at school. To cite Mark:

... both work experience and the traineeship affected my career path and plans as they gave me a feeling for both engineering and architecture.

Many, like Mark, mentioned that the school-based New Apprenticeship helped them to complete Year 12 as they could 'also do something I was interested in'.

Tara found that the workplace experiences in her school-based New Apprenticeship were complemented by off-the-job training.

I learned a lot in the workplace, but also in the classroom training. That was where it was really jammed into your head, and it covered everything, including stuff that wasn't covered on the workplace.

Telephone interviews

Again the school-based New Apprenticeship respondents seemed more enthusiastic about the value of workplace experiences while at school. Commenting on her three work experiences in Years 10, 11 and 12, Ananti found:

You get to see how it is outside of school, the workplace is a completely different structure to school and you need to see it.

She sums up the opinion of a number of others when reflecting on all contacts with workplaces while at school: 'I don't think I would have known what I wanted to do without it'. Ananti transferred from her school-based New Apprenticeship in hospitality to an apprenticeship with what she called a 'leap start'.

Workplace experiences were not always seen as positive, and a number of respondents commented on the perceptions, in this case work experience, that they may be seen as very limited in capacity. Tara stated: '... you get treated as though you know nothing, and given horrible jobs'. Interestingly, in this case, Tara continued in the same industry area as her school-based New Apprenticeship and post-school option as she was interested in this area. However, she echoed the theme mentioned earlier of having something to fall back on.

I'm qualifying as a chef in January, and then I am going to train in something completely different and fall back on my chef training later on. I want to train in something else while I am still young enough to learn ...

Emily also found during her school-based New Apprenticeship that workplaces were not neutral. 'My manager did not seem to like me and this put a strain on my health and working life.' After she had left, she discovered that 'the manager was investigated and as far as I know, he no longer works there'.

The idea of a school-based New Apprenticeship as a change from school was also appealing to many of the interviewees. Jane advises: 'If you're more practical than theory-wise then do a school-based New Apprenticeship just as a break from school five days a week'.

Tim echoed and confirmed this when he commented his school-based New Apprenticeship: '... made high school more bearable and provided a qualification which gave me a credit for RPL [recognition of prior learning] at university'.

As well as demonstrating the reality of the workplace to respondents, their experiences there highlighted the training and qualifications required.

Tim also liked, as others mentioned, being 'allowed one day off school to attend the workplace' where he 'enjoyed being treated as a co-worker instead of as a student'.

The interviewees who had not participated in school-based apprenticeships were less enthusiastic about the value of experiences, but still perceived benefits in differing ways. Oliver, who remained unsure of his own career pathway even though he had been employed since school in five different positions, felt that: '... [he] would have been more confused and have no ideas about industry if [he] had not experienced work at school'.

He was also made aware of the importance of qualifications through his workplace experiences both at school and beyond. He did not achieve the result he needed to attend university and believed he would have been better served to have left school for an apprenticeship. Maria also considered options other than university, advising others:

... if they're looking at uni then keep options open in case they change their mind before year 12. Don't be scared of doing only school, or of leaving school to do a trade if that's what they want. Talk to people in the field.

The idea of trying out options was emphasised by Emma, who was studying nursing. Her comment below encapsulates many of the positive comments made by other interviewees. She felt her work experience made ‘a lot of difference’. She noted:

Some people have chosen nursing and did not do work experience in that area at school. They have found the course a culture shock and some have left the program. Work experience was a good preparation and was the first step in the progression.

She would advise others to ‘grab all the work experience you can find. It narrows the window of choice’.

Daphne was less impressed with the value of experiences of workplaces at school. She believed that the important thing was to finish Year 12 as you can ‘then go and do different things’. Her experience showed her the ‘boredom of the child care industry’.

The importance of resources

The availability of financial and other resources to support the young people in their aspirations and choices was more difficult to ascertain. There were no direct questions about this topic but many respondents to the telephone interviews and in the qualitative comments on their survey forms alluded to such issues. For example, Tim left the university he first attended (although the course was preferred) as he had to keep up his part-time job to support himself and the job was at his parental home which was too far from the first university.

I didn’t have enough money to live away from home. I couldn’t get youth allowance so I had to come home every week to work for half the week. I ended up quitting after six months because it was too much. It was a two-hour drive. I was doing marine resource management and now I’m doing environmental science.

Other comments that highlight financial issues included:

I worry that I might one day want to live in town instead of on the land, and have no qualifications to get a decent job in town.

I would like to complete another apprenticeship in a different trade but would not like low pay again; too hard to live.

I worked both part-time and full-time for 18 months to qualify for youth allowance before I went to uni.

Others commented on the need to establish themselves independently. This was usually expressed as ‘something to fall back on’ and often appeared linked to worries about financial insecurity.

At the other end of the scale, some respondents shared ambitions of travel and studying overseas, which may well have been beyond the capacities and resources of others. Daphne’s future plans, for example, included studying in the United Kingdom, a situation only possible if well resourced and supported. Most young people would not even be aware of the possibility of such a pathway.

I’m going to finish my arts/law degree then I want to do a degree at Cambridge in land and economy linked to social development. It relates to my work at the pastoral company. I found out about it by accident on the internet when I was looking up a video clip of the Oxford-Cambridge boat race for my grandfather. He went to Oxford.

The variety of stories

Considering the youthful age of the participants, the diversity of their stories was fascinating. The following comments are a selection of the 95 made in response to the survey question Q31: *Briefly summarise what you have done since you left school.* The comments have been selected to display the range of experiences, and indicate both the ups and downs experienced by these young people. These quotes are from respondents in both the school-based New Apprenticeships and the non-participating cohorts and do not correspond across the table.

SBNA	Non-SBNA
<p>I have trained as a professional body piercer. I've trained as the best in the state and now I train others.</p> <p>After leaving school I went to another town and studied full-time for a year. Moved back to Gladstone and worked in construction, did uni part-time. After that deferred from uni until I moved again. I have a casual job at the moment.</p> <p>Full-time work (clerk); certificate trainee; temping (admin.); contract (project support officer) 6 months; full-time work (admin. officer).</p> <p>Arts degree uni; DipEd Melb uni; work part-time in a school after-care program and as an admin/ student support person at uni.</p> <p>Some work experience and limited study as recommended by a largely ineffectual and non-understanding employment agency. I am on a disability pension.</p> <p>I have worked full-time on cattle stations throughout Queensland and the Northern Territory for the last three years, and two years while at school.</p> <p>Worked as an apprentice chef for one year then travelled for a year. Worked retail for a year and about to travel to Canada and Europe for three years.</p> <p>Travelled to Germany, worked at same job for two years after coming back to Australia, position made redundant, started temp work, asked back to old job; resigned after five months because of too much work, spent about 680 hours each year teaching people about the Bible.</p> <p>Finished my apprenticeship, working full-time, now a manager myself training in what I have been taught.</p>	<p>Worked on a checkout in a liquor store, at a bakery and at two hotels in the last 2.5 years! I studied hospitality for a year while working in the industry and I now work at one hotel and study voice (music) at TAFE.</p> <p>Moved interstate to study full-time at university. Spent 1.5 years looking and applying for casual/ part-time work—still looking.</p> <p>Started a medical degree @ University of Adelaide (2nd year now), began part-time job at local ice-cream store, bought second hand car ... uhh ... got rid of an old boyfriend and got a new one !!! ☺</p> <p>I worked for 18 months until I fell pregnant a year ago, in that 18 months I worked I got engaged and married. At the moment I have a 7-month-old son and a baby due at the beginning of 2005.</p> <p>Full-time dental assistant @ cosmetic dental practice; dental assisting traineeship—completed end of 2002 (Cert III); dental assisting radiography (Cert IV) (currently—finish end of '04); panoramic radiography—to do next month also.</p> <p>Uni, part-time work, traineeship with university as work placement—twice.</p> <p>Looked for work for over a year and didn't find any. So went [sic] to uni for two years now.</p> <p>Had a gap year, started a traineeship for certificate III in hospitality; after the year finished ended my traineeship and went to uni, am now studying civil engineering at Wollongong Uni.</p> <p>University: year and a half, left in August 2004, Geographical Information Systems. Employment: gained employment at a car export yard working as a yard person working since August 2004.</p>

Note: SBNA = school-based New Apprenticeships.

The diversity of experiences the participants had already had was expected to continue throughout their lives. Three of the respondents made comments to this effect during telephone interviews.

I could see myself having different careers because I'm interested in so many different things.

Several, because of my own personality. Even now I'm doing two degrees, and don't expect to work in just one area. It's the nature of work now, everyone will.

You can explore so many other educational pathways. You don't choose one thing for the rest of your life.

Conclusion

Although it is difficult to summarise the findings, considering the richness and variety of the qualitative responses, the following trends could be discerned:

- ✧ Data from both telephone interviews and the comments on the survey were consistent with the findings from the survey and added descriptive richness to the findings.
- ✧ The school-based New Apprenticeship pathways overall showed that this group of respondents was more aware and confident in their decisions as they knew more about the industry areas of interest and were provided with support and advice through the process.
- ✧ Many respondents from both groups mentioned the potential of more than one pathway and involvement with more than one industry in their future careers, with flexibility possible.

- ✧ Those going directly to university, in most cases those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships, mentioned that, in a number of cases, the course(s) was not what they had expected. Some had changed direction, and others planned to change pathways in the future.
- ✧ Descriptions of individual pathways demonstrated the uniqueness and variety of each respondent's circumstances, opportunities and perceptions.
- ✧ Work experience was valuable to respondents, particularly in the group of those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships, in both selecting and rejecting career options, despite the fact that work experience was also criticised by many respondents because of its brevity and nature.
- ✧ Although perhaps obvious, the qualitative data showed that the more time respondents spent in workplaces during school, the more influence this had on their subsequent choices, particularly on first leaving school.
- ✧ While questions were not specifically asked about resources and opportunities, a number of respondents noted how lack of resources had affected their choices—either directly or indirectly.
- ✧ Part-time jobs were important, less as career pathways than as learning opportunities and means of supporting other study or career opportunities. They also provided much opportunity for respondents to learn about some of the realities of work.

Conclusions and implications

This chapter draws together the findings from the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study and relates them back to the three research questions. As discussed earlier, the fourth question about equity groups is omitted due to lack of respondents in different groups.

- ✧ To what extent does involvement with workplaces (including multiple involvement) while at school affect school leavers' subsequent pathways, and in what ways?
- ✧ How can multiple pathways be described and conceptualised?
- ✧ What are the students' views about the worth to them of their different involvements with workplaces? (This question will include exploration of the role of such involvement in the decision about when to leave school.)

In practice it proved difficult to separate the answers to the different research questions. This chapter therefore provides a general discussion of the effects of workplace experiences and a specific discussion of the different types of workplace experiences.

In interpreting this chapter, it needs to be remembered that the vast majority of the respondents (87.3%) left school in 2001 and 2002 and hence had been out of school for either two or three years at the time of the survey. In addition, the limitations of the study, discussed in the chapter on the methodology, need to be borne in mind.

In general, workplace experiences may have the following effects:

Provide pathways and links

- ✧ school-based New Apprenticeship to full-time apprenticeship post-school
- ✧ work experience to part-time jobs, during and post-school
- ✧ part-time jobs to fund further study, during and post-school.

Motivate

- ✧ Workplace experiences motivate students to complete senior schooling (especially school-based New Apprenticeships).
- ✧ Working in dull or menial positions, in part-time work and work experience, convinced some of the importance of qualifications.
- ✧ Discovering what field interests them gave a sense of direction to some respondents.

Broaden options

- ✧ Workplace experiences show vocational possibilities previously unexplored.
- ✧ They serve to eliminate potential pathways where the reality show these are not what respondents thought they were.
- ✧ They allow some to consider more than one career choice, often including the option of something to fall back on.

Afford guidance

- ✧ Workplace experiences give young people the opportunity to speak with people in the career area.
- ✧ In the case of school-based New Apprenticeships, they assist with transfer to apprenticeships.
- ✧ Workplace experiences help students to identify a passion for a specific career option.
- ✧ They enable students to try a particular area before they make big commitment.

Prepare for a working life in general and particular fields of practice

- ✧ The authentic experience confirmed or changed their decision.
- ✧ They gained entry-level and employability skills.
- ✧ Workplace experiences enabled students to be prepared for what a career actually entails.
- ✧ Workplace experiences indicated students' aptitudes.
- ✧ They increased communication skills and confidence.

The specific effects of the different types of workplace experiences are discussed in the following section.

School-based New Apprenticeships

These were highly valued for the development of employability skills and appeared to lead to a safe transition into a substantial post-school destination. This was typically another apprenticeship or traineeship, often in the same industry area, or an ordinary full-time job. However, there seemed to be some disadvantages. From the point of view of the participants, school-based New Apprenticeship could be seen as narrowing future pathways. Participation in these apprenticeships appeared to be associated with a lower chance of going to university than had been originally planned by the participants. Moreover, school-based New Apprentices were less likely to undertake work experience than other students, thereby losing their chance of experiencing different workplaces; for school-based New Apprentices more than for others, those who did undertake work experience reported that this experience had opened their eyes to a new industry area. From the point of view of industry, career aspirations of the young people were less likely than actual jobs to be in the area of the school-based New Apprenticeship; in other words, a proportion were in jobs related to their apprenticeship but they wanted to move into other industry areas. Linked to this is the fact that nearly a quarter (23.9%) of school-based New Apprentices compared with one-eighth (12.9%) of those who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships said that their major activity six months after leaving school was not what they had planned.

A conclusion could be drawn that students who undertake a school-based New Apprenticeship might be less unsure about their study and career plans than other students and might be more likely to be affected by what they experience and see in workplaces. Hence their solid post-school pathways as described in the findings might be apparent rather than real.

Part-time jobs undertaken while at school

These remained important for a large proportion of respondents well into their post-school years. In some cases these led to full-time jobs, including apprenticeships and traineeships. Retail and fast food/hospitality, the typical areas in which students worked, continued to predominate in post-school employment. This contrasts sharply with the relative diversity of industries sampled during work experience. However, it needs to be remembered that many respondents were still studying full-time at university and had not yet commenced any substantive career positions.

Work experience

Work experience was less highly valued as a way of developing employability skills than other forms of school workplace engagement. It was more highly valued by school-based New Apprentices than by others, even though only two-thirds of school-based New Apprentices undertook work experience. Despite this, work experience was influential in less evident ways, as shown quite clearly in both the telephone interviews and qualitative comments. Respondents found out about areas they considered to be their preferred options, and in some cases found their perceptions were wrong. In others, the work experience provided information and experience which allowed them to refine and redefine their choices within a career area. In the case of those respondents who had not participated in school-based New Apprenticeships, having a number of work experience opportunities gave them the chance to sample career and industry options, which in most cases confirmed their own decisions. Positive comments about work experience were in spite of the fact that there was a clear realisation that work experience students were very 'low status' and were rarely given responsibility while in the workplace.

Multiple engagement with workplaces

Multiple engagement with workplaces was likely to lead to less 'conventional' pathways. For example, school-based New Apprentices who only did a school-based New Apprenticeship were more likely than the average school-based New Apprentice to proceed into an apprenticeship after school. Those who did not participate in school-based New Apprenticeships and who had no workplace engagement were likely to go straight to university, as were school-based New Apprentices who had opportunities to experience other types of workplace engagement, such as work experience and part-time work. However, there are many factors that might be involved here, both in the underlying choice of extent and modes of workplace engagement, and in the effects of such workplace engagement upon post-school pathways.

The effects of workplace engagement in the context of other factors

Examination of the qualitative data makes it plain that the effects of workplace engagement on post-school pathways are limited. Many other factors, including financial issues, family and personal events, personal interests and non-work aspirations affect what young people do after they leave school.

However workplace experiences undoubtedly exert some influences, including:

- ✧ exposing young people to the workplace and assisting the development of employability skills
- ✧ exposing young people to career areas; in this context it is worrying that a substantial minority of school-based New Apprentices are not accessing work experience
- ✧ providing young people with additional resources (both financial and in the form of contacts and information), thereby enabling them to widen their choices post-school.

Conclusion

While the findings of the study do not provide a neat picture of post-school destinations and activities, they provide a more realistic picture than many other studies which do not fully acknowledge the multiplicity of activities of recent school leavers and the reasons why they make the choices they do. The qualitative data in particular provide a rich and detailed picture of the diversity of choices and influences working upon school leavers when considering their options, and

demonstrate that these influences continue to affect choices during the initial post-school years. One finding which emerged strongly was the importance of experiences in the workplace during school in assisting students to make informed choices; they were also important in motivating young people. Work experience for example was seen as valuable, as it provided the opportunity to increase confidence to interact with people of all ages, and it helped many respondents to start on their eventual career pathway. Even though few respondents were, at the time of the study, on a pathway flagged by work experience, it seemed that the work experience industry area often remained as a future career goal.

Observation of and familiarisation with the world of work in all types of experience were seen as having great value. Those respondents currently at university or involved in other further study frequently mentioned ‘having their eyes opened’ during either part-time work or other experiences in a way very different from school experiences. Most telephone interview respondents mentioned the importance of seeking broad experience and seeing how the world operates before making decisions, including seeking opportunities to experience the workplace. Less than satisfactory careers advice meant for some that personal experience was the best way to understand different jobs.

A number of specific findings about school-based New Apprenticeships will provide useful information for policy-makers in this area. These findings include their high employment rate, the lower than planned rate of entry to university, and the fact that, while many school-based New Apprentices are keen to start on an already planned career, some may be less certain than other students about their preferred career path. It is therefore important that undertaking a school-based New Apprenticeship does not preclude these young people from other opportunities of experiencing different workplaces and learning about other careers.

The mix of those who were sure of their career interests, those whose ideas changed over time and those who were less sure and therefore more affected by actual experiences, extended to both groups of respondents. Thus the study gave examples that supported all types of major careers theories—trait/personality, longitudinal and environmental theories. There was no strong evidence to suggest the predominance of any one theory to explain the data gathered in the study. Equally, there was no evidence that workplace engagement was the most important factor in career planning and actual pathways; other factors often predominated.

Implications for policy and practice

The following implications emerged from the findings.

- ✧ Opportunities to experience the workplace while at school can provide much information to students in relation to their own abilities and interests prior to their making pathway decisions and career choices. They also provide students with networks of contacts and with awareness of a range of opportunities.
- ✧ These opportunities may also provide generic skills which enhance their employability. Through preparation prior to workplace experiences of all types, employability skills could be fostered, monitored and developed through career education or other school curriculum in conjunction with these experiences.
- ✧ Policy-makers and schools need to ensure that undertaking a school-based New Apprenticeship does not narrow students’ options. Actions could include ensuring that school-based New Apprentices also undertake work experience, and providing encouragement and support to those who aim for university.
- ✧ The learning that many school students experience through part-time work opportunities while at school is very influential in terms of motivation and knowledge underpinning choices of future pathways. Hence part-time jobs could be formally considered by policy-makers, as well as teachers and career advisers, as part of a wider network of learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

- ✧ The industry areas school students are able to access through part-time work are limited, typically in many cases to retail and fast food/hospitality. Broader opportunities are only available through VET placements and work experiences. As part-time jobs often lead to post-school employment in the same workplace or industry, industries which do not currently offer part-time employment opportunities to school students might consider the advantages to be gained by creating such opportunities. Industries expecting labour shortages could particularly benefit.
- ✧ Apprenticeships and traineeships offer low wage rates for people in the initial stages of the program and this could affect their ability to live independently, and/or complete the qualification. The findings suggest that this did not necessarily deter many respondents, but may have been a problem for some.
- ✧ As many of the respondents continued in their school part-time jobs after leaving school in a permanent or interim capacity, or primarily to fund further study, the significance and effects of part-time student-working clearly merit further research. A particular concern may be the disadvantages that may now be associated with the lack of a part-time employment record.
- ✧ There is a perception of a lack of current effective career advice. Comments about deficiencies related both to job information and to university course information.
- ✧ It is important to ensure that careers in the industries in which students typically work, both during their school years and subsequently, are given equal prominence with other industry areas, in terms of advice and information provided to them while at school.

Implications for further research

Further research needs emerged as follows:

- ✧ the perceived narrowing effects of school-based New Apprenticeships and whether these effects are problematic
- ✧ the ways in which young people use their part-time employment 'portfolios' in later career moves
- ✧ the ways (acceptable to all parties) of integrating workplace experiences into documentation of school students' achievement
- ✧ the adequacy of careers advice and appropriate methods of professional development for careers advisers
- ✧ particular issues pertaining to equity groups which clearly can only be researched through targeting these groups specifically.

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Support document details

Additional information relating to this research is available in *How workplace experiences while at school affect career pathways: Support document*. It can be accessed from NCVER's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>. The document contains:

- ✧ Appendix A: Telephone interview protocol
- ✧ Appendix B: Mini case histories
- ✧ Appendix C: Sample telephone interviews
- ✧ Appendix D: Summary of telephone interviews
- ✧ Appendix E: Additional tables
- ✧ Appendix F: Questionnaire



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