

Submission on the consultation discussion document for Reform of Vocational Education

From the

Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc – Te Kawarangi

Summary

The Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc (AAPNZ) puts forward this submission on the Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) to express their views, particularly in relation to the retention of workplace assessment to recognise the skills and competencies of their members and administrative professionals in New Zealand. Workplace assessment comes in various forms. The most effective is that of oral assessment including methodologies from Assessment by Professional Conversation (APC)¹, which allows for reflection by the candidate (learner/student) on their work practises and development of their underlying depth of knowledge.

Administrative professionals may gain some of the more common skills they require through learning either at school or through a tertiary institution before they enter the work environment. However, many gain the specific skills and knowledge required through “on-the-job training”, “ad-hoc training” and “just-in-time training”. This learning often takes place over many years and is added to as is required by each new position they hold, depending on what that position requires.

AAPNZ strongly supports the retention of workplace assessment. It encourages those responsible for current reforms to ensure that, as a part of these reforms, the APC processes requiring the skills and knowledge of workplace assessors are not lost. The value of this type of assessment and qualification achievement is clearly demonstrated in both Appendix 1 (Research Paper - The Stories) and Appendix 2 (AAPNZ Members Stories)

Introduction

Administrative professionals as a term, covers over 50 titles for those who work in administration in New Zealand of which there were 240,000 people, 4/5^{ths} of whom are women, as at the 2010 census.²

This submission has been based on questions in the on-line survey on the website consultation.education.govt.nz. The questions that have been answered in our submission are in the order they were placed in the survey.

The questions are:

1. Please tell us about you (questions 1 – 12) - this is covered under the heading “Background”
2. The current system (questions 13 – 15) - this is covered under the heading “Current system”
3. Proposal 1, 2 and 3 (questions 16 – 33) - this is covered under the heading “Proposals 1, 2 and 3”
4. Impacts of change (question 38) - this is covered under the heading “Specific characteristics of Administrative Professionals”

¹Appendix 1 Competency International Ltd (CIL) – paper delivered to IAEA 2009

² Masters of Education Thesis, VUW, Administrative professionals in New Zealand: their professional development opportunities and career pathways – Ethelwyn Lloyd, 2010 - <https://aapnz.org.nz/research>.

5. Function of Industry Skills Body (question 44a and 44b) – covered under the heading “Function of Industry Skills Body”
6. “Other information relevant to this discussion - International Involvement”.

Background

AAPNZ has been in existence since 1972, formerly under the name of New Zealand Society of Executive Secretaries. This changed in 2000 to the current name which better reflects the wide range of titles seen today. AAPNZ is recognised by NZQA as the Peak Body for all administrative professionals. It provided input into the former national qualifications and into the development of the current, New Zealand qualifications in Business (Administration and Technology) developed through the Mandatory Review of Qualifications (MRoQ). AAPNZ has representatives on the post-MRoQ review panels of the relevant strands of these qualifications started in December 2018.

Those who work as administrative professionals, often do not hold a relevant qualification and as a highly female gendered occupation, they are often seen as not requiring upskilling within their role. This limits their ability to have a career pathway or to move to another role. Much of this is due to societal beliefs which has led to a perceived lack of value in the role and a lack of value by the administrative professional in themselves – this is demonstrated frequently by the words “I am **just** a receptionist/Personal Assistant/accounts person/etc.”³

AAPNZ, developed a Certification process which is a form of registration such as is required by teachers, nurses, accountants and as voluntarily required by builders, plumbers, etc. AAPNZ Certification was launched in New Plymouth 2004 by the then member of Parliament for New Plymouth the Hon Harry Duynhoven. Certification has become the professional development goal for many AAPNZ members. It is sought after by those; new to the profession, new to New Zealand, those wishing to hold a qualification (regardless of age), wishing to meet the challenge of new and younger employees, aware of the change in the administrative role due to new technologies and those wishing to take their work to a new level through career pathway opportunities.

Many of those keen to achieve certification have worked for many years in the administrative profession but have never held a relevant tertiary level qualification. However, they are often not in a situation where they can take time off work to undertake “learning” in areas they already know and as is required for their workplace, so tertiary learning to gain a relevant qualification is uninspiring. The current situation is a demotivating factor for administrative professionals, as adult learners. However, achieving a relevant qualification through workplace assessment especially professional conversation, as has been available in the recent past, increases their depth of knowledge and enhances their value of self.

Achieving AAPNZ Certification currently has three criteria, one of which requires a formal qualification, registered on the NZQA Framework at Level 5 or above, 120+ credits. When the Certification process was being developed in 2003, the question was asked of 120 members present, “What level do you want the formal qualification to be?”. Unanimously this was chosen to be a Level 5. However, when the question was asked of the 120 attendees “How many of you hold a L5 qualification?” only five people put up their hands.

Workplace assessment, recognising the skills and knowledge gained by this group of workers, provides the perfect opportunity to gain a qualification while at work. Where a gap is found in the knowledge required, that becomes a focus for professional development opportunities for new learning. That new learning may be gained in many ways – through secondment at work, through in-

³ Lloyd, 2010

house training, external training or completing a TEO course to name the most common opportunities. It is noted that filling a knowledge gap through new learning at an ITP for those undertaking a qualification by workplace assessment, has proved challenging for many due to the lack of flexibility in the current vocational education options. This is further explained in a second piece of research⁴.

It is also important to note that some of those who achieve a L5 qualification in the workplace then have the confidence to undertake and achieve higher qualifications and higher-level roles at work⁵.

Current system

AAPNZ supports the premise that the current system isn't working in a wide variety of ways.

This is demonstrated through the experiences of AAPNZ members trying to gain the previous qualifications (L4 NCBA and L5 NDBA) in the workplace, where a gap was identified and yet barriers to filling those gaps were experienced.

The current New Zealand qualification (post MRoQ) make-up is different, however, it may still lead to complexities where assessment of current skills and knowledge needs to be combined with new learning. Therefore, this is a good time for these situations to be discussed and accounted for during the proposed changes, however they resolve.

The majority of administrative professionals AAPNZ members, have 10+ years of experience in administration therefore returning to a learning environment for skills and knowledge they currently have is neither motivating nor likely. Therefore, workplace assessment, such as APC, recognising those skills and knowledge is essential to their achieving a relevant formal qualification.

There has been no single ITO for administrative professionals as they crossed all industries. Workplace assessors were registered with one or more ITOs. This system put limits around the candidate, dependent on the industry in which they worked. Those administrative professionals who work for the public sector, local government, hospital boards, schools were largely covered by the Skills Organisation; those who worked for a trade were intended to be covered by those trade ITO's. However, in practise this did not always work. Trade ITOs perhaps did not feel administration was part of their core business or they only held scope in business administration for individual unit standards or a much lower level qualification e.g. L3. Many other industries e.g. insurance, SMEs in a wide range of industries/businesses, not-for-profit, etc had no ITO that covered them.

In 2013 ETITO (which had taken over the Public Sector ITO Learning State and then more recently became Skills Organisation) agreed to take AAPNZ as an entity. AAPNZ's members were finally able to achieve a qualification using registered assessors and were reported through the Skills Organisation, regardless of their employing industry.

In 2018 the Skills Organisation arbitrarily decided they no longer wished to work with AAPNZ as the numbers we were reporting in any one year were too few for them to be interested (they wanted cohorts of 30 – 40 at a time, AAPNZ were looking at 5 – 10 per year maximum). They also indicated that they would no longer be offering the L5 New Zealand Diploma in Business (Admin & Technology) (NZDB (Admin & Tech)). This effectively stopped administrative professionals from

⁴ Filling the knowledge gap for administrative professionals undertaking their National Diploma in Business Administration L5, 2011 – Ako Aotearoa funded research project: Vivienne Kermode, Waiariki Institute of Technology and Eth Lloyd, Enderby Associates Ltd. <https://aapnz.org.nz/research> Both members of AAPNZ.

⁵ See the stories in both Appendix 1 and 2

gaining a qualification in the workplace through workplace assessment, as our skilled workplace assessors no longer had a reporting avenue.

Very few ITOs had the scope for the former qualifications, one or two are offering the L4 New Zealand Certificate in Business (Administration & Technology) (NCB (Admin & Tech)), none are offering L5 and L6 NZDB (Admin & Tech). Consequently, achieving a L5 qualification through workplace assessment is no longer possible for administrative professionals.

Some ITPs offer “recognition of prior learning” however this is a very expensive process and was often less attractive to those in the workplace than carefully structured oral assessment or APC, especially where the candidate historically had not achieved through any form of examination system in their past (secondary schooling).

ITPs largely deliver “courses” with pre-determined 15+ credit groupings of unit standards rather than individual standards. They are generally not keen on an individual who wishes to undertake a specific small piece of learning to fill a gap in their knowledge to achieve their qualification. One way this could be handled is discussed in the research listed in footnote 4, but few ITPs were able to see this as a way forward, especially given the current funding model.

Proposals 1, 2 and 3

AAPNZ takes no particular stand on the proposals suggested. However, given the points raised above, a unified funding model that focusses on the individual candidate (learner/student), to assist them gain their qualification, would hugely assist AAPNZ’s members and all administrative professionals throughout New Zealand. A financially seamless focus on the achievement of a candidate (learner/student) whether through workplace assessment, new learning, transfer to a different location or a blend of all, would be a true advantage for the candidate (learner/student). This would truly be candidate (learner/student) focused rather than organisationally centric.

Specific Characteristics of the Administrative Professional

A significant barrier to administrative professionals seeking professional development support is their lack of value of self, i.e. they won’t ask as they believe they are not worth it, or they believe they will be turned down, or that the organisation cannot afford it⁶.

Additionally, administrative professionals very often report barriers to their professional development no matter what area of industry they work in. Some workplaces consider them a “cost” rather than a “revenue earner” or “core service provider”, so do not include their professional development alongside core staff e.g. teachers, nurses, sales people, factory workers⁷. In recent general discussion this is noted as being less now within the public sector as equity issues have come more to the fore.

It is important to administrative professionals that they have the opportunity to attain a formal qualification which:

- recognises the skills and knowledge they currently demonstrate within their own work environment
- and undertake new learning if required to fill areas where there is a gap in knowledge.

⁶ Lloyd, 2011 (p100)

⁷ As no research has been conducted specifically on this aspect, this is anecdotal, but is consistent through many discussions with administrative professionals of their experiences when asking for professional development and was raised in the focus group discussions during research

This qualification achievement enables administrative professionals to develop:

- a greater value of self
- a willingness to undertake more complex tasks and roles
- and sometimes an increased desire for higher learning.

One example of this is a young woman with high home commitments, no formal qualifications, who felt she had failed at school. However, she had several years' administrative work experience, managing the administrative staff and tasks at a small city public hospital āwhina health unit. She undertook a L5 NDBA and achieved that to a high standard. She asked, "What is next for me, what further qualifications can I attain?". She was recommended to apply to the nearest university to undertake a Master of Business (MBA). She was shocked that she could consider this, however her increase in confidence led her to do so and she was accepted, achieving "A" passes in the first three papers she completed.

This success story demonstrates one example of a human resource in a business environment which was untapped until she found the opportunity to achieve her first qualification using her skills and knowledge from her workplace. This achievement raised her value of self and her confidence. It opened the door to further higher learning which she rapidly demonstrated she was very capable of achieving at a high level.

Function of Industry Skills Bodies

"Industry and employers in the workplace should have a skills leadership role" to influence the skills development system. AAPNZ would like to see that include and learners. Based in andragogy⁸ 'adult learners' need a stake in the development of their learning, they also often know what skills are required. For example, administrative professionals are often first to learn new business technologies which come into a workplace or they may actively seek new technologies, apps, etc which will assist the work environment and they then train others in the workplace to use that new technology. Not all candidates (learner/student) are young and inexperienced, there are a significant number who are mature with wide experience who could add value and detailed perspectives to the discussions on the skills development system. Tapping into these workers through workplace assessment brings an intimate knowledge of the skills and knowledge required in the workplace.

"Many should be involved in programme development". When adult skills development is being considered it is important to remember that 'adult learners' (in respect to andragogy) gain the most out of learning opportunities where they have participated in the development of and need a stake in what they are learning, particularly to see the relevance to them and their environment. The involvement of candidates (learners/students) in programme development could provide more engagement and success. Consulting with these workers will bring strong and intimate knowledge of the workplace and how those in it might best achieve a programme of learning.

Other Information relevant to the discussion - International Contribution

New Zealand is envied by administrative professionals around the world for our vocational education system. AAPNZ is currently instrumental in running the World Administrators Summit (WASummit). This event is held every two years where up to three delegates from many countries in the world meet to discuss and find potential solutions to issues of importance to administrative professionals internationally. AAPNZ Life Member, Eth Lloyd MNZM, has been Chairman of the

⁸ Lloyd, 2011 (P11)

Advisory Council for the WASummit since 2012. The Advisory Council is made up of representatives from various regions around the world.

As Chairman, Eth oversees the hosting of the event and manages the Task Forces who have been asked by the Delegates to research various topics, to ensure they are ready for the next summit. The 11th WASummit will be held in 2020 in Wellington New Zealand.

AAPNZ Past National President, Wendy Rapana is Task Force Leader, leading the International Credentialing Team (from 2016). Wendy's team for the first stage of this topic had members from the USA, Canada, Uganda, South Africa and Papua New Guinea. Since the 2018 WASummit, the team is tasked with completing stage two of this topic with members from South Africa, the USA and Trinidad & Tobago. The International Credentialing team is seeking to develop an understanding of the levels of different relevant qualifications (NQF) and certifications (non-NQF) that are available to administrative professionals around the world. New Zealand has taken the lead on this due in part to our vocational education system. Our process of recognising skills and knowledge gained in a workplace using workplace assessment as the assessment method, or part of a method, for gaining our fit-for-purpose qualifications (NZCB (L3 and 4) and NZDB (L5 and 6) in Business (Administration and Technology)) is highly valued.

Case Studies

We attach three case studies of the value of workplace assessment in achieving a L4 or L5 qualification in Appendix 2 AAPNZ - Workplace Assessment Stories, through recognising the skills and competencies of those who work as administrative professionals.

Conclusion

AAPNZ would be willing to meet and talk with those who are making the decisions on the Reform of Vocational Education to further present our case.

AAPNZ would very strongly support changes which make sure that workplace assessment (including oral assessment and methodologies from APC) remain available within our country, but particularly which recognises and values the contribution that workplace assessment makes to our members who are part of the business workforce and the wider workforce generally.

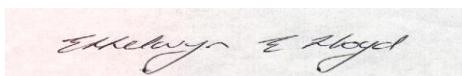
Signed by:



.....

Date:

AAPNZ National President,
Alison McKessar NZDipBus AAPNZ (Fellow, Certificated)



.....

Date: 21/03/2019

AAPNZ Professional Development Advisor,
Eth Lloyd MNZM, M.Ed., NDBA, AAPNZ (Life, Fellow, Certificated)

APPENDIX 1 – Research Paper - Creating behavioural change through assessment, 2009

Authors: Liz Bowen-Clewley, Greg Clewley, Jenny Grainger – Competency International Ltd, New Zealand
Colin McDonnell – Tai Poutini Polytechnic, New Zealand
Stan Whitefield – Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand

Paper Presented at the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) Conference in Brisbane, 2009

Abstract

Assessment by Professional Conversation™ (APC™) was originally developed as a tool for assessing current competence for high level, integrated performance, mainly in the management and service sectors. Use of the method in a wide range of contexts over a number of years suggested that there were significant other benefits for both candidates and employers and that far from being solely an assessment process it is a high-level learning process in its own right which promotes significant behavioural change. Improved performance, higher levels of motivation and commitment to further learning have been directly attributed to the APC™ process. To determine whether there are sufficient data to support this claim, users of the process, in conjunction with CIL agreed to undertake research within their candidate population. Initial data has been collected through candidate surveys and compared with evaluation data collected by Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Follow-up interviews have yet to be undertaken with candidates and employers as a change of government and economic imperatives have limited access to these people. Case studies are also being developed. The interim results of this research will be reported in this paper.

1. Introduction

In 1998, Dr Chris Devereux from the United Kingdom and Liz Bowen-Clewley of New Zealand were both working in the field of assessing workplace learning against competency standards and met to discuss their conceptual frameworks and methodologies.

Independently they had reached similar conclusions that traditional methods of workplace assessment such as observation and questioning had proved to be limited when assessing integrated, high-level work performance. They concluded that there was a need for an additional methodology to assess such integrated knowledge and skills that had often been obtained by a mixture of informal and formal learning and for which recognition of current competence was an appropriate form of assessment.

Devereux had developed an assessment methodology called Professional Conversation for use in the assessment, initially, of customer service skills that he described in his handbook *Rigour without Rigidity*⁹. This approach has been adapted by Bowen-Clewley and used in New Zealand and South Africa for the assessment of management competence, both in contextualised situations (asset management) and in broad based management (meat processing, teaching and mining). It is now widely used through government departments,

⁹ Devereux, C (1997) *Rigour Without Rigidity* WA Consultants

private companies and for individuals. The underlying premises and strategies of the methodology were reported at the IAEA Conference in Singapore in 2002.

Use of the method in this wide range of contexts over a number of years suggested that there were significant additional benefits for both candidates and employers and that far from being solely an assessment process, it is a high-level learning process in its own right that promotes significant behavioural change. Anecdote has suggested that improved performance, higher levels of motivation and commitment to further learning can be directly attributed to the APC™ process.

Two organisations in particular have adopted the methodology, the Ministry of Social Development and Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP). The staff involved in implementing and monitoring APC™ in both organisations are convinced that there is a wider benefit to both individual and organisations, and in order to determine the validity of this hypothesis CIL, MSD and Tai Poutini Polytechnic agreed to conduct qualitative research using a questionnaire followed by a semi structured interview technique.

This was intended to explore:

- the extent to which the APC™ preparation, and overall assessment process has contributed to a student's learning and development
- the identification of any learning and development component in APC™
- the manner in, or process by which any learning has occurred
- the outcomes or benefits of any learning and development to the student and the employer which might occur/have occurred as part of the APC™ assessment process.

2. Useful Definitions

- Recognition of Current Competence
A formal assessment of a candidate's performance in relation to specified unit standards or learning outcomes
- APC™
A learning and assessment methodology for assessing workplace learning through Recognition of Current Competence. The technique allows students to demonstrate their understanding and give examples of their skills and attitudes through discussion and the collection of supporting evidence.
- Learning and Development
Learning is a permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of experience. There are several aspects to this definition:
 - Firstly, learning involves a change in attitude or behaviour
 - Secondly, learning involves some form of practical experience
 - Thirdly, this practical experience must be reinforced over time for learning to take placeDevelopment is the process of helping individuals to develop and fulfil their potential

3. Methodology

Sample

Two groups were to be surveyed:

- APC™ candidates from the last 5 years

- Employers of participants who respond

Questionnaires¹⁰ were sent by MSD¹¹, Tai Poutini and CIL co-ordinators on a random basis to a maximum of 100 candidates.

Analysis of Data

The data was collated, synthesised and analysed to particularly reflect:

- Issues, trends, themes synthesised from the responses for each question
- The identification of any specific Learning and Development components in the APC™ process
- The extent to which the participant responses reflect APC™ as a Learning and Development tool (as distinct from an Assessment tool).
- The extent to which the APC™ process has contributed to students' learning and development
- The manner in, or process by which any learning has occurred
- The outcomes and benefits which can be attributed to the Learning and Development components

Initial case studies were developed to support the issues and the themes raised.

Ethics

- Participants were given the option of anonymity. Where this is selected, employers will not be followed up.
- All data will remain confidential with no information attributed to named individuals
- Participants were made aware that the information will be the subject of a conference paper

4. Some thoughts on the underpinning theory on behavioural change

In thinking about APC™ as a tool for influencing behavioural change we have been strongly influenced by a number of theorists:

- Daniel Goleman and his work around emotional intelligence
- Chris Argyris and Donald Schön and their work on generative learning
- Derek Melser and his ground-breaking work on thinking as a socially mediated action in its own terms.

4.1 Goleman¹² identifies five components of emotional intelligence:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

Under the facilitation of a coach or mentor, the processes of reflection, questioning and justification of their behaviours and approaches to leadership and methods of solving problems, students develop far greater self-awareness. This leads to greater self-confidence – they clearly know what they know and believe it, and what they are good at

¹⁰ The questionnaire is available on request

¹¹ Questionnaires were sent to a different sample in MSD from those involved in their review

¹² Daniel Goleman *Leadership That Gets Results* Harvard Business Review Article Mar 01, 200

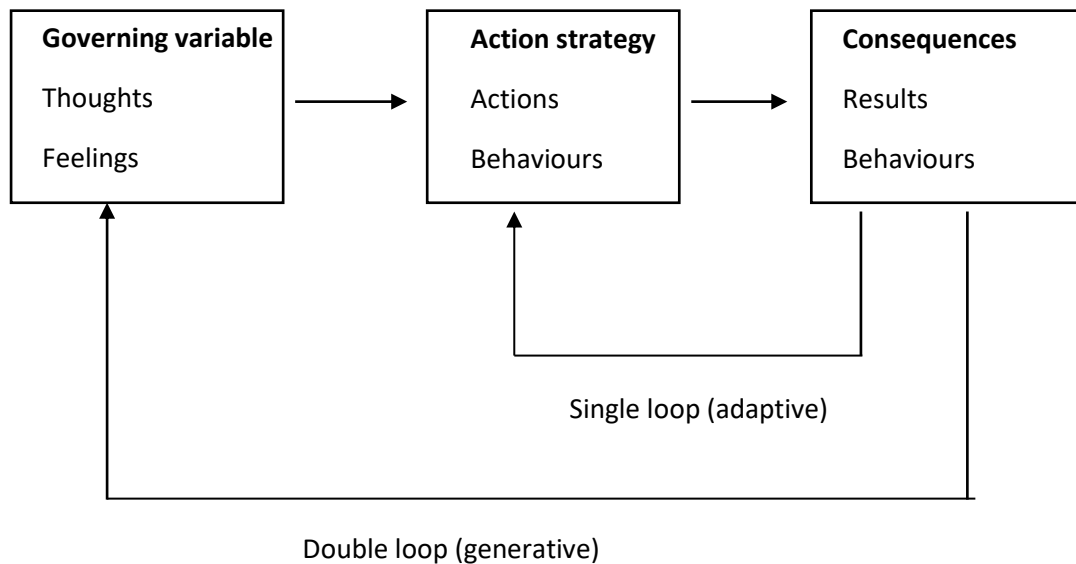
and believe it. APC™ provides independent verification of this, and this has a significant impact, especially if the participant does not have qualifications and have learned on the job.

This process also provides the base information for the self-regulation component where students identify areas where they may need to control or redirect their disruptive impulses and moods and work to their strengths rather than weaknesses.

4.2 Argyris¹³ and Schön’s work on the notion of mental maps and their related single and double loop learning also indicates how behavioural change takes place. For Argyris and Schön (1978) learning involves the detection and correction of error. They suggested that for many people, where something goes wrong, a starting point is to look for another strategy that will address and work within the governing variables. In other words, given or chosen goals, values, plans and rules are operationalised rather than questioned. According to Argyris and Schön (this is single-loop learning. See Fig. 1 below)

An alternative response is to question the governing variables themselves; to subject them to critical scrutiny. This they describe as double-loop learning. Such learning may then lead to an alteration in the governing variables and, thus, a shift in the way in which strategies and consequences are framed. This they see as critical to professional learning and as what distinguishes professional from non-professional behaviour.

Figure 1 Single and double loop learning



This emphasis on reflective practice is critical to establishing and maintaining behavioural change as it creates new paradigms for the learner.

Derek Melser is a new entrant in the field of cognition. His book *The Act of Thinking*¹⁴ challenges the core assumption of cognitive science – that thinking goes on in the head. Melser argues that thinking is not an intracranial process of any kind, mental or neural, but

¹³ Argyris, M. and Schön, D. (1974) *Theory in Practice. Increasing professional effectiveness*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

¹⁴ Melser, D *The Act of Thinking*, MIT Press 2004

rather it is a learned action of the person which is socially mediated. For Melser, rather than thinking being a process that begins in the head but extends beyond it, it is a personal-level activity, something that a person does through his/her actions. Since Melser views such activities as disjoint from natural processes, thinking is not a natural process at all, the sort of thing that we might study scientifically. Thus, thinking is a personal action that calls for a different kind of study, one that draws on empathy, interpretation, and hermeneutics.

At the heart of Melser's view is the principle that to understand what thinking is, one needs to understand how it is that thinking originates. He presents his own theory of 'token concerting' according to which thinking is a special kind of token performance by the individual, of certain social and concerted action. Thus in his analysis the act of APC™ creates thought and it is thought that leads to decisions about actions and the need for change.

All three of these theorists provide a basis of legitimisation of APC™ as a learning and development process which, through reflection as part of emotional intelligence and the mediated action of conversation focused on current behaviour, leads to the potential for behavioural change. Graphically this can be represented in Fig. 2 below.

Figure 2 Processes leading to behaviour change through APC™



5. The Ministry of Social Development perspective

At some point in their lives, most New Zealanders will have contact with us as we manage most of the delivery of social services in New Zealand. We work closely with partner agencies and service providers to help people get the support they need, when they need it, no matter where it has to be found.

Effective leadership is the key to our being a successful organisation. It requires a blend of knowledge and skills drawn from a number of disciplines and relevant across industries. While many of the skills leading to successful leadership are generic across industries, each can be applied to the context specific requirements of a specific sector.

MSD's external environment and its roles and focus have changed, resulting in changes in the way we work and how we work with people. To work effectively in this environment, we needed to have a clear idea of the skills and attributes of our people and be able to effectively and efficiently target learning and development programmes and initiatives for greatest benefit to both staff and the organisation.

These themes are incorporated within our Capability Development Strategy. The strategy highlights the need for people with strong brokerage, facilitation and negotiation skills supported by excellent relationship management skills, good judgement and consistent values.

In 2002 MSD decided to implement two national qualifications for its managers:

- National Certificate in First-line Management (Level 4)
- National Certificate in Public Sector Services (Middle Management) (Leadership) – Level 5

In consultation with the contractors we agreed to use Assessment by Professional Conversation™ as the primary assessment tool for a number of reasons set out below:

- We were looking to assess large numbers of experienced managers, some of whom had been managers for a number of years.
- APC™ provided an excellent tool to allow the managers to gain recognition for the skills they already had and through the reflective practice of the assessment, it allowed them to take ownership of their skill base and provided opportunities for self-directed skills improvement.
- Our managers are busy people and find it hard to make extra time for writing up screeds of paper work that might otherwise be required to complete the qualifications.
- Many of our managers, particularly those who had been with the organisation for a long time had not had particularly positive experiences in the traditional education system and were not keen on sitting paper-based examinations and the like.
- The opportunity to gain a qualification through the retrospective collection of evidence to demonstrate competence appealed to our managers.

In the six years to 2008 that we have been offering the qualifications through APC™, in excess of 518 qualifications have been awarded to our managers with over 80% of those engaging in the process completing within the agreed training agreement time frame.

The qualifications awarded are broken down as follows:

- | | | |
|--|---|-----|
| • NC in first-line Management (Level 4) | = | 261 |
| • NC in Public Sector (Middle Management) Leadership Level 5 | = | 257 |

Of those who completed the work-based qualifications a number have since gone on to engage in other courses of study seeking further qualifications and have stated that the confidence they gained through the APC™ model of assessment has been a significant contributing factor in their decision to do this. Two of those have since completed a Master in Public Policy through Victoria University.

Candidate Feedback on the Process

Candidate feedback has generally been positive and the following is a collation of candidate comment on the different aspects of the qualification, the process of assessment and generally how they felt about doing the qualifications. This feedback has been provided through face-to-face interviews with candidates, as well as an evaluation survey¹⁵. The following information is provided from collated extracts from the survey:

- The majority of participants found that by engaging in the qualification process they lifted their perception of the job and that they enjoyed the reflective nature of the assessment. Some identified that it allowed them to identify bad habits that had crept into their work and they were able to correct them.
- Other common responses were that the candidates appreciated the recognition of their work and felt more valued as a result and that it was good to have a recognised and transportable qualification.
- Participants felt that they had been generally well supported throughout the process by their assessors and their managers.
- Most of the respondents expressed their thanks for the opportunity to be a part of the programme. They were also very positive about the content of the qualification and the impact it has had on them as they have worked through the process.

Behavioural change reported by staff and supervisors included:

- More likely to develop their own staff
- More self-confident
- More interested in continued learning and actively seek new learning opportunities
- More inclined to review their own management and leadership styles
- More self-awareness
- Better understanding of their staff and their needs
- Feel more valued by the organisation

6. The results of the questionnaire to date

100 questionnaires have been sent out with a current return rate of 29%. It is anticipated that a further 20% will be received. Follow up interviews with candidates and employers are still in progress so the data below represents interim results. The data below relates specifically to candidate feedback.

- a. Issues, trends, themes synthesised from the responses for each question
 - i. Growth in self confidence
 - ii. Increased use of reflection both personally and with staff
 - iii. Identification of personal skills which are embedded in job performance

¹⁵ Grealish, D Review of Students, Seniors & Integrity Services Qualifications : Leadership Qualifications Survey March 2009

- iv. Value placed by organisation on the results of the process (both positive and negative comments)
 - v. Focus on personal performance
- b. The identification of any specific Learning and Development components in the APC™ process
- i. Reflective practice
 - ii. Importance of coaching
 - iii. Importance of regular feedback on performance
 - iv. Need for managers to have performance development plans as well as their staff
 - v. Importance of modelling desired behaviours
 - vi. Improved understanding of change management and the Treaty of Waitangi
- c. The extent to which the participant responses reflect APC™ as a Learning and Development tool (as distinct from an Assessment tool)
- i. Award of qualification very important as a recognition tool
 - ii. However the components listed in b. above identified as separate learning components
- d. The extent to which the APC™ process has contributed to students' learning and development
- i. Confirmation of skills and related growth
 - ii. Significant reshaping of performance
 - iii. Likelihood to review own practice and performance
- e. The manner in, or process by, which any learning has occurred
- i. Reflection
 - ii. Review of work activities
 - iii. Focused case studies
 - iv. Conversation with assessor
 - v. Independent study
 - vi. Identification of other ways of doing things
 - vii. Challenge from the assessor to improve level of performance i.e. management reporting
- f. The outcomes and benefits which can be attributed to the Learning and Development components
- i. Greater confidence
 - ii. Recognition by self and employer
 - iii. Raised level of performance
 - iv. Clarification of strengths and areas for improvement
 - v. Greater motivation to grow and learn
 - vi. Improved management and development of staff

7. The stories¹⁶

Sylvia

Sylvia had been working in the organisation for 15 years and had entered with no formal qualifications. She had a very negative perspective on formal learning and assessment and was very reluctant to engage in the qualification process and required a considerable amount of coaxing and encouragement to get started.

Once she completed her facilitation into the process, she found that she was actually enjoying the reflective nature of the assessment and began to look forward to her assessment sessions. She also found that she was beginning to feel more valued both within herself and by the organisation. Through the process she was able to identify that she had a set of valuable and sought-after skills and this in turn gave her the confidence she needed to move onward in her career.

She was the first person in her family to have completed a nationally recognised qualification, which became a source of pride not only for her but for her family. From there she began to pursue other developmental opportunities within the organisation and was able to secure a scholarship to undertake the Masters in Public Policy. She completed this and recently moved into a senior management role with another related State Sector organisation.

Stewart

Stewart had always been a high flyer in his workplace and entered the assessment process with great scepticism and thought he'd 'wing it' so didn't do much preparation. He discovered that not only could he not 'wing it', but he was also challenged on many of his perceptions about leadership and management which fell into a fairly dictatorial approach.

Through considerable discussion with his assessor and even more personal reflection he started to try out some alternative techniques in the workplace and in his next two sessions reported some interesting results in the increase in morale of his people and the improved outcomes in their work. On verification all his verifiers noted a huge change in his management style and spoke positively about this.

Stewart became a total convert to APC™ and encouraged others to undertake the process. He took leave of absence from his organisation to undertake some work in another agency and was so successful that they persuaded him to stay on.

Stewart often talks about APC™ to organisations thinking of implementing the process and directly attributes his growing career success to the realisations and personal growth that came from it.

Neesha

Neesha was a university graduate who took on a first line management role. She struggled with actually managing people and her boss suggested she do APC™ to see if that might help identify what her problems were and give her some strategies to deal with them. She was very distressed with the situation that had emerged where people were exercising passive

¹⁶ Names and organisations have been changed to retain confidentiality

resistance to her management requests and whilst feeling a bit resentful as she had a university qualification, agreed to give it a try.

She had collected an enormous amount of evidence and was minutely prepared for the assessment process but spent most of the first session in tears. She and her assessor explored the causes of her distress and discussed some strategies she might try. They agreed to give her some time before her next assessment to try things out.

At her second session she talked about what she had implemented and that it was improving her relationships within her team. She was able to discuss some of the excellent evidence she had brought relating to the other aspects of her job and after verifications was awarded with those competencies.

Her third session focused again on her people management skills. This time she was able to reflect on what she had changed and learned and what other things she might work towards. She'd gone back to her text books and realised what they meant in practical terms and was excited with those discoveries. Her verifiers noted her improved skills, but her assessor decided to have a fourth session in another two months to see whether the behaviours had been embedded. They had and her boss was delighted. She was awarded with the outstanding competencies and the qualification. It was at a much 'lower' level than her degree but in her feedback she said she'd learned more about managing people from that process than in the whole course of her academic study.

Ron

Ron was encouraged by a colleague to undertake professional conversation as they both felt he was stuck in a comfortable but undemanding job. Slightly apprehensively Ron decided to do a sector specific management national certificate targeted at middle management. After his first assessment session he was hooked. On award of the first qualification he immediately enrolled in a further higher-level national diploma and was well on the way to achieving it when a new and very challenging job came up in management but outside his current area of expertise. He attributes his decision to apply to the confidence the assessment process had given him and to his immense surprise was appointed.

He put his assessment process on hold in order to build his expertise in the new role, but after 6 months decided that the evidence he'd gathered, would be ideal for his assessment. It was. He completed the Level 5 diploma although he had to do some additional study in financial management.

This year, after 18 months in the job he decided to enrol for the Level 6 national diploma; unbeknown to the assessor he'd been collecting evidence over the whole time of his growing knowledge and skills. He said that he views the process as a reward for his own reflection and development.

His manager is ecstatic and has decided to offer the process throughout the middle and senior management of the organisation as to quote her, 'Every time Ron goes off to do his assessment, he comes back re-motivated, with new ideas and with an exceptional awareness of his own performance. His staff thinks he walks on water and their performance has improved significantly as well. What are you doing to these people?'

8. Conclusion

There is still further work to be done on this project, but it is interesting that the conclusions from both the MSD review and this research are very similar. Interviews will be undertaken with both candidates and employers and the data further analysed to determine whether the hypothesis that APC™ is a learning and development tool that facilitates behavioural change in leaders and managers is correct. However, these initial data do suggest that the anecdotal evidence will be borne out. If so, APC™ could become a powerful tool in developing and growing effective leaders and managers.

APPENDIX 2 – AAPNZ Member’s Stories

Friday’s Story

I was born, bred and raised in Otara where my parents settled after moving from the north to the city in the late 1950s. I am Māori and the youngest of seven children (five sisters – one being a whāngai – and one brother). Being brought up in Otara in the 1970s was fun; we played together with all our neighbours on the road and went to each other’s homes. Though I was brought up amongst the gangs, they were our neighbours and we knew each other; so, I never thought anything about it.

Dad was a carpenter and Mum was a factory hand; it was a given that I would follow in Dad’s footsteps when I left school.

I had fond memories of primary and intermediate schools – I played the Genie in the school’s movie of Aladdin and the Lamp, was a warden for the pedestrian crossing, school monitor ringing the bell for start of school, play time, lunchtime and end of school, was on the school gate at lunchtimes giving passes out to those who were leaving the school and undertook my roles responsibly.

I went to a co-ed college and all 3rd formers had to do six months typing (plus another subject) and six months of woodwork and metalwork. Unexpectedly I enjoyed learning to type. Towards the end of the 3rd Form we had a group assignment to do and a friend’s sister had a manual typewriter which we used to type up our assignment. As the fastest (although after only six months of learning to type like everyone else) I was given the task of typing our assignment out. This was the beginning of things to come.

In the 4th Form at the age of 14 I had to choose class options. As I was pretty good at typing I decided to take it on for another year. My typing teacher saw potential in me and suggested that I practice hard to sit the Pitman’s Typing exams and possibly the Trade Certificate exams in typing. So, during my 4th and 5th Form years I successfully passed Pitman’s Typing 1, 2 and 3 and TCB Typing 1, 2 and 3 – a first for my school at level 3 in the 5th Form. In 1985 I gained School Certificate (typing being my top mark) and won prizes at the school prizegiving for this subject.

1986 saw the introduction of 6th Form Certificate (I recall University Entrance was only available if you were in 7th Form). In 6th Form I continued with typing and added in Shorthand, amongst other core subjects, all of which I again successfully passed, winning prizes at the school prizegiving both in Typing and Shorthand as the top student.

Towards the end of my 6th Form year I was wondering whether to continue to Form 7 or leave school. As many of my friends were leaving with only a few staying on, I decided to leave school as well – not knowing what I intended to do. Our Principal at the time had a friend who was looking for help painting a hotel off Upper Queen Street and asked whether I was interested. I took the plunge, left school and started with this painting job; with no direction really.

However, during the holidays I saw a job advertised as a Typist in the typing pool with the Department of Social Welfare in Manukau. I applied for the job and was successful in obtaining it. The interview with the Supervising Typist in Charge and Supervising Typist was a scary ordeal. However, I thought: “wow, I’ve got a full-time job doing something which I really enjoyed doing and getting paid for it” (yes, I started on \$9,000 a year – a lot of money for a 17-year old), using what I had learned at school – typing and shorthand.

In two years, I was promoted to Senior Typist and at the age of 20 I thought, what else is out there? I was unsuccessful for several Supervising Typist jobs. I then applied, without giving it any thought, for the position of Executive Secretary to the Assistant Director-General (Eastern Operations) of the Department of Social Welfare in Wellington and I was offered the position. I did not really know about being an Executive Secretary – I knew how to type, how to do shorthand, but was still learning about office processes and systems.

I moved to Wellington to work at the age of 20 (leaving my girlfriend in Auckland). It was an exciting time in my life; learning a lot, making new friends and socialising (a lot). I then attended a secretarial course run by now AAPNZ Life Member, Valerie Jackson. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It gave me new ideas of what I needed to be doing in my role. That same year, the 2nd National Conference of the NZ Society of Executive Secretaries was held in Wellington and my manager approved my attendance. I did not know what to expect at all. There were over 300 attending and I was the only male attendee. Being young, male and Māori stood out in my mind. However, Valerie Jackson introduced me and that was my beginning as a member of the NZ Society of Executive Secretaries (later to become the Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc (“AAPNZ”)).

Two years later after a major restructuring, I moved back to Auckland and got a job as Personal Assistant to the South Auckland Area Manager of Children & Young Persons Service in Otara. I now had experience working with senior managers and was confident in dealing with people; was able to set up systems; had a good understanding and knowledge of office processes, etc. I married at 26 and the following year, I saw a job advertised as Personal Assistant to the Mayor of the Far North District Council based in Kaikohe; close to my parents who had returned there. I applied for the job and was successful; so, we moved to Kaikohe (my wife also worked for Social Welfare but in another office).

As I mentioned earlier, Dad was a carpenter and it was assumed I would follow in his footsteps. Of course, this hadn't happened. However, after the pōwhiri welcoming me to the council I heard Dad talking to the Mayor and his comment, which stays with me, was that he was “really proud”. He said he didn't realise that I could go places with the skills I had learned at school – possibly because typing was seen as a female skill. It was great hearing that from Dad.

Later we decided to return to Auckland. I started applying for jobs – still previous to the internet, so it involved writing letters and making phone calls. I even travelled to Auckland for a few days where I had set up meetings with recruitment agencies. I secured a job as a legal secretary with a top New Zealand law firm. Of course, though I had no experience in a law firm, my typing speed and accuracy caught their attention. They pointed out that learning on the job was part of their culture.

By now, I had been involved with AAPNZ for several years and became National President 2006-2008.

During this time and through my involvement with AAPNZ I heard about workplace assessment and I decided, I can do this. I was able to gather all the evidence required; I had experience working with senior managers, organising meetings, travel, running meetings through AAPNZ, running large events mostly outside of my immediate workplace (whanau and sport) and the list goes on. So, at the age of 36 I undertook workplace assessment. It was really exciting and reinforced my own knowledge from learning on the job. I was excited to work towards a national qualification, particularly since I had left school 19 years earlier. There were two areas that I was unable to demonstrate the required knowledge, so I studied two papers (finance and strategic planning) at Manukau Institute of Technology. Once I completed these papers, I was awarded the National Diploma of Business Administration (Level 5). I felt it was a real achievement.

In 2006, my wife and I became involved with a kapa haka group started by some of our friends. I became Secretary of the group. My roles with AAPNZ, my work experience and the National Diploma helped the group grow and I registered it as an incorporated society and a few years later with the Charities Commission.

After nine years in a law firm it was time to move on. I secured a position as a Judge's Associate in the High Court. While I had no knowledge of the Court systems, I quickly learned the role. Part of our role was also to go into Court with the Judge and take down the evidence, initially using Word Perfect and later moving over to Microsoft Word.

During this time Dad had passed away and my Mum was on her own so when the opportunity came up again for the role of Personal Assistant in the Mayoral Office of the Far North District Council I applied. I was successful in getting this role and we returned north staying with mum who sadly passed away while we were there.

While living with Mum our kapa haka roopu decided to run the Bachelor of Māori Performing Arts which I decided to do; I can write, I can research, but the big question was could I perform, and this was part of the degree. However, three years later, I graduated with a Bachelor of Māori Performing Arts at the age of 43.

Two years later we moved back to Auckland where initially I undertook a few temping assignments. I eventually accepted a position back at the High Court as a Judge's Associate where I have now been for five years – a position I thoroughly enjoy.

Due to my wife's involvement in setting up the Māori Women's Welfare League in West Auckland, I was an Honorary Member. Discussions there were about completing a Post Graduate Diploma in Business – Māori Development, which really interested me. I was offered a place on the programme and at the age of 46, I graduated with a Post Graduate Diploma.

Now at the age of 49, I have just embarked on the Executive Master of Business Administration through Massey University, which I intend to complete at the end of 2020.

Would I have ever considered higher education after leaving college? Why didn't I continue onto university instead of going to work? These are questions which I can't answer but I do know for sure that since doing the National Diploma in Business Administration L5 and in particular through workplace assessment, that experience ignited my passion to start, after nearly 20 years, on a journey of life-long learning.

I did this not only for myself, but primarily for our six mokopuna to show them that it is never too late to learn. An extension to this is that I did it also for my marae, hapu and iwi.

Friday Rountree

NDBA, B - Maori Perf Arts, PG Dip Bus – Maori Development

Janine's Story

If you had told me 30 years ago that I would be going to University to study for a degree, I would have said you were off your rocker!

I had left school at 17 with the highest qualification gained being School Certificate. I had no aspirations to go to University as no one else from my family had gone. I had enough to get me a decent office job and was employed at my local Council working as a junior in the typing pool. I worked my way through the various ranks and after 20 years' experience in local government administration, I was asked to join a national working group to develop a qualification specific for committee secretaries. This working group worked with the Local Government ITO (LGITO) over two years to develop a Level 4 National Certificate in Committee Management qualification. In 2004, I completed Unit Standard 4098 which was required to become a qualified assessor and was initially registered with LGITO. I was soon to realise that this was the start of my journey, not only assessing candidates on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), but also in my own quest in seeking further qualifications.

In 2006, I would have been a member of the Association of Administrative Professionals of New Zealand (AAPNZ) for ten years which, prior to 2005, would have meant I could apply for a professional designation as an AAPNZ Fellow. However, in 2004 AAPNZ adopted a certification programme requiring recipients of the AAPNZ certification to have a minimum qualification of a Level 5 Diploma in Business Administration. This certification programme also resulted in a change to the eligibility criteria to become a Fellow which took effect from 2005. You now needed to have attained AAPNZ certification before qualifying for Fellow. Having only achieved School Certificate meant if I wanted to become a Fellow, I needed to get a Diploma and get AAPNZ certification. I had only missed by one year.

However, as part of the AAPNZ certification launch in 2004, Manukau ITO offered AAPNZ members a scholarship towards the first year's fees to study towards a Diploma in Business Administration. This was the catalyst which started me off on my journey of further study as I applied for a scholarship and was successful. It took me three years to complete the diploma extramurally with a combination of RPL and study. In 2008, I received AAPNZ Certification and in 2009, I was awarded the professional designation of AAPNZ Fellow.

This wasn't the end of study for me though. I have since gained a Level 4 National Certificate in Adult Education and Training and am still a registered workplace assessor through Skills having completed numerous assessments both from within my own organisation as well as with other local government organisations. I am now in my 50s and am currently in my fifth year at Massey University studying part time as a distant student towards a BA majoring in Social Policy while also working full time. I am currently a member of the AAPNZ Professional Development Subcommittee involved in the assessment and moderation of the certification programme as well as the AAPNZ competency certificate modules.

I believe my journey is proof that you are never too old to study but having the opportunity to have my years of lifelong learning recognised through workplace assessment helped to motivate me to want to do more. I don't think I would have gone down this pathway if it wasn't for the opportunities I had. I now get a much greater satisfaction by helping others through workplace assessments and although I am only half-way through gaining my degree, I have come this far so there is no going back now only forwards.

Janine Hawthorn Dip Bus Admin; AAPNZ (Fellow, Cert)

Eth's story

I am a Pakeha woman, I attended secondary school 1964-68 inclusive, as a boarder at Nelson College for Girls. I gained School Certificate as a 2nd year 5th Former and failed University Entrance in my 6th Form year. I left secondary school feeling a failure at education.

I attended Wellington Polytechnic 1969 for a one-year course of study and gained a Certificate in Secretarial Studies, including shorthand, typing and Dictaphone. I worked over the next 30 years in New Zealand and overseas (England, Bermuda, Australia) and raised my family.

In 1997 I joined the New Zealand Society for Executive Secretaries (NZSES) (renamed the Association of Administrative Professionals New Zealand Inc (AAPNZ) in 2000). 2002-2004 I was AAPNZ National President. During my two-year term I developed and introduced AAPNZ Certification with the help of then ITO Public Sector Training Organisation (PSTO) Executive Director, Jay Lamburn. Certification was based on a NZQA registered qualification of 120+ credits at L5 or above. This was launched in 2004 with the first three recipients, all who had achieved the New Zealand Diploma in Business (NZDipBus) through distance learning, which was seen by many as the only way to achieve a relevant qualification when in the workplace at that time and was daunting to many.

I became concerned at the lack of recognition for those who worked in administration. It was not often seen as a profession more as 'something you did when you didn't know what to do', 'something to do while you decided what you really did want to do', 'something to do because you weren't clever enough', etc. It was not seen as a positive career choice for many. I decided to look for the research into this part of the business workforce, but I could not find any research so decided I would have to do the research myself.

In 2004 I became self-employed and ran my own consultancy working with administrative professionals to assist them with achieving their relevant qualifications in the workplace, assessing the skills and knowledge they had, against the requirements of the qualification. I had previously undertaken workplace assessor training and was registered as an independent assessor with PSTO. I was then endorsed by Competency International Ltd (CIL) as an assessor and was able to use their trade-marked process, Assessment by Professional Conversation™ (APC™)¹⁷.

At this stage I also started a Post Graduate Diploma in Education and Training for Professional Development and in 2010, on my 60th birthday, I graduated with my master's in education from Victoria University of Wellington. My thesis was titled "Administrative professionals in New Zealand; their professional development opportunities and career pathways"¹⁸. This was the first academic research in New Zealand and perhaps only the 10th in the world – a spectacularly under-researched area of the business workforce.

I then decided to undertake my National Diploma in Business Administration L5 through APC™. This experience greatly assisted me in my own assessment practise; to better understand the process of gathering evidence, talking through skills and knowledge held and showing where and how these were gained and used. Having been through the university written paper/assessment process and now APC™ I saw the robustness of workplace assessment and also noted my own feeling of endorsement of my administrative skills set, through achieving a relevant qualification.

I have continued to contribute to AAPNZ in a variety of roles, but my special interest has been on their Professional Development Sub-committee (PDSC) where the Certification programme has

¹⁷ The CIL paper in Appendix 1 explains the APC™ process

¹⁸ <https://aapnz.org.nz/research> scroll to the bottom of the page for the link

further evolved to include a Provisional Certification step with a L4 qualification as the formal qualification requirement. I am currently the AAPNZ Professional Development Advisor.

While I have undertaken my M.Ed. and L5 Diploma in a different order from others, I particularly noted the positive effect on myself of achieving the NDBA L5 and then observed that effect being replicated in those I was working with. As an assessor some notable comments I received from managers of administrative professional candidates were “What have you done to my PA? She is now willing to take on much more challenging tasks when I ask her, she appears so much more confident”. The comment from the CEO of a Public Hospital after the completion of a workplace assessment programme to achieve a L4 NCBA, with several health administrators, who said, “I now have happy administrative staff who feel valued, they work across departments and everything is running more smoothly”. Another comment from a professor at a university who arrived at a verification meeting looking a little sceptical, was “It’s really quite a robust process, isn’t it!”

I believe that the workplace assessment process using well-structured oral assessment or APC provides the framework or the doorway. It is the willingness of the administrative professional to use that framework or to step through that doorway that has made the difference.

Candidates I worked with all expressed a feeling of heightened confidence, greater belief in themselves, now recognising the value of the work they did day to day and often a desire to undertake more study. Two candidates who already held degrees felt that this process taught them more about what they knew and how to apply their knowledge in the workplace than their more theoretical degrees.

Workplace assessment is extremely powerful, especially when APC is used. The reflection and demonstration of learning undertaken both before assessment and between assessments lead almost all who participate to grow, in their skills, in their application of those skills and in their self-confidence.

At the end of 2018 I retired and have closed my workplace assessment/consulting business. I continue in my Professional Development Advisor role for AAPNZ. In the 2018 Queen’s Birthday Honours I was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for my work in administrative professional development. A true honour for me, but also for all administrative professionals in New Zealand and internationally.

Ethelwyn Lloyd

MNZM, M.Ed., AAPNZ (Life, Fellow, Cert.)