



# Facilitating Independent Learning in Tertiary Education

– new pathways to achievement

Heather Carpenter & Glenys Ker



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### **Heather Carpenter**

My thanks to Brett for his absolute understanding and support of the writing process, and this writer.

### **Glenys Ker**

My gratitude to Phil for his continued encouragement and acknowledgment of my learning endeavours.

## Recommendations

*This book tells an important story about the educational programmes and learning processes which characterise Capable NZ – a story that needs to be told because of the uniqueness of the programmes and especially the learning process, and the transformative impact for the learners.*

*The book also underscores the critical role of the facilitator in ensuring a powerful learning experience, offering valuable insights into what makes for successful facilitation. A must-read for teachers who are keen to practice within a facilitation paradigm.*

Phil Ker

Tertiary Education Consultant

*State Sector leadership depends on the capability of its workforce. No other programme of learning has achieved the benefits of the work-based learning approach to qualifications. Not only does this approach align academic research and theory to real world practical application, but it facilitates equity for second chance learners and develops social capital so that individuals are able to achieve work and life outcomes regardless of their circumstances. With this approach, work is the classroom in which skills acquisition, competency development and personal and professional learning are woven together in a seamless tapestry of long-term career development. Finally, as an L&D professional, if you are looking to revolutionize the traditional 70, 20, 10 learning and development model, this is it!*

Jenny Bean

Organisational Development Practitioner

State Sector



## Foreword

The publication of *Facilitating Independent Learning in Tertiary Education – New Pathways to Achievement* is both timely and necessary. As the world's educators contend with the myriad challenges and opportunities proffered by our pandemic-stricken world, this book provides real-world solutions for enhancing adult education, offering important insights for learning and teaching facilitation practice for the coronavirus era and beyond.

*Facilitating Independent Learning in Tertiary Education – New Pathways to Achievement* outlines clearly the complex requirements for facilitating learning in professional and work-based contexts. The book places understanding the needs of the learner as central to success, while assisting readers in navigating the myriad opportunities of working with adult learners in highly personalised settings.

Mindful of these contexts, the book focuses both on developing professional skills for facilitation in tertiary education, and on the personalised learning pathways provided for learners. Rooted in the concept of ākonga (learner at the centre), in Part One the book highlights the role of the facilitator, including the approach to relationship-building and the key skills required, and illustrates the learner's path to transformative practice and graduate achievement through an Independent Learning Pathway process.

Part Two examines core aspects of work-based learning, exploring professional practice as a domain in itself, as a work-based learning qualification and as a concept offering a benchmark for future practice, delineating its value for graduates preparing for unknown futures.

The sum of the book's parts offers a holistic approach to facilitation as a way of knowing, being and doing. Written to support the enhancement and enabling of real-life, real-time learning, this is essential reading for educators who seek to embrace alternative models of learning and teaching. It may be valuable also to the work-based learner who is keen to capitalise on their rich professional history and gain recognition for the skills, knowledge and mana they bring to the world of work.

Finally, this book is particularly relevant for those who wish to improve their teaching practice, and especially those working in adult learning and education development, who will find it a particularly useful resource.

Oonagh McGirr

Deputy Chief Executive: Learning and Teaching Services

Otago Polytechnic

Ōtepoti Dunedin, May 2021



# Introduction

## A facilitated learning journey

Work-based learning (WBL) has emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a curriculum philosophy which provides a vehicle for transitions within the new dynamic world of work. It allows accessible entry into the credentialled workplace, providing an equalising path, one which recognises that all skills, work and backgrounds have value. It offers benchmarks that are critical for career progress and fosters skills and frameworks for self and work development. Commonly understood in New Zealand as a process for gaining apprenticeships and undergraduate qualifications, in this book the meaning of WBL is extended to cover the development of higher-order skills and advanced qualifications, degrees and postgraduate degrees. In the higher education context, WBL can be defined as a learning process which applies tertiary-level critical thinking to work (paid or unpaid) to facilitate the recognition and accreditation of existing skills and knowledge, and the acquisition of skills, knowledge and abilities in order to achieve specific outcomes (Gibbs & Garnett, 2007) – the achievement of degrees and advanced qualifications. These qualifications are suitable for people who have the motivation and capabilities to learn independently, and to ensure the most powerful learning experience, the independent journey needs to be expertly facilitated. These learners cannot succeed or meet the requirements of graduate or postgraduate qualifications without facilitators who have the skills and knowledge necessary for independent, personalised facilitation practice.

In this book, we examine this facilitation practice, and describe two types of work-based learning pathways that are suited for highly experienced adults in work, with explanations of how these pathways are constructed and facilitated, and the outcomes that flow from them. In particular, we focus on the Independent Learning Pathway (ILP), a gateway for many into tertiary education, and underline its value both to learners and to the wider workplace. We examine also the professional practice pathways, qualifications which promote professional and personal development, and enhancement of practice in the specific work context of the learners.

Work-based learning is a story of learner success in gaining tertiary qualifications and, beyond that, a story of developing the higher-order skills and attributes that learners need to progress their careers in a challenging work environment. There is a wider economic benefit to highlight – after transformative learning experiences, learners bring new career and learning confidence to their work, and a heightened understanding of and enthusiasm for lifelong learning. For the workforce and employers, this provides mature, confident practitioners with a strong understanding of their specialist skills, their transferable skills, and qualities of self-management and adaptability.

## How does this happen?

The story of learner success in work-based learning qualifications begins with the valuing of learning from experience, and there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that learning from experience is a powerful educational technique (Kolb, 1984; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Andresen, Boud, & Cohen, 2000; Moon, 2004). Jarvis and Parker (2007) note that “learning is regarded as a phenomenon that takes place everywhere, every day of human life ... [it is] a major part of the incidentality of everyday life and of being human” (p. xiv). Vaill (1996) contrasts the commonplace institutionalised view of learning with *learning as a way of being*, which refers to the whole person, to something that goes on the entire time and extends into all aspects of a person’s life. All these views argue for the validity of learning that takes place outside formal education structures and emphasise the seamless nature of its development. Blustein (2014) agrees that both work and non-work experiences are seamlessly experienced in the natural course of people’s lives, noting that the lived experience of working is “conveyed in the language of people talking about their lives” (p. 8).

The work-based learning processes that are utilised for gaining advanced qualifications begin, essentially, with people talking about their lives. However, they entail much more than that. For life narratives to become the material of and the evidence for credentialling, a process takes place that involves a high degree of skill – one that utilises the skills of an effective facilitator of learning. This effective facilitation provides learners with the skills to extract and analyse their existing learning, and provides the new teaching essential for degree qualifications, in a format which is innovative and accessible for the learner.

## About the book

The book focuses on five major components of our work, as well as the outcomes that research has verified and learners have observed through these processes.

In Part One we outline:

- effective facilitation of learning for work-based qualifications
- the Independent Learning Pathway, proposed as a transformative learning journey for those undertaking undergraduate degrees

In Part Two we address:

- Professional Practice degrees which offer work as the curriculum and contribute to workplace and individual practice
- professional identity, outlining the personal strengthening and growth resulting from the professional practice pathway
- 21<sup>st</sup> century career competencies and attributes

Throughout, we illustrate these processes with stories provided by learners.

These components form the main content of the book and are presented here alongside the relevant strategies of practice.

Throughout these components runs a theme of accessibility and equity: the removal of barriers and the acceptance of difference. This theme relates in particular to the ILP: a journey which recognises and seeks to mitigate the academic or societal barriers of circumstance, resources and opportunity that can obstruct the entry of entire socio-economic groups into tertiary education. These are people who were not able to undertake tertiary study straight from school, and do not have the financial means to take time out from their working lives twenty years later to get the qualifications necessary to advance their careers. Efforts to open doors, work with learners' circumstances and respect different knowledges are illustrated in entry processes, programme structures, the facilitation model and practice, the learning tasks undertaken and the assessment processes involved.

## **Effective facilitation of learning**

A key topic of this work is effective facilitation of learning, and the illustration of the skills and knowledge necessary for independent, personalised facilitation practice. We illustrate and explain the researched model that has guided facilitators successfully in these pathways.

In learning pathway processes the facilitator and learner travel together, and the following chapters explore the key elements of a successful journey in both undergraduate and graduate settings. Like every craft, effective facilitation involves the mastery of tools and the practice of a range of skills, while allowing the individual to evolve strategies that signal the strength of each facilitator. Chapters 1 and 2 provide an in-depth examination of the facilitation model (Ker, 2017) and the skills required by facilitators. Chapters 3-5 document the facilitator's part in developing learner outcomes in the ILP qualification, examining the process of assessment through a structure of learning tasks. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, the facilitation and construction of professional practice degrees is addressed. In professional practice qualifications the focus is on the development and enhancement of practice capabilities, leading to a theory of practice, as well as enhanced practice within a particular profession and workplace. This invites a discussion about the strengthening of professional identity (Chapter 8) and a proposed model to explain this concept.

## **The learners' voices**

Learners stand front and centre in the narrative of our work. The learners we follow first in this book are those seeking an undergraduate degree through the process of the Independent Learning Pathway. These learners are professionally experienced adults who are highly skilled, but unqualified or under-qualified for their career aspirations. Typically, they are self-starters with a high level of self-motivation and with the disposition and ability to learn independently. Much of their learning so far has been self-directed (or has happened incidentally), although most lack this awareness on arrival. They are also not usually academically experienced and often lack academic skills.

In addition, these learners do not necessarily believe that they are capable of gaining a degree. Poor starts in earlier educational settings have robbed many of their learning confidence, and the traditional model of a discipline-focussed transmission of knowledge has little appeal for them.

Most do not have a formal credential and, if they hold one, it is usually at certificate or diploma level. Those with a formal credential may not have studied for many years: many learners have not studied formally since school, which may be up to 30 years previously. This lack of academic experience means that these learners typically have relatively untrained research/enquiry and writing skills, and little knowledge of the formal theory relevant to their field. While they exhibit strong practice, their theories are unlabelled. In addition, their capability for critical reflection is under-developed.

Many learners are minority students who have faced barriers of culture, language and curriculum bias. Learners who approach Capable NZ for qualifications are very often from Maori, Pasifika and immigrant backgrounds, as well as those whose work orientation is more practical than theoretical. These are learners for whom an holistic approach which values their entire life experience comes closest to acknowledging the expert learnings that already exist in their lives and are drawn from workplace, community and cultural settings. The process that these learners undertake, with the help of good facilitation, explores these pre-existing learnings and connects them to the new awareness of their capabilities as viewed against graduate requirements.

The learners who arrive to undertake professional practice degrees are skilled and experienced in a particular practice; they have developed expertise in an area and are seeking to apply it to real workplace problems and to focus on understanding and enhancing their own practice. Intentional informed practice, enhanced by reflective processes and the development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills, is a key aspiration and outcome for these learners.

## **A self-designed apprenticeship**

The learners who undertake our ILP and undergraduate professional practice degrees have already embarked on a learning path, however winding. Unwittingly, they exemplify the model of the 21<sup>st</sup> century careerist – the model that says the ‘owner’ of the career must take charge of the accumulation of skills and knowledge to grow their portfolio for employability. They have undertaken what some career theorists have called the self-designed apprenticeship (Inkson, Arthur, & Pringle, 1999). They have selected their own learning experiences as they progress through employment settings, choosing ever more complex and increasingly demanding environments in which to build skills and practice.

They upskill as they travel through this range of work and workplaces, gathering in many cases an impressive array of capabilities in their chosen fields. They may be managers with significant responsibilities, social service practitioners or health and safety specialists; however, they all lack one thing, a credential which provides a passport to further progress and acknowledgement of their learning. The proactive accumulation of a portfolio of skills (albeit unrecognised until made explicit in the learning process) or the self-managed construction of a work project demonstrates synergies with the actions and outcomes of effective career management in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century context. The learning is self-designed and self-managed. These learners approach the opportunity of a work-based degree excited by the prospect of a qualification, but often deeply fearful because of the gap they perceive in their formal learning ability. While they are often highly enriched by the learning and training bestowed by their trade craft and their life experience, recognised qualifications hold the status that they aspire to; they will be viewed and view themselves as “a person of worth with education, as a professional” (Bellamy, 2009, p. 87).

Most tertiary providers would claim that their content provides the 21<sup>st</sup> century-ready graduate with everything they need; in addition, we would claim that our *process* facilitates the discovery of reflection, self-awareness and skills for lifelong learning. The self-knowledge and confidence gained by the extraction of skills from experience and a heightened awareness of capability directly contributes to adaptability, an essential skill for the current environment, as is the strengthening of professional identity that is documented in these processes. The writing of this book coincided with the advent of the COVID pandemic, further sharpening our focus on the skills required for an unpredictable and challenging work environment. The relationships between the learning processes and career management skills and attributes are explored further in Chapter 9.

## Research underpinning this work

The learners' voices that are quoted in this work are derived from two sources. They belong to learners who have been part of an extensive doctoral research project, described below, or they are those of recent learners from a range of programmes who have given their permission to have their words reproduced in this book.

Research on the Independent Learning Pathway was undertaken in 2015 by Glenys Ker for a Middlesex University Doctorate in Professional Studies (Adult Learning). There was already a considerable body of experience and insights gained by facilitators about the processes undertaken over many years, and this informed the initial questionnaire. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 86 and were at various stages of their careers. Typically, they approached Capable NZ with a desire to improve their career prospects (though the learners over 70 wanted to round off a 'life well lived' or graduate with their grandchildren). As mature learners, people in this category have significant skills and knowledge drawn from a range of experiences in the workplace. They may have undertaken extensive training (in-house or external), will often have completed some (or partial) qualifications, and hold senior positions in a range of contexts. Those participants who had finished their paid working life were in voluntary/community support roles – and stated an interest in giving back to others.

The survey of learners from year 2006 to year 2014 who had completed undergraduate study (Bachelor of Applied Management and the Bachelor of Social Services) at Capable NZ provided the data for this research. These 161 graduates provided survey responses on their learning experience after completing the Capable NZ learning pathway process to gain an undergraduate degree. Surveys results were followed up with interviews of ten learners and examination of some portfolios. Facilitators were also surveyed for their perspectives. This data-gathering exercise provided the material for the conclusions and understandings we have reached regarding facilitation and the learner voice in this book. The survey responses provided illuminating data on the process for these graduates, and the personal and professional outcomes for them in terms of their identity. By examining the personal narratives of graduates, we gained an understanding of the construction of the new views of self, of professional identity and of the learning that has taken place.

More recent graduates have offered their work as illustrations of the pathway process, and other recent research (Carpenter, 2018; Mann, 2020) highlights the responses of a range of professional practice learners to their qualification journey.

## About our context

Capable NZ, a school within Otago Polytechnic, has driven the development of higher-level work-based learning programmes since 1999. The school has been the source of significant educational innovation for the polytechnic, introducing many new initiatives to provide for experienced adult learners in the workforce (Day et al., 2020). There is no precedent in New Zealand for WBL at degree or postgraduate level in which the curriculum is determined by the learner and the learner's workplace context. It is this paradigm of higher education that sets it apart from other models of work-based learning: a model in which the learning is situated entirely in the workplace; where the locus of power is shifted away from the institution's traditional mode of teaching and towards the learner and the learner's context; and where responsibility for academic credibility is held by the institution without it determining the specifics of what will be learned within it (Otago Polytechnic Programme Document). The programmes have been developed as a mode of higher education in which mature and experienced working people are given the opportunity to use their vocational experience, knowledge and context to explore issues, developments and practices that exist within their own workplace.

With a staff of over 70, in 2021 the school is home to 28 programmes, with graduates at all levels of tertiary education.

## Our readership

This book seeks to inform a number of audiences.

**Practitioner facilitators:** for those new to the work of facilitation, or those already experienced, it may serve as a tool for discussion, reflection and guidance. For those who may undertake this work in the future, it provides a model of well-designed and successful practice for their consideration and training.

**Learners:** for those undertaking our learning journeys, the authors hope that the examples of learner work and the explanations of structures may serve to assist their process and inspire their outcomes.

**A wider tertiary and academic community:** for educators and policy-makers in tertiary education, it will be of interest to those exploring accessible, learner-centred processes which fulfil the current upskilling needs of the workforce as well as embed practice which informs the future needs of lifelong learners.

The authors acknowledge that the present work is proposed within a context of examining and explaining best practice, the aim of all of those who work within Capable NZ. The voices of the learners themselves make the best case for a wider understanding and utilisation of learner-centred programme structures and pathways that serve diverse and mature learners who are recognising their need to upskill, gain qualifications for ongoing work and commit themselves to lifelong learning. These learners reveal themselves in these processes as skilled, experienced and, in the case of many, leaders in their workplaces or professional fields.

This book takes an applied approach, in keeping with our learning provision. It aims to explain and describe what we *do* and *how* we do it, allowing the learners themselves to illustrate and articulate the results of these processes. While a range of theories including experiential and work-based learning underpin our work, this book does not seek to explain these in depth, but rather to highlight them as the context for our work and focus more deeply on what happens in the journeys provided for the learners. This focus allows a transdisciplinary approach, as the authors acknowledge the synergy between portfolio learning and reflective processes experienced in the pathways and career self-assessment processes, and the integration of career, work and life experience. The authors draw on the literature of career counselling in explaining facilitation skills; career development and professional identity research in noting aspects of personal and professional growth; and career management literature in aligning strategic behaviours and attributes for the current workplace environment. This larger context contributes to a fuller awareness of outcomes from pathways that are based in adult learning theories and allows a wider appreciation of the processes involved.

## **How one qualification works – The BAppMgt pathway (ILP)**

The Otago Polytechnic **Bachelor of Applied Management** delivered by Capable NZ has been designed to meet the learning needs of experienced practitioners in work (paid/unpaid).

This programme takes experienced, highly skilled practitioners through a process of engaging with theory, new learning and reflection on practice to assist them to develop their knowledge and skills in management contexts and to enable them to relate this to their work practice. Thus the programme builds on the learning gained from existing skills, knowledge and experiences, supported with new learning to enable learners to integrate theory and practice.

This process produces a practitioner who understands their own practice and who is able to articulate this in terms of their personal leadership role, supported by a range of knowledge, skills and tools drawn from contemporary management perspectives. This in turn leads to an in-depth undertaking of practice, informed by relevant, up-to-date knowledge.

Typically, ‘taught’ programmes focus solely on the acquisition of knowledge in relation to the curriculum, leaving the integration and application of this in practice to the learner when entering the workforce. By contrast, Capable NZ programmes start with the learner context and practice in mind, with highly skilled facilitators working with learners to build their capability to integrate new knowledge into their practice from this perspective. Within an experiential learning-based framework, learners reflect on their learning from experience, using case studies of practice along with new learning. They complete a portfolio that includes new learning and insights relating to theories, tools, legislation and a current integrated framework of practice that meets the graduate profile of the programme.

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# Part One

Part One (Chapters 1-5) details the structure and facilitation of the Independent Learning Pathway. This pathway (ILP) is a learning qualification which embodies the characteristics of an experiential approach, extended by the introduction of reflective and new learning processes. It is unpacked in detail in this section of the book to illustrate the articulation of learning for the purpose of gaining a qualification; it also offers evidence of the transformative outcomes of the integration of new facilitated learning and the building of reflective skills.

There are multiple and learned sources one can explore for an in-depth view of experiential learning. What is highlighted below are the aspects that explain and underpin our practice within this qualification.

## **Experiential learning approach**

Experiential learning theory puts forwards an integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour (Kolb, 2015, p. 31), constituting an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process. This approach is characterised by Kolb (1984, p. 38) as

- ▷ involvement of the whole person, intellect, feelings and senses
- ▷ recognition and active use of all the learner's relevant life experiences and learning experiences
- ▷ continued reflection upon earlier experiences in order to add to and transform them into deeper understanding.

It requires a participative learner-centred curriculum design which emphasises and validates the personal experience and the learning events of the learner's life. It is a model which

- ▷ requires a safe environment for self-discovery, and meaningful relationships to ensure this,
- ▷ asks for a re-examination of values and guiding principles and for learners' emotional investment to be fully engaged so that they feel the impact of their learning at an emotional level

- ▷ asks learners to reflect on their learning and their interactions with the world, to make connections and experience valuable insights
- ▷ asks learners to self-manage their learning, identifying the knowledge they require and taking action to acquire it.

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... experiential learners are in control of their voice – they can identify the role of emotion in their learning, as well as reflect on how they have come to their new knowledge (Moon, 2004, p. 163).

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This model embodies a constructivist view of learning which focuses on the learner making sense of their world. Moon (2004) uses the analogy of a network of knowledge and understanding and associated feelings, with new ideas continually linked into the network and new material for learning becoming a catalyst for change of what is already understood. The constructivist view of the process of learning is not about the accumulation of the materials of learning, but about the process, of “transforming conceptions” (p. 17). Andresen, Boud and Cohen (2000) note further factors that may characterise this experience and are relevant to our practice (p. 16):

- intentionality of design – the learning events are structured (as in the Independent Learning Pathway, where tasks are structured to scaffold developing skills and understandings)
- the learning situation is managed by facilitators rather than traditional teachers (although in the Independent Learning Pathway process the facilitator’s role includes the teaching of new learning and academic skills)
- assessment of learning outcomes take place in ways that are characteristic of experiential learning – including portfolios and learning journals.

The initial engagement of the learner through the entry process, and the work of the facilitators, their roles, skills and guiding model, are introduced in Chapters 1 and 2 to explain the processes and skills that underpin and assist the learners’ journey. These chapters set the scene for our discussion of the structured and reflective pathway and its learning tasks, which ends with the integration of new learning, assessment and the production of a successful graduate (Chapters 3-5).

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# 1

## A personalised approach

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“One of the most valuable experiences while completing this qualification was documenting my learning from an early age. It was then I fully understood just how much I had achieved throughout my working life.”

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The first journey examined in this book is the Independent Learning Pathway, a pathway utilised for undergraduate qualifications. It incorporates three important processes which support and inform personalised learning in the delivery of these qualifications:

- ▷ Individual facilitation is provided for all learners, with communications taking place by email, phone and distance technology and, where possible, face to face
- ▷ a facilitation of learning model is in place that sets out how the learners will be guided effectively through their learning journey
- ▷ programme structures have been designed and adopted to allow the self-directed learner, a mature learner, to continue to work as well as study.

This chapter introduces the personalised journey provided for all learners, and the facilitation model that underpins all of these processes. The programme structure designed for the learning journey will be presented in Chapter 3.

## Beginning the personalised journey

Capable NZ requires learners to undertake a three-part process to ensure that they are undertaking the most suitable qualification for achievement of their career and learning goals. Learners

- complete an online self-assessment tool in which they clarify their length, breadth and depth of experience in the industry related to the qualification which they seek
- submit their CV for review, which expands on their work history
- undertake a profiling interview with a facilitator.

Facilitators take an early and important role in the progress of independent learners as they enrol for qualifications. Learners are profiled by facilitators to ensure they are eligible for the qualification they are seeking and are fully informed if there are other options which may also be suitable that they may not have considered. Making the right choice offers the best chances of success; learners are informed early that assistance and clarification of administrative and decision-making processes is available to them.

The profiling interview is the first step in working within the facilitation practice employed by facilitators for their work with learners, a practice which emphasises a learner-centred approach.

The foundation of the process is a relationship, an intentional collaborative partnership that is at the heart of successful facilitation practice (Hall, 2002). The learner arrives with personal, professional and academic goals, and partners with a skilled facilitator. A collaboration relationship is formed in the inquiry stage which sets the tone and provides the foundation for trust which encourages the learners to share their story, articulate their skills and ideas about their future, and share their aspirations. Learners are immediately engaged with as individuals with unique stories, histories and aspirations; these first conversations are the beginning of a process designed to build rapport and trust. The premise is that the learner *belongs*, and their experience has qualified them for a credential. At this stage, facilitators have already reviewed self-assessment reports and the learner's CV, noting

- their length, breadth and depth of experience in a field
- the competencies gained and the roles that have been undertaken

- the way that the potential learner has summed up their key strengths and capabilities with regard to the qualification chosen
- any other prior qualifications and training (in-house or external) undertaken.

Facilitators often begin the profiling conversation with open-ended questions such as, *Why do you want to do this degree? Why have you chosen this programme? What do you know about our process?* The facilitator continues to explore areas of strength, depth and the knowledge and skills or capabilities gained. The conversation will also reveal aspirations, motivations, purpose and goals, and aspects of competencies or anxieties regarding academic work. Facilitators note and affirm the skills, knowledge and learning experiences that accompany all work: informal work, committees, marae mahi, voluntary work as well as paid work; and the levels of any previous formal qualifications or papers completed. Other qualifications at appropriate levels may be suggested if necessary. The relationship with the learner is continued until the enrolment is decided. In these conversations, the facilitator ensures that:

- ✓ The process for the qualification sought is explained
- ✓ The qualification is congruent with the learner's aspirations
- ✓ The qualification is congruent with their experience and abilities – they have a good chance of succeeding and completing
- ✓ There is an explanation of new learning and how this may be achieved.

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*Facilitator Glenys Ker notes her use of alliteration when she sums up her initial contact with a learner. "I believe my role when engaging with a potential learner is to create an energy and enthusiasm about learning and how our programmes work. I like to keep the information simple and relevant and adopt a language that works. I want to understand what they know about our work, what they are thinking and hoping, and respond to the myriad of questions (including those they don't ask), and I like to listen for the clues that tell me about them. That way I can hear the insecurities, the doubts, along with the possibilities and the promise of gaining a qualification that they just were not sure they could do. Knowing the range of programmes and levels of learning we have on offer is important, along with the ability to make connections, join dots, be creative and at the same time listen deeply. In summing up, I like to use the E's – to engage deeply (giving information that is helpful and to listen for the clues), to bring enthusiasm and energy, to enlighten, empower and support potential learners to entertain the idea that this type of learning is worth doing."*

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Experience with 3614 independent learners at Capable NZ has taught us that the personal and professional relationship with the learner is crucial to the learning journey (Ker, 2017). It is personal in that at centre stage in a learner-centred approach is the view that the learner *matters*. It is professional in that the focus facilitators are asked to consistently adopt is on building a relationship in which the learner can articulate and reflect on their best work, whether retrieved from past experiences or building on new and valuable knowledge.

The initial building of the relationship acts as the foundation for everything that follows; this foundation provides a lasting platform for the process of the learning journey. Relationship building is therefore intentional; it requires certain actions and attitudes. A key precept of Ker's model of effective facilitation of learning (outlined fully below) is that facilitators should create a 'mattering' climate, a concept borrowed from career development theory (Amundson, 2003). Mattering is about the learner being at the centre of the work, being visible, being noticed, acknowledged and ensuring that facilitators extend to the learner a sense of real importance; there is an emphasis on tolerance and making an effort to understand the experiential world of the other person (Ker, 2017).

Learning is influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs (Boud & Miller, 2003); emotions and feelings are significant pointers to both possibilities for and barriers to learning. A person's belief in their ability to act and learn is a prerequisite for learning. Confidence and self-esteem are powerful influencers in learning from experience; from the very start of this process learners must believe they are capable, and the extent to which they engage with learning tasks will reflect their belief in their success. A supportive environment is therefore crucial; learners need a balance of appropriate support, trust and challenge from their facilitators. The skilled facilitator understands these aspects of learning and emphasises them.

Learners are assigned to a facilitator in a process decided on 'fit'. Within the facilitation model (outlined in detail below), the principle of fit asserts the importance of a close match between learner and facilitator. Feedback from learners supports this approach: they note and attribute their success to the facilitator "caring about them" or "understanding their background and experiences" or "being able to meet them on Sunday morning" or "having lots in common".

## Model of effective facilitation of learning

Underpinning the learner journey is a complex foundation of facilitation and support based on principles and competencies that have evolved and developed over many years of practice. This is the effective facilitation of learning model (Ker, 2017) which informs Capable NZ's work, and provides guiding principles for facilitators' work.

The model presents four principles at the centre of the facilitation process; these are reported by learners as key aspects contributing to their successful completion of the learning process, and are likewise affirmed in facilitator reports.

### Principle 1: Fit

– it is important that there is a close fit between learner and facilitator

The facilitator's role in supporting this principle involves having the self-awareness to recognise if the 'fit' with a learner is ideal and, if not, to seek out the right person for the role so that the learner is successful. This principle aligns with a professional conception of facilitation – the interests of the learner come first. At the same time, it is important that the learners themselves are empowered to suggest changes if they are not comfortable with either their facilitator or the actions of their facilitator.

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“I think that the facilitator's ability to be quite subject-specific for my case studies and understand the context was incredibly important to me – I don't believe I would have got the depth of analysis without that, and I think there was a real timely empathy to my facilitator – so there was listening, there was caring and, just at the perfect time, we would move on. I think that I got the right facilitator for me.”

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Fit includes the following dimensions: location (which provides opportunities to meet); the area of specialisation involved; and background commonalities (culture, gender and age). Wherever possible, an alignment of interests between the learner and the provided facilitator is sought. Where there is an instant recognition of 'things in common' – whether that be location, background interests or work roles of interest – the initial contact and beginnings of building a relationship becomes that much easier (Ker, 2017, pp. 106-107). The importance of 'fit' has

been recognised within Capable NZ as being sufficiently important that it now drives the allocation of work to facilitators. It is the basis for the establishment of the facilitator–learner relationship, which itself is essential, and forms Principle 2.

## **Principle 2: Relationship**

– it is important that the relationship between facilitator and learner is one that is bound by mutual respect, trust and empathy.

In this model of individual learning, the building of a productive relationship rests on the ability of the facilitator to gain insights into their assigned learner as soon as possible. They will read the learner’s CV and entry documentation and, armed with this background knowledge, can quickly establish a rapport, demonstrating that they care about the learner and that the learner matters.

The facilitator may also detect at this point whether there might be a clash of values which would trigger consideration for reallocation of the learner to another facilitator.

As part of the first engagement, a skilled facilitator will listen attentively and be curious about the learner, who will often share anxieties and misconceptions about the ILP at this point, and typically seek clarification of details before confirming their enrolment in the programme. If in their first meeting or initial contact a learner can make an instant connection with their facilitator – for example, talking about things in common or a work role they have been in, or even sharing a sense of humour or banter about study – this will spark a sense of appreciation: “This feels good, s/he understands me, I feel validated, I matter”. Thus, it is important that the facilitator sets out to create this supportive environment from the outset, at the point of the learner’s initial enquiry. To achieve this, the facilitator must be aware and recognise nuances in another person, whether in their tone of voice on the phone, facial cues on Skype, or in person, in the initial greeting and the way they engage.

## **Principle 3: Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes**

– it is important that the facilitator has the capabilities for the role.

Learners who participated in the original study suggested a range of skills and attributes that are required in a facilitator. They should be: passionate, energetic, empathetic, accessible, available, responsive, provide timely feedback (including just in time (JIT) feedback), be an

effective role model and have the ability to know when to be both ‘patient and pushy’. Learners like to know that they are in ‘good hands’ – that the facilitator fully understands the Independent Learning Pathway process, and that this is evident in the way they discuss it and demonstrate their confidence in it. Learners responded positively to affirming conversations and the awareness that the facilitator has heard them, acknowledged their experiences, and is genuinely interested in fostering their understanding and success in this journey.

Beyond their skills and attributes, a strong knowledge base is required by the facilitator. As the learner learns to merge the workplace with the academic world and to formulate their experience to meet academic criteria, so also the facilitator must be able to respond with both academic knowledge and the understanding of how workplace practice contributes to higher-level competencies. Adult learning theories (especially reflective practice), an understanding of experiential learning, a grasp of the subject-specific knowledge of a particular learner, as well as an understanding of their workplace practices are all required competencies. Knowledge of learning processes includes full awareness of the requirements of degree-level learning.

#### **Principle 4: Learners First**

– this principle demands the full responsiveness of facilitators to their learner, their availability and willingness to meet learners’ needs and always act in the interest of the learner.

Work timeframes are one area in which this principle can be easily illustrated. Effective facilitators are willing to work flexibly and be available to engage with learners within the parameters of their work and life constraints. ILP learners typically are in work and often their study time is in the evenings and weekends. Therefore facilitators need to be available at these times, within reason and as negotiated with the learner.

While a willingness to work flexibly is a desirable attribute in a facilitator, the corollary is a willingness by the facilitator’s employer to appreciate that effective facilitation is unlikely to always occur within a traditional 9 am to 5 pm timeframe. As a result, the employer should ensure that facilitators have autonomy and flexibility around their work hours. This principle is congruent with the concept of facilitation as a professional activity, in which professionals manage their own time and accept responsibility for meeting client needs.

At the same time, effective facilitators will encourage autonomous, self-directed learning, empowering the learner to take control of their learning as much as they can. The facilitator must be intentional and purposeful in their work with a learner in this regard.

Relevant to all four of the above principles is the requirement that the facilitator can work effectively with learners from different cultural backgrounds and, in New Zealand, with Māori in particular. For facilitators who follow the ILP approach, this is of major importance given the inherent attractiveness of the ILP to Māori learners. Appreciation of the narrative approach and recognition of broad experience, as well as the inclusion of cultural models and indigenous wisdom, is signalled by these learners as validating, motivating and empowering.

This model of effective facilitation of learning is informed in particular by the Māori value of *manaaki*, which underpins notions of relationship, caring and understanding of the learner as a person. *Manaaki* is commonly used to mean hospitality, people caring for people and being kind (Moorfield, 2011). These ideas support the priority in this learning process placed on valuing people – caring for them and letting them know that they matter.

Taking a deeper look at facilitator actions and learner impact, the principles of the facilitation model require a facilitator approach which directly influences the learner through essential elements of the facilitator-learner relationship, as set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Essential elements of the facilitator-learner relationship

Approach (Facilitator)	Keyword	Approach (Learner)
Learners first	<i>matterng</i>	achievement is possible, self-belief
Relationship	<i>support</i>	successful independent learning
Fit	<i>reciprocity</i>	interactive and collaborative inquiry
Skills, knowledge, attitudes	<i>reflection</i>	transformative and reflective insights

## Mattering

Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989) define mattering as the beliefs people have that they are important or significant to others. Amundson (2003) emphasises visibility and being noticed in an advisory context. Mattering is more than just words; it is the way in which people reach out to others to make them feel welcome and that they belong. Non-judgmental acceptance is an essential element of facilitators’ practice of ‘mattering’ with learners.

## Support

Facilitators are asked to draw on a person-centred approach in their support of a learner. The three principles of genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathy (Rogers, 1951) are expected to underline relationships, while supporting the learner in achieving their best work, their vision and goal of success – here the acquisition of the degree qualification. Rogers emphasises empathetic understanding, standing in the learner’s shoes, understanding their view of the world; this is considered part of the facilitator role.

## Reciprocity

The content of the learner portfolio allows a learning exchange with the facilitator – they become knowledgeable about the tasks and roles of the learners, the industries they are part of and the daily details revealed in workplace case studies, which may range from prisons to hotels, to social service operations and international businesses. The facilitator in turn is able to frame learner experiences with the appropriate complexity, ensuring that the standard of work discussed meets the academic

standards required. The Māori concept of ako is relevant here, in a context where learning is collaborative and dynamic between teachers and learners (Boldstad & Gilbert, 2008). It is a reciprocal relationship where the facilitator is also learning from the learner.

## **Reflection**

This is a key element of the Independent Learning Pathway process, which issues in new learning and a skill that will be developed. The learner's transformative and reflective insights are utilised throughout this book as a recurring illustration of this element and the development of it as part of their growing knowledge and skills.

The following expressions signal approaches and emphases within the facilitation model that foster learner success: a positive learner approach, enhancing self-belief and belonging; trusting and confident interaction with facilitators; the development of skills in inquiry and collaborative work; and becoming a reflective learner. The specific roles and skills that facilitators require to engender this learner success are explained in Chapter 3.

## **The Partnership Model (Durie, 2008)**

Durie (2008) proposes a partnership model that includes

**engagement** (whakapiri)

– establishing comfort, a crucial contributor to successful interventions;

**enlightenment** (whakamārama)

– working in a way that assists people to gain knowledge and understanding;

and **empowerment** (whakamana)

– the positive result of engagement + enlightenment

This model can be used in any service area when working with people. In the process of facilitation, the following actions and outcomes are suggested:

When the facilitator connects/attends

... the learner engages

When the facilitator articulates/clarifies/inspires/invests/listens

... the learner is enlightened

When the facilitator guides/encourages/collaborates

... the learner is empowered

*Acknowledging the 3 Es of partnership model (Durie, 2008).*

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# 2

## The Effective Facilitator – Roles and Skills

Facilitation forms the centre of our practice in personalised learning, and the facilitation relationship drives our Capable NZ processes and learner-centred approach. The effective facilitator manages this powerful relationship so as to become much more than a guide or a technician following a prescribed formula (Ker, 2017). To achieve success with learners, the facilitator must play multiple roles in their engagement with them, as well as exercise highly developed judgement. Facilitators must have the ability to utilise the right skills and knowledge at the right time, which entails having an in-depth understanding of the individual learner – not just their skills and knowledge, but their personality and motivations – so that they can make important judgement calls at just the right time – for example, to push or to challenge, to encourage, or to hold to account (Ker, 2017).

The roles required may change quickly, so a facilitator of personalised learning must be fluid and able to move in many directions, as new situations arise (Larrivee, 2000), and have the “ability to pivot” (Ker, 2017) as the learner changes direction. This facilitator role is as complex as any teaching role; it is the role of a professional, one with significant expertise in their field. It encompasses the ability to build an effective relationship (characterised by trust, empathy, collaboration, collegiality, congruence, reciprocity), as well as having the right skillsets, attitudes and qualities. These include constructive feedback, passion, energy, accessibility, availability, responsiveness and timeliness.

A good facilitator plays a range of interconnected and sometimes paradoxical roles: a teacher in a situation where the teacher also learns and the learner also teaches (Freire, 2004), a manager of learning, and a curriculum designer and evaluator (Joyce, Calhoun, & Hopkins, 1997). A facilitator must encourage the narrative at the heart of the learner’s work, yet always ensure that their work is lifted to the competence required to meet the standards of the qualification sought.

In the experiential learning environment, the facilitator assists learners to extract their learning from and through their work. This task requires them to play the roles of interpreter and reframer, as learners so very often see their highly skilled capabilities as mundane skills as of little importance. The facilitator must be able to ‘unpack’ tasks and reveal the complexity that may have been involved in undertaking them, so that a learner can become fully aware of their existing skills. In developing the capacity for reflection, the facilitator is also the teacher.

The facilitator may need to challenge and ‘push’ to elicit the best work from learners – a role not necessarily appreciated by the learner until the journey is at an end. Many roles are adopted in facilitation practice; the requirement to be “an active participant in a perpetual growth process requiring ongoing critical reflection” on facilitation practices (Larrivee, 2000) is a continuing one.

## **A fellow traveller**

A key role of the facilitator is that of fellow traveller, interpreter and guide. Entry into an educational domain with a new language and new meanings requires for many learners – who are highly confident in other domains – a guide who is able to travel alongside them, interpreting the language and the landscape. Demystifying the requirements of academic learning, clarifying what academic language and quality means, empowers the learner to come to the realisation that they can do this work once they know exactly what they have to do.

There is a role here in developing the learner ‘self’. For Hall (2002), the relationship between facilitator and learner is focused on developing the self-knowledge of the learner through dialogue, reflection and self-assessment. The learning achieved by individuals through their work-based activity is unique and differentially experienced; it involves a combination of intuitive reasoning, inference and inductive thinking, which is normally tacit and not analysed – however, in this process, it becomes the material for analysis and reflection. The primary role of the facilitator is to develop the learner’s capacities. The ability to create close relationships, so that stories and perspectives are related and heard, is required; this ability arises from the capacity to listen carefully and question at the deeper level of self. These abilities are discussed further below.

Developing the capability for critical reflection in the learner is an essential outcome of the pathway journey. Critical reflection is the key process which generates the new learning which both learners and facilitators report. There is a focus on motivating and stimulating the learner's need to learn about themselves, their roles and ideas.

The allocation of facilitators to learners, although seeking to align expertise with learners, does not rely on a subject content match. Facilitators in Capable NZ have expertise in a range of areas: management, reflective practice, career development and career management, 21st-century approaches to learning, small business enterprise, sports management, social and protective services, quality and business excellence, sustainability, building construction and information technology. Facilitators bring their own passions to the table, ideas grown in their practice over time to add to the process of facilitation. However, there is a common set of skills (outlined below) that need to be mastered for best practice.

## **Skills required for facilitation**

A primary set of facilitator skills has been identified to help elicit from learners the narrative of their experiential journey, as well as to contribute to their acquisition of reflective practice. These very particular skills are relationship building, listening, questioning and connecting.

- **Relationship building**

The importance of a high-quality learner–facilitator relationship cannot be overestimated. Amundson (2009) talks about developing a climate of “mattering” and makes an important point in this regard: “When people feel they do not matter their interpersonal connections are weakened” (p. 44). The facilitator role is fundamental to the learning process and requires the practitioner to be skilful in building an effective relationship, developing a rapport and gaining trust, along with other attributes such as being adaptable, accessible, approachable and supportive. The learner, and the learner's success, needs to matter:

She [the facilitator] made me feel important – I trusted her with my stories because she was always respectful – challenging my thinking and our robust discussions. She kept me inspired throughout the whole journey – we had an excellent respectful relationship; one that was based on humour, enquiry and constructive feedback.

- **Listening and questioning skills**

Hall (2002) notes that facilitation is about the ability to provide relatively intimate relationships, stories and perspectives derived from the capacity to listen carefully and question at the deeper level of self. In facilitation designed for academic achievement, we help the learner produce their stories in the mode and quality required for qualifications by our focus on the pieces of the story that meet the graduate profile of the qualification sought. To do this we need to listen.

### **What are we listening for?**

We listen for all manner of clues to the learner's perspectives; for a sense of hope regarding the learner's ability to manage the learning journey and to establish what will work best for them in approaching the learning pathway. We listen for life themes, behaviours, skills and competencies so that we can interpret and highlight their strengths and identify learner themes that come from their stories. Sometimes, in reflection, they see and hear these themes for themselves; at other times they need to hear them from a facilitator.

### **Facilitative questioning**

Both Haigh (2005) and Hall (2002) regard the use of questioning as a key facilitation skill to bring about self-reflection; and reflecting about the self requires a relatively deep level of inquiry. To assist the process of reflection in a learner, a facilitator can think in terms of the different levels of questions that can be asked.

To analyse questions and their effectiveness, Hall (2002) recommends the ladder of inference model (Siebert & Daudelin, 1999, p. 79, as cited in Hall, 2002). As facilitators we do not just ask questions. We need to question with skill and purpose. Inquiries into basic description, factual data, how something works, both represent and encourage the most basic form of reflection; whereas questions about purpose or personal meaning represent the deepest level because they engage the self. These questions get to the 'heart' of the matter and they are the area where the learner finds the most clarity.

Table 2: The Ladder of Inference

<b>SHALLOW</b>	<b>Questions of</b>	
	<b>Fact</b>	Data/information inquiries
	<b>Function</b>	How something works
	<b>Approach</b>	What options are there?
	<b>Purpose</b>	Why it is that way?
<b>DEEP</b>	<b>Self</b>	Personal meaning of an experience

*Ladder of Inference for Questions formed in Inquiry (Siebert & Daudelin, 1999, p. 79, as cited in Hall, 2002).*

The ladder represents a hierarchy, so learning conversations might start with the ‘shallow’ variety, but a skilled questioner should move down the hierarchy of question types until they feel able to engage in deeper inquiry with the learner. It is these deeper questions that have the greatest potential to lead to personal transformation for the individual (Hall, 2002).

Table 3 sets out how this approach might be applied in facilitation practice to build data for the components of an undergraduate portfolio in the independent learning pathway. The requirements of the portfolio are outlined in Chapter 4.

Table 3: Questions designed to deepen the learner’s reflection and insights

<b>Questions of requirements</b>		<b>Portfolio</b>
<b>Fact</b>	What work did you do, what did it involve?	Experiences, work history, projects
<b>Function</b>	What was it for, what did you achieve, how? How effectively?	Skills, strengths and strategies developed, utilized and evaluated
<b>Approach</b>	How was it undertaken, what processes were used, what informed or influenced you? What worked/ How well? What have proved to be <i>your</i> strengths? What models and theories guided you? What new learning would help you? What could you now learn?	Historic case study strategies, models and theories, and insights regarding new learning
<b>Purpose</b>	What is your focus now? What drives you and your work? Why?	New case study which requires an intentional, evidence-based approach
<b>Self</b>	What has this learning meant for you? What has evolved in your thinking? How do you see yourself /your work now?	Model of practice – evaluation and reflection on the learners practice now

The process of questioning that works down to the deeper levels of self parallels the development of the learner portfolios produced in our undergraduate work, where the material moves from an often descriptive beginning to a deeper, reflective and evaluative conclusion. Those portfolios that are truly transformative reveal learners who are able to demonstrate their transformed ‘self’. They are able to say why this is so, and to apply this understanding in their new model of practice, the final component of their portfolios of evidence. (See Chapter 6.)

As the learner responds to the questioning of the facilitator, they learn the process. Self-questioning has become normalised as they replicate their experiences developed through the facilitation process. The asking of inquisitive questions is a powerful tool for growth (Peavey & Hutchison, 1992), as these type of questions facilitate deeper thinking and assist the learner to connect their underlying thinking with what they are doing.

Haigh (2005) maintains that questioning is central to productive reflection: “When such questioning is facilitative, it prompts practitioners to go beyond their first thoughts and taken for granted ideas about situations, experiences and their actions (or inactions), to examine underpinning beliefs, assumptions and values critically, and to generate and evaluate their solutions to their problems” (p. 92).

- **Connecting**

An influential career counselling theorist (Savickas, 2005) points to this construct when he asks counsellors to listen “not for the facts but for the glue that holds the facts together as they try to hear the themes that make a whole of that life” (p. 58). Savickas tells us that people can live their lives and careers as stories, but “forget” to notice the themes, anxieties and aspirations that are driving that story forward, thereby authoring “who we are and whom we will become” (2005, pp. 42-70). If we transfer this idea to the work-based facilitation space, we find a similar ‘forgetfulness’. Our learners forget to notice the development of their competencies and the strengthening of their skills as they busy themselves with progressing in their daily work. When learners are not up to date with their range and level of skills, the facilitator can articulate the authentic competencies present in many roles, work situations and community involvement. As a facilitator hears and understands the learner’s story, they become focussed on the pieces of the story that will best demonstrate alignment with the graduate profile. Hence facilitators become connectors, “helping learners to integrate their disparate pieces of skill and knowledge into a larger ‘whole’” (McDrury & Alterio, 2003).

### **Reflection and transformation**

A common challenge for the learner is the recognition that analytical reflection involves the critical re-examination of long-held presuppositions (Brookfield, 2000). This is evidenced in their learning as they reflect on past experiences – acquiring the ability to acknowledge these long-held assumptions and the awareness of wanting to make changes. According to transformative learning theory, “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 162). Having recognised that there are past and present chapters in their lives, with this new connected story learners are able to build a preferred way of being for the future (Ker, 2017). Facilitators play a key role in this process.

Table 4: Building learner skills

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**Facilitator skills** > foster > **Learner skills**

**Listening** ..... **hearing their own story**

*Facilitator: As they speak out loud, learners hear the story they have been constructing their whole life.*

**Questioning**..... **self-questioning**

*Learner: What did I learn? I learned that I knew a lot more than I thought I did, which has helped me understand my own employability – it helped me to be able to clearly articulate who I am and what I can do and why.*

**Connecting**..... **discovering, integrating**

*Learner: I explored my values and my view of the world. I identified threads that have been entwined throughout my working life, my experiences and my drivers.*

**Reflecting about** ..... **reflection on**

*Learner: being able to reflect on and understand my practice, then apply it to theories was a transformational process ... now **that** is learning.*

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The skills of relationship building, listening, questioning, connecting and reflecting are key elements of the facilitation tools required for successful work in the work-based learning field. They underpin the validation of work and identity that flows from the facilitated processes. In essence, these skills facilitate not just the learner journey, but the parallel skills acquired by the learner which they will sustain in their future work and learning.

## **Facilitators' strategies**

Facilitators develop their own approaches and strategies when using these skills. One facilitator, James, who works in undergraduate and graduate programmes with mature international students, illustrates his relationship-building approach. He first looks to find *commonality* with the learner, discovering their world and perspectives, and building a bridge from this vantage point into the learning framework, a new space for them. He applies a model of *staircasing* – a collaborative exchange, a sharing between equals which builds the knowledge base of both participants, learner and facilitator. The learner brings fresh energy and

interest to the facilitator's views. The facilitator, through questioning and collaborative conversation, develops the learner's skills and appetite for inquiry for the work required. In the process, the levels of conversation between them develop from simplicity to complexity.

John, an experienced facilitator who works in undergraduate programmes, underlines one of the key skills introduced above in seeking to build the initial profiling relationship with learners – to *listen, listen, listen*. On receiving a learner he reads their CV and any background information obtained; he keeps this material on hand for reference in the first conversation, but takes care to avoid forming any preconceptions of the new learner. This first engagement is learner-focussed: "If they do most of the talking, you will build rapport fast and make better decisions around their suitability to pursue a qualification. Listen. Listen. Listen. The more they talk the better. Leave all your questions until after they have finished. Use their name (and get it right); this helps." John's advice exemplifies intentional practice – a strategy that achieves the best results for the learner and ensures that they follow the most suitable programme path.

## **Academic skills**

A further thread of expertise for the facilitator is their role as teacher and encourager of sound academic practice. Facilitation as practised in the Independent Learning Pathway is an alternative form of teaching. The ILP facilitators need to understand adult learning theories and apply these as appropriate to learners as individuals. The work-based learner is often highly skilled in their own area of expertise. Over their years of work, they have acquired strong opinions and beliefs about practice in their industry – views which they assume to be 'proven' by experience and practice, but which have never been challenged by exposure to evidence-based information relating to their craft. It is the role of the facilitator to ensure that learners are introduced to this new information and develop an understanding of evidence-based practice. This changing of old habits and developing of new perspectives is addressed in Chapter 5.

Academic practice also demands academic writing and presentation skills, including appropriate referencing of others' work. This requirement may engender a strong emotional response from learners who are reluctant to learn the new approach required of them. It involves a step into another world, a different mode of operating that at first appears pedantic and unnecessary. However, once the requisite skills are gained, for many it

becomes immensely satisfying. They have conquered a world previously unknown to them.

## Facilitator views

Facilitators of this process share many views of their wider role and use a range of metaphors to explain it:

*Lots of navigation images come to mind – it's providing the compass and setting a clear direction for the learner, identifying the destination and inspiring them to want to reach it; valuing what they know already and why they might want to know more, being upfront/realistic about some of the challenges en route, being a rudder to keep the learner on course, championing effort, celebrating success, enabling independence.*

The facilitators interviewed by Ker agreed on the skills, qualities and attributes required for effective facilitation (Ker, 2017). High on the list was the creation of a strong relationship between learner and facilitator, and the need for effective listening and strong questioning skills:

*It's active listening, timely questioning and belief in the learner. Really seeing them. Patience, and knowing when to listen, when to talk, when to ask questions, when to coach, when to push.*

*The ability to connect with, show understanding of the whole person, while growing and pushing academic achievement and development.*

Getting to know the learner as a person, recognising their individuality both personally and professionally, and placing the learner at the centre of the process are also seen as important. It is crucial to

*have a high level of understanding of individuals and their learning styles and excellent listening to what the learner needs, and having the ability to ask the right questions of your learner to see where they are ... [you] need an understanding of human behaviour.*

Facilitators agree strongly about the ability of the facilitator to help learners develop their capabilities in critical reflection; and that in order to develop the reflective capabilities of others, the facilitator must be a reflective practitioner themselves:

*enabling a deeply reflective process of personal and professional transformation for the learner, the outcome of which is the achievement of an academic qualification.*

*Be a critical thinker. Be a reflective practitioner. You cannot expect your learners to undertake such a reflective journey if you do not live it yourself.*

## Facilitation as professional activity

The facilitator is a professional working to promote and enhance learning, practicing within a recognised body of knowledge within an agreed ethical framework, and with the learner's interests at the forefront. Practitioners have knowledge of adult learning theory and principles, experiential learning, work-based learning and reflective practice. Effective facilitators continuously build their knowledge base and their skills to new levels, developing them to a stage where these skills are internalised and they are enabled to devise new strategies (Larrivee, 2000, p. 294). Workman and Helyer (2016) encourage the facilitator of learning to “do whatever you can to develop your own understanding of the learning theories, which can facilitate a variety of learning styles and approaches, therefore enabling learning that is ‘fit for purpose’” (p. 43).

Facilitators are also active participants in a community of practice through which they engage in ongoing learning about their practice, garnered through both formal and informal feedback. Peer mentoring occurs among colleagues, and tensions, confusions and frustrations in their work with learners are shared in a way that is empowering and non-judgemental, and yet encourages the offering of constructive feedback.

Because facilitators exercise meaningful judgements about their learners, they need to be highly reflective and well-informed by the current body of knowledge about their profession. They are expected to acquire a repertoire of specialised techniques and knowledge, including knowledge of when to use a particular technique. Intentional practice is required, with a clear alignment of their standards of practice with an accepted model of professional and ethical activity. They have a significant degree of control over their work, especially when it comes to the structure and the nature of work tasks. A professional facilitator of learning views facilitation as an unpredictable, variable and complex process – meaning that facilitation techniques and knowledge must be accompanied by intuition, creativity and insight.

## **Facilitator Attributes**

Attributes highly rated by facilitators in the personalised learning process:

- Having regular contact with learners, and creating boundaries and parameters from the start
- Having a fundamental interest in people and the workings of the human heart, mind and spirit
- Being trustworthy, open and honest
- Having the ability to keep track of learners' progress and to keep them on track
- Having the ability to motivate and mentor
- Knowing the boundaries for challenging learners, so as not to undermine their confidence
- Understanding the ethical issues involved in learner reflective practice

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# 3

## The Independent Learning Pathway

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“For starters, I had not appreciated how rigorous the process would be, and I struggled. Equally, I had no conception of the extraordinary power of self-reflection and how vitally important was the benefit of my study being informed by my practice.”

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### The Pathway Process

The Independent Learning Pathway is a process that extracts previous learning and generates new learning within a very powerful individual learning approach. The pathway allows the undergraduate learner to follow a guided set of tasks to fulfil the requirements of a portfolio. Critical reflection on workplace practice and experience, along with targeted new learning, leads to the production of a portfolio of evidence (POE) that meets a designated Graduate Profile; successful assessment against the Graduate Profile earns the appropriate credential. The pathway, often approached with trepidation, is often a surprising, transformational journey for many learners, who have never before experienced the means or opportunity to assess, enhance, validate and gain insights through reflection into their skills and knowledge.

### What is Independent Learning?

Independent learning can mean different things to different people, and where it is present in programmes it is essential to explain clearly to learners what is required from them, and what it means. According to one definition (Forster, 1972, cited in Candy, 1991): “Independent study is a process, a method and a philosophy of education: in which a student acquires knowledge by his or her own efforts and develops the ability for inquiry and critical evaluation; it includes freedom of choice in determining those objectives, within the limits of a given project or program and with the aid of a faculty adviser; it requires freedom of

process to carry out the objectives; and it places increased educational responsibility on the student for the achieving of objectives and for the value of the goals” (p.13). Forster’s definition clearly places the responsibility for self-managing learning on the mature learners, noting that guidance is readily available. The learners have this explained to them at the inquiry stage, and the ‘how’ is reinforced as they progress with assistance from the facilitator.

## **Unpacking the pathway**

Learners undertake their work through completing the eight learning tasks that make up their assessment portfolio. These tasks can be divided into three themes:

### **■ Looking Back**

*Titiro whakamuri, haere whakamua  
Look to the past to inform the future!*

Learners undertake a reflective review of past influences and learning which includes analysing early influences (Learning Task 1), their career development (Learning Task 2), and providing a case study of previous relevant skills and learning (Learning Task 3).

### **■ Taking Stock**

#### **What do I know? What more do I need to know?**

In this section, the learner reflects on their experience and extracts relevant and appropriate evidence to match and illustrate the requirements of the Graduate Profile of the qualification sought (Learning Task 4). Where gaps are identified in meeting the requirements, or enhanced learning is required, areas of new learning are noted and undertaken (Learning Task 5).

## ■ Summing up and looking forward

A second case study (Learning Task 6) is written which integrates the new learning into workplace practice and further demonstrates the skills and knowledge aligned with the graduate profile requirements. This is followed by the Model of Practice (Learning Task 7), which pulls together all the concepts that represent the learner – the whole self, the ‘new me’, and the important theories, ideas and values that inform the practice of the learner. The final task (Learning Task 8) is to prepare for assessment, gather evidence for the portfolio and prepare for a panel presentation.

This transition model of *looking back, taking stock, and moving forward* reflects Amundson’s (2005) “backswing” strategy utilised in reflecting on past career learning. This measured backswing is a process through which self-confidence is rebuilt, and there is a focus on new ways of thinking and acting. Once this is achieved, there is movement forward and attention is given to following through (Amundson, 2005). This chapter addresses Learning Tasks 1-4.

Table 5: The Learning Tasks Structure

<p><b>Looking Back</b> Who I Am and Why</p>	<p><b>Taking Stock</b> Who I Am, Why I Am, How I Am, What I Have Done and Know</p>	<p><b>Summing Up and Looking Forward</b> What I Now Know What I Want To Be</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 1</b></p> <p><b>Early life and influences</b> <i>Who am I?</i> An exploration of early influences begins the portfolio, which includes a reflective learning journal.</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 4</b></p> <p><b>The Graduate Profile</b> Matching the requirements of the Graduate Profile with learning; identifying gaps <i>How much do I know and what can I evidence?</i> (against the Graduate Profile of the degree being sought.)</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 6</b></p> <p><b>Current case study</b> Integration of new learning and understandings into a case study of work which represents Graduate Profile requirements.</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 2</b></p> <p><b>Career development timeline</b> <i>What have I done?</i> <i>What do I know?</i> <i>Why do I know it?</i> <i>How have I learned?</i> An understanding of self in the context of workplace and other practice</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 5</b></p> <p><b>Areas of new learning: theories, models, frameworks</b> <i>What else do I need to learn?</i> <i>How can I learn it?</i> <i>What does this new learning mean to me?</i></p>	<p><b>Learning Task 7</b></p> <p><b>Model of Practice</b> Representing my whole self, the ‘new’ me, the important theories, ideas, values that inform my practice.</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 3</b></p> <p><b>Historic case study</b> <b>Critical analysis of learning</b> Selecting a work role where there was significant learning and impact in the development of skills and knowledge. Looking back to evidence this learning. <i>Reflection – what I really learned; what this means to me now</i></p>		<p><b>Learning Task 8</b></p> <p><b>Preparing for assessment</b> Preparation of the portfolio and panel presentation. Pulling it all together. Preparing for oral discussion, reflection on the learning journey, moving forward.</p> <p><b>Where to next?</b></p>

## Looking Back

### Learning Task 1

### Early Life and Influences

Learners are asked to “*unpack your early influences, beliefs, values, views of self in the context of growing up. What are some of the things that spring to mind when you take yourself back there? What was important to you? Why? What did you believe? Who were your role models and why?*” In doing this exercise, they find and begin to examine the enduring values and beliefs that have influenced their life and work perspectives. As one learner put it:

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“On reflection, these values and learnings have probably shaped my world view. I guess they subconsciously continue to influence me, and underpin why I make the decisions I do, in my personal and professional life.”

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Typically, identifying with values and personal moral principles remains tacit and non-conscious (Nystrom, 2001). In this portfolio process, learners *deliberately* reflect on early experience, and make explicit their underlying beliefs and values. Their work is connected to early memories and family values, embracing the personal realm and taking stock of personal learning experiences. These experiences encompass family past and present, physical location, contexts and significant people who have been providers of learning.

Bevin, a learner in the Bachelor of Applied Management programme, examines his early influences:

*As I reflect on my formative years, I feel sense of gratitude for the Kiwi values my adopted parents brought me up with. Most of my early years were spent in a small Northland town where I grew up with friends and family. My memories of this time and the strong themes that come to mind are those of passion, faith and appreciating what you have in life and not to waste any opportunities that are given to you. These are values that I have probably inadvertently carried with me throughout my personal and professional career. I have not followed the traditional path of getting educated and qualified prior to moving into a career, but have worked my way up through the ranks and taken every opportunity to better myself. A passion for what I have done has carried me through to where I am now, and this has been a combination of successes and failures. As I reflect on cultural influences in my formative years, I realise that the culture that*

*influenced my early years the most were the European cultures. Influences from significant kaumatua came later on in my married life and career path and reflected a distinct shift in recognition of Maori values and beliefs.*

Looking back on early influences can be immensely rewarding for many learners, as they identify strong family values and guidance in their early years that has endured into their present life and work. For some it is very difficult. Learners who have experienced challenging early life situations are the ones that most require the facilitator's skills of trust, discretion and ethical practice. Learning involves the whole person, their feelings as well as thoughts, and these are associated with a range of experiences. Facilitators must adopt an ethical stance which respects both the well-being of the learner and their personal narrative, both valuing and respecting the self-directive potential of the learner (Boud & Walker, 1998). Typically, learners with challenging early starts are able to see very clearly how much they have overcome, and to articulate the ways in which they were able to achieve this; many note the building of personal resilience and their determination to create a new path for themselves.

## Learning Task 2

### Examining past and present work and learning

In the next phase of writing and reflection, learners are asked to consider areas of life where they have worked and developed key learnings and capabilities:

*What was your role, what did you do, how did you learn, what was profound (great learning – good and bad), what came naturally and why?*

*Where did this happen and who or what did you learn from – workplace, community, the sports field, lived events?*

The Christchurch earthquake of 2011, Cyclone Heta in Niue, and, more recently, the impact of COVID 19, have featured in some Capable NZ learners' portfolios as profound learning contexts. Experience in sports, at elite as well as community levels, are described by many as learning and leadership experiences. In this reflective process, informal knowledge, which is often undervalued and ignored, is investigated. Work experiences are also unpacked to identify the skills and attributes developed over time. Knowledge and skills gained both formally and informally enjoy equal value and respect as contributions to a learner's progress.

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“In this voluntary role, there were two main areas of work. One was to provide one-to-one counselling sessions for clients, and the other was to provide training to adults and children on sexual abuse prevention”.

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**What I learnt** – “As a sexual abuse counsellor I learnt about the immense strength of the human spirit to survive. I learnt reflective communication skills and the power of having regular supervision sessions for professional growth, learning how to critically reflect on my practice. In the education part of this voluntary role, I learnt how to be confident approaching schools to ask if they would be willing to have us come in to talk to their children. It was in delivering education to schools that I first gained experience in presenting information to a wide audience, which meant I needed to present information in a sensitive but interactive way, taking into account my audience”.

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Learners are encouraged to identify and examine themes that illustrate their career journey, extract the skills and knowledge they utilised and developed in their working life, and analyse their learning in a range of settings.

The timeline investigation extends beyond work roles to life activities – unpaid and voluntary activities that have taken place on maraes, in iwi and hapu, sports clubs, school or community committees, boards and governance roles. These activities have contributed a range of skills and knowledge and assisted in shaping a learner’s approach to their life and work.

Bevin describes and analyses his work as a production manager

### **Production Manager**

#### ***Jobs and tasks – extract***

*I hit the production floor in a humid hot Suva and spent many months learning the business from the ground up. I learned the technical side of production through to innovating and improving the business. I was given free rein to implement and improve the productivity. During this time, I travelled overseas and picked up a huge amount of knowledge around tradeshows in the US to retail and manufacturing in Australia.*

#### ***What I really learned***

*This role was a huge learning curve for me. CMT manufacturing was all about critical productivity and required skills in method engineering and station setup in order to get the best flow, quality and accuracy that the product required. Management of human resources was a big component, with nearly 600 staff, mainly women from a culture different to mine. I required a mindset change in order to get the best out of them. There was technology and automation involved in the process that needed managing, and this was all driven by customer demand and requirement for volume, speed and quality.*

*– Reprinted with permission*

Typically, learners unpack the roles they have worked in over their career, examining their responsibilities, their actions, projects and significant events in their work life in order to analyse and evaluate the skills and knowledge they have utilised. The career histories explained in learners' portfolios are often impressive, recounting significant responsibilities and leadership roles – these are highly capable learners who started their working-life learning from the ground up.

### **Learning Task 3**

### **Historic Case Study**

This case study task provides learners with the opportunity to select specific experiences which illustrate skills and knowledge relating to the graduate profile and provide a rich account of their work. As they review their work or activities, they also note what has informed them – training and theoretical models they have learnt, legislation and policy they must know and comply with.

The following instructions inform learners what is required in the Bachelor of Applied Management qualification to meet this task requirement.

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### Learning Task Three – an historic case study

This learning task provides you with the opportunity to reflect upon, critically explore and analyse a key learning experience, or experiences, from your past working or community life. Choose an experience that demonstrates your learning in some aspect of management. You will unpack and analyse the experience you have had, consider the impact of your practices, and aim to demonstrate skills and knowledge that align with graduate profile requirements. In some cases, a specific work role/job will be a useful one to unpack; or a situation where there were a range of significant learning experiences.

The following are examples of what you might consider, include and combine:

- Events you have organised, or project-managed
- Projects you have managed or coordinated
- Workshops you have designed and/or implemented
- Resources you have written and implemented
- Policy or programmes you have developed and/or implemented
- Change management processes you have undertaken
- Being a manager in a business/organisation
- Setting up/operating a small business
- Leadership events or opportunities, including team leadership
- Ethical issues you have had to manage through to resolution
- Innovative ideas you have implemented into your practice

The case study/work role chosen will be explained in context, and the skills, knowledge and attributes developed and used within it should be highlighted. Discuss your case study choice with your facilitator, who can help with examples in your area of work. At the end of your case study, evaluate your performance, the strengths you utilised, as well as the gaps in your knowledge and skill development at that stage.

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Learners are asked to reflect on their work; and while many provide success stories, some take the opportunity to examine, analyse and reflect on failure.

### **A learner reflection on their case study:**

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“... by unpacking a case study – i.e., a failed business – reflecting on it and then thinking about it today ... looking at my whole approach to the business, I could see that there was nothing else we could have done – it was the time and what happened, and we managed to change and evolve to a point where we could get out without any disaster... that was good for me.”

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## **Taking Stock**

In this section, the learner takes stock of their learning assets against the attributes that must be demonstrated by a graduate of the qualification sought. These attributes are encapsulated in the Graduate Profile associated with the qualification. They provide the criteria for assessment at the end of their programme. In this part of the journey, they are used by the learner to self-assess the extent to which they can already evidence the requirements and identify what new learning is required. It also provides a means for the learner to take stock of where they are in their learning journey; a time to self-assess and think about what they have covered, and where they could add information to their previous case study or career timeline.

### **Learning Task 4**

### **The Graduate Profile**

The Graduate Profile of the relevant qualification provides the template against which learners are able to assess, evaluate and evidence their knowledge and skills.

Table 6: Graduate Profile – Bachelor of Applied Management (generic)

**On completion of the qualification, graduates will be able to:**

- Apply specialised technical knowledge and skills to a specific business field and be able to adapt and/or generalise these to other business fields.
- Apply a broad range of generic business skills, principles and practices. These will include safety in the working environment and the ability to mentor and motivate others.
- Employ creative skills and apply them using a structured approach to problem solving.
- Display well-developed critical thinking capabilities. These will include analysing, evaluating and critically reflecting on information, decisions and behaviour. These capabilities will inform strategic thinking and adaptability in a constantly changing global environment.
- Recognise, adopt and, where necessary, require others to practise ethical dimensions inherent in business decision-making, with regard for issues of social responsibility and sustainable practice.
- Exercise self-direction and adopt independent working practices, with the ability to foster these in others.
- Accept responsibility for the quality of their own work outcomes and, where applicable, for the quality of the work outcomes of others.
- Apply independent learning skills to encourage regular access to new knowledge and information.
- Use effective written communication and well-developed interpersonal skills, with the ability to foster these in others.
- Initiate, inspire, guide, supervise and reward the work of others.
- Work effectively in group situations as leader or team member, as appropriate.
- Adapt to, and work effectively in, diverse cultural contexts and work environments and encourage others to do so.
- Use technology and communication systems effectively.
- Understand the relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi and its application to management in New Zealand/Aotearoa.

The learner cited below is providing explanatory and evaluative comment to demonstrate their skills and experience against one of the graduate profile attributes listed above.

### Graduate Profile attribute

- *Apply a broad range of generic business skills, principles and practices, including safety in the working environment, and be able to mentor and motivate others in such contexts.*

#### **Where I have shown this – role, position, setting, context, etc.**

In my current role, I am responsible for three staff members, their work outcomes and using my skills to grow and develop their leadership skills. As two of the three staff members work remotely across the region, mentoring individual staff members includes a mixture of one-to-one meetings once a month, a collective team meeting once a month and ad hoc teleconferences or skype meetings as needed. Health and safety is an integral part of the standard meeting agendas, and I am responsible for receiving, investigating and actioning all incident/accident/pain/discomfort reports from my direct reports. My role also includes guiding and supporting staff with project management skills, conflict resolution, report writing skills, effective time management skills and work/life balance as needed.

I have a human resource component in my role that includes developing six-monthly performance reviews and individual development plans with each staff member, employing staff and leading performance management processes as required.

I also have financial management responsibilities to manage the Learning and Development Team budget, authorise and code expenditure, and be accountable for budget expenditure. I am also responsible for developing a business case proposal for any capital expenditure requests.

#### **What evidence supports this (role or role profile/performance review/client feedback, awards, qualifications, etc.)?**

- Role profile (attached in vocational evidence)
- Area manager (BOP/Lakes/Coromandel) attestation
- Area manager (Waikato) attestation

**How do I evaluate myself on this attribute; what tools, resources and skills do I use to illustrate this attribute?**

I believe that in order to effectively mentor and motivate others in generic business skills, it is an ongoing learning journey for everyone. However, I am conscious of staff needs and understand the importance of growing their knowledge and confidence in general business practices. In the team meetings, each participant takes a turn to chair the meetings; staff outcomes are monitored with meeting templates that have been modified to capture not only *what* they are achieving, but *how* they are achieving work tasks and how they are feeling about those tasks. The staff in my team are the longest-standing staff in the organisation, and conversations in meetings have a strong reflective practice theme [enabling us] to reflect on a “head, heart, hands” model of service, developed by Orr (1992), as outlined in the performance review template.

Each attribute is addressed by the learner; where there are gaps in knowledge, the learner notes these to investigate further as part of their new learning undertaken in Task 4.

# Challenges at the early stages of the learning journey

## Expectation of traditional methods

Despite early communications about the Independent Learning Pathway approach, some learners may struggle to grasp the full extent of what it means. The responses of learners surveyed in our research (Ker, 2017) highlight some of these issues.

Several of the learners surveyed had a conventional view of what learning in the ILP would involve. These learners had difficulty getting beyond their experience in ‘traditional’ teaching environments. They assumed they would be undertaking formal assignments and being provided with relevant information to help with completion of those assignments. Many thought that the process would require them to complete set reading and other learning tasks.

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“I held on to the belief that ‘independent’ for me aligned to my overwhelming desire not to be in a classroom. I do not think I understood that ‘independent’ meant I would be responsible for going and undertaking research ... and for being responsible for my outputs.”

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## Learning about reflection

Most appreciated that there would be a reflective element to the learning process, although not all understood what form that might take. Consequently, there were significantly different understandings of the learning process.

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“To find that it involved a process of gathering, sorting and reflecting was unexpected. It is a very self-driven process. Motivation has to be high.”

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It became clear that one enrolment task is to ensure that learners understand that they will be asked to learn independently and should not expect to be ‘taught’ in the conventional sense. Those responding to enquiries need to orientate the learners towards the ILP approach, and to establish whether or not they have the necessary attitudes and skills to undertake independent study.

Facilitators also find that even when learners apparently understand the process, they may still struggle with the independent learning part – underscoring that independent learning is not a straightforward concept that learners easily grasp. Consequently, facilitators often find themselves repeating the initial discussions about learner responsibility and the nature of independent learning, and the nature of reflection.

The ILP approach is positioned clearly as a learning process which is suitable for mature adults with significant skills and knowledge gained from previous experience, who can learn independently and who are not expecting to be taught in the conventional sense. As far as possible, this is communicated to prospective learners on websites, publicity material and through their initial communications with their facilitator. Learners are advised that they can expect to come to new understandings of themselves and their area of professional practice. They are advised that new learning typically occurs in conjunction with relevant theories, in critical and reflective thinking, in degree-level writing and in new understandings of self.

For learners who had been shut out of more formal institutions, credentialing processes with papers or learning experiences that ‘didn’t fit’ their programmes, the ILP provides an holistic process that is welcomed.

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“That’s the difference – that it was inclusive and included everything about me and everything I’d learned and everything I had done, instead of putting circles around things and saying you can’t include that, no that’s not relevant – so it was progressive and enabled me to move forward instead of holding me back”.

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As a result of research feedback (Ker, 2017), the Springboard, a tool for learner assistance, was developed.

Table 7: The SPRINGBOARD

As an adult learner you will be a self-managing, independent learner, and you will be drawing on your skills and knowledge derived from your experiences while being supported to explore areas of new learning with respect to the qualification you are seeking.

**SPRINGBOARD** contains suggestions for improving your effectiveness as an independent learner.

<b>S</b>	<b>Seek advice whenever it is unclear what is required</b>
	As an independent adult learner, it will be expected that you will feel comfortable asking for clarification, support or extra assistance when you are not sure what is required, at any stage throughout the ILP process.
<b>P</b>	<b>Use Practice in your workplace as a starting point for learning</b>
	As a learner, it will be expected that your place of work (and prior workplaces) will be the cornerstone of your efforts to continue to learn, grow, adapt and add value when undertaking specific tasks involving skills, knowledge and attitudes learned in, at and through work.
<b>R</b>	<b>Review your progress in delivering your learning plans constantly against agreed criteria</b>
	It is a good idea right from the start of this learning process to keep note of the learning stages and timing suggested, as well as a reflective journal. This will help you to take responsibility for delivering on those agreed dates, and against the criteria expected.
<b>I</b>	<b>Integrate your learning into an overall framework of practice that is congruent, integrated and professional, and meets future aspirations.</b>
	Ensure you keep the ‘end goal’ in sight – i.e., what is expected in the final assessment process which includes timelines for peer review and clarification of understanding. It is helpful to understand this integration of learning concept at the outset, or within three months of starting the ILP process, so as to keep to task.
<b>N</b>	<b>Negotiate your learning plans carefully, taking into account the key areas where you want to improve</b>
	You will be expected to engage with your facilitator about the negotiation of your learning plan including timelines, dates, expectations and feedback. Also, it is important to be clear and focused on areas for improvement and new areas of learning, so that you both work towards these goals together.

<b>G</b>	<b>Generate imaginative and relevant outcomes from your learning that meet current and future aspirations</b>
	Make the most of your learning process and ensure you have support around imagining different or new possibilities for your future once you gain your qualification and have become much more aware of who you are and what you can offer.
<b>B</b>	<b>Broaden your perspectives about what constitutes effective practice in today's global environment</b>
	Make the most of your time by investigating and researching what is happening in your area of expertise locally, nationally and globally.
<b>O</b>	<b>Organise yourself to meet learning outcomes as agreed and negotiated with your facilitator</b>
	Ensure you have a well-organised structure detailing how and when you will do your learning, and find ways to stick to the plan – leaving everything to the last minute is not fair to yourself or to the facilitator and the institution that supports you.
<b>A</b>	<b>Articulate your learning needs to your facilitator clearly and promptly</b>
	Be open and honest about those areas where you know you will need more support so that the support systems available, including the facilitator, can help you.
<b>R</b>	<b>Reflect on your learning by seeking to identify accurately the capabilities, skills and knowledge you have developed and will continue to grow</b>
	It is important right from the start of your ILP to learn the cycle of reflective practice, which will then help you identify areas for further development based on your goals.
<b>D</b>	<b>Decide how you will ensure that your learning will be productive</b>
	Set goals with your facilitator, stick to them, and keep this map beside you as you engage in the learning. Refer to it when distracted and ensure that you are clear about a particular task before beginning work on it – i.e., read the requirements in advance, seek clarification with the facilitator, map out what you are going to do and stick to it.

(Ker, 2017)

## **Developing more complex thinking and writing skills**

A further challenge is assisting learners to acquire an analytical and evaluative rather than descriptive mind set. While learners usually have no difficulty in telling their story, and are tempted to describe much of what they know, they must do more than this to reach graduate requirements at the level they are seeking.

The portfolio of evidence demands that learners pay attention to the levels of learning required by the level of the degree sought. Learners undertaking degree-level qualifications must integrate into their work the required range of thinking and writing skills expected of a graduate within NZQA requirements (NZQA, 2020) – including the ability to analyse, reflect critically, integrate ideas and communicate these well.

Learners themselves find it helpful to understand the different levels of learning and to learn to check their writing for the appropriate higher-level thinking skills. A simple checklist for learner/facilitator discussion can provide a way for learners to assess their work for the complexity levels required.

Table 8: Checklist for skills

<p><b>Thinking and writing skills in deepening complexity relating to Level 7 skills (NZQA)</b></p>	<p><b>Description</b> – you are able to clearly and accurately describe processes, procedures, concepts, situations.</p> <p><b>Comprehension</b> – you demonstrate understanding of concepts, ideas, theories.</p> <p><b>Identification</b> – you single out key components or elements of ideas, theories and processes.</p> <p><b>Comparing ideas</b> – you examine different ideas and concepts and give opinions or evaluate these.</p> <p><b>Contrasting ideas</b> – you are able to look at different situations, unpack and explore differences.</p> <p><b>Analysis</b> – you examine thoughts, ideas, situations, theories, interpretation and diagnostic skills.</p> <p><b>Synthesis/Creativity</b> – you integrate a range of ideas to create new thoughts or concepts, and illustrate and defend your own opinions.</p> <p><b>Evaluation</b> – you are able to evaluate, form opinions about and assess your actions and your practice against your goals or other standards, or against theories and theoretical models.</p>
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For many learners it is a challenge to learn to recognise what level is required. However, once these concepts are mastered, they become proud of their ability to achieve more difficult and complex levels in their writing and understanding as part of their journey towards a qualification.

## Portfolio creation and portfolio thinking

The Independent Learning Pathway involves the creation of a portfolio for assessment which includes self-assessment of workplace skills and reflection on learning. The benefits of portfolio work which addresses career accomplishments has been noted by researchers (Borgen, Amundson, & Reuter, 2004). These authors observed the development of “portfolio thinking” (involving analysis, self-assessment and reflection) in portfolio creation and investigated the effectiveness of this approach in building career resilience. They found outcomes that demonstrated that, in their projects, the participants were:

- ▷ More in control of their career pathways
- ▷ More active in defining roles, tasks and responsibilities
- ▷ More purposeful
- ▷ Displayed more hope and optimism regarding their future
- ▷ More self-aware about the gaps in their learning

Borgen, Amundson and Reuter’s research aligned these attributes with career resilience, a valuable attribute in the 21st-century workplace.

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# 4

## New Learning

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“I expected and received a challenge: new learning, intensive researching and analysing of information and reflection.”

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The Independent Learning Pathway towards a degree qualification demands new learning. While previous experiential learning is the foundation of the pathway, a degree cannot be awarded without evidence that new learning has been undertaken to build on this foundation. This enables the learner to reach the required levels for the qualification sought. The ILP approach is a *learning* process, one that brings about new knowledge and understandings for the learner. It is not just a process of gathering evidence to prove that learning has already taken place; the reflective process of interpreting prior learning itself generates new learning, (Ker, 2017), as does learning related to models, theories and their application to practice.

After taking stock of their skills and knowledge acquired through the work of self-evaluation against a Graduate Profile, the learner is asked to identify gaps, areas to strengthen or enhance, utilising the reflective skills required throughout the entire journey. The learner is directed towards (and encouraged to find for themselves) models and theories related to their work or workplace, and information in the areas identified as weak. Facilitators work to assist the development of new learning by suggesting models and references that resonate with the learner and assisting them to discover their own.

Table 9: Learning Task 5

<p><b>Looking Back</b> Who I Am and Why</p>	<p><b>Taking Stock</b> Who I Am, Why I Am, How I Am, What I Have Done and Know</p>	<p><b>Summing Up and Looking Forward</b> What I Now Know What I Want To Be</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 1</b></p> <p><b>Early life and influences</b> <i>Who am I?</i> An exploration of early influences begins the portfolio, which includes a reflective learning journal.</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 4</b></p> <p><b>The Graduate Profile</b> Matching the requirements of the Graduate Profile with learning; identifying gaps <i>How much do I know and what can I evidence?</i> (against the Graduate Profile of the degree being sought.)</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 6</b></p> <p><b>Current case study</b> Integration of new learning and understandings into a case study of work which represents Graduate Profile requirements.</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 2</b></p> <p><b>Career development timeline</b> <i>What have I done?</i> <i>What do I know?</i> <i>Why do I know it?</i> <i>How have I learned?</i> An understanding of self in the context of workplace and other practice</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 5</b></p> <p><b>Areas of new learning: theories, models, frameworks</b> <i>What else do I need to learn?</i> <i>How can I learn it?</i> <i>What does this new learning mean to me?</i></p>	<p><b>Learning Task 7</b></p> <p><b>Model of Practice</b> Representing my whole self, the ‘new’ me, the important theories, ideas, values that inform my practice.</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 3</b></p> <p><b>Historic case study</b> <b>Critical analysis of learning</b> Selecting a work role where there was significant learning and impact in the development of skills and knowledge. Looking back to evidence this learning. <i>Reflection – what I really learned; what this means to me now</i></p>		<p><b>Learning Task 8</b></p> <p><b>Preparing for assessment</b> Preparation of the portfolio and panel presentation. Pulling it all together. Preparing for oral discussion, reflection on the learning journey, moving forward.</p> <p><b>Where to next?</b></p>

## Learning Task 5

At this stage, learners are encouraged to think about and give voice to how work, knowledge and informal learning have impacted on them as practitioners in their field, and the connections they now make through theories and models. They are required to consider new learning that is relevant for their future career development and build on what they already know in their field of study, work or career. In deciding what to learn, they identify both the gaps required to be filled for their degree requirements and the new knowledge and skills that will improve their understanding of and insights into their current role or future roles, considering questions such as *What would make you a better professional? What is necessary for you to grow and develop?*

Theory for new learning is chosen to match the relevant interests and requirements of the learner and negotiated with the facilitator to meet both the personal interests and professional needs of the learner, as well as the academic requirements of the Graduate Profile.

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“What did I learn? I learned that I knew a lot more than I thought I did, which has helped me understand my own employability – it helped me to be able to clearly articulate who I am and what I can do and why. I learned that once you have experienced work, it is not hard to then engage with theory – what is hard is to engage with theory when you don’t have a base to practice on – being able to reflect on and understand my practice, then apply it to theories was a transformational process ... now that is learning.”

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As this quote shows, the learner who discovers how to integrate the learning of theory and practice is learning how to learn. As Moon (1999) comments, in this process there is a meta competency at work – the learner is learning to learn by experience.

At this point of the journey, what Mezirow (2003) calls “perspective transformation” typically occurs. Three essential elements are involved in this process: a disorienting dilemma or a life-changing event that may have unfolded over time and that provides the catalyst for the learner to review their attitudes and beliefs about themselves; the life context of the learner, including their personal, professional and social connections; and critical reflection (Mezirow, 2003, pp. 58-63). These elements that

make up perspective transformation are present in the learning journey, signalling an alignment with transformational learning. The journey has been prompted by diverse events; it has required the learner to examine their own values and beliefs, as well as their previous learning and the contexts in which it has occurred, through the lens of critical reflection.

During this process, by critically reflecting on their attitudes and beliefs the adult learner will be prompted to change their habitual frame of reference – the assumptions and expectations which frame their thinking, feeling and acting. They achieve this through a conscious decision to reframe or redefine their world view, replacing it with one that is “more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14). While this process is often challenging, as the learner must critically re-examine long-held presuppositions (Brookfield, 2000), the learners themselves provide clear evidence of their ability to do this: to reflect on past experiences, to acknowledge their long-held assumptions, and to develop the awareness needed to want to make changes.

## **Enhanced capability in reflection**

For most learners, developing this ability to reflect deeply and critically on their life and work experiences constitutes new learning. The new learning in the qualification then occurs at two levels: the first is an enhanced capability to reflect critically, accompanied by the realisation and articulation of their valuable learning so far; the second is the new understandings that emerge as the learners examine their practice in the light of the new insights provided by theory.

The deep inquiry into past practice that is required by the Independent Learning Pathway programme of study allows learners to see what they did in the past through a different lens – the lens of a critical observer who is able to judge and analyse activity from a distance. The identification of skills utilised from this viewpoint triggers a stronger awareness of their transferability – how and where else they could also be applied. They have begun this practice in the *looking back* to their early influences and their career timeline; they have described and analysed their skills and knowledge and in the process have become aware of their entire career capital – all the assets they hold. Learners are now encouraged to examine their practice, and to begin to capture and synthesise what

have hitherto been separate and disjointed elements into an integrated set of concepts that can be illustrated by theory. This work continues until completed in a holistic portfolio and Model of Practice, discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

Common outcomes for learners from the reflective process are (Ker, 2017):

- Recognising that they knew more than they thought they did and giving themselves credit for that
- Appreciating that their knowledge drawn from experience had value and could be used in different ways
- Affirmation of their knowledge and skills, which leads to enhanced self-belief
- Understanding how past experiences have shaped current practice
- Seeing common patterns and themes which underpin both personal and professional actions.

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“The significant new learning for me is, and continues to be, developing the skill of reflective practice. Wow. This opened up my eyes to how I lead, and why I do the things I do.”

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## **Addressing gaps in the Graduate Profile requirements**

The new learning section of the pathway offers the opportunity to address areas of the Graduate Profile that a learner may assess themselves as needing to strengthen, and the facilitator must ensure are met. Learners are assessed on the whole Graduate Profile, and all aspects must be covered. In addition, by this stage, they will have discovered some new ideas and theories that they will want to know more about. One learner’s list for new learning reads:

### ***What are the areas for my new learning?***

- *Exploring issues of social responsibility and sustainable practice*
- *Researching more about the quiet leadership model to incorporate into my current leadership approach*
- *Researching more about the mindful leadership model to incorporate into my current leadership approach*
- *Researching emotional intelligence to see how it could be woven into my current leadership approach.*

## Discovering theory for practice

The attention paid to relevant models and theories, both the introduction of new theories and existing theories used in practice, is a second factor in encouraging new learning. Reading about theories stimulates the contextual understanding and the ability to find information which can be directly applied to what a learner does in their workplace and to make connections between them. Individuals respond to theories which resonate with their learning from experience and previous actions. It is often in discussion with their facilitator that they reveal what they do in practice – the facilitator can provide a theoretical basis that supports this practice and enlarges the practitioner’s thinking: “there’s a theory for that.”

In reviewing work done within the Independent Learning Pathway, a body of core theoretical knowledge can be identified that has had a consistent relevance and impact on learners, which they outline in their portfolios and use to demonstrate the integration of theory and practice.

- ▷ **Management learners** discover PDCA (plan–do–check–act or plan–do–check–adjust), a four-step management method used in business for the control and continuous improvement of processes and products. It is also known as the Deming circle/cycle/wheel, the Shewhart cycle, or the control circle/cycle. A simple concept, it is easily applied to a range of activities.

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“Deming’s circle of continuous improvement was a quality process that worked well for solving problems and improving our overall knowledge while on task, which was particularly applicable to building a project that was unique in so many ways. The project team were in many ways very new to this method of construction, but came with a huge amount of enthusiasm and resolve”.

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Teamwork is often reviewed through the lens of Tuckman’s (1965) Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning model, whereby learners are able to analyse behaviours and identify processes and issues in team performance. Emotional intelligence is an attribute valued by many management learners; here the work of Daniel Goleman (1996) on leadership provides a rich model for reflection and practice.

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“I learned a massive amount of new ideas, concepts and strategies ... which I have been fortunate to be able to instil into my life and job. I now have a far different view on business strategies and management than before I started the programme.”

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- ▷ **Social services learners** are typically interested in strengths-based theories and those that relate to their area of practice, whether counselling, mental health, disability or career practice.

Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory (1968), Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977), Carl Rogers’ Person-centred Perspective (1951) and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1987) are all standard approaches that many social services learners begin their studies with some knowledge of, and are now able to explore and think more deeply about how they might apply them to their practice.

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“I draw on Erikson’s theory as it helps me to understand my client/s and how they see themselves, how they react to the world and people around them, and what skills they develop in life.”

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“I draw on Rogers’ three principles of genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathy. Every relationship I build is based on these, and no other theorist has really said it better.”

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- ▷ **Career Practice learners** explore a raft of theories, depending on their practice. These address career development, career counselling, career education and career management.

Amundson’s Active Engagement model (2003, 2009), Inkson’s Metaphors of Working Life (2007), Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 2006), 21<sup>st</sup>-century approaches to career management (Carpenter, 2010), the “protean careers” model (Hall, 1996), and cultural theory (Reid, 2011) are often examined in relation to learners’ discovery of theory. In addition, decision-making theories including Holland’s Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1997) and Happenstance (Krumboltz, 2009) are commonly explored by these learners.

Some learners have devised their own cultural models to better represent decision-making and career perspectives for their client base.

Jay comments in his portfolio

*‘Over time, the combination of my experience, interests and new ideas and learnings leads me to consider other possible concepts that might help to articulate the nature of careers and help clients to make more relevant, identifiable associations to support their understanding. Hence, I am designing a framework based on a character of great cultural significance to Māori, which I felt could eventually refer to or incorporate other more established models such as Rangatahi Futures (2019) to ideally offer a more attractive method of career assessment for rangatahi. Arguably the most widely recognised example of the ‘haututū’ temperament among Māori is the demigod Maui, a hugely influential character made popular by numerous myths and legends of the culture. I am exploring Maui as a possible career model.*

*Abandoned at birth, loner by nature and endowed with supernatural abilities that allowed him to perform miraculous feats in the service of mankind, Maui became a defining archetype whose actions continue to resonate with people to his day. With each of his accomplishments, Maui appeared to reveal different layers of his incredibly complex personality; values, motivations, ambitions, and core beliefs, each often bringing with them both admirable and questionable qualities that force the individual to consider their moral and ethical implications.’*

## Cultural frameworks

All learners bring the voice and wisdom of their particular culture into their work, influencing the selection of models they utilise in practice. When questioned by facilitators about models already utilised, they reveal a range of cultural models which have become integrated into academic practice. Many portfolios draw on Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1982-1994, as cited by Ministry of Health, 2017), Te Wheke (Pere, 1982, as cited by Ministry of Health, 2017), and the Fonofale Model of Health (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) to illustrate the work of the learners.

One learner comments on observing the integration of a powerful cultural model into the practice of a coach:

*“After our first loss, he came into the changing rooms and started a discussion about where we all come from. He talked about ancestry. He asked us to think about one thing from our culture that we could contribute to the team which would have a positive impact. In my career,*

*I have had coaches and management in the past focus on physical and mental hauora, but this is the first coach I have worked with who has acknowledged the importance of whanau and whenua. His philosophy naturally incorporates the Te Whare Tapa Whā model by holding space for players to acknowledge the unseen areas of our lives that contribute to our overall wellbeing. It is easy as a coach to invest all your time and resources into physical development. However, I know from experience that physical wellbeing is just a small part of an athletes' life."*

*All learners' work reprinted with permission*

## **Leadership theories**

Leadership is explored in all qualifications by those leading in their practice. Exposure to leadership theories often has the most impact of all new knowledge for mature learners. Traditional notions of leadership are challenged by theories that validate learners' 'place on the ground,' whatever their status: grassroots theory, authentic leadership and servant leadership.

Theorists such as Sinek (2009) and Kouzes and Posner (2003) are utilised by many learners to signal new concepts of leadership that resonate with their current practice or provide inspiration for future practice. Katene has inspired many with his work on Māori perspectives on transformational leadership (Katene, 2010).

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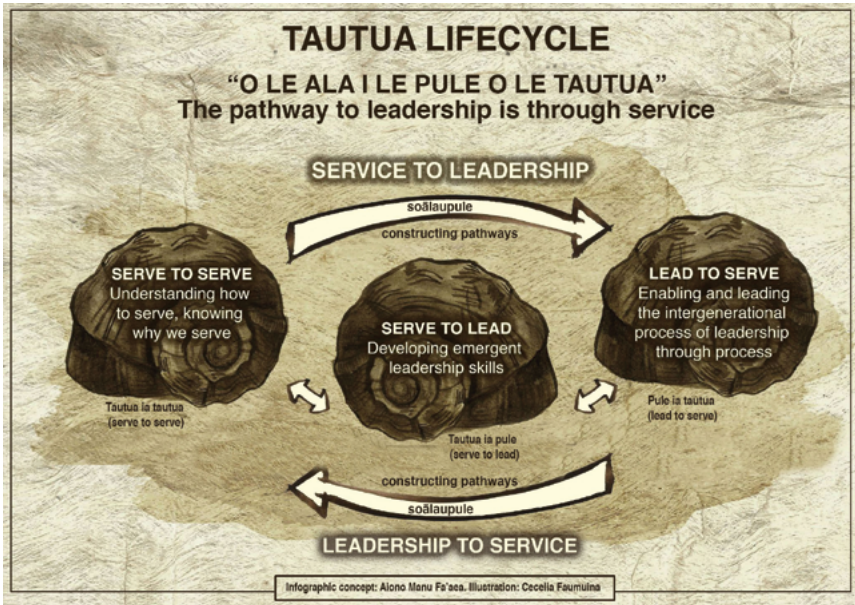
"Starting with 'Why' (Sinek 2009) gives direction and a clear sense of understanding. When I work with staff, I explain to them how the job or role they are doing fits into the wider strategic goals. As an example, disaster management will make no sense to the community if they don't know why we do it – if they don't understand the concepts and how it is important to their lives. By discussing [these issues] with them they begin to understand the why."

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"Finding the Kouzes & Posner Leadership Model (2003) was an exceptional moment for me – their five principles typify how I like to lead – using both head and heart."

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Many models empower learners to gain insights appropriate to their background and culture. Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) is a model that resonates especially with Māori and Pasifika learners, and has been fully articulated through cultural models. Jerome Kaino, a learner in the Bachelor of Applied Management qualification, uses a Samoan cultural model to illustrate this below.



Aiono Manu Fa'aea, Dion Enari. *The pathway to leadership is through service: Exploring the Samoan tautua lifecycle* (2021)

<https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/101592>

Being of service is a key value within Samoan culture. It is reflected in the well-known proverbial expression *o le ala ile pule o le tautua* – the pathway to leadership/authority is through service.

Samoans are taught from an early age to serve their home, communities and extended families. They will then be awarded leadership opportunities when they come of age. *Tautua* is a concept of leadership – this is considered a highly valued privilege to family because it is a duty and obligation to honour one's family or *aiga*.

*“It took me a while to grasp what that meant, but I quickly saw those words manifest themselves through what my dad would always do. Our family would always be the first ones to arrive at the community hall where we*

*had our services. Dad would set all the chairs out for the congregation, and we'd be the last ones to leave. Dad would get us to pack everything up again and sweep up. Dad would always say, "Do things because you want to do it, don't do it because you think people are watching you do it."*

*Jerome Kaino.*

*Reprinted with permission*

As learners read and reflect intensively on new theoretical models and evidence-based knowledge, they acquire the disciplinary subject matter expected of graduates in tertiary programmes; and their ability to understand how these attributes apply to practice assists them in examining their skills in their particular field of study. The discovery of theory validates and advances their existing knowledge in a particular disciplinary area, and in the professional workplace learners gain new confidence through having existing practices and processes validated against accepted models (Ker, 2017).

*Arnold (2017) states the differences between management and leadership: "management is the head of the operation, but leadership is the heart" (p.7). "Reflecting on my earlier days in my current management role, I can see where I demonstrated a management approach rather than a leadership approach. I understood the business outcome I needed to achieve and directed my team on what they needed to do to meet targets and objectives. .... I can relate to managing staff members where project outcomes were met, but the opportunity to harness and implement other staff members' ideas and creativity about how we might approach a task differently was minimised because of the management approach versus leadership approach. .... I have found that having a leadership approach supports staff to be fully engaged and confident in knowing their value within the team."*

*Reprinted with permission*

Alongside the focus on leadership, for many new learning focusses on two areas of practice within the Graduate Profile that must be addressed in Otago Polytechnic qualifications. These are the critical areas of sustainability and the understanding and application of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to workplace practice. Learners, some for the first time, examine the extent of sustainable practice within their life, work and industry, and consider the changes and contribution they might make in this area. They must also examine their partnership obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, again reflecting on their personal and workplace approaches to these.

This is not curriculum content in the sense of traditional ‘must-know’ knowledge for assessment purposes. The models and theories discussed above are suggested by facilitators or discovered by the learners themselves as thinking frameworks against which practice is examined, and awareness of thought and wider practice in a particular field is expanded. It is not about the acquisition of static knowledge – it is rather about the gaining and using of knowledge in a dynamic and motivational way, enabling learners to better adapt to the changing environments they work within (Bolstad et al., 2012). They are then able to scaffold and adapt their practice with concepts they have considered at length.

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“When I went back and started linking [my practice] to theory, it was like, I can see why I work that way and I can see that the whole cyclical continuance process has been completed, and I understand why I do that. I also learnt that there was so much I know that I didn’t recognise that I knew... and when I think about the theories that I used, I see that they are in everything that I do, they are an inherent part of me, but I’ve never acknowledged that... It was like, the depth and breadth of where I was going that hit me.”

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### **Why I am ... Why I work the way I do**

As well as exploring values and inherited beliefs through continuing reflective practice, the deep dive into models and theories joined many dots for learners, enabling them among other things to answer the question *why*. Learners were now able to distinguish which of their workplace perspectives were homegrown, values-driven, picked up along the way, unquestioned (and now questioned), and what was becoming more informed and *intentional* in their work practice.

Methods of learning also become more differentiated in this process. Learners are able to identify the different processes and locations of their learning through both the examination of their experiential learning and critical reflection on new learning.

Many learners begin their journey with the view that they are not members of the ‘legitimate’ learning community – entered through examinations, formal and explicit tested knowledge, and recognisable through the award of a degree. While they enter with this perspective, by mid-journey they are able to appreciate formal knowledge *and* also articulate and respect

the wider range of sources from which their learning is drawn. Thus they learn about and come to appreciate *how* they learn and recognise that their previous learning has value.

The deliberate addition of knowledge for a particular purpose is characteristic of academic programmes. Learners developed the ability to research, read and analyse professional literature, enabling many to feel that they were doing the ‘right thing’ personally and professionally. This new learning had a profound impact on the learners:

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“The research was new – I learned that being an investigative auditor – that those skills were research ... I learned that I enjoyed research and academic writing, and I was starting to find validation for my professional skills and my personal way of being in that research, and that’s important to me.”

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This research is the knowledge expected of learners and developed through formal education and training. Tertiary learning is designed to develop concepts, perspectives and the ability to apply knowledge. It provides credentialed areas of knowledge, and our learners have no doubts that certification of their learning is important. After all, that is what they have signed up for, and many express great satisfaction at discovering relevant bodies of knowledge. They have also learned to analyse and value their own rich learning experiences and apply new learning to them.

## Becoming intentional learners

Learners find they have used many other processes and strategies for learning which have not been made explicit until now. They now know that they can intentionally learn from:

- **Daily activities**

Learners have identified that working alongside skilled leaders and supervisors gives them the opportunity to observe and adopt those same skills, and they become adept at recognising them as they observe good practice. When taking part in a team project, they may have admired the way a particular team member contributes and noted those strategies. Having built the capacity to question and reflect specifically on skills, a ‘learning observation’ is now a more natural act. Immersion in a cross-sectional project may raise questions such as: How does that vital skill of *collaboration* really work? How are shared goals completed successfully? Who is the facilitator in the group? Who listens carefully, ties the ideas together, summarises progress, synthesises the information or arguments, asks the effective questions and progresses the project best? Unpacking their own learning strategies allows learners to continue the process in their daily work and to become more curious about how workplace skills are developed.

- **Tacit knowledge**

Tacit knowledge has been called the learning that doesn’t get taught. It happens by inference, observation, awareness, and is not articulated. Cox (2005) notes a combination of intuitive reasoning, inference and inductive thinking taking place. A learner may have the ability to go into a new workplace and work out what behaviour is expected, pick up and work with the unspoken dynamics of their team, using appropriate language and behaviours at the right time and place. Or they may get all of these things wrong. In learning a craft, tacit understanding may simply be about watching a master craftsman at work and observing their unspoken process. Some people are naturally very good at it; they have an antenna that picks up the right signals wherever they may be and can see clearly what is happening. They are often just very good observers and listeners. They know how to interpret new terrain by watching and listening when they find themselves on uncertain ground (Carpenter, 2010).

Tacit knowledge is understanding that comes from experience, and it is often intuitive. However, the reflective process discussed here highlights this knowledge and bring it to the forefront.

- **Practice**

Practice is self-managed; and the reflective learning required in the ILP qualification is also self-managed. Throughout their work, learners are building on their new understandings of how to see their work and experience differently. Becoming skilled in reflection through practice is an asset they will take away. They are also practicing higher-level writing and thinking skills. In academic work, in the workplace and in daily tasks, *synthesis* can be defined as the ability to take a range of complex information or knowledge that has been acquired, unite the key elements into a single concise understanding or case, and then be able to present this new understanding to others. The synthesising of ideas is a key skill in academic – and workplace – writing and communication, and it is important for learners to begin applying it in relation their own practice. The *decision* to improve is a self-directed learning strategy; the *means* of improving is through practice.

- **Relationships**

People give many opportunities for learning, as the case studies produced in the Independent Learning Pathway illustrate. While a CEO may be an excellent (or the worst) role model, learners find that incompetent workplace behaviours provide rich learning – they show explicitly what to avoid, and why. A coach or a mentor supplements personal learning skills by asking learners to reflect on their personal experiences, their actions and their role. Even an informal coach can teach the most valuable life lessons. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the pace of learning required demands a great deal of relational, ‘on the spot’ learning.

- **Reflection**

Reflection is now an intentional tool taken up by the learners, used to develop and make sense of their practice. For students to make good use of their learning from experience, they need to be skilful in their ability to reflect critically. Schön (1991), a major influence in the development of the theory of reflective practice and its application to adult learning, distinguishes reflection “in action,” *during* the

experience, from reflection “on action”, *after* the experience – the former being the more advanced skill. In the ILP approach taken at Capable NZ, learners are helped by facilitators to develop reflection *on* action and grow their skills to include reflection *in* action in relation to their current practice.

## **From fixed learning to mixed learning – integrating contexts**

Learners who come to the pathway with a strong association of learning with school failure or difficulty may still, later in life, describe themselves as “pretty dumb, I wasn’t much of a learner” even after undertaking a very satisfactory career as a builder, a policeman or an events manager. The concept that is fixed in their minds is that the formal learning system is the only way to prove themselves, and that is where real learning takes place. For these people, the understanding that they do not have to gain formal knowledge at a university, that the Independent Learning Pathway model is about honouring and valuing the learner’s workplace experience, is a transformative idea. Learners are often entrenched in their own particular context – a place that includes the politics of their organisation, the wider dimensions of organisational learning and the social dimensions of work – rather than in disciplinary knowledge. They are ‘experts in their own work context;’ they often have a deep understanding of it and the ability to write about it. Facilitators respect this knowledge – and part of their role is to assist learners to relate it to new expectations. What is often new and difficult is translating their work practice and their intuitive understanding of it into academic principles and theories, making sense of it in new ways.

Their knowledge of work and its context is strong – relating it to the dual expectations of academia and the workplace is a new learning.

Once they understand that learning is very much more than the activities that take place in traditional, formal settings, learners are able to recontextualise their learning from experience as knowledge. Expanding notions of learning is the first step. Recognising that they have learned in a multitude of ways and situations, and that they can apply skills and knowledge from one area to many others, is the next. The intentional learner knows how to achieve this – by recognising and purposefully utilising learning opportunities.

After learners have completed their work in the new learning area, facilitators have noted changes in line with the learners' own discoveries (Ker, 2017). These include

- ▷ An increased familiarity with and understanding of subject/discipline knowledge – e.g., human resources legislation, helping models in social services, project management
- ▷ A reframing of personal and professional self-knowledge
- ▷ Being able to associate theories with personal work practices
- ▷ Being able to situate personal practice in a national and international context
- ▷ The development of skills in research and in analysing and interpreting professional literature and theory.

Most of the facilitators in the study recognised that profound new learning had occurred as a result of the learners' critical reflection on their past experiences:

*“I think we hear quite clearly new thinking, or new exploration of old experiences in our conversations with learners, which signals learning about themselves, and their competencies.”*

Another facilitator reinforced this assessment:

*“I have particularly noticed the learners identifying their unconscious learning from their experience and realising that that has been as significant as any formal education process. Moreover, that recognition brings about significant adjustment in their attitude about themselves, and their achievements in work and life [are] no longer seen as [having] less value than they might have achieved in a conventional way.”*

Facilitators described how significant learning emerged through a process of integration of the learner's practice with newly discovered theory. In the words of one facilitator:

*“I find this process of integration exciting and hugely rewarding. The individual story is now understood within a bigger (personal and professional) collective context, and takes on new meaning, in consequence – i.e., individual stories are linked to meta-narrative, and this bigger context is almost invariably helpful.”*

## Thinking about their thinking

Most of the facilitators saw improvements in learners' cognitive capabilities throughout the learning process, including their thinking being extended into new dimensions and ideas as they developed the skills of 'thinking about their thinking.' One facilitator attempted to track this development as learners progress through the Independent Learning Pathway journey:

*"[A]n obvious first change is that writing improves and becomes sharper and more focused; less narrative and more evaluative; less descriptive and more reflective, with evidence of impact/ implication on self and practice (the 'so what' and 'now what' of the reflective process). There is also a deeper understanding and appreciation of the models they have espoused and work with; a clearer understanding of the ILP process and its benefits; the awakening of new insights into themselves and their practice; and the internalising of a reflective approach, so it becomes 'unconsciously competent'. Learners make a move from 'effective practitioner' to 'reflective practitioner' to 'critically reflective practitioner'."*

At this stage of the journey, the full expression of the learning process offered by these independent learning pathways becomes much clearer to the learner. It is a pathway that enables a deeper expression of self and individual competencies, leading to a fuller acknowledgement of their experience as legitimate learning and knowledge. In addition, with the help of facilitators, learners gain an increasing understanding of the significance of their insights and reflection as they progress along the pathway.

The learners we studied developed their abilities to reflect, analyse and evaluate, and research as they worked to present coherent portfolios; these abilities were further demonstrated through writing well-constructed case studies with strong integration of theory and practice. Also, learners began to show more awareness of their own abilities and could acknowledge these. This achievement is just as important as the external new learning in their subject or discipline, as it brings confidence and a new, valued sense of self.

It is clear that significant new learning occurs throughout the Independent Learning Pathway approach, and that both the facilitators and the learners identify similar elements of new learning. There is new learning about *self* which in turn produces a new or stronger sense of confidence, along with the realisation that this is transformative for many. There is new learning which is best described as learning about *practice* and which is usually produced as the learners engage with new theories about aspects of their

practice which they previously took for granted – they just ‘did things’ without thinking about the theory that lay behind their actions. Thirdly, there is new knowledge associated with the *subject matter* of the degree being pursued – management, social services, building construction.

Such new knowledge often arose from engagement with the literature, theory and best practice research. New learning also incorporates new *skills*, particularly those of critical thinking, reflection, research writing and communication – always at degree level and frequently exceeding degree expectations. Arguably, however, the most significant area of new learning is the synthesising of all the above into new personal models of practice.

## **Why is this process transformative?**

These learners engage in deep learning. The Independent Learning Pathway approach is similar to the five-stage map of learning identified by Moon (1999, p. 136): “noticing, making sense, making meaning, working with meaning and transformative meaning.” The transition to deep learning is especially notable in those learners who have previously not given thought as to *why* they do things. Deep learning requires higher-order cognitive skills, the ability to think conceptually, driven by an intention to understand ideas and relate them to previous knowledge and experience. Deep learning is transformative, and the process of transformative learning develops with the sequencing of the Independent Learning Pathway (Table 10) which encourages the emergence of higher-order cognitive skills. These higher-order skills are observed by facilitators as the learners near the end of their learning journey.

## **Understanding the table**








Table 10 below illustrates the synergy of the learning task activity of the ILP with the reflective process embedded in the transformative learning model (Sharpe, 2016). The learning tasks, the actions taken to perform them, and the reflective processes used are set out in an intensifying sequence.

- ▷ In Learning Task 1, the learner is reviewing early experiences, using familiar ‘automatic’ thought processes;
- ▷ The introduction by facilitators of reflective practice through questioning skills or reflective models brings critical reflection on life and work events and on new learning;

- ▷ New learning introduces new ideas, thoughts and concepts which must be integrated into practice.
- ▷ A second case study consolidates this new information and new reflective practices.
- ▷ By Learning Task 7, new information, beliefs and concepts are synthesized with experience and learning into a new Model of Practice.
- ▷ Moving on to new challenges, the learner is equipped with new frameworks and has validated their older practice.

The model suggests that this is a cyclical process; in the learner’s work the sequence begins again when the learner is challenged with new workplace demands or learning. Thus, the Independent Learning Pathway plays a valuable role in developing the reflective and cognitive skills of the learner – not just to become a level seven (NZQA) learner and a graduate, but also to become equipped with a proven method that will enable them to meet the challenges of 21st-century work.

Table 10: The Independent Learning Pathway and the Transformative Learning Process

<b>Portfolio Process</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Reflective Process</b>
<b>Learning Task 1</b> Early influences 	Generalisation of past experiences	Acknowledging automatic thoughts
<b>Learning Task 2, 3, 4, 5</b> Career development, historic case study, Graduate Profile, new learning 	Life events, work, training and new learning	Critical reflection on experience
<b>Learning Task 5</b> New learning 	Development of new ideas, possible beliefs, attitudes and actions	Re-integrate experience and emotions
<b>Learning Task 6</b> New case study 	Trying out, testing new beliefs, attitudes, actions	Adding new information
<b>Learning Task 7</b> Model of practice 	Experience evaluated via a process of reflection	New thoughts, feelings and beliefs
Ongoing practice  	Retain/revise original assumptions	Challenges (of present)

Adapted from Sharpe (2016), who relates the cyclical process outlined here to adaptation and resilience in challenging life contexts.

## New learning and new knowledge

According to a Ministry of Education Report (Bolstad et al., 2012), the “storing up for future use” model of knowledge is no longer useful or sufficient for thinking about how knowledge is developed and used in the 21st century. Instead, the focus needs to be on equipping people to do things with their knowledge, to use knowledge in inventive ways, in new contexts and combinations. The use of new knowledge by the ILP learners provides an illustration of this focus.

In discovering new theories, tools, and knowledge:

- learners are not acquiring static knowledge; rather, the gaining and using of knowledge is dynamic and motivational
- in the learning process, they are developing capabilities to work with it
- they are learning to discriminate between bodies of knowledge, whether evidence-based or derived from other sources, and applying their judgement in using this new learning
- knowledge is more like a verb than a noun – we can talk about creating knowledge and using knowledge, and using it to solve problems and find solutions to challenges as they arise on a ‘just-in time’ basis (p. 4).

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“disciplinary knowledge should be seen, not as an end in itself, but as a context within which students’ learning capacity can be developed.” (p. 4)

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# 5

## Integrating Practice

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“This achievement has become a foundation to a world I never once dreamed I would belong [to], and now I walk among many.”

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The learners believe they can now articulate who they are, why they are, what they do, how they know, and why they know (Ker, 2017).

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At this point, the learner is in the last stage of the Independent Learning Pathway journey. They are summing up their learnings, reflecting on their current approach to practice and evidencing their thinking in a new case study and Model of Practice. They will then prepare for the assessment process.

Table 11: Learning Tasks 6, 7 and 8

<b>Looking Back</b> Who I Am and Why	<b>Taking Stock</b> Who I Am, Why I Am, How I Am, What I Have Done and Know	<b>Summing Up and                      Looking Forward</b> What I Now Know What I Want To Be
<p><b>Learning Task 1</b></p> <p><b>Early life and influences</b>  <i>Who am I?</i>                      An exploration of early influences begins the portfolio, which includes a reflective learning journal.</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 4</b></p> <p><b>The Graduate Profile</b>                      Matching the requirements of the Graduate Profile with learning; identifying gaps  <i>How much do I know and what can I evidence?</i>                      (against the Graduate Profile of the degree being sought.)</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 6</b></p> <p><b>Current case study</b>                      Integration of new learning and understandings into a case study of work which represents Graduate Profile requirements.</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 2</b></p> <p><b>Career development timeline</b>  <i>What have I done?</i>  <i>What do I know?</i>  <i>Why do I know it?</i>  <i>How have I learned?</i>                      An understanding of self in the context of workplace and other practice</p>	<p><b>Learning Task 5</b></p> <p><b>Areas of new learning: theories, models, frameworks</b>  <i>What else do I need to learn?</i>  <i>How can I learn it?</i>  <i>What does this new learning mean to me?</i></p>	<p><b>Learning Task 7</b></p> <p><b>Model of Practice</b>                      Representing my whole self, the ‘new’ me, the important theories, ideas, values that inform my practice.</p>
<p><b>Learning Task 3</b></p> <p><b>Historic case study</b>  <b>Critical analysis of learning</b>                      Selecting a work role where there was significant learning and impact in the development of skills and knowledge.                      Looking back to evidence this learning.  <i>Reflection – what I really learned; what this means to me now</i></p>		<p><b>Learning Task 8</b></p> <p><b>Preparing for assessment</b>                      Preparation of the portfolio and panel presentation.                      Pulling it all together.                      Preparing for oral discussion, reflection on the learning journey, moving forward.</p> <p><b>Where to next?</b></p>

The experiential four-stage learning cycle developed for use with adults in higher education (Kolb & Fry, 1975, as cited in Cooper, 1985) involves four adaptive learning processes: a) concrete experience; b) observation of and reflection on that experience; c) the formation of abstract concepts based on this reflection; and d) the testing of the abstract concepts gained in new experience (Kolb & Fry, 1975, as cited in Cooper, 1985). Learners in the Independent Learning Pathway are now engaged in the third stage of this process. The learning drawn from the learner's work and life is transformed into new understandings, providing the learner with new concepts of self and practice. For many learners new to higher education, this abstract stage is often the most challenging, but completing it yields noticeable results.

## Learning Task 6    A Current Case Study

The second case study provided by learners in their evidence portfolio is expected to include the integration of their new learning and new concepts and demonstrate the application of theory to practice.

An exemplary case study provided by a learner investigating a change process in the social services field successfully integrates theories related to change management into the illustration, analysis and evaluation of her work project.

### *Case study extract*

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*The purpose of this case study is to reflect on a complex project that required me to build relationships, engage with outside stakeholders and project manage a task that would change the way the organisation would deliver training to their staff. Throughout this reflection, I am able to identify how my practice aligned with learning theories and leadership models.*

*[...] Working for a strong values-based organisation, it was important to have the organisational values integrated throughout the project to encourage management cohesion and engagement.*

*Blanchard (2008) states that people often focus on what they will have to give up rather than on what they will gain in the change process. Therefore, it was important for me to understand the manager's emotional concerns at the beginning and during the project so they could be understood and addressed. The concerns needed to be understood from an individual point of view as well as a collaborative*

group point of view. The managers needed clarity on the need for the project and how it would benefit both their sites and the overall service.

*Kotter (2006) argues that without short-term wins, too many people give up or actively join the ranks of those people who have been resistant to change. That was evidenced in the generation of excitement and increased motivation to have 'buy in' to the project when frequent milestones were not only achieved but celebrated as everyone's success. However, it was the positive changes that the project made to the organisational culture that secured the change in delivering learning to staff to become just a normal way of practice. It was no longer a trainer's responsibility to deliver training; it was now an organisational responsibility to have learning successes for all staff, which would then provide a higher standard of service to the organisation's clients.*

*In order to understand the delivery of training that best worked for individual Support Workers, the same adult learning principles were reflected on to deliver project information to managers. Principles include the importance of feeling respected, understanding how the learning relates to the work context and understanding the relevancy of the learning to learners' specific work roles. Having information delivered to managers covering these principles gave them an opportunity to receive information in a manner that was meaningful to them individually. ... Their knowledge was seen as important and vital for the project's success. Taylor (2000) highlights the need for facilitators to be "trusting, empathetic, caring, authentic, sincere, and demonstrative of high integrity". Effectively, I needed to model the behaviour I wanted to gain from the management team in order to foster connectedness throughout the project. I reflected on my approach to understand and take into consideration managers' emotional and cognitive needs each step of the project milestones.*

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The level of analysis in these second case studies show the learners' deepening insights into the contributing factors, results and the processes utilised. Having provided work that integrates new learning and displays higher-level thinking skills, the learner is now prepared for Learning Task 7, producing their Model of Practice.

The Model of Practice is developed when the learner is at the final stage of their ILP study. They are about to sum up their learning and are considering the following questions: *Who am I? What do I know and why? What guides me? What informs my practice?* From the reflective exercises they have undertaken, the evolution of their professional practice becomes clear, and the theoretical and practical frameworks in which their work is set now emerge. This Model of Practice is a bringing together of their ethos, vision, values and beliefs, and embodies what it means to be a competent practitioner in their field. It is the integration of their personal and professional growth, a manifestation of the whole self.

While the Model of Practice must be described in writing, learners are also encouraged to ‘illustrate’ their work, either visually, using drawings, photos and diagrams, or linguistically, with metaphors, quotes and word pictures. This framework sets out how the learner now practises and why they do what they do. It sets out to illustrate their current identity – ‘the new me’ – as a practitioner. To paraphrase one learner’s comments, they have gone from the invisible to the visible.

The Model of Practice illustrates the ability of the learner to draw on multiple threads within the journey and articulate their value and meaning to express their current intentional practice.

The Model is a revealing synthesis of the learner’s practice knowledge and skill. It is through their Model of Practice that learners demonstrate the nature and quality of their degree-level learning. They are demonstrating their ability to take a range of complex information or knowledge that has been gathered, connect themes from their past, their personal and professional selves, and to weave these together to define their new self and current practice. At its best, it is a creative and original contribution to the learner’s own practice and provides a guide for future work.

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“Establishing my very own Model of Practice was significant to me. It has allowed me to understand that I, indeed, function according to a model. I’m aware that as I grow and develop, I need to be open to adapting and improving both myself and hence my Model of Practice.”

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“Years of knowledge and experiences meant I could now create my Model of Practice ... to combine all the theories, models, why I knew stuff, and that opportunity to learn, unlearn and relearn, and to truly know that I had a strong values base to my work.”

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“I now have a framework of practice that incorporates all of who I am – values, beliefs, guiding principles, my leadership ethos, theories/models/strategies and tools that support my practice, alongside thirty years of management and leadership work, as well as a very clear and transparent way in which I like to operate.”

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The process of developing a model or framework of practice assists the learner to draw on the core of their identity, as they deliberately integrate their values and strategies for work. One learner described their experience:

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“I was amazed to realise that my work incorporated many areas of specialised work – social services, career practice, management and leadership. I am not just a career practitioner, I am many things. Therefore my Model of Practice is more than having an understanding of career practice, it is demonstrating my knowledge and skill in management, my beliefs about leadership and my understanding of the social services environment. I can be defined by having a multi-faceted, interconnected and integrated approach to a range of contexts.”

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This quote reflects the complex insights available to learners as they reflect on and construct a current Model of Practice, and a new view of themselves as an intentional practitioner.

## **The New Me**

Learners often identify ‘a new me’ as a direct consequence of the learning within the programme; and leading on from their success in the programme, they identify enhancements to their careers. The ‘new me’ is often more confident than the old, with a much stronger sense of self-worth, arising from the recognition by others of the credential they have obtained.

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“There was most definitely a ‘new me’... [I felt] more confident in myself. I feel more grounded – I feel okay about who I am, professionally and personally, and I have the self-belief that I am really good at what I do. And a ‘new me,’ I suppose, would be ingrained in me. I also feel validated – so that qualification and the journey of it has given me a validation I felt was lacking in the past.”

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“I’m okay with who I am now – this is me, and the transformative part of it for me was that I could recognise that my personality and my skills are unique to my way of being, and I have an ability to use them appropriately in the right context. I’ve seen some skills external to the formal part of the qualification – which I have gained more depth in – and I like those parts of me. I think that’s the transformative nature of the qualification.”

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“This sense of self is of major importance. Having attempted academic study in my youth and failing, I was always faced with the inner thought that I was ‘thick’. It has taken the better part of a lifetime to realise any learning is useful, and none more so than reflecting on experience.”

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## Learning Task 8

## Preparing for Assessment

Assessment is a two-part process for the learner on the Independent Learning Pathway. First, they prepare and submit their portfolio of the completed Learning Tasks. This is supported by a file of evidence which they must gather, which will confirm many of the claims made in the portfolio. This documentation includes training certificates, job descriptions, a CV and attestations from employers or other colleagues. This portfolio is peer-reviewed by a second facilitator, prior to submission, and sent to the assessors three weeks before assessment.

The second step in the process is a panel presentation to the assessors, either in person or remotely. This is a professional conversation with two assessors, in the course of which the learner articulates their knowledge and capabilities relevant to the degree sought and the requirements of the Graduate Profile for that degree. This includes their new learning and their new Model of Practice. As they bring life to their written work, they

speaking about their new learning, their new concepts and their new views of practice – they present ‘the new me’, and their new energy associated with it, in a variety of creative ways.

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It is when they speak out loud that the richness, the real story, is heard – and it is often not until when people of ‘authority,’ i.e., experts in the field, are listening and discussing and interacting with them that they actually comprehend they indeed are worth listening to, that they are knowledgeable and that their skills and knowledge are valued (Ker, 2017).

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The narrative presented to the panel of assessors gives the learner the opportunity to highlight their journey of personal transformation. Learners typically speak of having acquired greater self-worth, a stronger perception of ‘expertness’ – they are now professionally more experienced and adept compared with their situation at the start of the process. Their ideas, beliefs and knowledge have changed and become focused. They talk of a greater understanding of the need to integrate theory with practice. They have deliberately reflected on practice, they have made explicit their underlying beliefs and values, and they have synthesised both their formal and informal knowledge bases. They now know *what* they know, they know more, and they are able to access new information more readily. They know that they meet, and often exceed, the requirements of the Graduate Profile against which they are being assessed. For some this new confidence, the ‘new me,’ leads to a desire for more formal learning, met by enrolment in postgraduate qualifications.



Hale T-Pole used this slide at his panel presentation to illustrate his personal transformation.

Hale started his journey of learning as his professional rugby journey was finishing. He wanted to gain a qualification that acknowledged his life as an athlete, and as a coach, mentor and sports marketer, as well as his community practice – giving back to young people and making a difference.

Hale tells his own story:

*I started this journey to gain a qualification that matched my 18-year career and involvement in professional rugby. After finishing my years of top-level playing at the Rugby World Cup 2015, I was looking for something that formalised my many years of playing, coaching, managing teams and, in more recent years, in my job working as a player/agent for a sports marketing company, taking on roles representing players on PIPA (the Pacific Island Players Association) and Base (youth employment training centre).*

*The Bachelor of Applied Management was an ideal fit for me! A qualification that respected the experience I have gained through real-life involvement with my sport at a top level, and which supported my learning by teaching me academic concepts and theories that I realised I've been applying without really knowing it. This qualification has bought together my practice with theory.*

*My assignment (Model of Practice) is titled “From Making Tackles to Corporate Battles” and subtitled, “How Rucks and Mauls prepared me for Boardroom Walls”. What I realised, having reflected on my journey, is*

*that I actually did know quite a bit about some of the concepts I have been taught ... but I had not been put in touch with the appropriate research, as I had not been in a formal learning environment since I ... left high school. I started out thinking that it would be nice to achieve this qualification and that I would 'suffer' through the more academic aspects of it. I had genuine doubts about whether I would achieve it, especially since English is my second language. And what I learned was that there is a place for academic concepts in real-life working environments. I have learned not to be afraid and dismissive of what research can tell us about market forces or social trends. I can adopt these ideas and they help me operate as a person working in between corporate leaders and upcoming players.*

*It has given me a huge sense of achievement in an area that I felt was out of reach for me in the past.*

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Jenny Jordan, a learner in the Bachelor of Social Services programme, grew up with her family working and owning market gardens; at the completion of her degree, she was supporting the elderly in a residential village to create gardens for themselves. This is her learning and reflection on her personal transformation presented at her panel assessment.



## What I have become:

- Professional in Social Services practice
- Confident in the use of recognised models for Social Services practice
- Competent to use research tools when implementing new projects to support Social Services practice.
- A pursuer and sharer of knowledge to support others for future sustainability and fairness to all.
- Someone who puts steps in place to manage personal wellbeing
- I have developed new skills in essay writing and working with presenting in virtual and public settings.
- Someone who has faced challenges in her work environment who will use past experiences in reflection as I continue my future growth in learning and development.

## The achievement of a degree

This is a significant personal and professional achievement for mature learners. It means entry into a new world. It is the validation of their prior knowledge, their experience and their abilities. The production of the portfolio brings its own specific learnings and rewards including a heightened sense of the connectivity of the learners' life and work. The many roles they have inhabited in life, roles that intersect with others in both organised and random ways, now create a rich tapestry of life experiences (Blustein, 2014, p. 8). For many learners, the portfolio is a visual record and analysis of this tapestry which provides tangible evidence of 'the new me' which they take forward into their future.

Joanna Campbell, Hale T-Pole's wife, allows us an insight into the personal response of a new graduate:

*The other day (after his presentation), Hale came home with [a] sense of pride in himself and his achievement that I have not seen in him before. This is a man who has stood on the most famous rugby fields around the world, facing the fiercest opponents in the most challenging sporting situations. He has needed to make big sporting judgment calls in real life, with a rugby ball in his hands and millions of people watching ... accepting failure at times, public humiliation (on a scale that you and I cannot relate to), but of course also celebrating wild successes, too. He is proud of his achievements on the rugby field, but he does not think he is above others and he is more than aware of his areas of weakness or areas that he is yet to improve on, like formal education. So don't for a minute think that I haven't seen him in situations where he should be very proud of himself ... after all, he has achieved things that you and I will never ... But ... when he came home the other day ... his eyes were glowing ... and there was a sense of "Yes ... I can do this ... actually ... I just did it"! It was different from sporting successes ... he had a sense of more completeness ... he is not just a rugby player from Tonga who can run in a straight line ... he has also achieved a measure of academic success ... something that was missing ...*

*Email to facilitator (J. Campbell, personal communication, September 30, 2016)*

Another learner sums up the feelings of the new graduate in a slide shown at her assessment panel presentation.

### **Key Learnings: I am**

**C CURIOUS**

**A ACHIEVING**

**P PATIENT**

**A ADAPTABLE**

**B BEAMING**

**L LEARNING**

**E EDUCATED**

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## **Professional Identity growth through facilitated portfolios**

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Every professional has a professional identity – the question is how conscious and purposefully chosen it is. It is impossible to imagine a professional without a professional identity. It is possible that there are professionals who cannot articulate their professional values and commitments, therefore cannot purposefully draw on the core of their identity (Trede, 2012, p. 159).

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When learners are developing their Model of Practice, they are consciously examining, reviewing and explaining their professional self and their future self, and learning to articulate and purposefully draw on who they are (Carpenter & Ker, 2017). Reisetter et al. (2004) define professional identity as the view of self as a professional plus competence as a professional, resulting in *congruence* between one's personal worldview and professional outlook (see further discussion in Chapter 7). This integration culminates in envisioning oneself as part of the professional community, with a greater sense of belonging and knowledge of the competencies that allow participation in that community. For many learners it is this congruence which is most heartening – they have brought an older personal world-view up to date, and it is now aligned with the evidence of their new professional self.

## Facilitator comment

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“People often come with the idea that because they have not been to university, then they do not know anything, that they are ‘dumb’; age and experience do not seem to be a barrier to this thinking. As they work through the process, you can sense their change in thinking; some have the ‘ah ha’ moments when they, with passion, voice their new learning; for others, it is a slow dawning of realisation that eventually shines out in their oral assessment. I see learning in all of the above, but I think the biggest impact that learning has is on their self-identity.”

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For the learner, the process of undertaking a facilitated portfolio contains all the elements that facilitate identity growth in the individual – it heightens self-awareness, involves a rigorous self-assessment process, demands critical analysis and is intensively reflective. Conversations about professional identity enhance awareness of the underlying professional values involved. This process builds self-questioning skills. Trede (2012) notes that an unquestioned practice will breed an unquestioned identity; conversely, one can argue that the self-questioning processes and reflexive practice, deliberately taught in the facilitated portfolio process, will encourage a questioned practice and professional identity.

As Hall (2002) notes, “identity growth is not just knowing yourself but knowing how to learn more about yourself.” The skill of learning more about yourself is enhanced by the process of self-assessment (Harrington & Hall, 2007), which has been intensively demanded in the learning journey. Identity learning is seen as a meta-competency – the ability to form accurate perceptions of oneself, to gather feedback about oneself and to change one’s self concept as circumstances change (Hall, 2002).

Reflecting on learning achievements can empower the learner to make decisions about how to move ahead with their learning needs. The evidence of an increased sense of self – a sense of inner knowing – affirms *who I am*. This in turn provides an internal compass (Hall, 2002) which impacts on the learner’s ability to choose paths in keeping with their values and purpose, and to adapt and thrive in new and different work environments. Carpenter (2010) points to *identity awareness* as a key factor in employability and satisfaction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century careers environment. This includes the awareness of one’s own skills

and strengths, the ability to self-assess and reflect on assets and skills acquired or lacking, and knowledge of the values and goals that have personal meaning. All these capabilities produce a strong sense of self and help provide essential attributes for resilience and adaptability in the rapidly changing 21<sup>st</sup> century work environment.

At the end of the learning journey, learners indicate this new professional identity in a range of ways: they have grown in self-confidence and self-efficacy, and they have integrated their new self-awareness into their working roles and lives. They reference and define the ‘new me’ and the ‘old me’. They have new scripts for their lives which may change and evolve, but the reflective skills and analytical process of discovery remain with the learner, to rewrite in the future.

In the words of one learner:

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“I explored my values and my view of the world. I identified threads that have been entwined throughout my working life, my experiences and my drivers. It was only through writing .... that I discovered that coaching and educating were so important in what I do. My desire to change things, to step up and to influence was uncovered. My desire for a fair society that respects both the planet and those within it was teased out ... I explored my skills. With my learning assessment earlier this year I have extended the range of what I thought I could do. I am now peering over the opportunity and learning horizon.”

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## **A variation of the Independent Learning Pathway**

Organisations have taken advantage of the flexibility of the Independent Learning Pathway to use the qualification as a professional development opportunity for employees. The New Zealand Defence Force has placed over 70 learners in the Bachelor of Applied Management degree, redesigning part of their portfolio to fit their specific needs. The difference with these learners is that Learning Task 5, the section which requires new learning, has instead become a concisely defined project. The topic of this project is approved and supported by the employer, with a view to enhancing the learner’s knowledge in a particular area of their work.

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### ***Employer Feedback (NZ Defence Force)***

*“There are significant and lasting benefits for personnel completing work-based learning qualifications. The most important of which is having the ability to align academic research and theory to real-world practical applications – personnel are able to understand the context for their work in the big picture.*

*This is extremely important for the work we do – linking the tactical and operational with the strategic, particularly when our work has international application / implications. As personnel have come to see the strategic view of the world and how their work has alignment and impact, they have been able to commission from the ranks and have higher levels of aspiration for themselves, their families and communities.*

*Finally, the huge advantage of work-based learning is that it provides much of our workforce the opportunity for second chance learning, where they may not have achieved success in secondary education. Work has become the classroom in which skills acquisition, competency development and personal and professional learning are woven together in a seamless tapestry of long-term career development.”*

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Employers valued being part of the learner’s journey and having the opportunity to observe the transformative changes they made – for themselves and in their organisation. They valued having input into projects that benefitted the organisation, and watching the learner navigate new learning in research and enquiry. The project-based work was seen as a win–win for both the employer and the employee, as well as for the organisation as a whole.

The Independent Learning Portfolio leads to learners developing insightful understandings of themselves as individuals and practitioners. The pattern of understandings that learners achieve has been well identified in the research (Ker, 2017) – with a stronger self-identity, and professional identity, they have a stronger sense of confidence and self-efficacy that in turn gives them the courage to move forward, be open to new opportunities, and have a sense of control over their future plans and growth. These self-understandings constitute learnings that go far beyond an assessment process for a specific credential. Learners report their new self-understandings – for example, generic competencies that were transferable across a range of contexts, as well as contextual knowledge

and skills in their discipline that were likewise transferable. For some learners, these new understandings led them to view their future in new ways, contemplating new roles and, for some, new academic possibilities.

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“All this new knowledge meant that I had the ability to change some of my behaviours. I focused on my communication skills and style. I have started looking at different roles, ones that require tertiary qualifications, and ones which offer different opportunities.”

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Other learners noted changes in various aspects of their lives or perspectives sparked by their learning journey. Feedback from one learner showed changes in attitudes and self-belief. She wished she had listened to her facilitator rather than her to own ambitions to be the best, better than her colleagues; however, these competitive concerns have now been left behind:

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“But I’ve got to the point where I actually don’t care what grades others got and I don’t care if they know what I’ve got or what I didn’t, because what I got out of it was so much more powerful than actually the grade – what I got out of it was believing in myself and understanding that I have a high level of integrity, and that if I love myself and believe in myself and own it – when I take that power back – it is so hugely beneficial to me. And it doesn’t matter what other people did or didn’t do – it’s about what I contributed.”

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Ker (2017) likens the broader feedback from learners to *flourishing*, fitting the five factors of well-being (Seligman, 2011): positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment. Seligman theorises that maximum well-being leads to a state of flourishing, thriving, being full of vitality and prospering as individuals and as a group. This particular learner’s journey saw her flourish, functioning more happily and in a more engaged way in her personal life as well as her working environment – where she noted a difference in her attitudes, behaviours and management techniques (Ker, 2017).

## Graduate comments

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“I have spent nine years building homes ... I now build lives.”

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“Degrees were for smart people ... little did I know the heavy yet positive impact it would have on my personal well-being and development.”

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“It opened my eyes, made me think more broadly, able to learn more, I’m now more employable.”

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“I now know why I know stuff. I have learned new words.”

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# Part Two

## **Professional Practice and work-based learning programmes**

Part Two outlines learning pathways for the professional practice qualifications. Characteristically self-designed and self-managed, these programmes allow learners the opportunity to value and credit learning in, through and for work. Offered at graduate and postgraduate levels, they enable practitioners to take a critical, reflective and evidenced-based approach to change and development in their workplaces.

Professional practice qualifications at Capable NZ are work-based learning programmes. They are distinctive in their pursuit of knowledge that is action-focussed in order to achieve work outcomes (Garnett, 2016) and make a relevant contribution to work practice. They differ from traditional tertiary provision in the following ways:

- They are customised to the individual work-based learner, who is able to negotiate an individual programme of study, often in partnership with his or her employer
- They are derived from the needs of the workplace and the learner, rather than from a subject discipline curriculum
- The work undertaken may range across subject disciplines
- They focus on benefits to self, to one's professional practice and to one's organization/employer, addressing development and change at the level of the individual and the work context (Garnett, 2016).

Learners are able to recognise their own work-based learning as the subject of higher education study, and design and undertake a programme of study focused on topics and issues relevant to their work. They develop higher-level knowledge and understanding, as well as cognitive, practical and personal skills, from this study of their own learning. New learning undertaken in professional practice degrees is project-based, meaning that investigation into theory, best practice and research can be integrated

with the demands of the learner's workplace. This is work-based learning with an academic focus on higher-level knowledge and learning in the learner's own particular context, rather than one based in disciplinary knowledge. As many of our learners are employed people, they have insider knowledge which demands a focus on insider research and ethical practice.

As Gibbs and Costley (2006, p. 346) observe: "The work-based learner is managing time, the direction of study, the nature of the knowledge and the means by which it is being researched and developed. They manage not only the self-management of how learning is planned but also the nature of knowledge sought for the purpose of developing themselves into more effective practitioners."

There are three professional pathways described in this section:

1. The **Master of Professional Practice** is outlined in Chapter 6, which describes the elements and structure of the programmes offered and examines the assessment philosophy and process.
2. The **Doctorate in Professional Practice** qualification is examined in Chapter 7, focussing on the facilitation approach associated with this advanced degree.
3. The **Graduate Diploma in Professional Practice**, and the use of professional practice programmes for industry benchmarking, are described in Chapter 8. The programmes outlined here illustrate a more pragmatic approach undertaken at undergraduate level to provide variations for specific industry purposes. This chapter also examines and discusses the strengthening of professional identity, including for facilitators.

Finally, in Chapter 9 the authors emphasise the future-focussed delivery of these programmes. We consider the skills developed by our pathways' learners and align them with those required for career management and adaptability in the current challenging work environment, proposing a relationship derived from the learning processes.

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# 6

## Professional Practice and work-based projects

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“The discretion to apply all that I have become, but now mapped against an academic criterion. You can’t imagine (although I think you probably can) the relief and the light-hearted confidence that brings; that the academic gap has been filled.”

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A learner undertaking professional practice programmes is involved in knowledge creation and problem-solving of real-time issues demanded by a changing work environment. Relevant problems are addressed in an individual way, a process absent from the traditional disciplinary models for complex learning. The mature learners in these programmes undertake professional practice qualifications for a range of reasons: they may be aiming to transform their practice or deepen and intensify their field of expertise; they may wish to investigate a particular issue and propose solutions. They may be seeking a benchmark required by a professional body. They are typically employed or self-employed.

Many learners enter these programmes expressing appreciation for the opportunity to plan and design their own learning and to address an issue that has meaning for them. The work-based curriculum allows learners to focus a wide lens on the multiple realities of their working world (Garnett, 2016), enabling the creation of new integrative knowledge that is both emergent and complex (McGregor, 2015). A transdisciplinary approach allows the recognition of all the learning that has been achieved by a learner, and not just new work.

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Knowledge gained in, through and for work is usually transdisciplinary and multi-dimensional knowledge that is not easily teased out into subject disciplines (Garnett, 2016, p. 309).

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### ***The disciplinary approaches***

**Multidisciplinary** – *studying a research topic not only in one discipline, but in several simultaneously*

**Interdisciplinary** – *the transfer of methods from one discipline to another*

**Transdisciplinary** – *“concerns that which is at once between the disciplines, across the different disciplines and beyond all discipline. Its goal is the understanding of the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge ... Transdisciplinarity entails both a new vision and a lived experience” (Nicolescu, 2010, p. 22).*

*“The essence of transdisciplinary is that the unification of disparate strands of knowledge and ways of knowing the world is necessary if people ever hope to understand the world and solve its messy problems” (Nicolescu, 2014).*

Integrating their learning, achieving a new vision to solve ‘messy’ or ‘wicked’ problems is now the task of these mature, experienced learners; they will learn to apply this lens to their academic work and their workplace.

## **Elements of professional practice degrees**

The Master of Professional Practice degree provides an illustration of the structure and process of a professional practice qualification.

### **The Review of Learning**

Typically, and at Capable NZ, reviews of learning are undertaken in professional practice degrees. As in the Independent Learning Pathway, a learner examines all their multiple roles in work and non-work experiences. This provides rich material which is then analysed for skills, knowledge and capabilities, providing the foundation for reflection and insights into practice, values and the professional self. Experiences of career and work are revisited, as the whole self is examined with all the inherent and interwoven influences of culture, values and learnings. Through the process of writing and reflection, the work and life journey of the learner becomes a source of understanding, a narrative of learning from all of life’s sources, a path towards a revised understanding of self as a professional. Within this new framework, the learner derives a new understanding of the meaning of their current work, gaining new perspectives on the

depth and possibilities of who they are and what they do and why. A further outcome may be that their current work, their practice, deepens in meaning as learners see new possibilities. The review journey is written up to meet the assessment requirements of the first course of study.

***Review of Learning Instruction:*** *As a learner, you are encouraged to review your experience via reflective observations on your work/practice experience. This process facilitates the recognition of the learning that is associated with your experience for the purposes of awarding academic credit. Reflection on your work/practice also enables individuals to reconceptualise themselves as work-based learners and your workplace as a rich source of learning. Please note, the workplace extends into community experience and fields of practice; it is not confined to a discrete location. The reflective process can also help recognition of and make explicit the professional practice pathway; it invites consideration of your professional identity and changes and growth within it.*

*MProfPrac Guide, Capable NZ*

The review of learning process makes explicit, often for the first time, the full range of the knowledge and skills developed and applied by workers within work roles. This is a looking back, a deeply reflective process, designed to encourage learners to examine their experiences in order to isolate themes – be they interests, strengths, skills development, gaining insights, or looking for connections and relationships to ‘passions’ or career-enhancing milestones.

As with the undergraduate portfolio approach, facilitators in this space assist the learners in their journey of writing and reflection, interweaving experiential learning with theoretical models and previous experiences to answer the question: *How did you become the professional practitioner you are today? Tell the story of that journey, referencing and evaluating your experiences, sources of knowledge, mentors and themes of practice.*

Facilitation practice follows the effective model of facilitation, building authentic relationships with the learners that buttress their confidence, enabling them to convey and analyse their learning narrative. Critical reflection on the content and processes of learning is encouraged through the use of models and theories that build both skills and appreciation of the reflective process.

Anastasia, an MPP learner, describes her process in Course 1 of her learning journey, and the work that shaped her ideas:

*“During the first course of this programme, I spent about three months evaluating my previous professional practice. I began a reflective learning process by recording a lot of flashbacks and walking through my past to find and collect all the significant components that have shaped me into the person I was last year as I entered this MPP journey.*

*There were three large components or main areas that were significant to the shaping of my professional practice. The first one had to do with my personality, character and values. The second involved my qualifications and fields of experience. For my final area of endeavour, I compiled a set of capabilities and skills that I had learned and developed throughout my previous studies and work experience. Based on the realisation of these existing components, at the end of the first course I had come up with a rough idea about what I wanted to become in regard to my professional practice. This rough idea was further developed into a more detailed and specific concept during the second course, as described in my Learning Agreement.”*

## **Learning Agreement (Advanced Negotiated Study)**

The successful completion of Course 1, the Review of Learning, leads to the second course of the programme and the opportunity for the learner to negotiate and design their own project – its goals, context and methodology – directed towards the problem to be solved or the issue to be addressed. In addition, the learner outlines their own learning outcomes, the personal learning goals they hope to achieve. The Learning Agreement acknowledges the agreement between the learner, the accrediting institution and, in some cases, the sponsor organisation.

The Learning Agreement is made up of a series of tasks that are designed to examine the *what*, *why* and the *how* of the learner’s project. The context of the learner’s work or interest area is explained, the goal is described – often after many circumvolutions of the topic – and the final topic emerges. A methodology is constructed that will show *how* the project will be achieved, and the learner notes the literature areas that will be examined further in the project. This is often a challenging task, as the learner must critically re-examine long-held ideas by examining evidence-based data and best practice. Much of the work requires insider research, an important aspect of the process. Approval of workplace sponsors is also required, and any ethical considerations relevant to the methodology chosen must be documented and formally approved.

Anastasia details her process in clarifying her vision for her project and her future:

*“It was during the process of finalising my Learning Agreement that what once had been an embryo of ideas finally reached maturity in the form of a project concept. Along with this process, it became clear to me that I wanted to do what I had been passionate about. Furthermore, the realisation of my capabilities made it clear to me that doing something I loved doing as my new framework of practice was not out of reach ... I wanted to apply these capabilities in a new, different context that allowed positive or meaningful values to drive the execution. I could do that by combining visual communication with an area I had been interested in all my life, which is personal development. Instead of using these capabilities to spread out messages that promote consumerism, I wanted to use them to make a positive impact, such as by giving words of encouragement during tough times or sharing life lessons to add meaning to someone’s life. To accommodate my aspirations above, I defined my aspirational professional practice statement as follows:  
I wish to be described as a personal development strategist by offering personal development resources in various visual communication media.”*

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At this point, it becomes the task of an academic mentor to assist a learner to develop their agreement: the aims, context, learning outcomes for the learner and their audience, as well as the methodology and ethical processes required.

In Professional Practice degrees, the facilitator may also be the academic mentor at undergraduate level; at postgraduate level a separate academic mentor is appointed, with a new set of responsibilities to help the learner expand the inquiry into a project which satisfies the programme’s academic requirements. The facilitator role remains, and academic mentors are also expected to build a constructive learning relationship, taking a learner-first approach. Different skills come into play – the academic mentor must have a strong skill base in research practice and graduate-level academic skills so as to foster the same attributes in the learner.

The academic mentor’s role is to:

- Provide guidance and advice in the field of inquiry nominated by the learner, including the nature of the inquiry and the standard expected, the planning of the inquiry programme, literature and sources

- Assist in the definition of the aims and objectives of the inquiry and advise on methodological, conceptual and process matters relating to their production
- Ensure ethical considerations are addressed and appropriate ethical approvals obtained
- Provide ongoing academic oversight of the project as required
- Be accessible to the learner at appropriate times when he or she may need advice.

The appointed academic mentor may have specialised knowledge of the learner's topic, and in the areas of counselling, social services and technology-driven topics this is typically the case. The principle of *fit* is applied where possible; however, the expertise of the academic mentor lies in assisting learners to earn professional practice degrees across a range of industry areas, rather than within a specific body of knowledge.

## The work-based project

The requirements to undertake a work-based project in the Professional Practice qualifications introduce both undergraduates and graduates to innovative practice that illustrates the 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to education. The work undertaken for these qualifications involves addressing, exploring and solving problems in the workplaces or other fields of activity of the learners; these tasks represent a proactive desire to improve, research and contribute to issues of *now*. This is not the traditional theoretical exploration undertaken to resolve a gap in the theory – this exploration is designed to address, reveal or fill a gap in practice. However, evidence-based theory becomes one of the areas of exploration, along with best practice drawn from a global community involved in the same work and exploring similar problems.

In the Master of Professional Practice degree, learners begin the journey of a practitioner–researcher, utilising Masters-level research to locate themselves and their practice in a new space of informed expertise and contribution. In an effective profession, members are constantly engaged in research; individual practitioners need to seek out and engage with the available literature and then undertake their own research, acknowledging the context in which they live their lives, as well as the cultural values, norms and expectations which guide and drive them (Ker, 2017). Learners undertake these tasks, developing an awareness and appreciation of the role of the practitioner researcher.

DJ, a MProfPrac learner, writes of the struggle with immersion in new knowledge, and the questioning of self that typically frustrates learners until the “glimmer of light” appears:

*“One of the hardest parts of my studies was looking into articles for noteworthy information, then hours later finding myself several articles deep and being perplexed as to which information I should reference or what I even agreed with. Right up until the final presentation I was questioning particular models and thoughts I had on my topics, as the world has so much information and content to offer, so much that I was never really satisfied. There was always more to learn and more to read and think about. The process of revising my work and getting feedback and submitting again and again was a frustrating process, as I’m sure most students will agree with – but there was always the glimmer of light when my facilitator would reply with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘this is good’ ... in comparison to ‘have you thought about this?’ or ‘what about that?’”*

In Course 3 of the MProfPrac, academic mentors work to assist learners to develop their thinking and writing about their practice. It is an intensive process of reviewing, encouraging and intensifying the scope of their investigations into their project work, including the developing of their professional self and practice. The role of the academic mentor in work-based learning is to safeguard the ‘quality’ of the knowledge claims made by the learner, a role requiring an academic’s expertise (Bellamy, 2009, p. 97).

Table 12. Requirements of a Master of Professional Practice project

- 
- Implementation of the Learning Agreement and its learning outcomes specific to the work/practice and context
  - An appropriate response to the identified work/practice themes, learning resources and assessment requirements, reflecting the context and specific nature of the project, inquiry or other work-based activity undertaken
  - A systematic and critical discussion of the theories relevant to the project and their justification for the project
  - Systematic and professional engagement with relevant professional networks
  - The application of ethical principles in the research project design and its application
  - The application of an understanding of the relevance of the project to Māori, with appropriate consultation

- The demonstration of professional, interpersonal and networking skills in the production of new research within the workplace
- The production of the results in a form or forms that clearly communicate the findings to a workplace, and to an academic or professional audience
- The capacity to reflect critically on the research, the workplace and the researcher's place within that workplace or wider industry field
- The capacity to demonstrate how the project has provided or might provide a means to effect transformative change in the workplace, the learner's colleagues and peers, and in the larger work-related environment within which the learner operates.

*Capable NZ MProfPrac Guide (Otago Polytechnic 2020)*

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These requirements, as well as the competencies of the Graduate Profile, are captured in this extract from the programme's Moodle pages; it speaks succinctly to both the aims of the project and the developmental outcomes expected of the learner:

*The project work at Level 9 has its own application characterised by independence and a high level of specialisation. As a worker with initiative and desire to problem-solve, you also become a self-motivated, self-starting and autonomous researcher, well on the way to being a thought or practice leader in your field. Your understanding of the problem you identified is both deep and critical, and your ability to find evidence-based solutions will depend on your capacity as a reflective practitioner and a work-based researcher. You are well on your way to leadership at level 9, and this means being a leading thinker or practitioner in your area of endeavour, though it is nothing without mechanisms to share your new knowledge with your communities – your organisation, your colleagues, your stakeholders. Ultimately, being a leader involves making a difference to a culture, changing people's ways of thinking, doing, acting and being by putting them in a powerful position of 'becoming', a state where true learning happens through sharing.*

*Extract from MProfPrac Moodle site (Martin Andrew)*

## **Assessment**

Learners' final project work must encompass the requirements listed above, meet the learning outcomes of the programme and demonstrate the competencies of the Graduate Profile. In addition, they will have developed their own learning outcomes to be achieved.

Work-based learning demands a particular mode of assessment. Criterion-referenced assessment ensures that the learner is assessed against specified levels of achievement; the assessment criteria are stated and made available to learners as they begin their programme to ensure a transparent and consistent approach. Assessment methods must be rigorous, valid and “avoid undermining the nature of the learning, given that it will typically be issue-based, driven by the learner, and transdisciplinary” (Lester & Costley, 2010, pp. 5-6). Learners’ work is expected to present an explicit portrayal of personal experience which acknowledges the individual as a whole including thoughts, feelings and actions – an empowering experience for the learners (Costley, Elliot, & Gibbs, 2010).

## Learners as map-makers

Lester (1999) points to the distinctive nature of work-based assessment at this level:

*The aim of assessment is generally to assess learners’ progress as ‘map-makers’ or self-managing practitioners (Lester, 1999), not to confirm their conformance as ‘map-readers’ (i.e. their mastery of propositional knowledge or ability to demonstrate occupational competence). Its focus is typically concerned with learners’ reasoning and critical reflection, how they develop their capability as practitioners and practitioner-researchers, and how they make critical judgements in the work context (Costley & Armsby, 2007; Brodie & Irving, 2007, as cited in Lester & Costley, 2010).*

On this basis, assessment criteria are derived from generic-level statements and learning outcomes; learners will add their own criteria, written as part of the Learning Agreement, establishing their personal learning outcomes to be achieved. The generic criteria are mapped onto the appropriate academic levels and explicitly onto the learning outcomes of each course. It is the ability to assess the experiential learning of individuals through generic criteria, rather than prescribed subject-specific criteria, which allows recognition to be given to the full range of learning achieved by the individual (Garnett, 1998). As a result, there is a high degree of customisation, and much of the work-based learning which is achieved consists in addressing the depth and complexity of specific work contexts (Garrick & Rhodes, 2000). The knowledge a learner brings is that relating to their own subject area and work context: when they explore their own learning alongside new learning which is

highly relevant to their own work, there is an impact: “learners become intrigued with what they know, but also how much they do not know, and are stimulated to find out more” (Workman, 2009, p. 192).

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*“The assessor role in the Capable NZ work-based learning programmes demands a wide set of skills. An assessor must have the usual competencies to assess the quality of the written work, the meeting of academic criteria and the Graduate Profile outcomes: and assessment matrices provide this tool. Beyond that work, assessors require the ability to step inside the working context of the learner and perceive the issues addressed from their aims and perspectives, and their own practice. The panel presentation provides the opportunity to hear the ‘map-making words’ of the learners, to listen to the highlights of their learning, the synthesis of their understandings, the development of their personal map as a self-managing practitioner. In this setting the learner is the expert. Listening and questioning skills, just as in facilitation, assist the learner to convey their enthusiasm with their learning and the transformation of their practice. It is in the panel presentation that the whole person turns up, with thoughts, feelings and actions, and this is an empowering experience.”*

Heather Carpenter, lead assessor, Capable NZ

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The role of the learner as a map-maker and a self-managing practitioner is illustrated in the words of DJ, a MProfPrac graduate. DJ has used the professional literature to extend his understanding of his own reflexivity, and presents a graduate perspective:

*“Stress aside, in the end the new learnings I gained will be forever etched in my mind; how to research, survey and data collating and drawing out findings and themes was very informative for me. On top of that, the information gathered and presented will be instrumental in my current role with the New Zealand Olympic Committee and the athletes I engage with. Ultimately, to have this Masters qualification not only credits my new learnings, but also what I had already brought to my field of enquiry – which I feel gives me more credibility, but more importantly adds some theory to what people would assume has been a life of practical learning for me. I quite like what other people write about and the models they have developed, strangely enough. Equally I am quite proud of my own. I can live them and breathe them and I do every day.”*

The contribution to practice is a significant aspect of the assessment of a Professional Practice degree. Learners may be pursuing topics relevant

to their organisations and looking to engage and influence others, or they may be sharing their work with a widespread community of practice. Dena, a social work practitioner, notes her intentions with her work on empowering family and whanau in family group conferencing:

*“It has been worthwhile to be recognised for making a contribution at this level. I feel it has grown me, in that I have had a much stronger focus on this aspect of our work and been able to engage colleagues at all levels of the organisation and clients in some constructive dialogue on the topic. I can only hope that out of these discussions and from reading the report there can come further structured opportunities for talk becoming action or more effective practice... I look forward to an opportunity to present findings in practice forums around the region, as this should also generate some valuable reflection for a wider group of staff to hikoi te korero.”*

Table 13: Examples of work-based projects that have been undertaken in Capable NZ’s Master of Professional Practice

Project Title	Contribution to Practice
<i>Utilising Visual Communication to Promote Personal Development Messages and Make a Positive Impact</i>	Report and personal development website
<i>Designing Operations for Learner Success: A Case Study of Quality and Excellence in Capable NZ, Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand</i>	A model for self-assessment practice in organisational teams
<i>Performance Management: Coaching for Performance</i>	Coaching guide
<i>Personal Leadership: What Works for Learners</i>	Facilitator/learner leadership development model
<i>The Art of keeping Tigers</i>	A new framework model for assessing risk within the workplace, vulnerability control model
<i>Empowering Family /Whanau in Youth Justice Family Group Conferencing</i>	Practice forums for family group co-ordinators
<i>Leadership in High Performance Coaching: The Athlete-coach Relationship</i>	A C-L-R model (communication, leadership, relationships) for effective athlete-coach relationships including a tool for athlete and coach expectations. A start, stop, keep doing strategy for coaches

The contribution to one's own development as a practitioner and the impact on personal practice is also a significant aspect of the final work. Andy emphasises the impact of becoming a reflective practitioner:

*“The journey of my MPP was one of me becoming a reflexive practitioner. Where I might have previously carried out an activity with learners and later reflected upon it ... during the process of the MPP, as modelled by the integration of the reflection into the qualitative results, I now consider that I am always reflecting. I am now aware of how the minutiae of practice going on around me is the basis for conscious opportunities for improvements in practice. Raelin (2008) highlighted the significant potential for work-based learning programmes such as the MPP to use reflection in order to build theory in practice. Raelin suggested that reflective practice extends such learning beyond the individual to the collective, and highlights reflective practice as a key mechanism for learning and knowledge production. This is supported by Siebert and Costley (2013), who also believe that the provision of a framework that enables a learner to utilise reflective practice helps learners to make sense of their experiences, which in turn allows them to learn from their experiences.”*

*Reprinted with permission*

After submission of projects, which include a critical commentary, for assessment, professional practice learners in the MProfPrac then present to a panel of three assessors, one of whom is an external assessor. A professional conversation provides the context for the learner to highlight the key learnings derived from their project, their personal and professional development, the contribution to practice achieved and the impact on their own practice.

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*“As a facilitator, one of the most rewarding parts of my role is to see the often significant transformative experience that studying with Capable NZ can bring to learners. I have experienced learners having both professional and personal transformation. First, professionally – learners usually report that they gain in self-confidence, which enables them to grow professionally, seek out and take opportunities, or apply for promotions, or re-evaluate their entire career in some cases. Our learners also find that they have experienced a transformation personally as well. I have had learners report that they have become better parents, better partners, and feel they are more confident in how they are living their lives. The large reflective component of our qualifications enables learners to really explore what is truly important to them, and they are able to more clearly see where they*

*are able to contribute most. I apply the idea of ako (reciprocity of learning and teaching between the learner and the facilitator) working alongside learners who are embarking on their Masters or doctoral studies. I learn alongside and with the learner, and we learn from each other as we go on a journey of postgraduate study together. This is not a relationship which is [one of] facilitators instructing learners, but hearing what the learner wants to do and guiding them to achieve their goals. This work is a true privilege which I enjoy greatly.”*

Jo Kirkwood, programme leader for the MProfPrac, Capable NZ

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In the context of professional practice degrees, the facilitation process upholds the model of effective facilitation and encourages features that foster transformative learning (Taylor, 2009), with a particular focus on reflective practice and critical reflection. Learners produce a critical commentary – a reflection on their journey which examines the impact of the learning on the person and the practitioner, and what this means for the learner’s practice.

Anastasia notes in her critical commentary:

*“This project led to three core changes in my professional practice ... Firstly, this project has encouraged growth by forcing me to move from a passive role into an active role in determining what kind of messages I would communicate using visual communication. Secondly, it has stretched my capabilities as I had to apply them in a new, different context with different needs and dynamics. This involves different exercises of my skills, including problem solving and strategic thinking. Last but not least, it has equipped me to develop further towards being and becoming a well-rounded designer and artist by exploring different media of visual communication. These changes were aimed to bring impact to my own personal growth, to creative workers by giving an example of using creative skills for values-driven projects and to the general audience who benefit from the personal development resources I have shared.”*

## Understanding criticality

A deep exploration of criticality is an essential aspect of postgraduate professional practice learning. The deepening of practice as learners progress through the levels of learning required for postgraduate degrees is addressed by one facilitator:

*“It is hard to differentiate ‘critical understanding’ at Level 8 from ‘critical awareness’ at Level 9, but it is a difference between the merely cognitive to a real opening of the eyes at literally a new level, a level you need before you are ready to take action and apply your learning to your various disciplines of practice. ‘Awareness’ comes from a deep immersion in your practice and its artefacts: from critically reading literature and workplace documents, policies and textbooks, or whichever texts of practice relate to your discipline of practice. You become an expert by reading the field thoroughly, building up a sense of scholarship in your field that better prepares you for making your own contribution to this field. ‘Awareness’ comes, too, from a deep probing of yourself as a practitioner and insightful exploration of the work of exemplary or typical people around you, ranging from other practitioners to clients – whoever the ‘stakeholders’ in your discipline of practice are. By ‘stakeholders’ in the world of experiential learning we refer to the people who can benefit from your MProfPrac.”*

MProfPrac Capable NZ Moodle Page (Martin Andrew).

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# 7

## A Professional Practice Doctorate

In 2017, Otago Polytechnic became the first New Zealand polytechnic to offer a doctoral programme in Professional Practice. The professional practice doctorate exemplifies the recently emerged doctoral degrees that are not targeted at specific disciplines; rather, they are used worldwide as vehicles for professional development and for addressing complex work issues (Costley, 2012).

The Doctor of Professional Practice (DProfPrac) offered at Otago Polytechnic is characteristic of these programmes – it is learner-centred, transdisciplinary and research-focussed. It attracts learners who already have expertise in their fields and who may be in roles of leadership in their organisations and are seeking to extend their skills in work-based enquiry and reflection through a significant project. These learners are likely to be motivated by the prospect of developing new knowledge for innovative practice (Doncaster & Lester, 2002) rather than undertaking subject-specific research. The learning programme is designed to develop and extend their abilities as self-managing practitioners (Lester & Costley, 2010) and promote further leadership of practice.

The work-based nature of the DProfPrac places the learning and research undertaken in a transdisciplinary context; as learners, candidates are expected to locate learning within the context of both an academic community of practice and the workplace setting as part of a broader national and international environment.

The Otago Polytechnic DProfPrac draws on the success of the well-established Middlesex University Doctor of Professional Studies, a programme which is generally considered best practice in the professional doctorate arena. Middlesex University's professional doctorate programme was introduced in 1996/7 and has influenced the design of doctorates in many other countries (Malloch, 2016). The Doctorate in Professional Practice differs from a traditional PhD in the following ways:

Table 14: Comparison Table of the Traditional PhD vs a Professional Doctorate

<b>Traditional PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)</b>	<b>Professional Doctorate</b>
Demands a significant original contribution to the body of learning in a given discipline	Demands a similar level of contribution, but practice and impact on practice is a major consideration
Based on a substantial written thesis or dissertation	Requires a project with significant outcomes and critical commentary on process at the level expected for the qualification
Assessment always includes a viva voce examination	The research project assessment includes a presentation and viva voce at the level expected for the qualification
Criteria for assessment are not explicitly stated and the assessment is, in part at least, norm-referenced through the general academic expectation of level	Criteria are explicitly stated in terms of required learning outcomes. This applies to any taught elements as well as a research project which is assessed against broad and wide-ranging doctorate-level criteria.
Requires detailed reflection on the appropriate subject matter, which can include practice	Requires detailed reflection on practice relevant to the appropriate subject and professional area in a transdisciplinary format
Students are usually identifiable either in full-time or part-time study	Candidates tend to be full-time practitioners who are studying part-time; since the study is practice-based, this blurs the distinction between full- and part-time modes
Students may (or may not) be involved in long-term strategic research	Candidates contribute to immediate issues or the longer-term strategic development of organisations or professional practice. They have to defend their ideas from the outset in a practice setting rather than in 5 years' time.
Based in a subject discipline that has its own paradigm against which the general expectations of level are judged	The degree is not in a subject discipline; the learning outcomes use generic criteria. The qualification is based on professional practice knowledge and agency priorities that are often transdisciplinary and emergent.

Table derived from Middlesex Doctorate comparator.

All the elements of good facilitation practice at undergraduate and Masters' level apply to the work of the DocProfPrac mentor roles. The learner is supported by a lead academic mentor, a second academic mentor, and a professional mentor; the process is deepened to ensure level 10 work is produced, and the advisers must have the skills and knowledge to steer the process towards the outcomes of a Professional Doctorate. As the comparison table indicates, advisors whose own doctoral work is in the traditional space face a process of academic mentoring which calls for a new approach and different skills in working with learners. They must become practitioners of transdisciplinarity – their methodologies are viewed as iterative and evolving rather than prescribed.

'Messy' problems in the workplace do not confine themselves to a single disciplinary cause or solution; emergent issues exhibit a complexity which demands the interconnection of many disciplines and perspectives for solutions, underpinned by an explicit values dimension.

***As researchers:***

*“Transdisciplinarity researchers share a number of features: they tackle complex real-world problems; they address the complexity of such problems by involving multiple stakeholders from science and practice and give rationales for the diversity of their perspectives, and they generate knowledge that is solution-oriented, socially robust, and transferable to scholarship and the complex real-world.”*

Martin

***As a methodology:***

*“Transdisciplinarity can be described as a research strategy that allows us to involve society and all their forms of knowledge to get to grips with vexing societal issues. It has a formal basis that considers our understanding of the structure of realities, the openness of knowledge and logic for inclusivity. The methodology of transdisciplinarity embraces discipline-focussed approaches, cultural thinking and spiritual wisdom on equal footing. The focus is on bringing about change that will have broad benefit, that responds to the urgency of the situations we face and takes responsibility for our actions by considering our interventions' consequences.”*

Henk

***As practitioners:***

*“I see my kete of knowing as a magpie nest filled with multicoloured shiny objects from many sources and representing multiple areas of interest, endeavour and discipline. It is by occupying a nest made up of*

*the eclectic and the various that the mentor becomes a practitioner of transdisciplinarity, also able to suggest strategic alliances that might aid a learner's trajectory."*

Martin

## Programme Structure

The DocProfPrac embodies the elements of the Professional Practice programmes provided at other levels, although within a different structure.

The first course, Articulating Practitioner Research, has two main outcomes:

- ▷ **The Review of Learning**, in which the learner reviews their professional experience and learning, drawing on evidence from their work history to support their claim to be able to work at doctoral level.
- ▷ **The Learning Agreement**, in which the learner critically evaluates a range of appropriate methods and approaches in order to develop a proposal for a research programme which is intended to have a significant impact on their workplace or organisation, and potentially nationally and internationally.

The second course is the Practitioner Research Enquiry. This component is structured by the learner into a series of projects producing sustainable outcomes that affect or influence others within and beyond the learner's organisation. Projects are expected to result in knowledge creation that adds to the organisation's intellectual and structural capital, leading to an increase in the organisation's overall capability. In addition, each project must have the capacity to impact upon and enhance individual professional development and organisational or practice development. Learners are required to communicate the potential usefulness of their research work to specific audiences; seize opportunities to demonstrate leadership of practice; and present aspects of their work to at least one relevant professional body.

### Three doctoral advisers reflect on their work with learners, their roles, focus and practice:

Martin provides a clear perspective on the roles of the mentor at this level of learning, describing the mentor as co-constructor and sage:

*“Offering academic mentorship in postgraduate programmes in the area of professional practice, whether in face-to-face or virtual conferencing mode, is an opportunity to co-construct and negotiate learning. Putting the learner at the centre is at the heart of successful mentoring, and this involves careful reflective listening both of what the learner’s needs are and what capacity they already have. The mentor’s role as co-constructor involves making suggestions and creating interventions which emerge from and build on the learners’ existing capacities. This is important because it gives learners the feeling that the suggestions are doable, achievable, practical. It is an obvious example of applying the old Vygotskian ‘x+1’ principle: in making one step in learning, the learner makes two steps in development. Depending on the learner, it may be appropriate to give them a glimmer of the next stage of possibility, the ‘x+2’, but too much information can be daunting, while too little is not challenging.*

*Balance remains crucial, and to be in a position to create balance begins with deserving trust from the learner, which is achieved by spending a short time discussing ‘life’ in the form of identifying obstacles and enablers in the learner’s current state of being. In short, this involves taking a holistic interest in the learner, and remembering their journey from meeting to meeting because, of course, such acts of engagement with the personal help to build trust. In this space, tensions can be navigated with a combination of empathetic listening and frank and direct coaching. The purpose here is to ensure the learner is on track, focussed, motivated, and aware of the next steps. It is also valuable to offer them a safety net: if you have any questions – or fears – contact me on a negotiated social media platform using informal and direct language. The perception of being there adds value even as it builds trust.*

*From a space of trust it is possible to build respect. Respect underpins relationships characterised by reflective and empathetic exchange, minimising power differentials between the mentor-as-sage and the learner. Imparting sagacity is not an ego-driven, top-down transaction, but rather one couched in the language of the possible: here are some references you may find useful; have a read and write me a short message advising me how you think they might inform your work. The volume of references suggested is important and for me the lucky number is three: any more can be intimidating and unrealistic, but just three is sufficient to add motivation.*

*The mentor-as-sage brings their life experience in education and learning to the educator–learner dyad, and ideally is grounded and versed in the knowledge of their journey and the artefacts that embody that knowledge, like references.*

*Importantly, an academic mentor needs to be a practitioner of their trade, and the repertoire of the trade is not only the what – knowledge of methodologies, paradigms, theories, ways of being and thinking – but also the how: the means of appropriately sharing from this nest, this kete, with learners in an equitable way like an exchange or a conversation, and not a powerful top-down act of imparting. The true mentor is humble, and not driven by ego or desire for any sort of social capital.*

*Trust and respect power the relationship and keep it moving forward, as it's necessary for the learner to want to come back for the next conversation, rather than to dread it; and if life happens, then it happens, and it happens to us all, learner or mentor. There is no room for the language of blame and recrimination in this space, but of mutual understanding and an ethics and duty of care on the part of the mentor.*

*Ultimately, it is the role of mentors to make themselves redundant; or rather to guide their learners on a journey towards autonomy and agency. In professional practice they are the ones with the subject knowledge, and through collaboration and sharing that knowledge is enhanced by contact with new ways of thinking and seeing, leading to fresh ways of becoming, belonging and being. There is a deep infusion of social learning theories such as social constructivism, community or practice theory and critical friends' pedagogy, all underpinned by a postmodern and poststructural view, but the metalanguage may not be necessary. I gently insert it into texts that learners create, and point it out to them, so that it appears that the metalanguage emerges naturally from the learner's understandings. This process is organic and holistic, and is based on the idea that the mentor's role is also to enhance the feeling of wholeness of the learner. It is only really when they reflect on their journey that they realise the many milestones of their journey. Mentoring can be quiet and seamless, not declarative and ego-driven."*

Martin Andrew

Phil emphasises the focus of the learner:

*"I see the primary role of the facilitator/mentor as an educator is to help the learner develop the reflective capabilities so that they are able to build meaning from their experiences. This is achieved by challenging the learner to go beyond describing what they have experienced to extracting what they learned and how this has been incorporated into their practice.*

*In terms of guiding the development of the learning agreement, it is the facilitator's/mentor's role to keep the learner focussed on what they are trying to achieve, knowing that there are three interrelated sets of outcomes: the professional development of the learner as a practitioner; the contribution which the learner intends to make to practice; and the contribution the learner intends to make to the employer/workplace.*

*It is this focus on the 'what' that then enables the learner to select an appropriate methodology for achieving the intended outcomes, and once the methodology is clear any ethical issues will come into the frame. It is important that the facilitator/mentor does not distract the learner by going down the PhD pathway, but keeping them focussed on the fact that they are engaged in a professional practice qualification. As such, the practice is paramount and methodology is instrumental, not the academic pursuit which characterises the PhD."*

Phil Ker

### Kelli mentors Māori learners in this programme:

*"What I have learnt through these mentoring experiences is that whanaukataka (relationships) is an integral component to successful learning and teaching relationships. Building relationships online can take more time, and it is preferable to meet kanohi ki kanohi, especially at the start of the learner/mentor relationship if possible. In a world currently protected by international and, also this year, regional and household borders, online learning via Skype, Zoom or Messenger has become a new normal that aligns well with Capable NZ. For Māori, this asks of us a cultural shift to adjust to these platforms of communication. There is a need to be flexible, to allow the learner to choose their preferred method of communication and to set up regular calendar dates to keep in touch and connected. It is important to recognise that Māori learners may have whānau, hapū and iwi commitments that take may precedence over their studies at times and the need for Māori to be fully supported to carry out whānau and cultural responsibilities such as wānaka and tangi.*

*The process of whakawhanaukataka, building online relationships, is really important and, for mentors of Māori learners, it provides an opportunity to get to know the learner culturally, who is important in their life and how do they engage (or not) with whānau, hapū, iwi and the Māori community. Who are their kaumātua and champions that can support them when they need some āwhi or tautoko, what are they passionate about and what are the key components to maximise their success as a Māori learner? Māori learners are not homogenous and bring with them a rich kete of diverse life experiences and expectations. As with all relationships,*

*productive and successful learning relationships with Māori are built on a foundation of trust, respect, autonomy and understanding of who they are as takata whenua, a culturally located Indigenous person.*

*When mentoring Māori learners, the kaiako is in a privileged position to draw on the rich cultural experiences that Māori learners bring with them, such as te reo Māori, socio-cultural and political contexts, history and whakapapa, sometimes helping learners explore these components if appropriate. In the mentoring role this could look like sharing new resources, engaging in a kōrero about their preferred learning style, exploring Māori pedagogies, theories, methodologies and methods. It is also important to recognise that cultural identity is a continuum and that not all Māori learners choose to work with Māori or wish to take a kaupapa Māori approach. At all times, the learner holds the power to decide what their mentoring team should look like and what learning supports they need, if any. Indigenous people should be empowered to take control of their own learning journey, albeit situated within the colonial education system, to realise self and whānau transformation through education.”*

Kelli Te Maihāroa

This facilitation team have witnessed the first DProfPrac Māori graduate successfully assessed in 2021.

The outputs for assessment of this qualification are a 50,000-word practitioner thesis; a panel presentation to three assessors including external and international representatives, where required; reflective activity; and a public presentation.

Table 15: Doctoral projects in progress

Exploring the role of academic resilience during mental health clinical practicum of undergraduate nursing students	Generating a research-led intervention, “The Mental Health Tick,” for use within Otago Polytechnic and Te Pukenga.
How does Tapatoru, the professional standards framework for foundation educators in the tertiary sector, guide and inform the capability building of this sector?	Sharing insights into the construction, affordances and dissemination of Tapatoru as a means of increasing educator engagement and capacity.
Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence award winners	Understanding how ‘excellence’ is conceptualised and applied in the stories of multiple educators in the vocational education sector.
Exploring professional identity in occupational therapy	Investigating the transition of senior learners in occupational therapy from operating in practicum to real-world settings.
How can we better prepare school students for entrepreneurial leadership earlier in their education journey?	Exploring connections between high school student leadership learning and entrepreneurial leadership requirements.

## Doctoral Learner Comment

*Work based learning has changed the way I see the landscape I practice within. I began my Doctorate thinking I'd learn how to improve my professional practice. Now I know how to transform the discipline I practice within.*

*The implications of my learning have led to change in many areas of my life. My motivation to influence change has transformed into a plan to create it.*

*I have learned how to pitch my concepts with confidence, and test them rigorously. I have had the chance to engage with supervisors who encourage the relentless hope in the ability of all people to learn and belong. I have a life that allows me to give back, and participating in work-based learning contributed to this.*

*I see the world differently because of the doors that my education has opened.*

*To any person who is considering work-based learning, run towards it and don't look back. Doors will open for you, and life will lead you down paths you never expected. You will be challenged beyond your imagination, and with these challenges, you will build the mental and emotional determination required to find your purpose and relentlessly pursue it.*

*You will ensure that you live a life that means something. You will become dissatisfied with the way things are, and have the skill required to do something about it.*

*Have faith in yourself, and in your ability to learn.*

*In the words of Bukowski, "You'll do it, despite the worst odds. And it will be better than anything else you can imagine. If you're going to try, go all the way. There is no other feeling like that".*

Lisa McLennan

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# Professional Practice – Benchmarking Qualifications

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“GradDipProfPrac has grown me professionally on a surprising scale, it has shown me how to seek, interpret and disseminate information relevant to my role in a way that both staff and management can relate to. It has allowed me to be accepted at the management table to discuss matters at a high level and provide advice to my peers that is important to manage and mitigate risk in our workspace.”

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## **Undergraduate qualifications in Professional Practice**

Undergraduate professional practice qualifications provide an ideal vehicle for professional benchmarking for groups which are seeking a standard for professional bodies or work roles. A significant example is the Graduate Diploma in Professional Practice with a context in Occupational Health and Safety.

Following the official report on the Pike River tragedy, the NZ Government passed the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, signalling a new approach to health and safety in New Zealand. At this time, the New Zealand Institute of Safety Management, the Health and Safety professional body, finalised talks with Otago Polytechnic about a benchmark qualification for their industry. It was agreed that disparately trained Health and Safety practitioners around New Zealand could gain graduate status within their professional body through the Level 7 Graduate Diploma in Professional Practice undertaking work with a context in Occupational Health and Safety.

Pike River emerged as a significant driver and referencing thread which motivated a new cohort of learners to examine and improve their practice, consider new threats and develop systems and practice that met the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

This qualification gave learners the opportunity to produce, discuss and enhance professional practice within their industry context; it also aligned with the learners' aspirations to both upskill and innovate within their workplaces and in their lives.

These graduates' development affected not only their own professional pathway, but that of their industry. A parallel process occurred: the growth and impact of knowledge and expertise of individual practitioners, on the one hand, and the growth and impact of enhanced professional practice on an industry striving to improve, on the other.

The programme learners for this qualification were essentially able and experienced adult learners, who embarked on a journey of new learning both to upskill and to gain a significant professional benchmark in their industry, as well as eligibility for inclusion on the HASANZ Register to practise as a qualified health and safety adviser in New Zealand. Many were practitioners of considerable experience and expertise who had come up through the ranks of their industry, found themselves in a health and safety role, and developed skills and strategies to provide health and safety advice to their industries. Before the adoption of the OP qualification, a number of factors had disadvantaged both practitioners and the industry, including

- disparate credentials for professional status
- a lack of credibility, and a lack of ability to demonstrate evidence-based practice
- a lack of professional cohesion, with no strong, professionally led community of practice.

With numbers of practitioners undertaking this and other qualifications successfully, industry practice has changed: a graduate credential confers status on the holder as a professional practitioner, and evidence-based solutions for practice problems are emerging and being disseminated, promoting a professional reputation for practice within the industry.

For professional practitioners, Professional Practice may be defined by three characteristics (Carpenter, 2018):

- it is informed – it is evidence and theory-based
- it is intentional – it is best-practice-oriented
- it is critically examined – it is reviewed and reflected upon by the practitioner.

The structure of these credentials is designed to develop all these characteristics. The GradDipProfPrac learners are practitioners in many fields seeking to build expertise in their practice. They undertake research projects at Level 7; these are typically investigative studies which demand exploration of best practice, incorporating evidence-based conclusions as well as a critical examination of their own ideas so as to develop intentional practice. In the benchmarking examples the learners are bounded by legislation and policy, areas with which they are very familiar; what they are able to examine is the best practice within these boundaries that might emerge from their investigations of a range of theory and international practice.

## **A pragmatic approach**

The advisory roles in this programme are jointly held: the facilitator and the academic mentor are the same person. While the facilitator role remains the same, guided by the principles behind the model of effective facilitation, as the course structures change from a review of learning to the design and writing of the work-based project, the academic mentor steers the learners' work towards the course requirements and academic skills quality demanded at Level 7. This is a pragmatic approach; time-pressured Health and Safety managers and officers did not want to deal with two advisors, and the year-long programme demanded maximum efficiency to meet the learners' needs. This arrangement also recognises the boundaries of legislation and policy that encompass these learners' work, allowing facilitators to work more knowledgeably with them.

Improving their own practice is very specific goal of the learners in this qualification. Many have not had opportunities to explore the range of literature and research that will expand and grow their expertise. Because they intend to apply their work, this work is undertaken with a very strong focus on what can be immediately utilised in this space.

“The course allowed me to undertake research into a topic to a level I would otherwise not have done. This allowed a far broader understanding of the topic than I would normally have developed prior to making recommendations as to policy and actions.

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My study has developed my knowledge in my workspace to stop me from just dabbling, to making a difference in my workspace. I have been able to pass on the benefits of my learning to staff who I work with and this has surprised and enlightened them, as my studies opened a door in health and safety that many of my peers had not explored.”

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## Leadership in practice

Taking a leadership role as a practitioner is another positive outcome for these learners. Many noted their new-found confidence and sense of enhanced credibility in feedback surveys (Capable NZ, 2018), where the following feedback emerged:

- 90% of learners in the GradDipProfPrac reported feeling more confident
- 91% of learners in the GradDipProfPrac reported feeling more credible

Learner feedback supported these findings:

- “I have been able to speak with confidence and in some depth on what a safety culture may look like.”
- “[The course] provided me with further confidence to be able to talk and discuss this approach to health and safety with leadership teams and boards of many organisations...”

Comments gathered during research reflected these outcomes in the contributions that learners are making in their workplaces:

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“Until I carried out the presentation I was a little-known figure in this space; in the company now I am respected and consulted by my peers in this space, having recently been asked to present another topic at another gathering of my peers.”

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“I have been able to apply my learnings and these principles and create educational material to present to our clients. I have also submitted this same presentation as a paper for the upcoming HASANZ conference.”

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“The key benefit of the course to my contribution to my workplace is in the development of understanding of the area of H&S and developing an approach and programme for the organisation. Initial indications are that it is meeting a real and under-recognised need in the organisation.”

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Learners noted not just their enhanced ability to provide leadership in practice, but the motivation to continue learning:

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“In general terms the GradDipProfPrac process has helped me add additional skills and capabilities and provided motivation to continue my professional development.”

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“Completing the course has re-awakened an interest in further education and extending my knowledge and expertise in health and safety management, along with the personal challenge it brings.”

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Table 16: Examples of GradDipProfPrac Projects (including Occupational Health and Safety)

Report	Contribution to industry /workplace
<i>Driver fatigue</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information resource for employer</li> <li>• Training resource</li> </ul>
<i>How prepared are NZ venues for acts of terrorism?</i>	Report, analysis and international best practice shared
<i>Risks associated with stress and fatigue among non-clinical workers: An exploratory study of contributing factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report and infographic poster</li> <li>• One-page information sheet</li> <li>• Toolbox talk (for distribution)</li> </ul>
<i>Investigation of best practice in the use, tracking, storage and labelling of vertebrate toxins used for feral pest control in New Zealand</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report with recommendations for industry</li> <li>• Presentations to industry forum</li> <li>• App developed for safe storage</li> </ul>
<i>Mid-life career challenges and strategies for change</i>	Practitioners' resources: guidelines, tools
<i>Catalogue of key soil moisture parameters in Canterbury</i>	Catalogue for viticulture workplace use
<i>Development of an online course using virtual reality examples for laboratory workers and students.</i>	A Levels 5, 6 credit NZQA qualification to ensure laboratory compliance with the Health and Safety at Work (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 2017

## Accreditation of Professional Practice

A further notable example of professional practice for benchmarking is the accreditation process designed for New Zealand Family Group Conference co-ordinators in 2015. These co-ordinators, who work in the Child Youth and Family Ministry (now Oranga Tamariki), play a sensitive and complex role which involves coordinating and facilitating court-ordered Family Group Conferences. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and training. The professional practice qualification was adapted to combine with formal practice standards to provide a credentialling process. The co-ordinators undertook a review of learning based on Course 1 of the GradDipProfPrac., building skills in reflective practice and self-assessment. These were enhanced as they reviewed their practice against the organisation's formal practice standards. The co-ordinators were also asked to investigate the theories they utilised

which contributed to their practice, and the cultural models and relevant legislation which informed the practice of this group. They were asked to consider the form of leadership they were providing in their work. A three-day workshop process was used to introduce the work required; the above areas were discussed and debated and, three months later, the learners produced portfolios which captured their work.

Self-assessment against practice standards and reflection on personal practice produced strong portfolios incorporating individual professional practice from this group. As with the undergraduate learners in the Independent Learning Pathway programme, the topic of leadership provoked lively discussion in relation to their role and practice. Grassroots and servant leadership models were accepted by many; others had to question their strong beliefs about leadership being located hierarchically at the ‘top,’ and set aside innate cultural humility to acknowledge their own leadership in practice. One feedback sheet commented:

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“The hardest thing for me is the ‘self’ stuff ... “the kumera does not tell how sweet it is...,”

but your korero on being authentic made me feel comfortable (and proud) to tell my story,

Kia Kaha  
Be strong

Kia Maia  
Be courageous

Kia Manawanui  
Be steadfast in your heart”

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The submitted portfolios were assessed by both the organisation and a Capable facilitator/assessor, and over 130 learners were certificated. Feedback from the Family Group Conference co-ordinators made it clear that the qualification did not just provide a benchmark that validated their work and skills, it also strengthened their professional identity as individuals and as a group.

## **Professional growth and professional identity development**

As with learners graduating via the Independent Learning Pathway, learners within the professional practice qualifications report evidence of professional growth, professional identity development, and a transformed view of self as a professional with the confidence to share their work. The contribution to industry or the workplace developed as part of their project

work is presented to others, shared in the workplace, or in international forums. Learners step up to become part of professional bodies and speak out about their work.

## Facilitator comment

*“I have started working with learners in the professional practice space where learners identify a goal in their work environment, research the issues related to that goal, develop an approach to resolve it and implement processes to achieve the desired outcomes. Learners graduate after completing a work-based project, recognising their skills and value, both to themselves and their organisation, and on a wider basis making a contribution to their wider industry colleagues. Professional practice qualifications, particularly for those with strong experience but no previous degree, can be transformative. To recognise and articulate that they, the learner, are a professional in their chosen field gives a personal strength and professional validation – they gain identity.”*

Cushla Donnelly

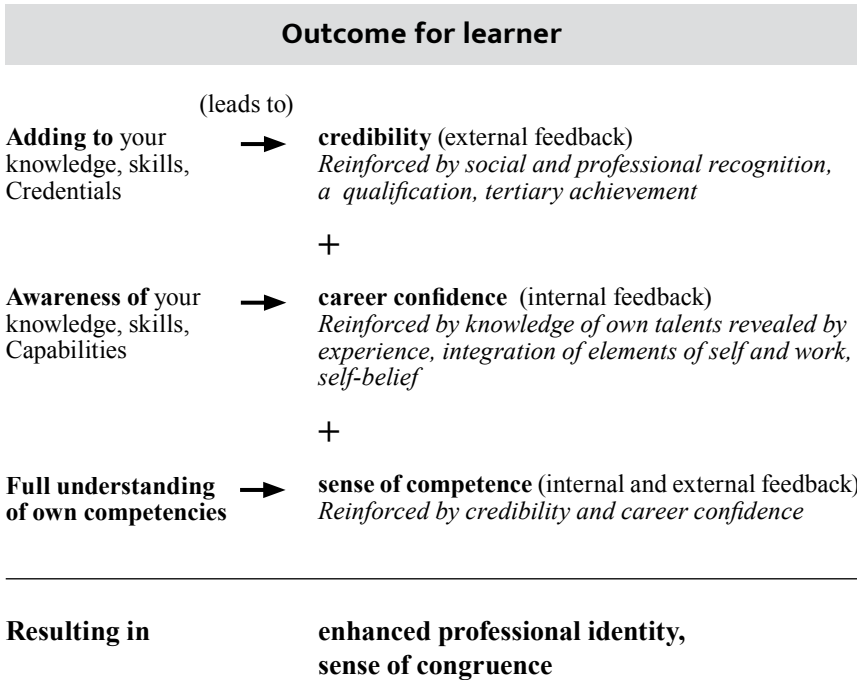
## A strengthened professional identity

Professional identity development involves the acquisition of new role behaviours and new views of the self. It is a systematic way of evaluating, identifying and organising the perception of self (Erikson, 1968); it is dynamic and able to change through processes such as the ability to increase levels of self-awareness (Hall, 2002). It may begin with the exploration and understanding of how one views the world and involve *self-becoming*, which leads in turn to “self-assurance, self-confidence and fosters intention and cohesion for professional identity development” (Trede, 2012, p. 162).

Reports from learners through programme surveys (Capable NZ, 2018) and research (Ker, 2017; Carpenter, 2018) have provided strong evidence of learners’ views on their professional growth. They report new perceptions of themselves as practitioners, viewing themselves as having more confidence, more credibility and as more informed.

In examining professional identity development within the process and context of the work-based learning pathways, in the model presented in Table 16 Carpenter (2018) proposes several factors which contribute to the learners’ new perceptions of self, and suggests the building blocks which contribute to enhanced professional identity growth.

Table 17: Model of professional identity growth following the learning process



The building blocks of enhanced identity growth include

- Career confidence
- Credibility
- Competence (Reisetter et al., 2004) relating to the full understanding of own competencies

The outcome of the enhancement of all these attributes:

- ▷ Identity growth
- ▷ A new vision of the professional self, the professional identity.
- ▷ Congruence between the personal and professional view of the self

Carpenter (2018) (revised)

This model suggests that the perception of self may change with an increasing awareness of personal competence, and that the feeling of increased credibility following graduation enhances the learner's view of themselves as a professional. There is an ensuing congruence, a personal integration which culminates in envisioning oneself as part of the professional community – with a greater sense of belonging and knowledge of the competencies that allow participation in that community (Reisetter et al., 2004). For many learners, it seems that it is the realisation of this congruence which is most heartening – they have brought an old personal world-view up to date, and it is now aligned with the evidence of their new professional self.

With this new self and career identity, the learner may derive a new understanding of the meaning of their work, gaining new perspectives on the depth and possibilities inherent in who they are and what they do and why (Carpenter & Ker, 2017). The model may be perceived as an ongoing cyclical process for the intentional professional practitioner.

## **Facilitators of independent learning and professional identity**

Examining the building blocks discussed above, one might conclude that the same process of growth might be demonstrated in the development of facilitators of independent learning. They do not arrive at Capable NZ trained and ready-made, as the Capable NZ process is unique. Whatever their background, all facilitators face similar steps in their development and in acquiring skills in working with independent learners. They begin to acquire new role behaviours and new views of the self, potentially realising a strong professional identity in their new roles. A suggested sequence of development for facilitators is outlined in the table below.

Table 18: Professional identity growth as a facilitator

<b>Early work</b> becoming credible	<b>Experienced work</b> demonstrating and growing confidence	<b>Highly competent work</b> fully understanding one's own competencies (being confident and credible)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adding to knowledge and skills</i></li> <li>• <i>Practicing facilitation skills</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Awareness and confidence in knowledge and skills</i></li> <li>• <i>Developing expertise and understanding</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Highly competent in knowledge and skills</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading and advancing practice of others</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising the model of effective facilitation</li> <li>• Questioning and listening skills</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Portfolio-building skills</li> <li>• Reflective practice</li> <li>• Teaching self-assessment and reflection</li> <li>• Communication for individual guidance</li> <li>• Ethical practice</li> <li>• Ensuring academic quality processes for learners' work</li> <li>• Levels of learning</li> <li>• Introducing research skills to learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critiques learners' work effectively</li> <li>• Creates opportunities for learner insights and reflection</li> <li>• Experience of and remedies for obstacles along the pathways</li> <li>• Knowledgeable about academic structures and processes</li> <li>• Research-competent, contributes to practice, able to provide sound research guidance</li> <li>• Adherence to academic quality processes</li> <li>• Works within a range of levels and programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A confident practitioner at all levels of work-based learning practice</li> <li>• Expertise in specialised areas of facilitation practice, able to advise, mentor and train others</li> <li>• Strong knowledge of research methodologies and their applications</li> <li>• Able to advise on academic processes, design curriculum, monitor quality</li> </ul>

Table 18 suggests a framework of increasing competencies and, potentially, a sequence of skills and attributes that enhance one's professional identity as a facilitator of learning. Each column in the table assumes the skills and knowledge set out in the previous one, while the third column sets out more advanced leadership capabilities that those working in this field can aspire to. Building these competencies is essential to developing a facilitation practice that will foster engagement, achievement and transformation for learners.

Facilitating independent learning is a shared experience – both facilitator and learners bring knowledge to the learning interactions.

Raewyn, a facilitator, provides an illustration of this exchange in commenting on her facilitation role, and noting her fascination with the subject matter that the learner provides: *'it's knowing the detail of the workplace, the real-world challenges and problems they are solving in their projects that I love.'* The principle of ako recognises that shared experience – as new perceptions, insights, interpretations and understandings, as well as new knowledge – grows out of these shared learning experiences. When facilitators exchange teaching and learning roles with their learners, both engagement and achievement improve, as does transformation. The caring and authentic learning space created by good facilitation skills fosters and values participation and contribution; the facilitator listens deeply to the learner's unique story of skills, knowledge and learning from their experiences. It is about building valuable and beneficial relationships, where all those involved are empowered to learn with and from each other.

## Facilitation as a developmental relationship

- **What makes for effective facilitation?**

The ability to develop the learner's capacities for learning about tasks and self.

- **What skills, knowledge and attitudes do you need?**

The ability to provide a relatively close relationship, and transmit stories and perspectives derived from the ability to listen carefully and question at the deeper level of self. Facilitators are able to motivate and grow the learner's need to learn about self, roles and ideas.

- **What is key to the relationship?**

The ability to connect with and show understanding of the whole person while growing and pushing academic achievement and development.

- **Key belief**

We work to show learners the richness and complexity of their self, skills and experience and how this connects with academic knowledge and achievement.

*Adapted from Hall (2002).*

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# 9

## Future-ready graduates

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“Going forward, post-COVID, adaptability may be our greatest asset.”  
(Washington Post, May 2020)

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“Even with the most innovative policies in place and the mobilization of huge public resources, the success of any skills strategy depends heavily on the motivation of individuals and their decisions to take a step forward.”

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### Producing a graduate equipped for change

Mature graduates of work-based learning programmes may be any age and at any stage of their career; the qualities they must share are those that equip them for the environment they face, including the desire to keep learning. This book has so far revealed and highlighted a range of outcomes for the learner beyond the primary goal – the acquisition of a degree or postgraduate qualification. In their feedback, learners themselves note the development of reflective skills and practice, and the transformation of their capabilities and potential.

These are experienced learners at the end of a successful journey, ‘turned on’ to learning, empowered and confident and, by their own reports (Ker, 2017), motivated lifelong learners.

They are well positioned for the challenges of the post-COVID present and future – learners who will take the necessary steps forward to meet the upskilling demands of new, future-oriented workplaces. This chapter addresses the strengthening of self, of the professional identity and the 21<sup>st</sup> century career attributes gained through this process.

However, first it must also be noted that these are graduates of a future-focussed educational approach.

## Future-focussed educational delivery

Educationists agree (Bolstad et al., 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2009) that educational methods best suited for our future world must be:

- learner-centred rather than teacher-directed
- personalized rather than ‘one size fits all’
- based on interactive exchange rather than direct instruction
- delivered on demand rather than time-slotted
- collaborative rather than competitive
- directed to learning for life rather than learning for ‘school’

The work-based learning pathways outlined in this book follow these principles, and seek to uphold them despite operating within a more traditional tertiary environment. Bolstad et al. (2012) prioritise and clarify the key concepts of future-oriented educational practice, concepts that align with those at the heart of the Capable NZ provision:

▷ **learners and learning are at the core of educational practice ... it is a learner-first approach**

– the model of effective facilitation that guides the educational delivery practice of work-based learning programmes demands a learner-first approach

▷ **personalised learning**

– the pathways described in this book are predicated on a personalised experience of independent learning for self-managing, self-directed learners; they have moved away from the ‘one size fits all’ model to meeting the different needs of different learners.

▷ **engagement with real-world learning**

This is a critical factor. Bolstad et al. (2012) propose three significant arguments for putting learners’ “transformative engagement with the world” (p. 40) at the centre of future-oriented educational thinking and practice:

1. the idea that the learner ought to be transformed through their learning.
2. the idea that the world can be transformed by the learner.
3. the idea that the principles or concepts that are applied through the learner’s engagement with the world can themselves be expanded and transformed through the learning process.

Bolstad et al. (2012) propose that 21<sup>st</sup> century learners need to do more than just reproduce knowledge, “they must be able to actively interact with it, to understand, critique, manipulate and create and transform it” (p. 37). These authors are not dismissive of disciplinary knowledge – they recognise that learners need to know how old knowledge systems work, and how scientists and historians go about creating new knowledge in their disciplines. They describe the skills of mediating and translating and moving between the disciplines as “a kind of systems or metalevel knowledge” (p. 36), something more important than just knowing the detail of those disciplines.

The learning pathways models outlined in this book address these ideas:

- ▷ there is considerable evidence of the transformation of self and the ability to build capability,
- ▷ contribution to practice and real-world projects allow the learner to have an impact on some aspect of their world in the process of their learning. Learners are engaged in **real time** in knowledge-generating learning opportunities that facilitate such contributions (rather than undertaking contrived learning activities that have been designed to help them learn and store knowledge for future use).
- ▷ the models and frameworks of practice generated in the learning pathways demonstrate the innovative approaches and capacity of learners to work with knowledge and expand and transform it in learning processes. A transdisciplinary methodology resonates with this approach.

As concepts of knowledge are expanded and transformed, valued learning is extended.

“Life wide” learning (OECD & ILO, 2018, p. 14) is a holistic approach which accepts all learning that has occurred for an individual, without prescription of location or processes. Vaill’s (1996) “learning as a way of being” endorses this idea; it is described as connected to the whole person, as something that goes on the whole time and extends into all aspects of a person’s life. It reflects the approach utilised within the Independent Learning Pathway and Professional Practice degrees.

- It is *self-directed* learning: the learner sets the goals; the learner may be the only person who knows the specific need, and who decides the content and the pace of learning
- it is *creative* learning: the learner may be exploring without knowing the outcomes
- it is learning that happens simultaneously with other processes, and is continually occurring in the midst of working and living
- it includes *learning about yourself*, becoming a more conscious or reflective learner, and noticing *how* we learn (Vaill, 1996, p. 32).

A future-focussed approach generates the skills and attributes required for the future. They include the strengthened professional identity described in the previous chapter, the developing of attributes and competencies for 21<sup>st</sup> century work, learning and career, and equipping the graduate learner with skills for the future of work.

## **Strengthened 21<sup>st</sup> century career attributes**

New Zealand and governments worldwide are faced with transforming workplaces and workforce skills to face the challenges of a post-COVID future and rapid technological change. Many strategies and initiatives have been developed (OECD & ILO, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2018; Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2019) to meet the challenge of empowering individuals to develop new skills to meet current and future workplace demands. There is general agreement on what is required of the workforce to meet the demands of future work; in a world of rapidly changing job roles, the ability to upskill not only requires the opportunity to do so, but the willingness, motivation and confidence to understand and act on what is required. The necessary skills typically include adaptability, self-management and the aptitude for lifelong learning (World Economic Forum, 2018).

## **Adaptability**

The ideal worker who is ready to change and adapt (Carpenter, 2005)

- ▷ can proactively seek out opportunities and
- ▷ is fully aware of their own skillsets and is able to confidently choose the areas in which they are most likely to thrive
- ▷ has confidence in their ability to undertake ongoing learning for new tasks and roles, and strong identity awareness.

Adaptability is a key meta-competency in this environment (Savickas, 2005; Hall, 2002) and encompasses many attributes. Implied in the development of adaptability are those outlined above: knowledge of self and one's own skills (including transferable skills) as a foundation for making changes, and the motivation and willingness to explore and learn in order to undertake changed roles. Self-management, self-awareness, identity awareness, career confidence and continuous learning (Carpenter, 2005, 2018) are foundation skills for these attributes and are discussed further below.

## **Self-management**

Self-management skills are a prerequisite for undertaking independent learning pathways, and for the 21<sup>st</sup> century career. Mature learners travelling independent pathways are self-managing, self-directed learners undertaking personal journeys that require enormous perseverance and commitment. Self-management is the ability to take personal ownership of one's learning and career development; today's careers, like learning, are highly personalised requiring individual proactive pathways which lead to personalised rather than traditional views of success (Carpenter, 2010; Hall & Mirvis, 2014). Increased levels of self-management and self-direction are needed, at least in management and supervisory roles, as people are asked to take more individual responsibility, both in their workplaces and for their careers (Lester & Costley, 2010). Programmes which support people as self-managing practitioners and self-directed learners are particularly relevant for this environment. A front-loaded educational system focussed on early career pathway learning and traditional expectations no longer serves diverse working populations, who may expect to upskill at many stages of their working life.

## Self-awareness

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Critical to managing one's career and integrating work with the other parts of one's life is a clear self-awareness, or a sense of identity – knowing who we truly are. There are many different ways, structured and unstructured, for coming to know oneself ... [F]or the purpose of career development work, let's assume that the best, or at least the most teachable, means for achieving this self-awareness is through a self-assessment process.

(Harrington & Hall, 2007)

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Mature graduates of an experiential and work-based learning pathway have developed strong workplace and transferable skills; what they gain in the reflective learning processes is *knowledge* of these. In the processes of self-assessment, career review and reflection, they are able to identify and articulate the skills that they have successfully carried through a range of workplaces. These go beyond the basic skills and abilities of communication, information processing, critical thinking and problem-solving to incorporate transferable skills of sustainable practice and cultural understandings. These graduates also develop a growing understanding of the transferability of skills such as management, co-ordination, project management and research. Learner portfolios and projects both explore and demonstrate curiosity, persistence and leadership skills – all defined as desirable 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace skills (World Economic Forum, 2018).

An advanced range of proficiencies for the digital age is listed in Table 19. These add skills such as self-direction, interactive communication and higher-order thinking to what might be considered a basic list for graduates of work-based programmes.

Table 19: What does it mean to be literate and educated in today’s knowledge-based digital age?

<b>1. Today’s Basics</b>
<p><i>Read critically, write persuasively, think and reason logically</i></p> <p><i>Solve complex problems</i></p> <p>Use <i>visual imagery</i> to communicate ideas</p> <p><i>Access information efficiently, evaluate it critically, use it competently</i></p> <p>Know, understand and appreciate other <i>cultures</i></p> <p>Practice <i>sustainably</i></p>
<b>2. Inventive Thinking – Intellectual Capital</b>
<p>Show <i>self-direction</i>, be able to chart your own course through change</p> <p>Be <i>adaptable</i>, able to accept the challenges of change</p> <p><i>Manage the complexity</i> of globalisation and the Web by identifying the new skills required to deal with it</p> <p>Be <i>curious</i> about the world and how it works</p> <p>Undertake <i>ongoing learning</i> to contribute to your quality of life</p> <p>Imagine the new through <i>creativity</i> and make discoveries, inventions and learning happen through <i>risk taking</i></p> <p>Demonstrate <i>higher-order thinking</i> – in creativity, decision-making, problem solving and <i>reasoning</i> – the ability to plan, design and evaluate solutions, often using technological tools</p>
<b>3. Interactive Communication – Social and Personal Skills</b>
<p><i>Teaming and collaboration</i> describes the ability of specialists to accomplish complex tasks together, and use information technology for joint projects</p> <p>Have a grasp of <i>ethics</i> and <i>social responsibility</i> to understand the dilemmas produced by emerging complex technologies</p> <p>Undertake <i>high-quality interactive communications</i> through a variety of media, while mastering the new dimensions that arise through the use of information technology.</p>
<b>4. Quality – State-of-the-art Results</b>
<p>Using careful <i>planning</i>, manage and anticipate contingencies, and have the flexibility and creativity to deal with unexpected outcomes.</p>

*Adapted from a Report of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Commission National Alliance of Business, USA, developed by the Metiri Group in partnership with NCREL, enGauge.*

Lists such as these become useful self-assessment and discussion tools for learners to heighten their awareness of areas of strengths and those needing development. They invariably represent useful skill mixes, such as creativity, problem solving and critical thinking, and managing stress and change. Such skill mixes are of growing importance in the transition to a digital world of work (OECD, 2017).

In the learning pathways they undertake, learners must examine their own career assets. The positive effects of self-assessment and active reflection on skills and attributes are well attested in a range of literature, including the area of career management:

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The way you see yourself and perceive your work experiences makes a huge difference to your self-belief, which impacts on your career confidence, which impacts on your career progress. ... there is a positive cycle at work – the ability to articulate your skills gives feedback to yourself that you have those skills; career confident people know exactly what they have to offer because they identify what they are learning as they learn it. The process of self-assessment and reflection brings clarity and self-knowledge about your real assets and abilities, and ongoing career confidence (Carpenter, 2010, p. 106).

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## Identity Awareness

Longer working lifespans and an accelerating rate of change makes an understanding of self even more critical. As Harari (2018) notes, a person's career or work identity is influenced by many roles and relationships. "Who am I?" will be a more urgent and complicated question than before." While a stable career identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not possible, the self that has a strong inner compass (Hall, 2002) *is* able to withstand and navigate change, including changes of career, without losing balance. The individual's awareness of self is the key currency in navigating complexity and ambiguity (Hall & Mirvis, 2014), and constant pressure to adapt and changing work expectations. A strengthened sense of self is apparent in learners' reports (Ker, 2017); these learners have examined their career identity and appreciate the personal change and growth that has occurred.

In contrast to a career identity that is able to expand and grow, a fixed identity (Carpenter, 2010), particularly in older workers, is a danger, as it rejects the constant re-invention which is necessary, even though this is sometimes demanding and difficult. The tools for personal re-invention include opportunity knowledge and self-knowledge to make the best choices. Other tools such as reflection and self-assessment, learned later in life through newly earned and confidence-building qualifications, are invigorating for older learners and may provide a fresh view of their future prospects. Another tool is learning; according to Ibarra (2004), we “rethink ourselves by gradually exposing ourselves to new worlds, new relationships, new roles.” Exposing oneself to a world of new learning is a powerful tool for identity growth.

Independent Learning Pathway learners confidently integrate ‘the new me’ into their understanding of self – they can identify very clearly the development of this process. The ‘old me’ and ‘new me’ constructs are helpful in examining the building of a career identity – they make explicit the capacity to change with new knowledge and skills.

## **Becoming a learner for life**

Lifelong learning asks individuals to learn continuously over their life span (OECD, 2018) in a world where the nature of work is changing rapidly and continuously. As a concept, it has evolved from consistent learning for workplace demands to include the concepts of

*‘life wide’* – involving learning in institutions, communities, workplaces and families, and

*‘life deep’* – which assumes an active assimilation and mobilisation of knowledge (Bélanger, 2016, as cited in OECD and ILO 2018, p. 14). Becoming a lifelong learner is an essential attribute in contemporary careers. If workers are going to adopt new patterns of working, *continuous learning* is a behaviour which must underpin that path. Continuous learners demonstrate “strong and ongoing awareness of the need for and the value of learning” (London & Mone, 1999, p. 119); they “search for new information about themselves and emerging workplace requirements so that they are ready to fill learning gaps” (p. 120). The learner for life must be a self-managing learner, able and motivated to search for the learning that fits their current needs. Those who undertake the Capable NZ pathways have learned how to learn from experience and from a

variety of daily activities; they have a heightened awareness of the need for and value of lifelong learning, and have learned through personalised, independent learning how to manage this themselves.

Capable NZ adds further requirements to the essential repertoire of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. All programme curricula encourage learners to increase their understanding of both sustainable practice and their obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Preparing learners to be sustainable practitioners has been the goal of a journey which began for Otago Polytechnic in 2011 with a map and a set of guiding principles designed and detailed in *The Green Graduate* (Mann, 2011). For work-based learners in Capable NZ, the guidelines are set out in curricula and graduate profiles, challenging all learners to reflect, research and understand the skills, values and behaviours that would make a difference to their personal practice and workplaces, and assist them to contribute to a sustainable future (Mann, 2011).

Similarly with their understanding of their obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi: all learners are expected to consider Māori knowledge, practice and cultural perspectives as they relate to their chosen qualification, and to reflect on both their own practice and that of their workplace in relation to these perspectives.

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## What else should learners learn?

Brodie and Irving (2007) propose a stronger range of expectations of learners and facilitators – including that in relation to work-based learning, learners should *know* what they are learning.

Table 20: What learners should know and their learning advisors facilitate:

- 
- What learning is (how learning implies change) – *learning theory*
  - How to do it best (style, approach, fitness for purpose) – *learning theory*
  - When they have learnt (description of and reflection on the learning) – *critical reflection*
  - By what is their learning informed (its validity, how it stands up to scrutiny against outside evidence)? – *critical reflection*
  - What they need to learn (future learning) – *critical reflection*
  - What they have learnt, know more about, become more able at doing (analysis and evaluation of the learning) – *capability*.

(Brodie & Irving, 2007, p. 14)

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Much of the awareness and meta-learning described above takes place in these pathways programmes, and is particularly emphasised in the professional practice programmes. Learners write their own personal learning outcomes in the learning agreements associated with these qualifications and evaluate their capability at the completion of the process.

Making transparent the relationship between the learning processes and career management skills or attributes *would* be an innovative process: it may also provide clarity and understanding for the learner. It may help answer questions such as, *What are the benefits of doing it this way? What is the purpose of this process?* and provide a link to and a framework for career thinking.

Table 21: Career attributes and how they are discovered and developed in the learning processes

Career attributes	Defined as	Developed or discovered in the learning process
<p><b>Adaptability</b> Savickas (1997)</p> <p>Hall (1996, 2002)</p>	<p>The ability to change to fit new and changed circumstances; readiness to cope with new roles or tasks; resources to cope with change and trauma</p> <p>The ability to develop or update behaviours to effectively respond to changing environments</p> <p>A metacompetency which involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability and willingness to change</li> <li>• Learning how to learn</li> <li>• Continuous learning</li> <li>• Self-knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Reviews of learning in professional practice qualifications and career reviews in learning tasks (ILP) identify examples of previous adaptability</p> <p>Self-assessment processes bring resources utilised in coping with change to the surface</p> <p>Evidenced in reviews of learning, self- assessment processes, graduate reports</p> <p>Confidence reported and desire shown for more ambitious next steps</p>
<p><b>Self-management</b> Arthur (2017) Hall &amp; Mirvis, (2014)</p>	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Seeking opportunities for progress</p>	<p>Undertaking independent self-managed learning</p>
<p><b>Self-awareness</b> Harrington and Hall (2007)</p>	<p>Ability to reflect on assets and skills required, gain self-knowledge through self-assessment</p>	<p>Reflection, reviews of skills, knowledge and learning, self-assessment and evaluation of skills</p>
<p><b>Identity Awareness</b> Carpenter (2005), Hall and Mirvis (2014)</p>	<p>Knowledge of the goals and values that have meaning for the individual</p> <p>Clear sense of self</p> <p>‘The internal compass’</p>	<p>The ‘new me’ and the ‘old me’</p> <p>Strengthened professional identity</p> <p>Revised models of practice</p> <p>New professional practice, leadership aspirations and practice</p>
<p><b>Career Confidence</b> Savickas (2005)</p>	<p>Anticipation of success in executing career actions, solving problems</p> <p>Feelings of self-efficacy</p>	<p>Awareness of knowledge, skills and competencies, transferable skills, graduate competencies, successful completion</p> <p>Supportive relationship through personalised facilitation practice</p>

<p><b>Continuous learning</b> London and Mone (1999)</p> <p><b>Lifelong learner</b> OECD and ILO (2018)</p>	<p>Thinks about learning from daily activities and applies knowledge later</p> <p>Develops skills in anticipation of job or career opportunity</p> <p>Searches for new information about themselves and new performance requirements so they can identify gaps</p> <p>Self-managing</p> <p>Able to search for, respond to learning that fits their current needs</p>	<p>Previous learning activities</p> <p>Engagement in study</p> <p>Learning skills investigation, reflection</p> <p>Reflection and self-assessment processes</p> <p>Self-directed learning qualification</p> <p>New learning and projects work designed to fit current needs</p>
<p><b>Career Resilience</b> Arthur, 2017 Borgen, Amundson and Reuter (2004) London, 1998</p>	<p>Multiple factors contribute, including sense of agency, control, flexibility and creativity, sense of purpose, sense of hope and optimism, courage and determination, perseverance</p>	<p>‘Portfolio thinking’ – undertaking a process of self-reflection focussed on attributes and strengths</p> <p>Supportive relationship of personalised facilitation practice</p>

The linking of career management attributes to learning processes reinforces the connection between learning and career, a connection that has been in the forefront of our learners’ minds since their first inquiry regarding a qualification. Making this connection transparent adds to their understanding of their transferable skills and how they are being developed.

There is value in meta-learning – the opportunity for learners to learn about their learning. Raising learner awareness of the implications of their pathways may lead to a broader sense of the value of what they have achieved beyond the qualification.

### A seamless tapestry

Facilitation processes that provide these opportunities for learner awareness further develop the skills of learning how to learn, a tool for the continuous and lifelong learner. Here it is worth repeating an employer’s comment from Chapter 6 to emphasise the connection and integration of work-based learning with work and career:

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“Finally, the huge advantage of work-based learning is that it provides much of our workforce the opportunity for second chance learning, where they may not have achieved success in secondary education. Work has become the classroom in which skills acquisition, competency development and personal and professional learning are woven together in a seamless tapestry of long-term career development.”

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The metaphor of a seamless tapestry of work, learning and career development is an apt one. Work and learning are the processes we have described in detail in this book; their connection with career attributes and development is explicitly stated in this chapter and noted by learners themselves in previous chapters.

The goals are the same – the development of the individual learner to discover their best learning potential and achieve their vision of their best professional self. The inclusion of skills such as critical thinking and formal writing for academic achievement encourages the mature learner, who may already have a responsible role, toward leadership thinking. The vision of achievement is the same. Even while crossing the stage and wearing the celebratory garlands of graduation, learners are making the move to leadership roles and practice. In their kete, as many tell us, is a new sense of self, newfound career confidence, learning and leadership motivation, and proven academic abilities. They take these attributes into their workplaces as future-ready graduates.

The concepts outlined here may expand the model of facilitation practice in the future. Facilitators of independent learning are privileged to work one-to-one with learners; they hear personal dreams and visions of success, as well as the difficulties and obstacles that obstruct the learner’s progress. They hear the celebrations of achievement and the questions asking *What next?* Facilitation practice (and this includes all the advisory roles) for independent learning in a work-based learning programme must meet requirements for learner achievement, programme complexity and academic quality. It also serves to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century context through fostering skills for learning to learn, self-management and adaptability.

## Conclusion

Capable NZ can be proud of their achievements with the learners who have completed the pathways outlined in this book. Facilitators operate in time-bound systems, attempting to meet policy and administrative targets which do not respond to the on-demand approach and the ‘messy lives’ of the mature learners who juggle learning progress, families and often full-time work with all the challenges of the adult learning world. We offer a different process through the pathways described in this book; pathways which are personalised and receptive to those needs of our learners. We observe the resilience and self-management displayed by mature learners as they persevere with learning; our best practice, which we must always strive to achieve, offers learners the chance to produce their best work. This book is offered to inspire and contribute to best practice.

There is much more that could be written on our work as our experience with these pathways develops and further research becomes available. When given access to the life-wide experience of mature learners, and having participated in their reflective process, we and our colleagues have observed close-up the difference that tertiary study makes to people’s lives, futures and self-belief. We have documented here the pathways and processes that provide the opportunity for entry, achievement and tertiary success.

## Learner Comment

*“My journey with Capable NZ started in 2017. Before the journey, I treated my experiences – both professional and personal – as unrelated and random in nature. Through a process of critical reflection undertaken in partnership with my amazing facilitator I was able to clearly see that all of my career choices reflected a commitment to Māori development and within that context I had developed and demonstrated legitimate leadership skills and frameworks. With real clarity, I now see and value the distinct nature of my contribution to Te Ao Māori. The Capable NZ journey is a commitment to understand oneself. It is one that is challenging and complex but for those willing to do the work, it is a journey of self-discovery like no another.*

Whāia te iti kahurangi, ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei  
Aim for the highest cloud, so that if you miss it, you will hit  
a lofty mountain”.

Audrey Trotman (strategy, planning & projects,  
Māori Development)

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**Dr Glenys Ker** is a highly experienced work-based learning and professional practice educator and the primary architect of the independent learning pathway approach to degree education on offer through Capable NZ, the School in Otago Polytechnic which specialises in work-based learning and professional practice qualifications. Glenys works as a facilitator of learning, supporting learners to articulate their skills, knowledge and attributes gained from their work-based learning experiences, and to undertake new learning to gain a degree qualification best suited to their experience.

Glenys brings to her facilitation an extensive background as a highly successful practitioner in career development and education, including as a teacher in secondary school, polytechnic and university contexts at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels. Her professional practice has been enhanced through her many leadership and management roles, again in multiple educational contexts, including school and service department leadership and leadership of independent learning programmes. Glenys is also an active researcher in the field of work based learning and integrates her teaching and research in the development of facilitators of independent learning pathways.

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“This book draws upon the experience of Otago Polytechnic’s pioneering innovative work-based learning programmes which effectively combine individual learning with real life impact at work. The authors have extensive experience as facilitators of learning which is genuinely transformative in nature and central to the challenges faced by the busy professional adult learner. The central themes of innovative learner centred learning and flexible facilitation are explored in depth and brought to life through utterly convincing learner testimony. This book provides an engaging, informative and inspirational insight into learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

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