

# Accelerated Apprenticeship Delivery Programs



## Ross Bury

Skills Victoria International TAFE Fellowship

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and Regional Development, Victorian Government





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# Executive Summary

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The Fellow travelled to the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Sweden to research and compare delivery models in apprenticeship training courses in the furniture making industry. Traditional Australian furniture making apprenticeship programs require apprentices to:

- attend an off-the-job training component either one day per week or one week per month. This delivery model does not provide the apprentice with any form of continuity or momentum due to the short periods of time they are at school.

The concept of design has all but vanished from the Furniture Making training package for Certificate II and III courses in Australia. This raises the question of how an apprentice is able to design a product if they don't understand the underpinning knowledge of what design means.

The Fellow travelled to the USA, UK and Sweden to research and compare the following delivery models in apprenticeship training courses in furniture making:

- The visits and interviews conducted in the USA provided valuable opportunities to research programs where students attend school for four to five weeks at a time.
- The visits and interviews conducted in the UK provided valuable research information on accelerated apprenticeship programs, with an apprenticeship completion time of approximately 18 months.
- The visit to Sweden provided valuable research on design being delivered throughout pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.

Initial observation by the Fellow indicated that these new programs enabled learning institutions to produce furniture making tradespeople faster and with higher levels of skill. The overseas programs that the Fellow studied:

- enabled tradespeople to achieve a furniture making qualification in a shorter amount of time (accelerating the apprenticeship)
- delivered off-the-job training in four to five week blocks
- introduced design content into apprenticeship programs.

The Fellow visited Palomar Community College and Bakersfield Community College in the USA:

- both colleges are community funded and located within light industrial areas
- Students enrol in full-time courses and are then allowed to attend as a part-time student
- both colleges run furniture making courses, ranging from basic to advanced
- both colleges offer very similar methods of delivery and provide off-the-job training in large blocks of four to five weeks of full-time attendance. This method allowed students an unbroken thread of training that resulted in more detail being put into coursework, and also accelerated the theoretical component of their schooling.

The benefits of such a model appeared to be:

- students who attended the full-time model for four to five weeks, were more engaged
- full-time students appeared to have better relationships with teachers than the part-time students
- full-time students produced a higher quality of work than that of the part-time students
- full-time students achieved an accelerated completion rate compared to that of part-time students.

The UK component of the Fellowship included visits to two colleges, Wiltshire College and Chichester College, and two employers of apprentices, Cimitree and Wabi Sabi. The following concerns were highlighted as a result of these visits:

## Executive Summary

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- The model currently being used in the UK is accelerated apprenticeships based on Competency Based Completions (CBC), and has been for a considerable period of time.
- College staff have concerns with the current funding model where assessments only occur off-site.
- Practical assessments cannot be undertaken at the Registered Training Organisation's (RTO's) premises due to the current government funding model and, therefore, must be undertaken at the employer's worksite.
- Employers are concerned that some units of study are not assessed on their premises. This could result in the apprentice never qualifying unless a host employer can be found.
- Teachers had concerns with the way the assessments were documented.
- On-site assessments are considered to be a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) equivalent in the UK
- The quality of skills are not assessed during this documentation process.
- The skills gap in furniture making in the UK has been addressed, but to the detriment of quality.

The Fellow's visit to the Steneby School of Craft and Design in Sweden allowed him to investigate the design component included in the school's furniture studies program. For example:

- how design was embedded within foundation and vocational courses
- the option available for students to undertake one- or two-year courses in both foundation and vocational studies, with an emphasis on design.

Design is not a stand-alone unit on offer at Steneby, it runs through all units of assessment. The current furniture making training package in Australia has moved away from descriptors such as 'design' and is using the word 'produce'. In reality, before one can produce they must be able to design.

For furniture making apprentices in Australia to be able to compete confidently on the global stage, we must:

- re-introduce design back into the training package
- develop units of competency that will enhance apprentices' design capabilities
- ensure new design units don't take away from the essence of design by making the assessment criteria too rigid
- spend greater amounts of time detailing the meaning of design to furniture apprentices.

This Fellowship research project concentrated on visits to international locations that this Fellow believed would deliver greater insight into addressing the issues he has raised. The International Experience chapter of this report focuses on those findings in greater detail.

To be succinct, not all findings were favourable to the Australian context and that if they were introduced to Australia's current vocational system, it could lead to a broadening of the skills gap for the furniture making industry. These findings have been expanded upon in the outcomes section of each site visited.

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# Abbreviations/Acronyms

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CBC	Competency Based Completion
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFT	Cabinet Making and Furniture Technology
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
FIAA	Furnishing Industry Association of Australia
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
ISC	Industry Skills Council
ISS Institute	International Specialised Skills Institute
Km	Kilometre
LLN	Language, Literacy, and Numeracy
MSA	Manufacturing Skills Australia
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VIOSH	Victorian Institute of Occupational Safety and Health

# Definitions

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## **Design**

Design is problem setting and problem solving. Design is a fundamental economic and business tool. It is embedded in every aspect of commerce and industry and adds high value to any service or product—in business, government, education and training, and the community in general.<sup>1</sup>

## **Innovation**

Creating and meeting new needs with new technical and design styles. (New realities of lifestyle).<sup>2</sup>

## **Skill deficiency**

A skill deficiency is where a demand for labour has not been recognised and training is unavailable in Australian education institutions. This arises where skills are acquired on-the-job, gleaned from published material or from working and/or studying overseas.<sup>3</sup>

There may be individuals or individual firms that have these capabilities. However, individuals in the main do not share their capabilities, but rather keep the intellectual property to themselves. Over time these individuals retire and pass away. Firms likewise come and go.

## **Skills gap**

The difference between the skills needed on the job and those possessed by the tradesmen.

## **Sustainability**

The ISS Institute follows the United Nations for Non-Governmental Organisations' definition on sustainability: "*Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*".<sup>4</sup>

# Acknowledgements

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Ross Bury would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide him throughout the Fellowship program.

## **Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)**

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc is an independent, national organisation that for over two decades has worked with Australian governments, industry and education institutions to enable individuals to gain enhanced skills and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading-edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our Fellows. Under the **Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program** the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

1. Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions.
2. Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses.
3. Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 200 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 22 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010':

Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change.

International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills across a range of industries and occupations.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, the ISS Institute works with Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional practice, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see <http://www.issinstitute.org.au>.

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## Acknowledgements

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### Fellowship Sponsor

The Victorian Government, Skills Victoria is responsible for the administration and coordination of programs for the provision of training and further education, adult community education and employment services in Victoria and is a valued sponsor of the ISS Institute. The Fellow would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

### Supporters

Individuals and organisations involved in the development of the overseas program and in the Fellowship submission, were as follows:

- Michael Hartman, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), ForestWorks
- Robert Lucas, CEO, Furnishing Industry Association of Australia (FIAA)
- Bob Paton, CEO, Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA)

### Employer Support

Ross Bury acknowledges the time given by the Deputy Director TAFE and Executive Director of Technical & Trades Innovation Victoria University, Coralie Morrissey, to undertake the Fellowship.

### Organisations Impacted by the Fellowship

#### Government

- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). DEEWR have stated in their Strategic Plan 2008–2011, “through world-class vocational education and training, people can achieve their full potential, in the modern labour market”. Research findings from this Fellowship will be provided to DEEWR for them to assess the possibility of it being a viable proposition.
- Skills Victoria

#### Industry

- MSA has responsibility for the development, implementation and continuous improvement of furnishing qualifications. Findings from this Fellowship will help support the development of comprehensive skills for furnishing personnel.

#### Professional Associations

- FIAA is the major body that represents the furniture industry of Australia. Favourable research results from this Fellowship will enable the FIAA to inform their members of state of the art design and delivery methods of future furniture apprenticeships.

#### Education and Training

This Fellow will liaise with relevant Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) associated with the furniture industry:

- Construction & Property Services Industry Skills Council
- Forest Works
- MSA

ISCs and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector – Technical and Further Education institutes (TAFEs) and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) – will be provided with the benefits of this Fellow’s findings, such as the incorporation of design in furniture apprenticeships and delivery methods.

# About the Fellow

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**Name:** Ross David Bury

#### Employment

- Senior Educator, Teaching & Learning, Victoria University

#### Qualifications

- Diploma of Vocational Education & Training, Victoria University, (2004)
- Diploma of Assessment & Training Systems, LP Communications, Geelong (2004)
- Cert IV Assessment & Workplace Training, Victoria University (2003)
- Cert IV Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), Victorian Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (VIOSH), Ballarat University (2000)
- A Grade Cabinet/Furniture Maker (1978)

#### Brief Biography

After leaving school in Year 11, the Fellow commenced a furniture apprenticeship in 1975 and stayed within the industry until 2000. He commenced sessional work with Victoria University’s Furniture Department in 2000, whilst also working as a consultant in OHS. He was offered full-time employment with Victoria University in 2003.

During the period of 2008–2009, the Fellow developed a new delivery method for cabinet/furniture making apprentices, this method had a more holistic approach to delivery than the previous traditional methods used.



# Aims of the Fellowship Program

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This Fellowship provided the opportunity to identify:

- Whether the accelerated apprenticeships delivered in the UK are producing quality tradesmen.
- If the accelerated apprenticeships system delivered in the UK is suitable for Australia.
- What UK employers (Furniture Makers) think of the UK model of accelerated apprenticeships.
- How 'design' is incorporated into the vocational pathways in Sweden.
- Whether it possible to use the Swedish 'design' model in Australia for furniture apprenticeships.
- How full-time furniture courses are delivered in the USA, and how on completion of these courses employment is then found.
- Whether the USA delivery method is suitable for implementation in Australia.

# The Australian Context

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Australia is undergoing a Skills Reform as stated in 'Resourcing the Future' – DEEWR discussion paper 1st March 2010. Our workforce of the future has to be able to compete on the global stage. Within the furniture industry the numbers of furniture makers are very low, due to the flood in the Australian market of foreign imports.

To overcome this situation, Australia must fast track new apprentices within this field. Australia must also look at developing apprentices' design capabilities, along with questioning if it is time for a whole new delivery system. All of these areas must be investigated if our Australian furniture producers are to survive.

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Shorter apprenticeship time served
- Enhanced design/construction of furniture
- More local furniture products on the market
- Competitive pricing against global imports
- Increased demand for locally made furniture
- Number of local furniture manufacturers to increase
- Increased employment in the industry.

### Weaknesses

- Lack of support from Industry
- Government's slow reaction to change
- Lack of funding for TAFE institutions to implement changes
- Few content experts available to implement design into LMF02 Training Package
- Manufacturing base unwilling to take findings on-board.

### Opportunities

- Development of new Training Package content
- Increase of local furniture manufacturing base
- Establish Australia as a design centre of excellence
- Reduce our Skills shortage in the furniture industry
- Competitive globally as a furniture/design/manufacturing training centre.

### Threats

- Technology gaps in Australia when compared with overseas competitors
- Over supply of tradespeople within the furniture industry with a limited approach to training and development.

# Identifying the Skills Deficiencies

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## **1. Investigate Accelerated Apprenticeship delivery and results in the UK.**

- Interview UK teachers, apprentices, and employers on the viability of the Accelerated Apprenticeship programs, and record findings and opinions to identify whether these programs have addressed the skill deficiencies present in the UK, and whether they are suitable for implementation in Australia.
- Gain an understanding of new processes and innovative ideas from reviewing UK training practices and resources that have addressed the skills gap.

## **2. How to embed 'design' into the Furniture Training Package.**

- Conduct interviews and record information from visits, direct observation, and curriculums sourced from Gothenburg University. To enable the Fellow to learn how they embedded design into foundation and vocational courses.
- Determine the viability of introducing new units of competency based around design into the Furniture Training Package.
- Gain an understanding of why European colleges believe design should be a keystone in all vocational courses.

## **3. Evaluate full-time study as opposed to one day a week, block release for apprentices.**

- Investigate and understand the USA method of full-time schooling for furniture making students, and how they are regarded in the industry as tradespeople without experience on the shop floor.
- Record what involvement USA furniture manufacturing industries have with regard to the furniture making curriculum.
- Document the pros and cons of this method being used within the Australian apprenticeship system.
- Gain an understanding of how the USA model benefits both the employer and the employee, and explore why this model hasn't been adopted by other countries using the traditional apprenticeship model.

# The International Experience

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The purpose of the overseas study program in the USA, UK and Sweden was to identify and explore skill deficiencies identified by the Fellow. The information obtained will enable the Fellow to provide advice on:

- The delivery model in the USA for furniture making students
- The accelerated apprenticeships program used in the UK
- The Swedish model of embedding design into foundation and vocational courses.

The Fellowship research included meetings with college staff, students and employers in all three countries as had been arranged prior to departure.

## Visit One – Palomar Community College<sup>6</sup>

### Location

- San Marcos, California, USA

### Contacts

The following staff provided invaluable information to the Fellow during his tour of the College:

- Chris Feddersohn, Professor of Cabinetmaking and Furniture Technology, and Head of Department.
- Dave Thomsen, Professor of Cabinetmaking and Furniture Technology.

### Outline

Palomar Community College is situated in Southern California, within a light manufacturing area. The Fellow noted the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) on California. The College had reduced their course and teacher base dramatically between the time the visits were arranged and when the Fellow actually visited. This included the 12-month diploma courses being redesigned to incorporate three 16-week blocks titled:

- Certificate Cabinet Making and Furniture Technology (CFT) - A
- Certificate CFT- AA
- Diploma CFT (final 16 weeks)

These two certificate courses provide students unable to complete the entire 12-month diploma course with the opportunity to exit with a qualification. Classes are offered Monday through Saturday with evening classes five nights a week.

Staff are teachers or trainers:

- Trainers do not have a formal teaching qualification, as it is their industry qualification/experience that deems them full teaching privileges.
- Teachers have a formal teaching qualification plus industry qualification/experience.

### Objective

- Investigate the USA model of obtaining a furniture making qualification prior to commencing employment. Evaluate whether this model is suitable for Australian furniture making apprentices.

### Outcomes

- At least half of full-time students were undertaking the diploma course to become self-employed. The students believed the course content was enough to cover the skills required in the craft and at the business level to help them run a successful furniture making business.

## The International Experience

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- The remaining students attending had already gained conditional employment within the furniture making industry.
- The model of four- to five-week blocks of training enabled the teacher/trainer to deliver a detailed theoretical in-depth program. The Fellow observed that students seemed more relaxed and engaged with this model and willing to undertake coursework. Students would arrange with their employer the appropriate times that they could attend each block/s of training until completion of the qualification had been achieved.
- The senior students mentor the 'freshmen' (first year students). All senior students were assigned a freshman, with the purpose of providing course assistance to the allocated student. Although most classes did not align between mentor and mentee, specific times were scheduled for catch-up sessions.
- Business skills are embedded into the course. Students are taught how to operate a business on a day-to-day basis. This included general bookkeeping, understanding of the taxation system, lease options and estimating and costing. On completion of the diploma, a student would have the necessary skills to operate their own furniture making business. The philosophy of Palomar Community College is that craft skills and business acumen need to be developed at the same time, as they believe that one without the other cannot truly produce a good tradesman.
- The Certificate - A course provides the student with the basic costing and estimating skills, that enables them to quote on commission work.
- The Certificate - AA provides students with the skills to supervise a furniture making workshop in low- to middle-management position.

### Visit Two – Bakersfield Community College<sup>7</sup>

#### Location

- Bakersfield, California, USA

#### Outline

Bakersfield Community College lies in the heart of the Bakersfield community in Northern California. Bakersfield is one of a number of traditional working class oil towns and the Community College is one of the oldest established Colleges in the USA. The GFC has also significantly impacted this College, resulting in reducing the number of furniture making courses from six to three in 2011.

The diploma course is delivered over 12 months. This 12-month timeframe is divided into three blocks of 16-week courses:

- Certificate A,
- Certificate AA,
- Diploma (final 16 weeks)

#### Contact

The following staff member provided invaluable information to the Fellow during his tour of the College:

- Steve J. Hageman, Professor, Engineering and Industrial Technology, and Head of Department.

#### Objective

- Investigate the USA model of obtaining a furniture making qualification prior to commencing employment. Evaluate whether this model is suitable for Australian furniture making apprenticeship system.

## The International Experience

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#### Outcomes

- The majority of students attend each 16-week course full-time.
  - Classes consist of approximately 18–20 students
  - 70% of students were unemployed or had part-time employment outside of school hours.
- The remaining students utilise the four- to five-week block method.
  - 30% of students were in part-time employment preventing full-time attendance of classes.
- The students interviewed confirmed that starting their own furniture making business was a major priority and the business units were just as important as learning the craft.
- Students, teachers and trainers all believed the block method was a far more effective and economical way to deliver training. The continuity allowed for an easier transition from unit to unit.
- Evening classes are in demand and delivered 4.30 pm – 9.30 pm five nights per week. Students attending were undertaking certificate and diploma courses and were already employed in the furniture industry and believed the skills and knowledge gained would prepare them for:
  - middle management positions within their organisations
  - running their own business.
- Classes were available on Saturdays for all levels of furniture making.
- Students could utilise the night and Saturday classes to catch up.
- The senior students/freshmen mentoring program was an assessable task. The freshmen assessed their senior student with a graded marking system for their contribution towards their practical and theoretical outcomes. Most senior students believed the mentoring role was more than a requirement.

### Visit Three – Wiltshire College, School of Construction Industries<sup>8</sup>

#### Location

- Trowbridge, Wiltshire, UK

#### Outline

Wiltshire College is the main provider of further and higher education in the Wiltshire area. This college has four main campuses and four smaller centres. Trowbridge is one of the smaller centres that deliver furniture making courses to apprentices. Trowbridge, the county town of Wiltshire, lies in the heart of the South West of England approximately 10 miles from Bath. It is one of the three largest towns in Wiltshire.

#### Contact

- Mark Ashton, Training Co-ordinator, Furniture and Cabinet Making.

#### Objective

- Investigate the Accelerated Apprenticeship model used within the UK training system. Evaluate whether this model is suitable for Australian furniture making apprenticeship system.

#### Outcomes

- The apprentices' schooling is divided into two categories:
  1. Academic: the underpinning academic knowledge, which is delivered at the College.
  2. Practical: the practical tasks, which are all assessed in the workplace.

- Furniture making apprentices undergoes a process similar to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Each apprentice is responsible for the gathering their evidence for the particular assessment, and this could include:
  - photographic evidence
  - work log or diary
  - employer's third party evidence
  - apprentice's documentation for unit assessment
  - any other documentation to prove assessment has been undertaken.
- No practical assessments occur in UK training centres, as all government funding is gained through on-site assessments.
- Apprentices do not undertake practical tasks within Colleges/Schools to assist them with their qualification; the exception to this rule is basic skills, such as hand, power tools, basic jointing methods.
- Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN), levels for all apprenticeships have been developed. Each apprenticeship course has a pre-determined LLN level. All new students have their LLN levels assessed at the commencement of their course to establish if they are at the required level for their apprenticeship. If a student is not at that level, they must undertake catch-up classes until they are deemed to be at the required LLN level for their apprenticeship. Once the required LLN levels have been achieved the apprentice can commence the academic component of their apprenticeship.
- Furniture making teachers are divided into two categories, trainer and assessor, most teachers were one or the other, but there were exceptions to this rule:
  - The furniture making teacher only deals with the students whilst they are at the college. They would be responsible for all academic course work and the basic practical tasks.
  - The assessor only deals with the assessments associated with the on-the-job training.

### Visit Four – Chichester College, Westgate Fields<sup>9</sup>

#### Location

- Chichester, West Sussex, UK

#### Outline

The southern coastal City of Chichester is in an area of outstanding natural beauty. It has Chichester Harbour to the south and rolling hills to the north. Chichester College is situated approximately 1 km from the town centre and is surrounded by parks and gardens.

#### Contact

- Christian Notley, Area Manager, Furniture Making Department.

#### Objective

- Investigate the accelerated apprenticeship model used within the UK training system. Evaluate whether this model is suitable for Australian furniture making apprentices.

#### Outcomes

- UK training centres have been using skills sets and unit clustering for many years. This is the basis of the Accelerated Apprenticeship model.

- The theory is that units of study undertaken should be tailored to the apprentice's line of employment. Units of study are assessed against the work the apprentice will complete with their employer, as this allows the apprentice to proceed at a quicker rate than the traditional apprentice model previously used.
- Government funding requires all practical tasks to be assessed in the apprentice's workplace. If an apprentice is unable to complete certain units of study due to the nature of the work being outside the employer's scope of work, the apprentice would not be able to complete his apprenticeship. This issue can only be solved with locating a host employer that could meet the individual apprentice's requirements for completion of the remaining practical assessments.
- It is not financially viable for assessors to observe a full competency assessment as most assessable tasks take days/weeks to complete. UK colleges relied on the use of photographic, third party evidence and apprentice work diaries (from employer/supervisor) to a great extent.

### Visit Five – Cimitree, Furniture Makers<sup>10</sup>

#### Location

- Church Farm Rd, Petersfield, Hampshire, UK

#### Outline

Cimitree is a small company committed to creating bespoke freestanding and fitted furniture of the highest quality. Cimitree employs only highly skilled craftspeople.

#### Contacts

- Adrian King, Furniture designer, Owner, Cimitree
- Chris Thorpe, Furniture Maker, Owner, Cimitree

#### Objective

- Establish if the current UK model of all practical assessments being undertaken in the workplace is a suitable model for the Australian furniture making apprenticeship system.

#### Outcomes

All apprentices:

- were well informed in regards to assessments and timelines
- had regular meetings with the assessors in regards to assessment protocols.

Employers:

- were not always fully aware of the assessment requirements arranged between the assessor and the apprentice
- were not always aware of the assessment scheduling that was arranged between the apprentice and assessor
- were concerned with units of study that they could not provide the apprentice with for their assessment
- were concerned over finding hosts/placements for the student to complete any outstanding assessments
- wanted their apprentices to be able to complete their outstanding assessments/units of study at the RTO.

### Visit Six – Wabi Sabi, Furniture & Interior Design<sup>11</sup>

#### Location

- Donnington, Chichester, Sussex, UK

#### Outline

Wabi Sabi was set up by a Japanese designer to offer unique solutions for people who are looking for the enduring beauty and quality of handmade solid wood furniture.

#### Contact

- Andrew Juniper, Owner, Wabi Sabi.

#### Objective

- Establish if the current UK model of all practical assessments being undertaken in the workplace is a suitable model for the Australian furniture making apprenticeship system.

#### Outcomes

As result of this visit, the Fellow developed the following concerns:

- Assessments could not be undertaken at the relevant RTO.
- The quality of training provided by the RTO could be questioned, as assessments were all theory/ document-based and no hands-on skills training was provided.
- There was a lack of communication between the RTO and the employer in regards to apprentice's progress. Conversations occurred between the assessor and the apprentice; however, communication with the employer appeared to be non-existent.
- The apprentices were assessed as competent under this accelerated/fast tracking system and had received their trade papers. However, their skills were not that of a tradesman even though apprenticeships have been recognised as qualified. Andrew Juniper (Wabi Sabi) commented that apprentices aren't being shown the necessary skills at trade school anymore due to the nature of assessments being paper based at the employers premises. This is leaving gaps in the apprentice's skills base.

### Visit Seven – Steneby Skolan of Craft and Design<sup>12</sup>

#### Location

- University of Gothenburg, Hemslojdsvagen, Dals Langed, Sweden

#### Outline

Steneby Skolan is an annexe of the University of Gothenburg, catering for craft and textile students. They deliver foundation, vocational and degree courses in furniture design and making. Steneby Skolan is situated two hours from Gothenburg in Dals Langed, a rural area of Sweden.

#### Contacts

- Carl Acker, Lecturer, Furniture Design.
- Mats Aldén, Professor, Furniture Design.
- Klaus Barthelsson, Training Co-ordinator, Foundation courses.
- Barbro Erlandsson Bratt, Steneby School, Co-ordinator, International Studies.
- Åsa Nyström, Lecturer Furniture Design.

#### Objective

- To investigate how design is embedded into foundation and vocational courses in Sweden.

#### Outcomes

- Students have the option of one- or two-year courses. Those studying the 2-year course have the option of exiting at the end of the first year.
- All students at Steneby Skolan have approximately 200 hours of instruction per year in artistic creation. This can include picture composition and understanding the role of pictures in communication and culture.
- Students are provided with projects that encourage them to openly challenge and discuss ways in which the 'norm' can be interpreted. This encourages them to openly inquire and problem solve with their lecturers and encourages them to work with their peers to come up with new ways of completing their projects.
- The University of Gothenburg's facilities are available for students to use without supervision seven days a week.
- The University of Gothenburg employs a vast range of national and international designers who lecture and mentor students, these lecturers are considered to be the catalyst for new design perspectives.
- The carbon footprint is a major consideration regarding the choice of materials and techniques for student projects.
- Design is not a standalone unit at Steneby Skolan, it is a common theme throughout each course.
- The standard student assessment for each course comprises:
  - Projects
  - Student portfolio
  - Peer evaluation, each student presents their portfolio to the class for evaluation.
- The criteria for a student to progress into higher education is based on their individual portfolio and an interview.
- The general philosophy of Steneby Skolan was that the student portfolio reveals more about what a student has achieved and their capabilities than a theoretical report card.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Fellow's findings indicate that:

- The UK method of fast tracking is not dissimilar to Australia's RPL process.
- The UK method of assessing and addressing a student's LLN needs prior to the commencement of an apprenticeship has great merit, as opposed to the current practice of addressing the issues once an apprentice commences their schooling.
- The USA model of large block training has its merits and could be applied in the Australian system. This method would allow apprentices to attend the off-the-job training component of their apprenticeship for three to four weeks at time to undertake their theoretical and practical units.
- Australian apprentices currently attend the off-the-job training component one day per week. This method is not always conducive to students completing quality work whilst at trade school. The current model:
  - does not provide opportunities for continuity for the student
  - can be disruptive to employers, apprentices and the training provider.
- The benefits to the USA model would provide opportunities for continuity and increased productivity levels.

The overseas component of the Fellowship provided positive outcomes. The challenge now will be to engage with the relevant bodies in disseminating the research and encouraging them to take on board the findings.

The research will be of a benefit to future furniture making apprentices. If we are to compete in a global market, the training provided to our apprentices needs to equip them with capabilities equal to or better than that of their international competitors.

# Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes

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The Fellow will make presentations and recommendations to:

### **ForestWorks**

The Fellow will make presentations and recommendations on the following topics:

- UK – accelerated apprenticeships
- Sweden – embedding design into Furniture Making courses
- USA – large block training benefits.

The meeting and presentation to the CEO and members of ForestWorks, an Industry Skills Organisation, will provide an insight into the UK method of accelerating apprenticeships and the benefits of embedding design back into Certificate II and III furniture making courses in Australia.

### **Furnishing Industry Association of Australia (FIAA)**

The Fellow will make presentations and recommendations on the following topics:

- The implementation of additional design units into the Furnishing Training Package.
- Working with the FIAA on the implementation into the Furnishing Training Package more units on design.

### **Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA)**

The Fellow will report to the CEO of MSA and members of MSA, on the research undertaken by the Fellow, and advise when needed on how MSA could use the information to the furnishing industry's advantage.



# Recommendations

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The following recommendations are made by the Fellow based on the findings of his research that indicate:

- The UK method of fast tracking is not dissimilar to Australia's RPL process.
- The UK method of assessing and addressing a student's LLN needs prior to the commencement of an apprenticeship has great merit, as opposed to the current practice of addressing the issues once an apprentice commences their schooling.
- The US model of large block training has its merits and could be applied in the Australian system. This method would allow apprentices to attend the off-the-job training component of their apprenticeship for three to four weeks at time to undertake their theoretical and practical units.
- Australian apprentices currently attend the off-the-job training component one day per week. This method is not always conducive to students completing quality work whilst at trade school. The current model:
  - does not provide opportunities for continuity for the student
  - can be disruptive to employers, apprentices and the training provider.
- The benefits to the US model would provide opportunities for continuity and increased productivity levels.

## Government

Both Federal and State Governments, e.g. DEEWR, Skills Victoria, and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), need to review the findings and provide support and funding to educational institutions to implement the necessary changes to the furniture making apprenticeship system in Australia.

## Industry and Professional Associations

Peak industry bodies and furniture associations need to consider:

- the benefits of expanding the design component in the Certificate II and III furniture making courses
- moving away from the traditional one day of off-the-job training to the USA model of three to four weeks of block release
- the UK funding model of practical assessments for apprentices can only occur onsite, Australia needs to continue with its current model in providing funding for assessments to take place both on-site and off-site.

It is recommended that a conversation should occur between the Fellow and the relevant ISC, in regard to the key findings. Peak industry bodies and furniture associations then need to provide guidance and support to employers within the industry by mandating specific changes to the existing system to ensure that apprenticeship training continues to improve.

## Education and Training – Universities, TAFE, Schools

The Fellow is available to work with TAFE and other educational institutes to develop and implement curriculum and teaching resource materials.

This would include specifically developed units for Certificate levels II and III furniture courses, from the LMF02 Furnishing Training Package. Courses affected are:

- LMF20309 Certificate II in Furniture Making
- LMF30302 Certificate III in Furniture Making
- LMF32109 Certificate III in Cabinet Making.

## Recommendations

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Training providers need to incorporate design basics into the curriculum as value adding for students until such time as the relevant units have been developed and implemented.

Such things as technical drawing, design concepts, and design prototyping specific up to Certificate III should be developed.

### ISS Institute

ISS Institute can provide contacts where needed to help the Fellow's findings reaching a greater audience than those mentioned.

# References

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Sustainable Policies for a Dynamic Future*, Carolynne Bourne AM, ISS Institute 2007.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> *Directory of Opportunities. Specialised Courses with Italy. Part 1: Veneto Region*, ISS Institute, 1991.
- <sup>4</sup> World Commission On Environment and Development 1987, *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.
- <sup>5</sup> Skills Australia's *Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010*, pp. 1-2. [http://www.issinstitute.org.au/pdfs/WWF\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.issinstitute.org.au/pdfs/WWF_strategy.pdf)
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- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/> – Bakersfield College website 2011, Bakersfield College, California, viewed 4 May 2011
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- <sup>11</sup> <http://www.wabisabidesign.co.uk/> – Wabi Sabi – Furniture & Interior Design website 2011, Wabi Sabi, Sussex, viewed 9 May 2011
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