

PAPER:

***NEW MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND  
ENTERPRISE TRAINING***

***Associate Professor Andy Smith***  
**Group for Research in Employment Training**  
**Charles Sturt University**

Abstract:

Since the early 1980s, Australian enterprises, together with their counterparts in other parts of the developed world, have implemented a range of new management practices (NMPs) with enthusiasm in a bid to harness the knowledge and creativity of their workforces (ABS, 1996). These NMPs include Total Quality Management, Just-In-Time Systems, business Process Re-engineering and, latterly, the philosophy of the learning organisation. Foremost amongst these NMPs has been the adoption of team working.

Overseas research, particularly in the USA, has shown that the adoption of teamwork is gradually becoming more widespread. It has been estimated that, by the early 1990s, over one third of American establishments had implemented at least two NMPs to the extent that they impacted on over 50 per cent of the workforce (Appelbaum and Batt, 1994). Teamworking was the most common of the NMPs adopted. Moreover, it appears that these changes are frequently accompanied by an increase in the extent of training provided in enterprises, and by a switch from conventional, technical training to training that emphasises the behavioural skills of employees such as interpersonal and problem-solving skills (Osterman, 1995).

A common thread running through these programs of organisational change is the extensive use of teamwork to motivate employees and gain increased flexibility by devolving responsibility for decision-making to lower levels in organisations. Case study evidence from Australian enterprises (Smith *et al*, 1995; Hayton *et al*, 1996) confirms the US research findings that the introduction of teamwork requires new sets of general, behavioural skills from employees. However, the demand for training created by the adoption of teamworking may differ significantly. For example, the training requirements for the implementation of Japanese-style production teams under lean production will be quite different from those associated with the creation of temporary, cross-functional, problem-solving teams under TQM. However, as recent research in the USA suggests, extensive training is an essential concomitant of the successful implementation of teamwork, regardless of type (Banker, Field, Schroeder & Sinha, 1996). Thus training provision and training demand in enterprises will differ according to the management philosophy that is currently operational. Many enterprises may lurch from one set of training needs to another as they pass through successive waves of organisational change.

This paper will report the results from a research project funded by the National Research and Evaluation Committee examining the impact of the adoption of NMPs, and teamworking in particular, on the provision of training in Australian enterprises. The research involves a survey of 2,000 enterprises and follow-up interviews with 100 enterprises and aims to build a model of the way in which different NMPs affect the demand of training in enterprises and the way in which training is used to support the implementation of teamwork and other NMPs.