

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This exploratory study is about the ‘lived experiences’ of St John Ambulance Australia SA (St John SA) volunteer first aid trainers with respect to ‘quality training’. Specifically, the study explores what volunteers perceive ‘quality’ training to be, and investigates whether their interpretation and delivery of quality training had changed following the accreditation of St John SA as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to detail the project’s background, importance and general objectives. The specific objectives of the broader project will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

1.2 Background to the Study

St John SA has been a provider of first aid in the South Australian community for over a century. The traditional path for volunteer members in the organisation was to become involved in training as a way to develop themselves and their peers within local divisions in the maintenance of first aid skills. The emergence of volunteer trainers into the community over many decades was seen as a way whereby volunteers could teach the community vital skills in first aid treatment and additionally, through donations gained from providing this service, enhance the wider humanitarian work of the organisation. In the late nineties, the organisation became a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in order to keep pace with contemporary practice to align training skills and achievements within nationally recognised qualifications. This event helped to increase the number of qualifications issued in order to continue to offer this service both to the community and local divisions.

- “2005-2006 saw St John in South Australia issuing a total of 48,383 certificates from a total 50,179 enrolments, an increase of 3,054 on last financial year. Compared to 2004-2005, there has been a 6.7% increase in total certificates issued, and a 6.1% increase in certificates issued per capita”. (Annual Report 2005-2006, Training Report St John Ambulance SA: 8)

While St John SA has been issuing increasing numbers of nationally recognised training qualifications to its clients, the number of trainers appears to have declined. (St John SA, 2006). In the 2003 Annual Training statistics for SA there were 243 trainers issuing 42,124 certificates. Two years later the Annual Training statistics for 2005 identified that 181 trainers had issued 47,636 certificates. This trend has continued through to 2007.

This thesis explores the impact of moving St John SA to RTO status and compliance with nationally recognised training policies and guidelines, particularly from the viewpoint of volunteer trainers.

- “Some long standing trainers left at the end of 2005 leaving gaps in both the training roster and our organisational knowledge. We thank all trainers who left in 2005-2006 for their time and energy in providing first aid training to the South Australian community. These losses have meant a renewed recruitment drive, which has been made all the more difficult due to the requirement for all paid trainers needing to hold a full Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training”.

(Annual Report 2005-2006, Training Report St John Ambulance SA: 8).

This study is a ‘snapshot’ of the experiences of St John SA volunteers throughout this period of transition. It primarily seeks to record the experiences of quality training and perceptions of volunteer activity as trainers during that time.

1.3 Volunteer trainers

The group selected for this study were St John SA volunteer members who were employed as trainers. These trainers were formally qualified to teach internal members of the organisation and external members of the public. This study group of volunteer trainers was a mix of volunteer members and paid employees at St John Ambulance SA.

This group received no payment for the training they provided in their divisions (volunteers) but may have chosen to receive a payment for courses delivered to the wider community (paid). Payment could be by way of a donation to their division or

as a direct payment to the trainer.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to explore issues of fundamental relevance and importance to volunteer trainers, using the experiences and perceptions of the volunteers themselves. Key issues included: How do volunteer trainers within volunteer-based organisations identify with training as a vocation? What benefits or limitations do these trainers perceive of nationally recognized qualifications? Does having nationally recognised qualifications enhance or detract from their volunteer role within the organisation? Do trainers believe the training being offered to volunteers is better by being nationally recognised?

The specific purposes of this research were to:

1. Explore how St John SA volunteer trainers identify with training as a vocation;
2. Explore how St John SA volunteer trainers perceive quality training;
3. Identify the factors that volunteer trainers believe contribute to or detract from a quality training experience;
4. Explore how the current training agenda at St John SA has impacted upon volunteer trainers;
5. Identify volunteer perceptions of the ‘value-add’ of St John SA’s move to nationally recognised qualifications, and in particular, whether it has enhanced the quality of training.

This study will contribute and inform St John SA and other volunteer-centred organisations (e.g. CFS, SES, Red Cross, and Royal Life Saving) on the impact and acceptance of nationally-recognized qualifications upon volunteers. In particular, this study explored this aspect through volunteers who themselves are designated as trainers for the organisation. Volunteer trainers play a critical role within an organisation. Research suggests that teacher perceptions and experiences can anecdotally filter through the volunteers they support through training.

This study allowed St John SA volunteers an opportunity to self-reflect and examine their own movement of externally validated skills and knowledge through

participation in nationally recognised training.

It was hypothesised that the introduction of the Australian Quality Training Framework (hereafter 'AQTF') 'phenomenon' to these trainers did impact to some degree, and this was explored throughout this study. To date (*c.*2006), there had been no known qualitative research conducted by St John SA that has considered volunteer members and workplace changes other than a state training review which was undertaken in 2000. The 2000 State Training Review was the impetus in determining the current agenda of volunteer training during the study period (2003 – 2005).

This study was undertaken to support future strategic management of further change and course development for volunteer staff within St John SA. This completed study will present an opportunity for St John SA management to engage in reflective practice as an organisation and to consider both impacts and value adds for volunteers upon volunteer member retention. The research does additionally serve as a useful snapshot of the state of South Australia experience within a national organisational rollout of AQTF implementation from the St John members' perspective. The study will support a reflective instrument to contribute volunteer input towards a future wider training needs analysis within St John SA. A literature review (see Chapter 2) revealed a significant gap in issues around identification of training needs from a volunteer viewpoint and that further research would be useful in this area (Hopkins, 2000, Hopkins 2001, Catts et al 2006).

1.5 Research Questions

The specific research questions explored through this study included:

1. Has the decision by St John SA that volunteer trainers would obtain nationally recognised training qualifications to deliver training impacted on their volunteer training role and their personal lives to any significant degree?
2. Do the volunteer trainers perceive that the quality of training received by them or delivered by them post-RTO status has changed?
3. What additional pressures on volunteers have the changes to volunteer trainer accreditation post RTO created?

4. Do volunteer trainers value nationally recognised qualifications themselves as a result of working as a volunteer within St John SA?

Through exploration of these questions, it was hoped that the study could consider how trainer perceptions influence ongoing transition towards change, as well as identify explored possible obstacles and the future readiness of trainers facing a changing training landscape within the organisation.

1.6 Research Design

This study was undertaken using a qualitative research paradigm. This approach facilitates a deep or 'rich' understanding of why things happen. Essentially, the qualitative paradigm seeks to explore and understand rather than to describe and explain (Creswell, 2005). Its focus is on what an issue or phenomenon means to the individuals involved (Neuman, 2006).

The design for the study involved the use of semi-structured interviews in which a similar set of open-ended questions were asked of each participant. An open-ended question in which the respondent is free to answer in whatever way seems relevant and appropriate to them; that is, it is a question for which the researcher can not directly influence the exact focus or nature of the response, and thus allows the respondent to determine what is relevant and important.

Data analysis involved interrogation of the notes of interviews in order to identify and report both the unique and common issues and themes provided by respondents (Smith, 2004). The decision was taken not to attempt to impose the researcher's beliefs regarding the 'meaning' that could be attributed to the findings, but rather to allow the perceptions and interpretations of the respondents themselves to provide conclusions for the reader. Creswell (2005) proposes that the process of not attempting to impose researcher (external) structure on the interpretation of findings may be particularly valuable in exploratory research where the purpose is to open up rather than to condense knowledge.

1.7 Importance of the Study

This study produced qualitative data that had not previously been collected by St John SA from volunteers. The combination of volunteer and trainer as study participants gave the study a multi-faceted aspect to explore training quality and Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) implementation within St John SA in new ways.

Prior to this study, it is reasonable to assert that there has been a paucity of rigorous research or academic discussion that combines volunteers and trainers as a study group. Further, little has been written regarding the specific impact on volunteer trainers of the implementation of national VET standards for trainers and training organisations. Given the significant and on-going increase of private organisations engaged with volunteers using nationally recognised qualifications from the VET sector, this study offers new and potentially important practical insights for relevant organisations and trainers.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

As the researcher within this study, I was aware of my role as a paid State based Training Officer within the organisation. This relationship was a known aspect to research participants. No participants had a direct reporting relationship to me at the time of the study project. Although there are always potential conflicts of interest or dilemmas when an 'internal' person does research there are also benefits in that a lot of the terminology and events have some known understanding to the internal researcher (Holian, 1999).

The study was not limited by exclusion of any research participants. As all participants who wanted to be part of the research were included in the study, this study potentially represented the full coverage of willing participants experiences. In this regard, the study was limited by the fact that only 21 % (16) of the potential total of 76 trainers chose to be involved. It is possible, therefore, that a larger sample of experiences may have revealed new or different reflections by the volunteers.

Throughout this study, I was employed full time at St John SA as a training officer.

This reality impacted on available time to have dedicated to a longer or more in depth study. The study was undertaken as a volunteer, therefore the costs of the study were borne by the researcher which included significant travel costs to country areas and unpaid time to conduct trainer interviews across the state and complete the study. The time and financial aspect created some limitations around the project, particularly with respect to the time and timing I could allocate to observation and interview. Predominately, this meant the study has taken longer than originally planned in 2004.

I do not believe that my role at St John SA imposed a significant limitation on my capacity to collect and present valid and reliable information throughout the study. I had no direct connections to St John SA volunteers at any time during the survey period, and had no ultimate power in using the proposal findings, and so believe I was genuinely able to present myself as 'neutral'.

1.9 Key Definitions

These definitions are included to give the reader an understanding of the terminology used by the researcher in the text, primarily to ensure consistency of understanding. The definitions were taken from the Trainer Guide (St John SA-2005) or developed by the researcher for terms not already available in printed text. These terms also allow the reader to understand the statements made by volunteers in transcripts.

Member: A person who is part of the organisation as a volunteer or paid staff person.

Trainer: A member who meets the National & State St John Protocol of trainer. This protocol has minimum stipulations of qualifications, training experience, professional development commitments, and delivers a minimum of 45 hrs of training per training year (July – June).

Division: A local group of members who have established a venue with active members who contribute towards volunteering as a first aid volunteer for their surrounding community.

Volunteer : A St John SA member who receives no monetary payment for the

provision of first aid training (in the case of this study) for the role they undertake at their division to maintain being a divisional member. They are equipped in first aid skills which include regular skills reassessment. These skills are then used in the wider community at events through volunteering.

Internal Training: Training provided to members only – members are not paid to attend or deliver this training. This is provided by Divisional trainers who are Operations staff who conduct training within St John divisions.

External Training: Training provided to non members. Payment is usually charged to a client for this training. Trainers can elect to become casual staff that are paid a wage, or can remain a volunteer trainer that will result in St John SA sending a donation of funds back to their division for general use in running that division for members.

St John Ambulance Australia SA: The South Australian operations of St John Ambulance Australia. The national office is in Canberra. The training is managed from the South Australian state office. The issue of qualifications is done in South Australia on behalf of the ACT national office.

Preferred trainers: Trainers who offer training to external clients and have met the requirements of the St John National First Aid Training Regulations and Protocols. An external client can be private (not advertised) or public (publicly available via advertised brochure) course. Preferred trainers have additional internal accreditation requirements to meet including compulsory training and professional development attendance each year. Preferred trainers can be paid directly by St John SA or volunteer for the training they provide for external clients, which means their division will receive a donation for this service.

Preferred trainers who are also volunteer members are not paid to deliver training at their division, which may include skills updates, assessments or delivery of new training to members.

Volunteer trainers: Trainers who meet all the requirements of the paid external trainers (preferred), but no payment is directly received for the hours spent training, becoming qualified or attending professional development.

Paid Trainers: External trainers who receive payment for training as employees

under the St John Enterprise Agreement.

Operations Branch: First Aid volunteers at St John Ambulance SA Inc.

Divisional trainer: Operations staff who conduct training within St John divisions.

Internal course: A course for members of St John or St John employees only.

1.10 Structure of this Thesis

The thesis was structured to inform and build a setting for the reader from the position as a novice observer. The author has attempted to offer understandings and possible links to aspects of each volunteer participant without imposing her own constructed conclusions or findings. The aim of this study from the outset was to build an understanding, not to seek definitive findings or conclusions.

- “With publication, the study’s problem enters the public domain and becomes the responsibility of not only of the study’s author but of all who are professionally interested in that research area..... Research into a problem does not end with a single study. Nor is there truly a final formation of a problem any more than there is a final solution”.

(Brewer & Hunter 1989:63)

The thesis has been presented to the reader as five chapters. Chapter 2 – Literature review. Chapter 3 – Methodology. Chapter 4 – Data Presentation and Findings. Chapter 5 – Discussion and conclusion. Chapter 6 – References.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter positions the present study within current literature relating to the provision of adult education by volunteers. Essentially, the literature review provides the known context against which to explore the reflective insights of the St John SA volunteer trainers.

2.1 Issues Related in Literature

Searches undertaken of academic databases such as Current Contents, ProQuest, Emerald, Austrom: AEI (Education), NCVER and VOCED provided limited and often contradictory information relating to the key issues relevant to this study. Key word combinations such as volunteer and training, volunteer and national recognised qualifications, volunteers and trainers, and volunteers and accreditation all produced limited information and source material. Journal searches proved somewhat more profitable, particularly the Australian Journal of Volunteering, the Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care, the Journal of Workplace Learning, the International Journal of Educational Development, and the Journal of Training.

The literature review initially focused on three main topics: volunteers, quality training, and VET. At the outset of the study I believed these search terms should generate a range of studies to focus upon. Although there were various studies across these three areas of this research study, locating studies with a similar focus or aspect was more difficult.

My approach to the literature for this study then became focused specifically around the research questions and what other studies had been done that informed my research approach or study group. I therefore became focused on locating studies dealing with the use of nationally recognised training with volunteers. Three filters were used to interrogate the literature: the introduction of the training qualification Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessor for volunteer trainers; the introduction of training package units across volunteer training; and a general search of what components contribute towards quality training.

The study was conducted across a period of sweeping change within VET as an

educational sector. The movement by many organisations including St John SA to become a registered training organisation was part of the changing environment in which training would be offered to its volunteer members. Within St John SA, there were four main changes that occurred from the late nineties through to early 2003. These changes became the sorting instrument to review previous literature within the search terms.

2.2 Four Key Changes

- “It is clear that VET teachers and trainers experience the process of change at an individual level. The highly personal nature of the change process is of great significance, but individual perspectives can be lost in processes aimed to bring about system wide change”
(Harris et al, 2005:69)

In recent years, four key changes impacted on the training area of St John SA:

Introduction of Training Package units for internal up-skilling of St John SA members, including trainers;

Increasing demands on individuals around work and volunteer commitments and the capacity to undergo further training to attain externally recognised VET qualifications relating to skill achievement;

Introduction of the Certificate IV Workplace Training and Assessor units for all trainers including volunteers involved as trainers at St John SA; and

Strategic rationalisation of a large volunteer training workforce into a smaller bank of qualified trainers across the state.

Introduction of training package units for internal up-skilling of St John SA members, including trainers.

Recent research (Hayes et al., 2004; Hopkins, 2000) indicates that numerous volunteer organisations have shifted what was once an internal or self-developed and recognised training program to the Australian Qualifications Framework (ANTA, 1998; Moran & Ryan, 2004). As there is no ‘typical’ volunteer organisation, it is not

surprising that there is significant diversity in the literature regarding internal and external incentives and tensions that have influenced those organisations to make such a move (Hopkins, 2000).

Volunteer organisations across Australia are enormously diverse, involving agencies such as Meals on Wheels, the State Emergency Service, Country Fire Fighters, Landcare, Fisheries Officers, Ambulance officers, environment programs from Coast Action, Trees for Life, Waterwatch, Zoo guides, literacy support workers, motorcycle officials, and community refugees support workers. It is, in fact, reasonable to assert that almost every community service is supported via volunteer labour and time.

Bundock (2000) investigated one such organisation – the Country Fire Authority (CFA) in Victoria. The CFA study focussed on the implementation of competency based training for their fire fighters. The study identified a range of experiences which could enhance training practises and explored areas of concern amongst the volunteers. The research examined the use of skills recognition and recognition of prior learning (RPL) to limit the amount of training required for the volunteers and to bed down the competency based system internally. Nevertheless, the requirement that existing volunteers still had to undertake further training in order to gain recognition within the newly-introduced competency based system reportedly created a tension within the CFA. This same tension had also been discovered in a study of four major fire brigades in the United Kingdom, which were reported by Bundock in the 2000 CFA study.

During a seminar for volunteers in 1999, Hopkins (2000:8) reported that the volunteers themselves stated: “Volunteers give of themselves and expect their skills and contributions to be valued, without what are perceived to be threatening assessments of their skills, knowledge and performance”. This viewpoint is supported in an article in the Australian Journal of Volunteering (Warburton et al., 2004). More recently the Executive Officer of the South Australian State Emergency Service Volunteers Association, expressed in his editorial that ..

- “Training requirements are still an ongoing issue around the state with Training Officers being worked hard to assist units in maintaining and gaining competence many members are spending more weekends than not attending courses and exercises so they can continue to assist the community.

They are saying this is affecting their home lives and their careers”
(SASES, 2006:1)

To explore these comments I reviewed ‘Recognising of current competencies of volunteers in emergency service organisations’ (Catt & Charmings, 2006). This study attempted to show the relationship between organisational structure and the flexibility of training. It used comparative case studies across six emergency service organisations to examine how organisations viewed current competencies in designing, delivering and assessing training and skills. Using both individual and group interviews based on volunteer experiences, the research concluded that achieving greater flexibility in training may require organisational change in order to build trust within a work context.

A contrasting study by Smith et al. (2006) focused on case studies relating to the use of nationally recognised training within Australian companies within four industry areas: hospitality, manufacturing, arts/media and call centres. Although this study was not specifically volunteer focused, it did highlight the complexity of understanding the implementation of training in the VET system, and in particular, that training received could be too general and not focused on the specific needs of the learner. This study was of interest because it was also one of the first to explore the issue of issuance of nationally recognised training qualifications from private RTO’s, rather than publicly funded RTO’s, and so in many respects addressed companies similar to St John SA. The study revealed that the learners generally were expected to collect evidence themselves in order to demonstrate that they met the competencies specified in the training packages. Several authors argue that this infers that trainees are not receiving ‘real training’ and that assessment processes are artificial (Down, 2002; Rhodes & Sherres 2004, Catts & Chamings, 2006).

Down (2002:5) stated that, despite windfalls in the introduction and implementation of training packages

- “The system appears to be struggling against real impediments to implement a change which is only partially understood by most of its practitioners....it does present real challenges which need to be overcome if Training Packages are to realise their potential as an organisational framework for VET provision and assessment”.

This aspect of concern was explored within the St John SA study. In many respects the study participants are affected by this as a double hit, as they are required to remain competent as volunteers and also undertake assessments and training as trainers which has separate and distinct organisational requirements within St John SA.

Increasing work and volunteer demands on individuals and the capacity to obtain further VET qualifications.

- “For the first time the ABS Population Census in 2006 is to include a question on volunteering. The inclusion of a question on volunteering in the 2006 Census is an historic recognition of the massive contribution volunteers make to Australian society each year, economically, socially and culturally”.
(Australian Journal of Volunteering, Volume 10, Number 2:8, Mitchell 2005)

There is little doubt expressed through the literature that volunteers make a substantial contribution towards a better Australian community life. Motivation appears to be one key to addressing the retention of these people, but also their development to meet the changing needs of the organisation appears to be a reciprocal key to longer term satisfaction of volunteers (Paull, 2002).

The role of training volunteers is now beginning to appear in a range of literature across a number of vocations and organisational types. These include Meals on Wheels volunteers (Griffiths, 2003), fire fighters (Bundock, 2000), emergency management (King et al, 2006), tourism volunteers (Jago & Deery, 2002), and Volunteer Ambulance Officers (Fahey & Walker, 2002). Many studies are suggesting that there are sensitivities by volunteers to increased training demands within accredited training programs. These sensitivities include skills recognition, increased administrative requirements, and delivery of the volunteer training by accredited training staff.

In the 1996 report to the Australian Government by The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS, 1996) ‘Volunteering in Australia’, there were two recommendations that specifically mentioned volunteers moving in to formal training and skill competencies that were transferable to other sectors. These recommendations were the ‘ongoing training needs’ of volunteers and ‘skills

recognition' need to be explored from the volunteer viewpoint. Now a decade later, with volunteer rates being stretched via changing family structures and paid work demands, evidence is emerging that the training of volunteers does have contradictions as well as tensions (Cox, 2000, Metzger, 2003). It would seem important, therefore, to build an understanding of what the volunteers themselves see to be the major issues and challenges within training, which is separate from organisational needs of cost, duty of care, legal obligations & compliance being driven largely by AQTF compliance and strategic business planning.

Data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in a survey reported by Trewin (1996) indicated that volunteers themselves do not see training as a concern. This viewpoint does not appear to be shared amongst volunteers themselves a decade later, and was explored throughout this study.

Hayes et al. (2004) investigated training for volunteers within the fire and emergency service organisations in Victoria, focusing in particular on attitudes to learning, skills and knowledge acquisition, and the impact of nationally recognized training. The study found that more formalized training has produced as many challenges as opportunities for this group of adult learners, including the additional time that is required for training activities in addition to volunteer time at their organisation. Although this study had literacy as a focus, the overlaps with volunteer training and achievement of competence were explored. This study contained many organisational parallels to St John SA in that the fire service relies on high levels of skills and training to be assessed to ensure the organisation is equipped to offer a quality community service. The aspect of literacy was not explored in the current study for the St John SA trainers, however many of the study participants did discuss other members reactions to movement back to school-type training and the challenges it presented to some volunteer members who had low levels of schooling prior to joining as a volunteer.

Within, another volunteer organisation, the Country Fire Authority (CFA), a study of the volunteers was conducted to support the recruiting and retaining of volunteers (Henry & Hughes, 2003). This project was explored from the membership base of CFA volunteers. Correlations of the similarities of importance of technical skills and competence within fire scene management and first aid management skills were

considered in reviewing this research. Training was exposed as a critical aspect by several participants who viewed competence as 'life and death'. Participants in this study generally indicated that nationally recognised qualifications produce both positive and negative feedback, with 'fear of failure' representing a major tension for CFA members. Other data published in this study included tensions of 'people with experience and no certificate and people with certificate and no experience' (Henry & Hughes, 2003 :85). This aspect did emerge in the study at St John SA and will be discussed in chapters four and five of this research. One of the key reflections of participants in the St John SA study was whether using trainers who held nationally recognised qualifications had enhanced the training delivered to volunteers and if not, what components were now missing by not using experienced volunteers who did not hold training qualifications.

The 'Stand up and be counted' report (Fahey & Walker, 2002) was an interesting project to review to inform this study. Three of the participants within the St John SA study were also volunteer ambulance officers therefore this study did have other connections to the other participants that were not directly explored within the current study. The 'Stand up and be counted' project was to produce a national strategic planning framework for recruitment, retention and training for Volunteer Ambulance officers. This study included survey responses from St John ambulance volunteers in NT, NZ, WA and SA as well as other ambulance services around Australia and New Zealand. The impact of VET programs and other formalised training programs for volunteer ambulance officers were explored. Although this current St John SA thesis is not relating to ambulance officers but specifically first aid trainers, the report explored volunteer motivation, retention and training as specific study topics. The fine balance between the organisational need to have up to date trained volunteers and volunteer time did arise in this study and the need for greater flexibility in delivery methods and approaches. What was interesting in this study that only forty percent of formal training and skills assessment was done with a qualified trainer (Fahey & Walker, 2002:41). This figure is just a sample of survey recipients but comments also published within the study included that 'Our training is more often than not given by officers who need training themselves. Not enough on the spot help and practical advise (Fahey & Walker,2002:44)'. As this study was during the period of transition towards a national qualifications framework it does offer interview responses

regarding training that also emerged within the St John SA study around previous training received by non qualified training staff. Several studies suggest that training delivered within the national training system by a designated trainer has been viewed by many volunteers as a weaker model compared to training that previously was delivered by experienced volunteers who were not qualified as trainers.

In another small study (Hopkins, 2000) the focus of the research had been on the training of volunteers. In this study to begin research into VET and the Voluntary Sector invited representatives were drawn from broad range of volunteer organisations as well as representatives from Volunteering Australia, Business Skills Victoria, University of SA, Industry training Boards and Australian National Training Authority.

- “In an ideal world, a balance would be found between the validity and reliability of assessment and the expectations of the volunteer”.
(Hopkins, 2000:3)

The balance of expectations of the volunteer and the link to on going training were of interest within this study. The constraints on volunteers were examined including financial implications for the organisations and higher standards of training for volunteers to achieve benchmarks of competence. Volunteering Australia has a ‘code of practice that requires organisations that adopt it to provide volunteers with adequate training to perform effectively and to provide professional development (Hopkins, 2000:4)’. In order for changing organisational needs to be met all staff, including volunteers, would need ongoing training. Constraints relating to training were examined. As volunteers, are not dependent on their income from the voluntary work, they are more able to resign if the training requirements become too onerous. Volunteer burnout had been a casualty of training for many that informed this particular study. Another constraint had identified the lack of people with the skills to train others. Providing training was often problematic as the class room based training occurred during times the volunteers were often working in their paid work. This study was only a small project that arose from a seminar to begin to collate the issues relating to work in the voluntary sector. However it did not give the depth of deeper reflection by volunteers around the specific issue of training. The St John SA study would explore these aspects further to advance the knowledge on whether the

ongoing and increasing training requirements were causing burnout or worse, volunteers leaving the organisation.

The change around trainer qualifications was explored within the literature:

Introduction of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training for trainers at St John SA.

The question of who would take on the role of training the volunteers at St John SA was answered by the organisation when it became an RTO. Previously a range of volunteer members would take on this task dependent on skills, availability, interest and at times rank. Under the new National St John Ambulance training protocol, that role would be determined by the designated trainer for a particular division. As a component of the movement into the Australian Qualifications framework, the designated trainer would need to have externally recognised skills and qualifications in order to undertake this role. The qualification required by the trainers at the time of this study was a minimum of 4 units of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. The introduction of this qualification for trainers did produce a watershed in the numbers of trainers who would be recognised by the organisation in order to continue to train other volunteers.

The changing role of VET practitioners has been researched intensively during the past few years. (Mitchell et al, 2006a; Mitchell et al, 2006b ; Harris & Simons, 2006, Simons et al 1999; Harris et al 2005; Harris et al 2001,). The introduction of the national recognised training system within VET did also reveal a watershed of staff across the VET sector as a whole. Another study that was of interest was study by Harris et al (2005). The methodology of this study used focus groups to explore factors and changes practitioners had observed within the last five years around their teaching/training role. This time frame clearly positions this current study and the work of Harris to the same period of time as the St John SA study. This study did produce some interesting discussion around the place of the Certificate IV training qualification as the accepted qualification and the potential for this qualification to affect future quality outcomes of education and training because of the narrow focus of experience and qualifications accepted by VET in order to teach and train. As

quality outcomes pre and post RTO accreditation by St John SA would be explored it appeared that across most RTO's, not only those working with volunteers, the aspect of quality around this qualification has been studied and emerging as an area indicating tension in the VET sector generally (Simons & Harris, 2006, Mitchell et al 2006a, Smith & Dalton 2005).

Strategic rationalisation of a large volunteer training workforce into a smaller bank of qualified trainers in SA.

Historically St John SA volunteers who by 2003 were recognised as trainers were around only twenty percent of volunteers who saw themselves in a training role during the period leading up to the late nineties. The reasons how and why this occurred have already been raised in previous discussion. What does not appear visible in any literature reviews is how similar or common this figure is across other organisations including other volunteer organisations such as CFA, Fire fighters, Ambulance officers & Meals on Wheels. There is difficulty in capturing this data as many have left or are difficult to identify in data base information at this present time. Another larger study could be undertaken to locate and review this group of volunteers and how they see the changes having influenced current training received as volunteer clients of training or impacts on their decision to remain a volunteer. Anecdotally most other organisations that had moved into the Australian qualifications framework would have also experienced rationalisation of training staff. The extent of these regarding relationship to St John SA figures is unknown.

As there are significant costs of time and money associated with having trainers qualified within the AQTF, the rationalisation of the workforce was necessary in order for St John SA to build a sustainable model of training delivery and quality. Other studies suggest that some volunteers who were either overlooked as the trainer, or unable to achieve the training qualification had been a valuable training resource pre RTO movement (Hayes et al, 2004). The task of juggling twin roles of working and assisting others to learn is an issue flagged within numerous studies (Harris et al, 2000, Catts & Charmings, 2006). The reality when organisations rationalise the workforce is that they also limit the ability for the training workload to be shared. A consistent message in the literature is the growing need for organisations to offer

flexibility to volunteers within training roles. The St John SA study explored this aspect and builds upon other studies relating to workplace training, particularly in an informal environment such as volunteer divisions and first aid event attendance.

2.3 Quality Training

“The concept of ‘quality’ is a multi-faceted one, and it should not be surprising that its meaning within the VET environment is open to argument and negotiation.

Throughout the world, various VET systems make choices as to which indicators they will use as their preferred means of measuring their efforts to achieve quality” (Meyers & Blom, 2002:1).

Quality has a variety of different meanings under the competency-based training agenda (Chappell et al., 1995 ; Jones, 2001; McElvenny, 2001), which only serves to exacerbate the significant public and academic debate about whether the nationally recognised training framework does achieve a national benchmark around quality and achievement (Schofield & McDonald 2004; Hoy-Mack, 2004). Much of this debate appears to centre around issues of perceived relevance and need (Rifkin, 1996; Tsai & Tai, 2001; Smith & Hopkins 2001). A study for Volunteering Australia by Hopkins in 2000, for example, found that in order for training to be deemed of high quality by volunteers, it must initially be seen as relevant.

Research undertaken for ANTA by the Centre for Undertaking Research in Vocational Education (CURVE) at the Canberra Institute of Technology and the University of Ballarat in 2003 identified particular characteristics required to deliver quality VET teaching and learner centred approaches. These characteristics include “learner centred approaches with the teacher/trainer acting as a facilitator; a strong workplace focus with emphasis on the application of the learning experiences to the workplace regardless of the context in which learning takes place, and third an emphasis on flexibility and innovation which enables development of learning strategies characterized by customization of the learning and assessment processes”. (CURVE, 2003a:2). The St John SA study considered these characteristics when aspects of quality were explored with the participants.

Judging quality emerged from the literature as a major issue in a range of settings. In

particular, trainers who are assessors of training packages themselves appear to grapple with issues of quality (Jones, 2001). Quality also was an emerging theme taken from a study within private training organisations that was presented at a National Council for Vocational Education Research conference in 2006 (McPhee, 2006). This research was of interest as it had been based on an interpretive methodology using semi-structured interviews. The study found that several aspects of quality were linked to the quality of trainers, although this is not covered extensively in existing literature. The St John SA trainer study directly explores this aspect as a feature of the research material and will therefore build on this recent conference paper.

Quality is one of the key goals of the revised AQTF that links to whether or not training will be received as valuable and worthwhile by clients of the RTO (IBSA, 2007). Several studies have indicated that the relationship between learners and workplace trainers has a significant impact on the quality of training received (Harris et al, 1998; Rhodes & Scherres 2004). This aspect was explored further within the St John SA trainer experience. Study participants were both learners and deliverers of training; therefore quality was explored in both situations within this study.

Several recent research studies addressing critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment in VET have identified that 'Quality is the key'. A report by Mitchell in 2006, for example, argued "that governments across three countries are focused on improving the quality of VET provision and outcomes" (Mitchell et al, 2006a:9). The report further proposed that VET practitioners are also focussed on quality. The impacts of a quality system on the education and training classroom also appeared in a study by Gibb in 2003. This study explored the knowledge that underpins quality learning, what quality learning means in practice, and how quality learning and lifelong learning are inextricable. As this study was based within the TAFE system, it will provide a point of reference to compare and contrast the experiences of St John SA trainers within a private RTO.

The theme of quality was explored throughout the current study because of the essential link between participant perception around training relevance and quality, and the increasing numbers of changes within VET that appear to be driven by improvements to 'quality' as an output. St John SA and provides an interesting

snapshot study due to the dual link of the study participants as active volunteers and nationally qualified trainers.

2.4 Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Although accredited training for managers and coordinators of volunteers has started to be addressed, perspectives on the training of volunteers to benefit themselves and the wider community have largely been a ‘black hole’ in policy until recent times (Rogers, 1997). The ABS Population Census in 2006 did include a question on volunteering. “The inclusion of a question on volunteering in the 2006 Census is an historic recognition of the massive contribution volunteers make to Australian society each year, economically, socially and culturally” (Mitchell, 2005:67).

In the strategic evaluation into the ‘Qualitative Impact of the Introduction of Training Packages on VET clients’ it was indicated “that people’s perceptions of the impact of Training Packages was dependent on the context in which they were working and the understanding of vocational learning which they brought to the implementation of the training packages” (NCVER, 2002:1).

Training reforms over the past fifteen years have been aligned to standardising VET. Initial reforms introduced the competency based framework as a central aspect to teaching, learning and assessment in the VET sector (Simons & Harris, 2006). The curriculum or syllabus generally has been replaced by Training Packages for accredited training within the public arena of course provision, including at St John SA. Recent critiques of training packages indicate that although they inform the content they do not always consider the view that competence is not conceptually bound but interacts with people and work and is more collective in gaining a full understanding (Simons et al., 2006). The use of training packages by volunteer trainers was part of this study, and it is noteworthy that the findings suggested that volunteers frequently perceive a lack of relevance and application of the training packages to their main role as trainer.

The movement of St John SA courses within VET anecdotally has been viewed by some trainers in the past as problematic as they do not always connect the wider context of VET to being applicable within the organisation. This aspect has appeared

in other community based organisations that have volunteers (Henry & Hughes, 2003). In particular, it would appear that trainers within volunteer organisations significantly grapple with the implied tensions between education and training (Simons & Harris, 2006). The terminology and complexity of design of training delivery to produce standardised training are issues across many organisations and is discussed several times in a range of studies (Simons & Harris, 2006).

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research design and data collection and analysis methods used in the study.

3.1 Focus of the research design

The purpose of the research was to explore the reflections of ‘lived experiences’ of St John SA volunteer first aid trainers around themes and perceptions of ‘quality training’. The research questions addressed what volunteer trainers perceive ‘quality training’ to be, and whether they perceive that approaches relating to the delivery of quality training had changed post accreditation by St John SA as a registered training organisation. The research design focussed on addressing these questions.

The study was undertaken using multi-methods to gather, explore, contrast and present the lived experience of the trainers. An ‘interpretative interactionism’ methodology (Denzin, 1989) guided the study throughout the various stages of data collection, interpretation and presentation. At the commencement of the study, a loose framework was constructed to allow themes to emerge. During the initial stages of the project the researcher designed a preliminary research survey to be used across the entire group of trainers who matched within the criteria or scope of the study. This research tool was submitted to the UNE ethics approval committee prior to the project commencement and was approved unchanged to be circulated to the trainers. These surveys, which were voluntarily completed and returned, became the data to identify possible research participants.

The interviewed participants were chosen in order to gain representation across a range of trainer experiences across the full group of seventy six possible research participants. These representations were intended to capture the rural, remote and metropolitan trainers from both genders and from varying age groupings. By taking this approach, the study had attempted to capture younger and older participant experiences relevant to the subject of enquiry.

3.2 Overview of Methodology

Basically, the study employed an historical approach based in the interpretive paradigm. The basic premises of the interpretative paradigm (Littlejohn, 2000) are:

- People make decisions and act in accordance with their subjective understandings of the situations in which they find themselves.
- Social life consists of interaction processes rather than structures and is therefore constantly changing.
- The world is made up of social objects that are named and have socially determined meanings.
- People's actions are based on their interpretations, in which the relevant objects and actions in the situation are taken into account and defined.
- People understand their experience through the meanings found in the symbols of their primary groups, and language is an essential part of social life.

In order to explore the topic through an interpretative paradigm, a multi method research methodology was used. This approach suited the purposes of this study as a basic intention of the researcher was to assist interpretation of the range of participants experiences by overlaying or triangulating (Vogt, 1993) information collected through the questionnaire, interviews, and relevant literature, from both inside and outside the organisation. Brewer and Hunter (1989:17) argue that “this multi-method strategy is simple but powerful. For if our various methods have weaknesses that are truly different, then their convergent findings may be accepted with far greater confidence that any single method's findings would warrant. Each new set of data increases our confidence that the research results reflect reality rather than methodological error”.

The presentation of the trainers' reality was a central consideration in the design of this study. By using triangulated data I attempted to differentiate points of variation between each participant in the study, and if any of these data points, potentially influenced any experiences. The use of multiple methods was to illuminate an understanding not to interpret the data towards conclusions for the reader. The use of this approach was ‘to attempt to evaluate the contradictions’ and differences between the study participants (Brewer, Hunter, 1989:24). In this sense, it is important to note that the researcher did not predominantly seek to proffer findings or absolute

conclusions, other than those perceived and identified by the participants themselves.

Denzin (1989:15) coined the term 'interpretative interactionism' to describe "those interactional moments that leave marks on people's lives and have the potential for creating transformational experiences for the person". Employing multi methods allows the researcher to maximise data collection in relation to 'interactional moments'. As this study allowed the researcher to access many years of training data, publications, draft course documentation for volunteer trainers and the internal strategic plan, many aspects of information were able to be overlaid over the information collected from the volunteer trainers through questionnaire and interview. In addition, records relating to trainer qualifications, achievement, and employment category were also able to be accessed to assist interpretation of these multiple data points. Through this approach, patterns and anomalies in the perceptions of participants generally become more apparent and thus more open to interpretation.

Sieber (1973) has also illustrated that relatively strong methods can assist weaker methods by using interviews to cross check other data. As the survey returns were low in number, the use of additional methods strengthened the overall picture of participant's experiences when viewed through and within other information. The use of a multi method approach "holds out the larger promises of more sociologically significant conclusions and greater opportunities for both verification and discovery" (Brewer & Hunter, 1989:21). As a consequence, "in this arena of competing perspectives, multi method researchers have a vested interest in bridging differences and bringing about common understanding" (Brewer & Hunter, 1989:178).

Interpretive interactionism was the primary methodology selected by the researcher to gain the perspectives of the participants. By this approach, the "attempt is to make the world of lived experience of ordinary people directly available to the reader" (Denzin, 1989:7). The range of research methods employed for the interpretive interactionism paradigm include "open ended creative interviewing, life history, life story, personal experience, participant observation and thick description" (Denzin, 1989:7).

The essential research design employed for this study was to explore the personal lived experiences of the volunteer trainers in order to compare and contrast the themes that emerged, using the interpretative interactionism' methodology as a framework for analysis and presentation. The selection of this methodology provided a

methodological logic for the study by offering clear stages and processes to move through the compilation of lived experiences.

Denzin (1989) suggests that the process of interpretive interactionism should move the researcher through a range of steps in order to locate, study and interpret the 'how' question within the qualitative study. Denzin proposed five primary steps which he referred to as deconstruction, capture, bracketing, construction, and contextualisation. These steps, he argued, "bring into sharper focus the phenomenon under investigation" (Denzin, 1989:62).

'Deconstruction' involves a critical analysis of how the phenomenon has been presented, studied and analysed in previous theoretical literature and research (Denzin, 1989:51). The deconstruction step for this study was largely undertaken with the literature review in order to understand previous definitions, observations and analysis of the questions and similar studies that would inform this. The primary purpose of deconstruction was to locate this study against this body of work in order to present new information. This stage of the methodology essentially has been presented as the literature review in Chapter Two of this thesis.

'Capture', as presented in Denzin's work, involved the following aspects:

- "Securing multiple cases and personal histories that embody the phenomenon in question;
 - Locating the crises and epiphanies of the lives of the persons being studied; and
 - Obtaining multiple personal and self stories from the subjects in question concerning the topic or topics under investigation"
- (Denzin, 1989:54).

'Bracketing' is when the phenomenon is taken out of the world where it has occurred and presented on its own terms, not interpreted in terms of standard meanings within existing literature. Bracketing is an interpretative tool that moves the researcher away from existing literature and understandings to identification of key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question. The reoccurring features are interpreted to offer what they reveal about the essential features of the

study questions. The steps used in bracketing include:

- Locate with the personal experience, or self story, key phrases and statements and how they speak directly to the phenomenon in question.
- Interpret the meanings of these phrases, as an informed reader.
- Obtain the subjects interpretations of these phrases if possible.
- Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, reoccurring features of the phenomenon being studied.
- Offer a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon in terms of the essential reoccurring features
(Denzin, 1989:56).

‘Construction’ classifies, orders and reassembles the phenomenon back into a coherent whole. The goal of construction based is to try and find the lived facts under one essential meaning and to find the same recurring forms of conduct, experience and the meaning within them all (Denzin, 1989:59).

‘Contextualisation’ presents the phenomenon and how it was experienced by ‘ordinary’ people. The syntheses of the main themes of the stories are compared and brought together in order to illuminate variations on stages of the process.

Contextualisation includes the following steps (Denzin 1989:60):

- Obtain and present personal experience and self stories that embody, in full detail, the essential features of the phenomenon as constituted in the bracketing and construction phases of interpretation;
- Present contrasting stories, which will illuminate variations on the stages and forms in the process.
- Indicate how lived experiences alter and shape the essential features of the process.
- Compare and synthesize the main themes of these stories so that their differences may be brought together into a reformulated statement of the process.

The goal of contextualisation is to clarify the meaning of the experience for the interacting study participants. This aspect of the study has been presented in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Study participants self selected themselves to participate further in this study. They did so without knowledge of the identity or number of other participants in the study. Participants in this study were asked to reflect on a range of experiences from early schooling, themselves as a learner, experiences of training, definitions of quality, definitions of training, influences in their own development as trainers, motivations of being a volunteer and how that factors in their current involvement as trainers, and training experiences received and delivered both pre- and post- RTO status at St John SA. Throughout this reflection, some trainers revealed personal and organisational hardships from earlier times and the apparent impacts some of those experiences had on them as individuals and volunteer members. The reflections were seemingly honest and at times emotional for the volunteers to discuss. These experiences provided significant insights into what it means to be a volunteer and a trainer within the organisation.

The approach undertaken for this study was to invite all trainers that met the criteria specified for the study to consider participation in the study. The decision was made to include all sixteen participants in the interview phase of the project, in part allow the collective group experience to be fully explored, and in part because an examination of the geographical, educational and length of service data relating to the volunteers provided no seemingly valid way of reducing the sample size. Further, the inclusion of all willing participants allowed all participants a voice to further inform the research questions. Interviews were set up and undertaken with the aid of a voice recorder. All interviews were transcribed into word documents and printed off for analysis as the full record of trainer experiences. It is the interpretation of these experiences and presentation of the interviews that are presented in Chapter Four, the presentation of findings in this thesis.

3.3 Participant Selection and Study Sample

The study participants, sixteen in all, represented the full capture of volunteer trainers

who had agreed to be part of the study. The participants included nine males and seven females from both country and metropolitan locations across South Australia. Fifteen research participants volunteered to take part in face-to-face interviews, and one participant preferred to have a phone interview due to limitations on their time and availability to participate in a face-to-face interview.

The research examined trainers who met the following criteria:

- They have been a volunteer member of St John Ambulance SA for more than 7 years.
- They are still recognised within St John SA as a qualified trainer, known as 'preferred' on the internal database in December 2003.

These two criteria limited the study to a group of seventy-six trainers. It excluded volunteer trainers who commenced involvement as trainers at St John SA after the introduction of nationally recognised qualifications (post 2000) and also those St John SA members who had no formal trainer qualifications in 2003. It also excluded any trainers who were not connected with any volunteer training role within St John SA. This provided a good base to explore the pre- and post- organisational movement into the current training provision from the volunteer perspective as trainer and learner.

Sixteen trainers agreed to become involved in the study. The sixteen participants gave a reasonably representative distribution of male to female, and country/remote to metropolitan. They also provided a significant range of volunteer years of service which would assist an exploration through the study around themes and contrasts of experiences. Four trainers located in country regions declined to participate, responding to the researcher that they did not identify with being a trainer and did not see that they fitted the purposes of the project. Another fifty-six trainers failed to respond to the invitation to be part of the study.

All but one of the sixteen participants was interviewed using voice recorder, with the transcripts subsequently transcribed. The sixteenth participant undertook a short phone interview. Notes were taken by the researcher at the time of phone interview. This participant was located a large distance from the researcher in rural South Australia, and due to the nature of being an on-call ambulance officer with other commitments, could not offer a reliable time for face-to-face interview. The

participants provided an enormous database of experience – collectively over 500 volunteer years – with St John SA.

Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2005) – using a set of generally open-ended questions – were used to explore the reflections of the volunteers about their training roles. These questions were submitted to the UNE ethics committee as part of the approval process prior to undertaking any of the interviews. At the completion of the participant interviews, there were over 35,000 words of transcribed data to be interpreted and presented as themes within Chapter Four of this study.

Figure 1: Study Participants by gender in training region
(Metropolitan and Country).

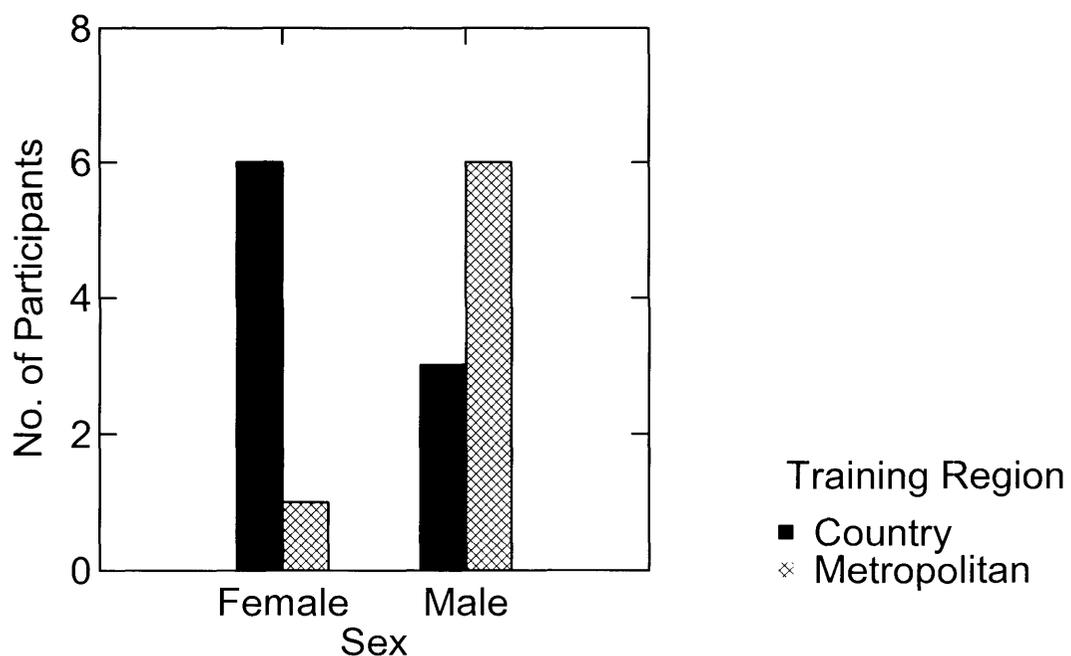
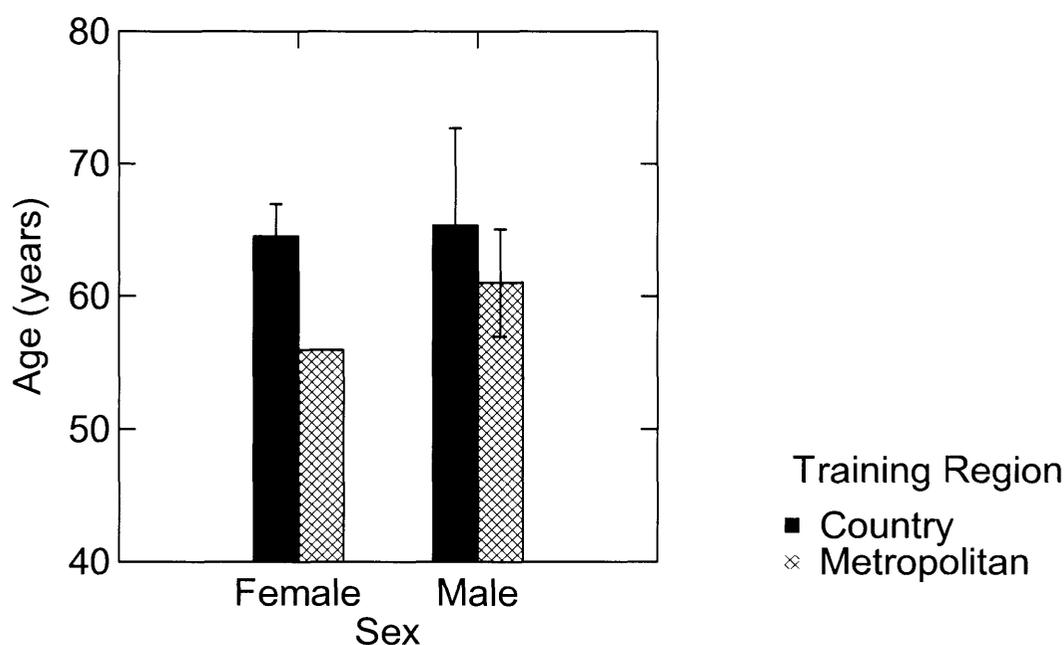


Figure 2: Study participant age range by gender in training region

(Metropolitan and Country)



3.4 Sampling Limitations

The scoping criteria of this research study excluded all trainers who had left St John SA as an organisation since its move to RTO status in 2000. It also excluded volunteers who were not formally qualified as trainers as at December 2003. A larger research project would be required to take in the other volunteer groups beyond this research study. A larger study may also offer additional experiences that may continue to build upon the reflections identified through this study.

The project did not attract a large sample of St John SA trainers, with 56 (74%) of potential participants failing to respond in any way to the offer to assist with the research. There is no defensible information to explain the low response rate, although some anecdotal comments suggest that one possibility might be

dissatisfaction with the current or past direction of training at St John SA as an organisation.

The non response of surveys also may have had connections to the perceived neutrality of the researcher. This will always be an unknown. During the duration of the study numerous trainers who had not responded to the initial invitation, verbally commented that at the time of receiving the information about the study, they were already feeling overwhelmed with time commitments to being a volunteer and could not take on any more. As the researcher was fully aware of this situation, these trainers were reassured that they had a right to decline and that it would not impact on the study as it had attracted enough trainers to continue. This sentiment was also an aspect of the participant who did the phone interview, who indicated that the uncertainties of the job meant that the researcher might travel over two hours only to find that the respondent was unavailable.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

The initial survey tool (Appendix 7.2) was posted out to all trainers that matched the study criteria. A period of two months was allowed for adequate time for survey completion and return. The survey included Ethics Committee approval information and some basic research questions around roles as a volunteer within and beyond being a volunteer at St John Ambulance SA. All enclosures had been approved by the UNE Ethics Committee prior to research project being commenced.

All research participants who chose to voluntarily participate beyond survey completion were provided an information sheet at the time of interview and also verified their responses to survey data posted in to the researcher. Taped interviews lasted up to one hour each. The locations for the interviews ranged from the participant's house, the local St John SA division near the participant's house, or at the St John SA worksite of the researcher in a private meeting room. The choice of interview location was always left up to the study participant to nominate. The researcher was always prepared to meet with the study participants at any location, subject to having an uninterrupted room to undertake the study interview and have it captured onto tape.

The study interview transcripts are a substantial assembly of views and experiences that relate to research questions. These transcripts constitute the primary research data that accounted for a year long research activity followed by another year of thesis production.

3.6 Methods used for Data Interpretation:

The survey tool allowed various aspects of the trainer typology to be moved into tables for analysis. These figures appear within the study, primarily as pictorial examples of the text. The database at St John SA also offered some additional data relating to income relationship of the study participants to the training work undertaken and this was examined when differing themes and experiences began to emerge during the bracketing aspect of interpretation of the study data. The participant experiences emerged as different when the deeper aspect of whether the trainers had moved to becoming a paid trainer for courses presented to the public. This payment commenced around the year 2000 when new quality assurance measures were implemented into the organisation after becoming an RTO. From this time only a few of the study participants remained as an unpaid volunteer for being a trainer. The overall summary statements of the participants regarding quality training pre- and post- St John SA becoming an RTO were also able to be situated within Figure 7 as a summary document which is discussed in the findings in Chapter 5 of this thesis document.

3.7 Quantitative Interpretation and Analysis

The methods that guided the large assembly of trainer lived experiences were guided by Denzin's (1989) steps through analysis. The transcripts were printed numerous times and key themes, words, statements and ideas were highlighted and noted for interpretation. By bracketing and contextualising the printed words, themes and correlations began to appear that were like, related, dissimilar or unusual. By using some of the tables that had been formulated throughout the study, it was possible to gain links and understandings in the data that became two-sided. This assisted to build links to how the trainers' experiences had emerged from the changes that had

occurred within the organisation and how they felt about quality training pre- and post- becoming an RTO.

4 DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents information and findings relevant to eight key themes that emerged from the study. Specifically, the chapter presents information and perspectives in the actual words used by volunteer trainers for the purpose of allowing the reader to examine the individual and group experiences that supported or detracted from perceptions of quality training at St John SA since it became an RTO.

Every experience is individual. Every word has its own meaning for that individual. This study focused on interviews with sixteen trainers as individuals. These trainers explored a range of experiences of learning, training and volunteerism. They were set in the period leading up to and throughout the use of nationally recognised qualifications within a private RTO as trainers and volunteers.

The full transcripts of the reported experiences of the volunteer trainers were examined and contrasted for themes that emerged across the full collation of sixteen individual responses. This full collation of experiences and recollections were then cross referenced and collated for similar and dissimilar words, quotes and meanings, in line with the notion proffered by Van Manen (1990:78) that “reflecting of lived experience then becomes reflectively analysing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience”.

This chapter discusses the eight main themes that emerged from the discussions with individual trainers and what comparisons and reflections were drawn from triangulation of the data transcripts. These themes assist to build an understanding of the experience of movement into the Australian Quality Training Framework and the impact, if any, on quality training.

4.1 Learners, Skills and Education

- “Formal schooling was seen as system that transmitted information designed to equip the child for life. This view assumed that the knowledge and skills learned during childhood were sufficient for adulthood. Research on young, middle and older adults indicates that an individual continues to learn and change across the life span. Research also suggests differences in motivation,

learning and memory between adults and children. These differences fail to inhibit continued learning but do affect instructional procedures.”

(McMillian & Schumacher, 1984:394)”.

Acquiring knowledge as a learner is part of us from very early child hood and persists throughout our adult life. In order to gain some insight into the lived experiences of the St John SA trainers as study participants, their beginnings as a learner were explored. Learning and the concepts of learning were explored in order to understand the ‘meanings’ attributed by volunteers and the ways by which they acquire knowledge as it is reasonable to assert that these orientations will directly impact on their approach to the role of trainer. The underlying question pursued by the researcher was: Would the study group reveal any clear pattern of early learning experiences and those later in adult life that could help explain their approach and understanding of training? To position the trainers initially as learners themselves, they were taken back to child hood to recall positive and negative aspects of being schooled.

The trainers, who participated in this study, did not instantly identify with being a learner themselves. Recollection of their early school experiences assisted in positioning the dialogue on this aspect of themselves.

More than half of the study participants stated that they had not had a positive beginning as a learner:

- “I went to Year ten at school and failed at English which meant I failed at everything. I hated school and failed at English, scraped through Geography, Maths and Science”.(ID 12)
- “I hated school. I did not like it until I did the technical hands on stuff. Things improved for me once I started Technical school” (ID 10)
- “As a learner I felt stupid and trapped. Unsupported and not comfortable, I did not do my homework.” (ID 14)
- “Even though I did enjoy school when I left school my teacher said I would never get a job because my marks were not very good.. School was not engaging. I was not interested in it” (ID 6)

- “I was a very hands on person, I found it difficult to read instructions and then do something.... I left school in Year 7..” (ID16)
- “I did not have a good experience at school. I did not have good concentration and took a while to catch up with what was going on...” (ID 7)
- “When I was in Year 1 or 2 I had a female teacher who punished me for dog earring my books.. the fact I can still remember this now indicates to me it was for me a negative beginning..” (ID 5)
- “I was a poor outward reader and lacked confidence. I can’t express myself very well. School was just ok...” (ID 15)
- ‘Primary school and generally the public education system did not stir me at all. It was very authoritarian, learning by rote. Times tables etc ...Stuck with me. It was an early educational system. The educators were not from degree courses at all. Secondary school was not thrilling either’. (ID 3)

This beginning of being a learner was later explored during interviews with the St John SA trainers as to whether there had been any influences upon becoming a teacher/trainer as an adult. There appeared to be no identifiable correlation between the dis-engaged learners as children and having a negative influence later on as a career impediment to enter the world of training.

What did become clear throughout the interviews was how all the participants had taken the best and worst of the teaching and learning they had received and transferred these experiences into their own repertoire of training and learning styles of delivery:

- “I see a lot of people who come along who did not enjoy school. They are coming along because they had to and they are scared. The atmosphere can be tense. I understand where they are coming from and I try to teach them knowing this...” (ID 14)
- “I am drawing on my early time at the division in the country. The way the Superintendent taught us first aid was very influential to me as a learner...” (ID 16)

- “People still come up to me now and say I was fantastic the way I taught them. I did not have an academic background. I had a basic education. I just related to them... I was more visual and hands on. I could relate practical to theory. I had a formal picture in my mind of what would work with teaching...” (ID 15)
- “Back then classes were filled with people just like you. They were learning the same time as you...” (ID 6)

The study participants used similar terms throughout their interviews. Words such as “hands on”, and “I am a practical learner” transposed throughout most of the conversations. They seem drawn to teaching first aid as a natural progression from student to teacher and felt that their own experiences of learning were important and influential to their roles as trainers.

This study group seemed to have a mix of those who have had a poor positive beginning in learning and those had enjoyed and thrived in this early environment. The group in the latter category had produced more learners who had continued on to higher education than those who had finished school early with negative experiences from primary or secondary school. Overall, the desire to continue to learn had not been overly affected by early schooling experiences. A possible correlation of interest emerged when overlays of data were put into the review of the material. Those respondents who had not had a positive early experience at school had encountered more difficulty with the introduction of training packages, more specifically the Certificate IV Workplace Training and Assessor training qualification (ID 13, ID 7, ID 12). This is compatible with the findings of Harris et al. (2000:44):

- “The workplace trainers’ own experience of learning and training were also thought to exert a strong influence on the development of effective workplace training skills. Positive learning experiences were valued because they exposed trainers to the potential benefits accruing from training and hence imbued the trainers with a belief in the value of training which in turn, helped the trainer to provide authentic experiences for their learners”.

To build upon the findings in the Harris et al study, the aspects and experiences of quality training were explored to see what aspects detracted, were included or contributed to quality training.

Figure 3: Trainer average age in final year of secondary school education by Training Region (Metropolitan and Country).

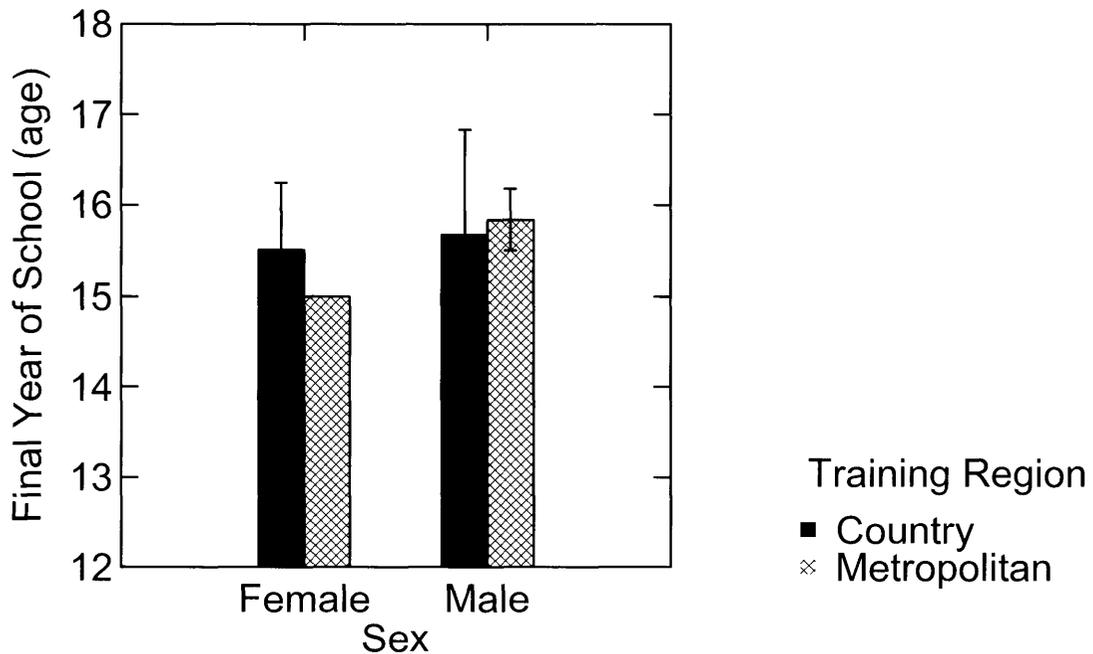


Figure 3 gives the total leaving age from secondary school of the study participants. This data was linked to early experiences of school as a learner. The youngest age was 15 with the oldest being 17.

4.2 Quality Training – Definitions and Experiences

What does quality training mean? What components increase quality, and is this measurable to training for both learners and trainers? St John SA trainers considered these questions as they reflected over the many positive and negative experiences of training/education undertaken as a learner or inspiring as a trainer. As Mitchell et al. (2006:6) noted: “the VET sector is distinguished by complexity and opportunity. Many critical issues were identified by stakeholders under the banner of these two terms, but the majority of VET stakeholders, quality is the most critical issue in teaching, learning and assessment.”

‘Quality’ has many different interpretations. VET managers often indicate it is about achieving consistency that is essentially about accountability. For teachers and trainers, quality is concerned with academic excellence and transformation of the individual (Gibb, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2006). Currently (*c 2007*) we have a range of training-related changes with the AQTF and the revised Certificate Training qualification (TAA04), in addition to organisational change that is driven under continuous improvement to enhance quality at St John SA. However, for this study, no definition was suggested or inferred. What was meant by ‘quality’ was left up to each individual to define in their own words.

As the researcher, I explored these issues: So what does quality mean? What are the ‘bits’ that must be present in order to achieve and receive quality as a learner? What do you strive for as a St John SA trainer?

- ‘A trainer will teach you something but unless they have first hand knowledge of the subject it is not quality. In theory and in practice! You need both to have quality..’ (*ID 6*)
- ‘The person is friendly You can ask them anything. They speak in understandable language. Practical experiences help a lot, don’t use too many, what do you call them... acronyms.. shortened words. They need to explain it simply. Showing you. Giving you ideas of their experience so you relate to it...’ (*ID 7*)
- ‘It comes from a person that has experience in what they are training..’ (*ID 2*)
- ‘Quality training is one by a trainer who has the background in the material and can communicate this well. Having the knowledge is not enough. Communication is critical and flexible.’ (*ID 14*)
- ‘You need individual needs recognised. Be supportive. Be organised. A mixture of practical and theory’ (*ID 15*)

In almost all of the interview transcripts, practical experience in the area being taught was overwhelmingly cited as a critical component of quality training. This study group had also received training by trainers who were not practically involved with the organisation as a first-aid volunteer and perceived their training to be weaker in

that it did not have the range of examples and real life experience to build upon the learner's understanding of first aid conditions and treatment. This aspect was reflected upon as a 'loss' and the volunteers suggested that it impacted negatively on future first aid trainer skill levels:

- “The ability to use the ambulance jobs to explain details of how and why things worked was fantastic. It was really a great mix...” (ID 3)
- “I sometimes use my experiences of all these things, including working on the ambulances in my training at an appropriate time. I might use funny stories, jokes and real life things that have happened. Because of all my training I have done within St John and my experiences within St John, I have a good base to draw on...” (ID 9)
- “I learned more treatments during training but for me, I learned more actually doing the job out on the road... people delivering the courses need practical experience ...” (ID 6)
- “My experience on the ambulance as a volunteer has been very useful to me as a trainer. The examples you can give, the people remember those...Quality training comes from a person that has experience in what they are training. That includes death, serious injuries and fractures etc. As an ambulance officer I got to treat lots of things so my teaching was enhanced for this. I knew my stuff. When you don't have this, like many trainers now, I wonder how they can teach well...” (ID 2)
- “I was disappointed not to be going on with the ambulance service as I found that more satisfactory use of my talent, skills and interests. It really complemented training people who would go on to learn first aid...(ID 4)

The change within St John SA of no longer running the ambulance service is all part of the history for many who were involved in this study. As a volunteer within St John, many would now attain experiences to include in training from attendance at first aid duties as a volunteer first-aider. All of the volunteers were part of a division, however the time to train others had consumed a lot of their available volunteer time, over attendance at first aid duties. The discussion of time and impacts on the volunteer were reoccurring themes throughout many of the transcripts. This will be

further discussed under Trainers and Change.

4.3 Influences and Motivations of Becoming and Remaining a Volunteer at St John

Although this study focused upon quality training, the participants provided an interesting snapshot to explore member motivation and retention. All but one of the study group participants was involved as a volunteer in at least one other volunteer organisation, so their support for the volunteer sector created a rich group of experiences to explore this aspect. Collectively, the trainers who participated in this study had an average of over 31 years as a volunteer, with an average of 26.5 years as a trainer. As a researcher, I was interested in whether these two were linked in any way regarding retention from the viewpoint as a motivator to stay as a volunteer.

How they became involved, as well as why they stayed involved, was a question that was explored within the study group. It had no direct link to the study topic but is important, historically and currently, when volunteers are becoming difficult to attract and retain, especially those that take on the training role as a volunteer.

This study group of 16 identified recruitment pathways were through three distinct channels:

Five (31.25%) were recruited in the first aid course they attended initially or through local recruitment campaigns that invited community members to attend a first aid course. Four of these had had no previous thoughts on being involved prior to attending a first aid course.

Nine (56.25%) were encouraged or referred by an existing St John volunteer to get involved. None of these had any prior intention of becoming a first aid volunteer at St John SA prior to this time. One had refused any involvement previously despite both parents being involved in this area; however the will of a good friend who was a volunteer changed this view. One of these was a doctor by profession, who enjoyed the friendships and comradeship at the division over the obvious professional link to first aid.

Two (12.5%) initially saw St John SA as an environment which would give them a

good base to use their vocational skills as a nurse or paramedic for the benefit of the community.

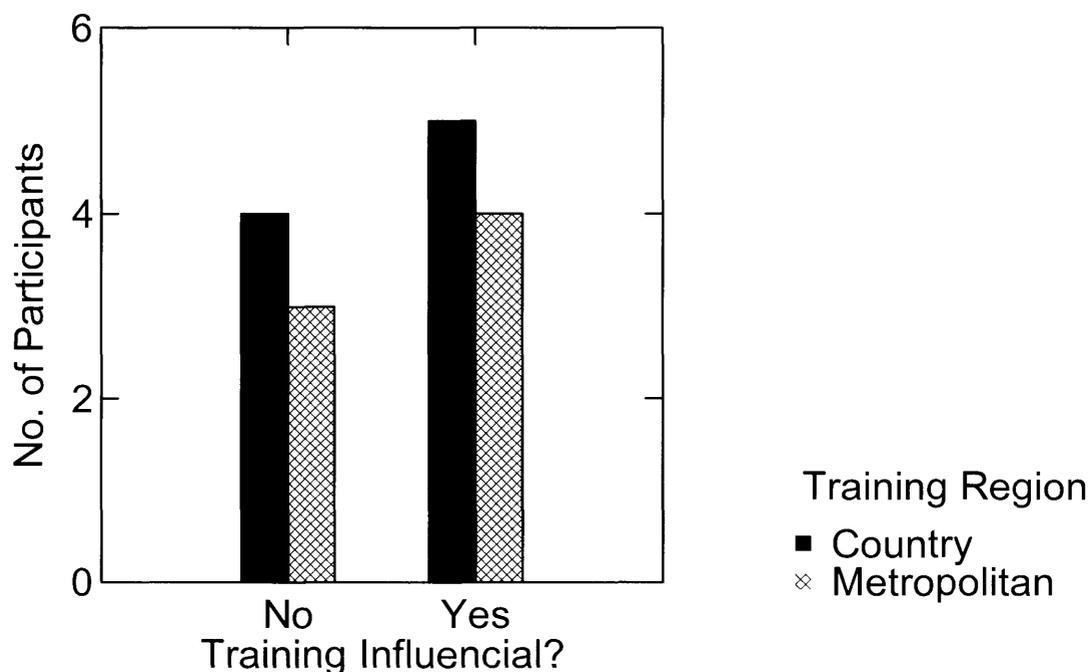
More than half of the study group had been recruited from friendship or family relationship to an existing volunteer member of St John. This would appear to have been a very successful method, with another third coming from attendance and approach at a first aid training course, which suggests these two areas are highly successful as a combined recruitment strategy.

From the perspective of retention as a volunteer, the link to training emerged as important within the study, as a motivator to stay within the organisation. This aspect was interesting, in that, if the volunteer had not remained as the trainer, they may have left earlier. For over half the study participants (56.25%), being the trainer had been quite influential in remaining or staying longer within St John SA:

- “It has been influential to stay. I am interested in teaching. I enjoy training. I enjoy people learning” (*ID 4*)

This comment was supported by another eight study volunteers from both country and metropolitan trainers of both genders. The impact on being the trainer as an influential aspect of staying longer or at all within St John SA, was irrespective of how quality training was perceived pre or post RTO status.

Figure 4: Response to being involved as a trainer as influential to staying at St John SA longer (by Training Region).



4.4 Trainers and Change

An enormous catalyst for the study had been to contrast experiences of training pre- and post- RTO status. The impact upon the volunteers from a change management and process prospective was enormous. There have been four key changes that organisationally impacted directly upon the participant group in this study. These were discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. There have also been enormous changes in the volunteer trainer content area and first-aid procedures. VET as an educational sector, does appear to be one that involves pervasive and continuous change and all of these things were part of the study participants' experiences.

As a group, the volunteers interviewed had endured enormous change over a sustained period of time. Many had gone on to obtain qualifications, with no real desire to have

them. Others had changed career and skills through the loss of the ambulance service. However, there had been losses of volunteers outside of this group, because of change and the way it had been communicated and managed by the organisation in the past. In this way, the experiences were significantly diverse:

- “In 1980 I did my first recognized training course. It was a methodology course. I was told back then it would be handy if I got some formal training in order to deliver lessons. I did this at Naracoorte Tafe. I did this for St John, CFS, SES. I was doing all this training because I had a piece of paper saying I could do it. My first lesson was how to light a match. In 1989 I did another course to further what I already learned. I could keep teaching first aid. I progressed from there to the Certificate IV, the first four units. I felt cross. I was told I had to do it. I was already doing it though. At that stage I was the youngest of all the trainers. People had been at St John for 40 years plus teaching. When they said they had to have a certificate in order to teach first aid the rest of those 4 said why? These blokes were in their 50’s and 60’s. Most were at retiring age. They felt too old to go back to study. They were angry. In 2 weeks we lost 120 years of collective experience. It was like that. I was the only person left... (ID 6)

Most of the study participants agreed that the organisation needed to make the changes in order to have educated, literate and engaging trainers deliver future training. There was also acknowledgement that the training needed more contemporary methods than simply lecture mode:

- “Training is better now than it was. Being an RTO has been useful. The old St John structure did not change. The new structure has forced us to look at new ways. The checks and balances are there. There has been a pruning out of dead wood trainers over the time. This has been useful. The new assessor network has been useful in providing a support for each other. Technology has been a useful aspect. Email has been very good. These things have all made things better...” (ID 14)
- “In the country I feel positive towards the future. There is talk of a regional training role which might be good. I have hope that new blood is coming in. They might be looking at regional rather than local trainer. There is new stuff

coming along. Change is constant so everyone is thinking what next all the time. Overload is potentially an issue. Keeping up. As a volunteer the demands on you are high, you are expected to do things yet you are not prepared well for events. You are being told what you are to do but it is not being communicated well..” (ID 15)

- “At the time we were in a rut. We were against change. We did have apprehension. But once we tried it we knew it was the way forward. We used to just lecture and this was not good. The original 14 week courses put participants under enormous pressure. They needed to gain lots of knowledge about all sorts of things. You had to go through all the theory for weeks and weeks and remember it all for the end when you were being assessed. Now with ongoing assessment it is better in this way for everyone. Lots of our participants are mature aged people. They have not been to school for a long time. We need to make the courses appealing for these people and remove pressure to do school work. The training now is far superior..” (ID 9)

Time is an aspect that was highlighted as a poor resource by all of the study participants. Time to study, to remain qualified, to train others, get professional development, attend skills training, to retain a range of knowledge in order to teach, to prepare for divisional training sessions, to watch other trainers, to network, to travel, to learn new skills and to be active as a first aid volunteer at community events or duties. Although volunteer time has always been precious, it seems through the experiences of the volunteers involved that the accreditation process for trainers since becoming an RTO has drawn heavily on their available time. Time commitments required for training had been necessary in becoming qualified in the first four units of the Certificate 1V in Workplace Training and Assessor, but then the volunteers also had to attend training sessions in Adelaide to deliver and assess further training.

- “I do think as time is going on we are loading up our volunteers -operationally especially. However, society dictates well trained people who have been assessed to provide their level of confidence. If we can short circuit some of that, it would be better. CFS are now saying this, they say they will do fire fighting but no rescue. so it is starting to happen here. We put quiet a demand on our volunteers..” (ID 3).

- “Time for work. Time for St John. Time is a juggle. I juggle at 2 volunteer roles myself. Qualifications are part of being current in your employment. But getting and maintaining qualifications take more time on top of that. The nature of work is changing..... Time is the negative thing. Fitting it in is tricky. My marriage has been dinged around because I do St John things instead of other things at home...” (ID 12)

4.5 Thoughts About Becoming a Registered Training Organisation in 2000

The volunteers within this study used the event of becoming an RTO to reflect on the training delivered and received by them at a point of significant change. Apparently because St John SA became an RTO, many who had previously run training for St John SA discontinued. Those who wanted to continue needed to gain external training qualifications, as recognised under the AQTF. All participants in this study were accredited as trainers three years into the implementation of becoming an RTO. As the organisation could offer nationally-recognised qualifications within first-aid as a benefit to clients, it was explored as to what it had meant as a volunteer trainer.

Most of the participants talked about having to get the qualification as either insulting or unnecessary, but agreed it had changed the trainers who would remain involved as the organisation moved forwards:

- “In the mid nineties St John said we needed to do some instructor training. It was done at TAFE, Certificate IV in training small groups etc. I found it a waste of time and somewhat insulting to have to do that. I could see the organisations point of view as I was very aware that trainers within the system at that time were absolutely hopeless. They had no knowledge or skills in conducting training. They talked rubbish. So I could see the organisations point of view in making everyone do it. It immediately weeded out a whole raft of illiterate people. They were not bad people and I have nothing against illiterate people but they certainly should not have been training others .” (ID 4)

- “I thought qualifications were a good thing. I thought trainers needed to get a better understanding of what a training role involves. Prior to being a RTO, trainers did not necessarily have any skills in training. I did a train the trainer program, on a weekend, internally. I had no issues in getting a qualification. On reflection, internally, some of the stuff had been covered in workshops. It made sense that this would lead us to this point. No one knew why we did what we did. I think it did impact on peoples’ thought processes. They did understand a bit more why they did need to have variety etc. The actual quality of the 4 units varied. Not everyone came out with a clear understanding of the intended outcomes. They had missed the point it was a package to do with training. They kept applying it just to the St John work only. There was no change in skills re improvement...” (ID 15)
- “On the whole things are better now. Things are more structured, less variable. It is a good thing. In the past people could just teach what they want really. People used to come back to classes being told terrible treatments. You were mortified when they said they had been taught this by a trainer. So we don’t see that now. People come back with appropriate skills and knowledge now. The quality is improving but the material has been really watered down. We used to teach childbirth. Now there is very little taught. Now it is more doing no harm. I don’t think this is a loss. People can go other places to learn more. We often get illiterate people now which are hard work so to have things not so full on is better. We also get disabled people so in this way I think it is better now. Assessments of students also changed through being an RTO. It used to be very formal (pre RTO) which was very threatening, especially for illiterates or those who had never done formal exams before. They would get really stressed out...” (ID 8).
- “The courses are more practical now. We used to follow a strict syllabus. You now need to think and create the learning experience. You need to now be more lateral. The trainers who could not change seems to have created a parting of the water away to trainers who could adapt. They have remained rigid. You need to be creative. That is what came out of being an RTO.....” (ID 15)

- “It should have been done 20 years ago. It is a good thing. In the 80’s I did a long course that was not worth a bean outside of the organisation. It looked fantastic on paper but it did not really count outside. That was 3 years training. The framework for training in 1997 came in and we should have moved everything then. We are doing much better now. I got a job overseas because on my resume I had listed all the qualification codes on my resume. That was impressive. I gave links on the website to what the qualifications meant. I think that is how I got the job as a first aider overseas...” (I.D.12)

Literacy levels of previous volunteer trainers and skills improvement as a result of getting the qualification appeared to be part of the reflective experience of St John SA study participants. The single aspect that the trainers all discussed in becoming an RTO was the need to get a training qualification.

Despite the fact that numerous trainers in the study had experience in teaching adults as qualified teachers or had been involved with the set up of quality systems prior to becoming an RTO, none stated that they had been offered any form of recognition for these skills and knowledge. It had been part of the original discussion but never eventuated for those in this study group. Despite any level of training experience prior to becoming an RTO, all completed the training qualification through attendance at training and submission of course work. The impact of this on the trainers was for many that their skills and practice did not change as a result and they found this did not give them a positive start to becoming a recognized trainer within the RTO. They aligned this lack of recognition as a negative of becoming an RTO, rather than consideration that if St John SA as an organisation had managed recognition better as part of becoming an RTO, they may have felt differently.

- “When the training became different from when St John became an RTO I started to think things had not changed for the better. After teaching for almost 20 years I had to get a qualification that said I could keep teaching. I wondered what they would teach me. I had a friend who was a teacher who attended the course who said it was a waste of time, she had learned nothing. I felt dismayed. I wanted to learn something if I was being asked to go to Tafe. I did not want to waste my time. I felt being told I needed to go to Tafe to get qualifications as an instructor when I felt I was already an instructor was not

good or well received by me. I was told I had to have a piece of paper...” (ID 2)

- “By the time I was back and involved in being a paid instructor RTO did not mean much to me. We were abruptly notified that we would have to do 4 units of this unknown course in writing. It was going to cost us. It was to take 10 weeks. I was angered by this. I did not have the money. Lots of people felt like me. I went ahead and the training was terrible. I was back at primary school. The trainer who took the course was atrocious. But I felt I had to do it otherwise I would not get paid. I needed the work. It was not until that I finished the whole Cert 4 course that I started to get it. But I thought why am I doing this, I know this stuff. We found a formal basis for what we had been doing for years. I did not like doing it but accepted we needed to have the formalized stuff..” (ID 14)
- “There was talk at the time to get RPL and that having an education diploma and a degree I would get some recognition but I could not see that it was recognized because I was still having to do the Certificate 1V course with a raft of people who had no teaching or interested background. I could not see that I was given recognition. I had to go to Tafe for a weekend on 2 or 3 weekends and do some further work to get the 4 units of the Cert 1V. It did not change anything as far as I was aware. I did not train differently or get any acknowledgment from other members I had done it. However I did see the organisations point of view in making people do it. I think this was the agenda. It was a way to get credibility. They could say all our instructors now have this qualification or series of units...” (ID 4)
- “The cert 1V possibly I did not get a lot of benefit out of. I was happy to do it, as I knew I needed to in order to be a trainer but I don’t think it was of any great benefit. Some maybe might be useful. It was not all new information. New information is good. But I was doing a lot of the stuff anyway...” (ID 9)
- “As I am a doctor I have been training off and on for 40 years. That crunch came early for me when I was told I could not keep training without a qualification. A lot of correspondence transpired at the time about this. I was feeling very upset. Probably someone else would have told them to stick it.

Most people would have left the organisation then. I tried to get RPL but I could not. The current training person in my region was calling Adelaide but nothing came of it. And I thought I am not quitting, bugger them. I was feeling angry and very upset. My professional knowledge and my experience in training since 1967 was totally disregarded. All my work was of no value”
(ID 8)

However, if the issue of separating out the need to gain qualifications and the changes to training were explored after becoming an RTO, the experiences of the study group appeared to improve. As these changes of becoming an RTO were linked to a quality training agenda, from the organisations perspective, this aspect will be discussed in the following theme.

4.6 Qualifications and Quality

One of the standard presumptions that underpins the AQTF relates to qualifications of staff and how these and continued professional development enhance an RTO’s ability to provide quality training. It is implied that they are linked therefore within this study group, the connections of training qualifications and quality were explored.

Figure 5 illustrates that the majority of participants in this study held only a partial qualification (four units of the Certificate IV Workplace Assessor and Training certificate).

Figure 6 gives a strong indication that within this study group, the majority of volunteers had received their AQTF qualification through participation in internal training at St John SA rather than by attendance at another RTO or education provider.

Figure 5: Highest AQTF qualification level of participants in St John SA study by region (Metropolitan and Country).

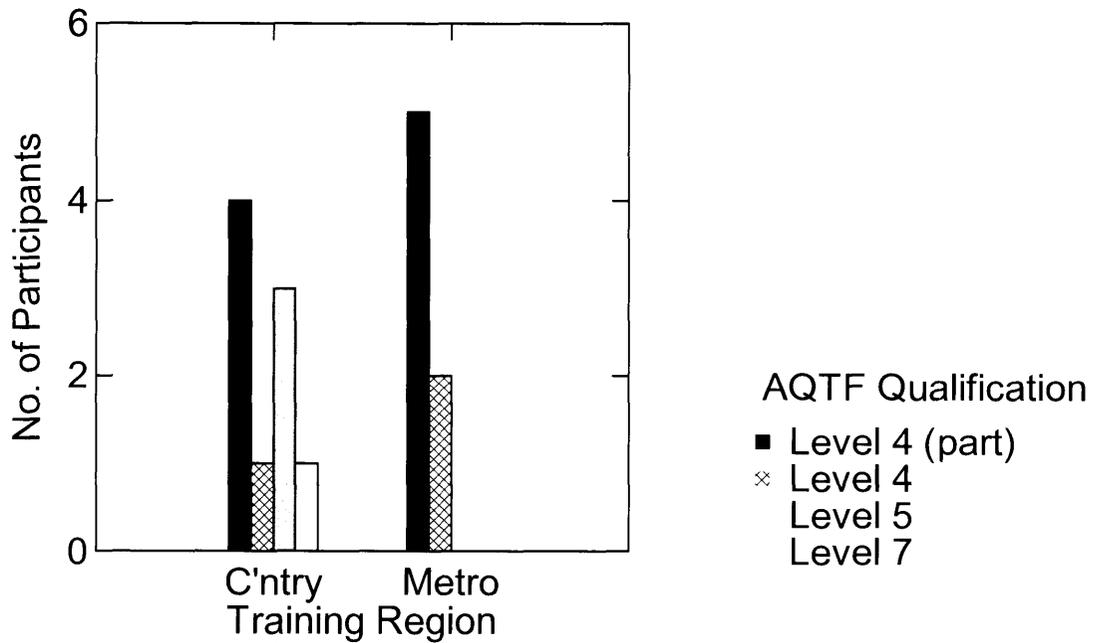
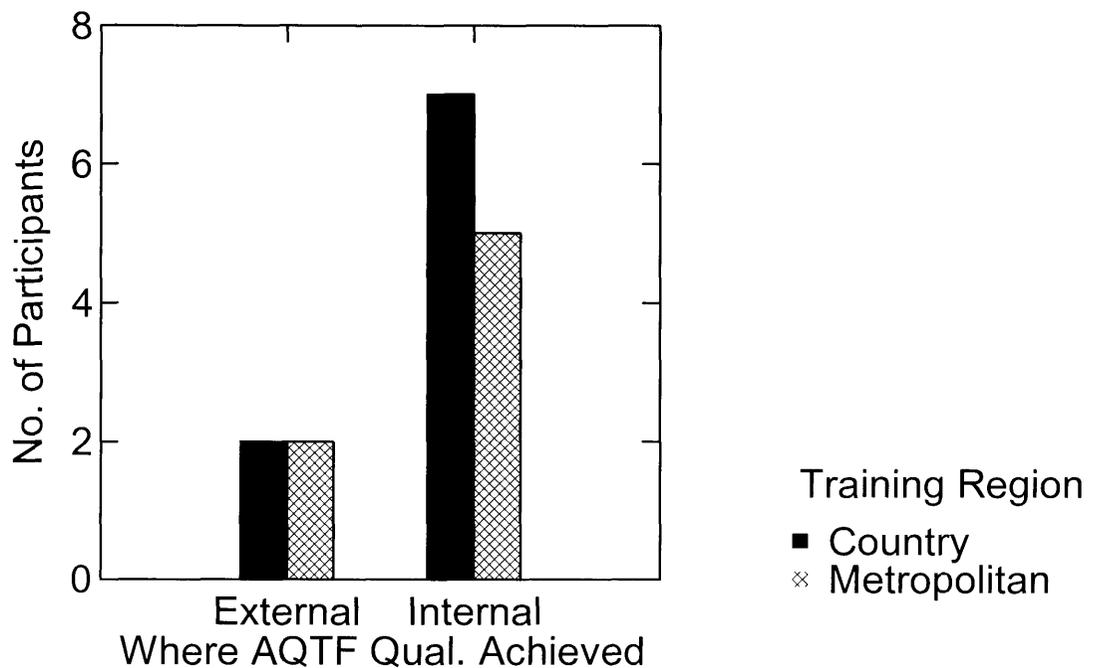


Figure 6: Where AQTF Qualification Achieved – Internal or External RTO (by Training Region)



In relation to this study group, more than 90 % felt qualifications alone did not guarantee training quality. Each study participant was asked what quality actually 'looked like'? Then they were asked to examine the links between that definition and whether having qualifications as a trainer supported this definition. Quality as a training experience was largely supported by the group as the following:

- “Training – if you don’t know anything about anything someone has to give you the framework. Once you have the framework you can then play with it. The framework is training. Quality – what they do with that experience. Are they stuck with the framework or can they take it to another dimension? That is quality. Quality training is done by a trainer who has the background in the material and can communicate this well. Having the knowledge is not enough. Communication is critical and flexible....” (*ID 14*)
- “Firstly and foremost you must have a nice teaching environment. If you don’t have that right from the word go you are up against it. It must be a nice teaching environment. A reasonable class size. By this I mean no more than 15 people. That is about it. Any more than that they will not get enough training. They are queuing up to use manikins etc which is not good. The trainer has to know their stuff. They have to come well equipped with good equipment and the trainees feel engaged by trainer. The trainer has to be well prepared....” (*ID 11*)

The study group had very clear ideas about what quality training would contain or look like. The components that were discussed included:

Good environment/venue;

Class size not too big (< 15);

Different teaching methods;

Trainer subject knowledge beyond basic information;

Interaction and personalisation of students as individuals;

Good communication style;

Engaging learning experience;

Facilitates student confidence in their skills/knowledge;

Organised trainer;

Trainer friendly and supportive;

Balance of practical and theory in content;

Trainer meeting course outcomes;

Well presented to the learner;

Content appropriate and correct; and

Trainer is personable. Good personality of trainer.

The aspects that were mentioned repeatedly were

- ‘mixed methodologies;
- trainer must have subject knowledge beyond the course content being taught;
- communication style of trainer;
- engaging learning experience;
- trainer organisational skills; and
- trainer supportive of students.

The things that created an experience that did not offer quality training included:

- elementary like school;
- learning by rote;
- course too slow;
- trainer with little subject experience;
- trainers who read to the class;
- unsuitable venues;
- trainers who can’t answer course related questions from students;

- lecturer presentation style;
- no life experience;
- too much theory; and
- does not cater for individual needs.

The study participants were then asked to reflect on their definitions of quality training and then to consider whether having training qualifications might influence their chances of receiving quality training. As all the participants had obtained the qualification in order to keep training within the RTO and attended professional development as required within the trainer accreditation model at the RTO, they offer an interesting group to explore this area. The group had mixed experiences of this aspect:

- “They can be linked. An individual can give quality without having qualifications. Some of the best training I received was from individuals who were not qualified on paper. Because of the baby boom a lot of teachers only did one year of training on paper. They were excellent teachers. Others in the system were drones. Really were. They were highly qualified on paper but had no relationship to quality training. None. Teaching and training is a natural thing. Training quals improves this but it does not create this. It is about the relationship between teacher and student and this is the crutch of it. People either have it or not. Some of my best teachers were not highly qualified...”
(ID 4)
- “Good trainers and exceptional trainers don’t necessarily need qualifications because I have seen this myself. These people were not qualified but overall it raises the odds that the two will go together I guess.” (ID 5)
- “These things (qualifications and professional development) are supporting quality training now at St John. In the past there were good and awful trainers. These things have got rid of these awful people. I was training with someone who was crude, said inappropriate things, he was old, he was loosing his memory, I was always apologizing for him. He was racist and sexist. He was a teacher mind you so you just never can guarantee what might happen.

Eventually he left through the trainer qualifications thing. I think getting people to get trainer qualifications really sorted out the many who were training. Some hardly did any hours at all..." (ID 8)

- "They don't have to go together. There are natural trainers. I am better for being qualified. I am important. More credible. It is an achievement. My training is heaps better. It is easier to teach. I don't get so stressed..." (ID 7)
- "I have had great training from unqualified people. I think it raises the chances but it does not make you a good teacher. You need to naturally have these skills I think. It makes a good teacher better. Most of St John's training now is done by qualified people. I personally prefer the older style teaching where they were taught the technical aspects. I am not sold on scenario teaching that we do now..." (ID 11)
- "You can get quality training from an unqualified person, but they can be rare. You are not as likely to get it. The good trainers have wanted input from others and keep growing as trainers" (ID 15)

The study participants had a richness of experience from which to draw these experiences. They had joined St John SA as volunteers and all of them had completed the training qualification in order to remain involved as trainers. They also had received training over many years prior to that time by unqualified volunteers who were involved with training. Some were educators outside of St John SA, many had other qualifications up to doctorate level. Numerous study participants offered some of these unqualified trainers pre- RTO as still the most influential training person to them. The many experiences do imply that there is a natural suitability in order to teach and train others that can be enhanced but not guaranteed by qualifications:

- "The way my Superintendent taught us first aid then was very influential to me as a learner. He was ahead of his time. Other people could do things and did not impact on me the way he did. .. He used to do all sorts of things to support role play, mocked up backdrops for scenes, lots of props to simulate what we might find as a volunteer. He would build elaborate sets. We would walk into the division for a training night and find this amazing scene. This is how we were taught. I don't even know if he was formally qualified or not. It

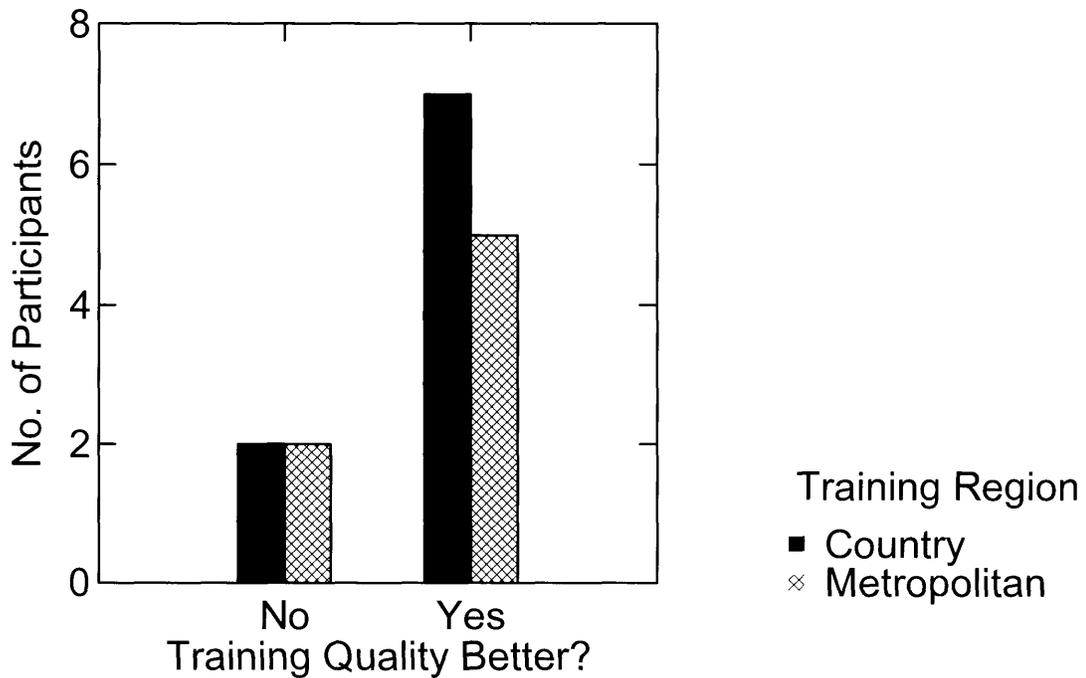
was very rewarding. Every one at the division appreciated it. Then when we did get called out to real life events, we felt equipped to manage.” *(ID 16)*’

- “The Superintendent at my division was a great mentor. We would share the training. He assisted me a lot. We shared ideas..” *(I.D. 9)*’
- “The divisional staff used to train you. There were some terrific trainers. Their only motivation was to serve their community and they did this role very well. You used to get some practical skills with written assessments done that were developed locally...” *(ID 6)*’
- “There was a group of people, volunteers and those who were keen on the training side of things. They (St John SA) were fortunate to get a medical student who did not pass university – medical school for about 4 years. He had a good background and came on the scene, he identified the need for further training. He would get a group of people together and we would go around the country doing country training weekends. Whatever subject you had to do you would do in a syndicate manner. We did that with all the volunteers in Gladstone, Port Pirie and other places. We provided them with an ambulance but we had to show them how to use it. There was oxygen and consequently as when time moved on these became an annual event in providing training sessions There might be 2 in the lower north area, west coast and so one. (Person’s name) identified that by getting this done by medical students, they could then provide other training. He would pick on 4th year medical students. They would be employed over the vacations from university. It gave them a bit of money and most of these are now leading specialists in their field...”.
(ID 3)

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Figure 7 summarises the responses of participants to the question “Has Training Quality improved or declined since becoming an RTO? It indicates that over 80% of this study group believed that training quality had improved since St John SA had become an RTO.

Figure 7: Summary of responses: “Has Training Quality improved or declined since becoming an RTO?”



The study group had many years to reflect on the training within St John SA before it became an RTO, and the years up to 2003 (when they were chosen to be part of the study). For many, the experiences had been both negative and positive. This aspect will be discussed in the theme below.

4.7 Australian Quality Training Framework versus Internal Regulation

St John SA has always operated what was known as the Training Branch, and in current time, Training Services, as a part of the organisation. The Training Branch/ services has a structure that encapsulates training, syllabus design and development,

skills and knowledge testing, and trainer accreditation. The numbers of trainers significantly reduced from the late nineties to current time for a range of reasons. These reportedly included the need to gain the Certificate IV Workplace Assessor and Training units, the requirement to deliver 45 hours of training a year, the attendance at specific professional development activities, volunteer retirement, time pressures to remain a trainer and an active volunteer, volunteers leaving the organisation, and a mix of other less specific reasons. The study participants were asked to consider both frameworks (pre- and post- RTO), and to indicate which they felt was better overall, and which produced more potential to achieve a quality training agenda for the organisation. Three (18.75 % preferred the pre- RTO model, and thirteen (81.25%) preferred the post- RTO model

Although there was overall support for the proposition that by becoming an RTO, St John SA had improved its training quality, that support was mixed with experiences that it has still produced challenges, hope and regret:

- “Actually some of the best training I have had at St John was this year. A guy ran a course from Unley. The lecturer was from Canberra. He was very good. It was very professionally run. The training we were doing was very good. The support system of handouts was excellent. It was very good but, the thing that happens is that the good trainers that might be good at a division become overwhelmed by the training expected of them. I took someone along, a young girl, so she left. She had been at the division for 10 years, quiet good but she left. She never followed up, never completed the homework..... She felt overwhelmed and left. If you were not a quick learner, the training we are running is hard. It overwhelms people. Not me, it is fine. But others walk away. Yes, the quality is getting better. Tonnes better. Than 5 or 6 years ago. But computers will be a factor in keeping volunteers. Not all volunteers can turn on a computer, operate a power point presentation. It is important. You need these skills, people expect to get this with training. I think the better trainers now are in their thirties rather than the older ones. I am retiring the end of this year. I don't know what my division will do. Divisions are struggling with member numbers. I have stayed 2 years longer for my

division to look out for another trainer. I don't know what they will do. I think my division may close temporarily. Personalities are part of why people leave. It is a pity..." (ID 4)

- "It is progressing in the right direction. But people delivering the courses need practical experience. All the things they (St John SA) are trying are good but impossible for volunteers to achieve. A volunteer trainer who has a full time job can't do this. It needs to be negotiable. They get cut off now. They are not valued. Quality training is being achieved at the expense of the volunteers. St John lost some very good trainers over becoming an RTO. The aging workforce is an issue. The computer literacy will discount the older volunteer. I am not computer literate. I am being told to get a new computer to get through my next officers course. A note pad and a pen are not good enough anymore. These are all issues for volunteers..." (ID 6)
- "We used to run our own train the trainer internally. It was not really recognized outside the organisation. Now the qualifications are nationally recognized so the standard needs to be there. We are audited etc so this must occur. Prior to becoming an RTO, because it was governed internally, there were a lot of political issues. Some people progressed as trainers, others did not. It was around who you were. It does not happen now. It seems fairer on individuals. The process is designed to build people up. It is not good if your face does not fit, and that used to occur. You can have a lot of letters after your name but you can not put it into practice. You can be too academic and not be able to apply it practically. Qualifications and training do compliment each other but you need to be able to apply the knowledge back. You need to be able to modify stuff to apply the training in your own way. This is where the qualifications do help, it gives you the understanding and realization of why this is so and how to do this..." (I.D 10)
- "The Training Branch yes. We have professional trainers involved now. We don't have many trainers now in my region now, but they are all of a good standard. They are professional and I get good feedback by people who come to me who have been trained by them. I know it has caused a lot of grief to have this. However, some of them have never really done any first aid,

outside of the book that they teach. This is a loss. People ask questions in training. Having first aid skills, like we get by being a volunteer in the division, this knowledge supports this. Whereas if you don't have this, I think the training might be more professional but risks being very shallow. We have this now. Very few professional trainers in my area have any connections to St John in any other way. They are paid and they train. This is the worst thing but they are doing a good job overall. Skills maintenance might help these people I think..." (ID 10)

- "Yes it has been achieved. In the divisions the training is better and more meaningful. There is still a way to go to get more quality. The culture is the biggest factor as a negative. Coming to grips with the Assessment process. I think it is challenging. A lot of trainers struggle with it. The technical side of VET would help people. I don't get a lot of time to prepare now. If I need to train new people I would struggle. Doing event duties also is an issue. I am time poor. I have done more trips to Adelaide this year than any other time in my life. It does cost money to be a volunteer. If you have multi roles like me, you have to attend lots of things. The cost of petrol and wear and tear on your car is huge. ." (I.D 15)
- "Now is better re quality I think. Trainers having qualifications and professional development do give a better trainer as an outcome." (I.D. 7)
- "Pre RTO - everything was rigid and lots of people did not like that. People were scared to do training. Post RTO – now students, everyone really , they are more relaxed doing training. They have happier experiences. They like not having to do reef knots etc. Training is much better. I enjoy training more now. I have less pressure. Lots of people used to fail when we were rigid and that is terrible for you as a trainer. Now, passing, is very achievable. By removing the pressure things are better. You used to assess people one on one. It was very threatening. Now group assessment lifts the pressure. I feel for people who come in nervous. I have been like them in the past. I try and relax them. I fully understand them. It helps me as a trainer to identify to this person. For St John becoming an RTO is a good thing..." (I.D 16)
- "The pre RTO was better. It was better for what we teach. For an essential

practical skill I think the internal methodology training course was better than now. This is my point of view. It was very good for new trainers to get into the St John mind set. At Tafe it is very general. I was impressed by the St John internal course. I would still be a member if I was not training. I don't let it dominate my life. I enjoy St John. I have many stories. I get angry some times because the communication aspect is not good. Divisions are at the coal face. Communication does breakdown. People have left over it. Taken off the uniform... Sometimes it is personalities really. I would remain as a volunteer even if I was not training. I enjoy moving up the ranks. By and large I find the training great. We are getting called in more and more for administrative training. This is very hard on volunteers. It is far more now than what we ever used to do..." (I.D 11)

- "Qualifications are good. Training has improved over the years more to do with practical delivery rather than being an RTO. Quality Assurance has always been around. It is important for currency. It is more formal now. Trainers who are not St John members are a good change. The changes to the culture because of these people are a improvement in quality. Bringing in other people with skills outside just first aid has enhanced the culture and professionalism of the training..." (I.D 12)
- "One of the things that has happened now is trainers are encouraged to meet and talk together. Even watch each other's training. Just to see how they do it. This is a recent thing. It did not happen. I had never seen another trainer until recent times. We are all different. We have to learn from each other. Our organisation in becoming an RTO has improved the training enormously. The quality especially in my experience. My training has been better, my experiences are better now. We are teaching better now- the quality is there now for sure..." (I.D.9)
- "I saw a trainer in Adelaide last year and this made me change how I was training. She affected lots of little things I had been doing or not doing. Nothing big or major. Watching another trainer at St John has been a major way to get new ideas and different ways to do things. She asked me some things she did not know about remote first aid and together we both learned

new things. It is different treating someone when the ambulance is 10 mins away or 50 mins away. Sometimes it can be an hour and a half. So it is different. It has been good to talk to other trainers. I enjoy getting to things to talk things through with other trainers. Seminars are good. Ops run good stuff here in Adelaide. Although I know most of it, I always learn something. The liaison with other trainers is the main thing that I learn from. We asked each other what we are doing. This is a new thing bringing about quality..." (ID 13)

- "We don't really teach people any great skills anymore. They come for 1 or 2 days. They used to come for 6 weeks. They had time to go over the skills. Now it is just like an assembly line of operation. I feel (persons name) in my area is very supportive and does not necessarily disagree with my view. (Person's name) has to just go along with it. I feel St John has lost their way. We are flat out in our community and the expectations on us for training are just ridiculous..." (I.D 1)
- "I enjoy the training more now that before. I have more flexibility now with my own training. It is less military. I have an enormous range of techniques I can draw on. Previously, I had been pulled up for not saying things or showing things in an absolute way. It would be better for the learners now but the paperwork is overwhelming and a negative for volunteer training staff..." (I.D 14)
- "Now the trainers still have to meet requirements. I don't think it matters that they are not doctors or medical students as long as they can impart the knowledge. They now have all those things a trainer should have – they have got it. However, I would say, that having used the first aid knowledge is an advantage as a trainer. That is a loss from the past. The advantage I had myself is that I know you can not learn signs and symptoms by rote – you did not know what you were talking about. We don't emphasis this now. You need to recognize conditions in order to treat them. (Person's name) said look at the changes and what they mean, what are they telling you. And so in my mind, I could impart that. I am so glad the new resus has come out. We knew years ago in early times, that from our early manikins with monitors that the blood pressure would drop by the old method. We knew back then the more

compressions the better the blood pressure would be. So now we do 30 to 2. This was identified many years ago but we were not in a position to bring about change. So in a class, I could explain this from having my background and seeing the early manikins that would show blood pressure. I think for this time, given there is no opportunity for people to learn like I did this current methodology that we do is a must. I like the idea of ongoing training & self development. It is very good for your confidence. I got mine so differently. I worry about extra load on giving so many additional things trainers must do as in professional development etc. It is an extra load. The feedback sheets from the students should be enough. If one reads that, it would tell me that things were ok with the training. I think annual assessments is a little unnecessary for the trainers. I do think as time is going on we are loading up our volunteers.....”(I.D.3)

- “We are more respected in the community. We are seen as a quality provider. To keep that standard we need systems in place to remain no 1. Time is a problem. This year is a shocker. It is hard to meet all the demands. If I am available I will go. I will stop harvesting to help out if I am needed. The community don’t have commitment now. I am committed. I am content. It has cost me thousands I guess.... There seems to be a lot of work around for first aid training now. I do a lot of volunteer work for no money. It costs me money to do it but I believe in volunteering. I enjoy it. I get satisfaction from helping people. It is up to the first aider to keep people alive before the ambulance gets there. Time is an issue. I need to get 65 hours at volunteer events, 45 hours of training, I work on the ambulance as a volunteer, I run my own properties so it is a lot of commitment in time....” (I.D 5)
- “My sense is that things are not going so well. The old fashioned way is better I think. There are bits missing now. It’s hard to say. I just think there are losses in how we do the training now. ..” (I.D 2)
- “Training branch did loose a lot of volunteers over the changes. Some leaving was a good thing. But some that left I think had great things to offer. They were very valuable. The change did create this loss. My training might be coming to an end. I just can’t do the hours they want on top of duties and my

work. I think it will be ending. I feel they are trying to stop me from training. This is how I feel. I think they want permanent staff to do the courses I have done. It is all getting too much. Training will go, but I will stay on with my division. I enjoy grass roots, the companionship in my division, the duties. My job is to work to support the volunteers, I do it all. We supply a high standard of service to our community..." (I.D 8)

4.8 Looking Towards the Future

During the duration of this study, further changes that would soon impact upon the trainers involved in this study were on the horizon. The initial need to get four units from the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment was to be replaced by trainers needing the full eight units. In order to remain as a trainer for external (public) courses or to supervise volunteer training positions, individuals would need to gain the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment by June 2008. The accreditation model had been reviewed and now means trainers will need to run almost double the initial 45 hours of training a year to remain accredited from 2007. St John SA had aligned internal training to nationally recognised training units and this had meant additional training and assessment for volunteer trainers to be able to sign-off volunteers in their divisions. Trainers involved in the study had reflected back but were now considering the new changes that were impacting as the study was coming to an end. In particular they considered the issuance of national qualifications for volunteers who were not trainers, and whether they personally felt able to continue to gain further training qualifications or meet the new trainer accreditation model. It became apparent from the study that there would be further loss of volunteer trainers:

- "Time for work. Time for St John. Time is a juggle. I juggle at 2 volunteer roles myself. Qualifications are part of being current in your employment. But getting and maintaining qualifications take more time on top of that. The nature of work is changing..." (ID 12)
- "The missing ingredient now in the accreditation is the practical component. A volunteer does this for nothing. To expect volunteers to teach this many hours, attend professional development and everything else as part of meeting

quality assurance is impossible for a volunteer. It is different for professionals. It is their living. I guess the volunteers are not recognized in monetary terms and hours. In order for me to work as a volunteer I loose all the penalty rates in my job. I give this up. Double time, time and a half. I never get that money back. There is no recognition by anyone that I have to do this in order to volunteer..." (ID 6).

- "I don't want anymore qualifications. I don't want to do any more formal study..." (ID 11)
- "I think becoming an RTO has helped but heading down the track of integrating courses that also meet outcomes of other courses is good. We don't have to do that as it can attract people into the organisation. Retention is as important as recruitment. Personally I think this is good. Getting nationally recognized qualifications as a volunteer is good as it is sort of like a payment for your time. You don't look for payment but is something back for the time..." (ID 10).
- "St Johns line of insisting on standards for training has really improved training I think. But the dilemma is, it puts off people. And if you put off too many you might have good quality stuff but you don't have enough people..." (ID 4)
- "I know to continue I needed to do more training units. I would like to do that. But I am 75 now, it might take me 3 years. What would I do then? It is time for me to drop off. I am finished in my training role now. I was happy to finish. My time had come. I will finish up completely in the next 2 years. It will be time for me to finish up..." (ID 3)
- "Computers might be an issue for the future. They are for me. They are in every division now. Our computer got delivered and sat in the box for 3 months. If the division has younger people that can do it, great. But this is not the case where I am. We are stuck with it. It has been suggested we might get training with it. I hope so. Our youngest member is 17, and she got it out of the box recently. Other divisions with older members, who are also computer illiterate, are also feeling like this could be a change that will also bring loss.

It is a shame really, it is like we get too old to be useful anymore..." (I.D 8)

- "I am too old to be bothered with qualifications for volunteering. I have no desire to go on to do anything. I do not feel influenced to stay on as a volunteer. I do see it would be good for younger people. Qualifications are good for younger people. It is hard to manage internally well. I don't know it will work as an internal rolling out. It value adds on the surface. But many volunteers don't join for that. The training program does require volunteers to do training. If the qualifications are issued because of that good and well but I don't think getting homework and assignments done by our volunteers is a thing that will be well received... I guess one of the down sides of the role I have taken as trainer is I have not got as much experience at events as the training side as taken over. I did not really achieve my original motivation to join St John." (ID 15)
- "For the organisation to remain viable, people, our clients, wanted nationally recognized and portable qualifications. If we did not do this I really don't think any one would be here now. I definitely think qualifications value add to my own membership as a volunteer. Our certificates are seen as valuable. Any qualifications I can get by being a volunteer I see as a benefit to me." (I.D 16)
- "Will more training qualifications it make me a better first aid trainer? I don't want a generic training qualification. I want to teach really good first aid. It is very hard to find volunteers. Training them is an issue. Volunteers have jobs and a life at home. How do they study with us for volunteering? Most have to do this now to keep their jobs. The best training is hands on. I would not have become a volunteer myself if I had had to do assignments and study etc. I just wanted to help my community..." (ID 2)
- "There are lots of reasons why people are leaving. Our division is struggling. I don't think training is the main reason. I am still training in my division but I am no longer training the public. That is because I have done it for a long time. I'm not young. I was going over same material, often with the same people every 3 years. For myself and for those students, it was time for a change. I have been their trainer for 10 years. They would seek me out. I felt

it was time.” (I.D 4)

- “I do think you need to teach so many hours in order to keep current. I know if I had a long break, it did not flow as well. I would have to stop and think. I think if you are to set yourself up as a trainer you should do this. I do attend professional development when ever I can. I think it is important... Some of the volunteers like to get these (qualifications). They find it useful for their work. I personally don’t care. I’m not interested, I think it is pathetic. I would not be bothered at my age now if I am told I have to do study and get qualifications in order to remain a volunteer or superintendent. I’m just not interested in this. I am open to further training qualifications, but that is it. That is because it is useful for my work now. That is the only reason. I have many times where I feel like walking away. It is very political in the divisions at times. Personalities can make it awful. But I have this philosophy that often you look back on annoyance and can’t really understand what got you so upset, it passes. It usually passes. I have been involved for so long now. It has been a big part of my life since I was 21.” (ID 8)
- “The new assessor network has been useful in providing a support for each other. Technology has been a useful aspect. Email has been very good. These things have all made things better...” (ID 14)
- “The retirement age is increasing. But I enjoy the training. Now I have retired from work it gives me something to do. I accept the paper work that comes with the training now. I would like to try and complete my qualification now and get the final 4 units. I hope I can get through them but then I need a big think before 2008 when I need to get another new training qualification. But I am getting on. I will try and keep going because I love training. It will depend on my health I guess. I started late...” (I.D 13)

The future holds as much uncertainty for St John SA trainers as it has over the previous decade. Of the sixteen trainers who were involved in this study, half had finished their training role in the public course area at the conclusion of the study period. A mixture of reasons from issues relating to qualifications, accreditation hours or simply lack of time had taken more toll on this group. What became more apparent for the future was that by 2008, over 80% expected to have finished in their

training role altogether. These aspects will be discussed in the final chapter of this study – Chapter Five: Discussion and conclusion.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter examines the implications of aligning volunteer activity and training to nationally recognised qualifications and other aspects of training-related change that have become St John SA volunteer trainer reality in 2006, including the potential future impact of those changes upon volunteer trainers within St John SA.

The eight main themes to emerge from the transcripts of text (over 35,000 words) taken from interviews with St John SA volunteer trainers were identified in Chapter 4. The researcher did not offer interpretive analysis from the researcher viewpoint, as the intention had been to let the experiences be bracketed, free from overtly intellectual search for meaning or conclusion.

This chapter will discuss possible connections among the experiences. This aspect is the contextualisation of the study themes into a conceptual 'whole' around which to explore differences and meaning.

5.1 Relationships of Volunteers to Monetary Income from St John SA to Experiences of Quality Training Study

Throughout the study, the experiences of individual trainers were exposed. Most of the study participants had related aspects of experiences. What began to emerge in the light and shade of the experiences were correlations of experience that were linked to the categories of trainers within the study in relation to monetary income.

Although originally I did not consider this would impact on the experiences, it did seem to have some connection to the overall study data. Many of the study participants had many decades of training experiences as a volunteer and despite movement into external training to the public post- RTO, some of these trainers had not received income themselves from this but remained as a volunteer, donating the funds from the training back to their local division.

Six participants in the study (37.5%) had never received any monetary income themselves from providing training that derived income from the public. Ten

participants in the study (62.5%) had elected to be casually paid for the external training to the public for a range of reasons including rising personal costs such as petrol in order to continue training. Secure employment as a paid trainer by St John SA as the primary income source had also been a factor for 43.75% of the study participants that were receiving payment. All the study participants received no income for any training they delivered back to their divisions including attendance at operational professional development, inductions and skills assessment training.

When the above was factored into the trainer experiences, contrasts appeared linked to this reality.

In the group of six (37.5%) of participants who had never received payment for any training they had delivered, five (83.3%) had finished training by the end of this study. All had given age, trainer accreditation process or lack of time the reasons for finishing up as the trainer. Two of the three trainers who felt that the pre- RTO model supported better training quality came from this group.

The consideration of income does not negate the experiences of this group. Rather, it creates a point of separation of the absolute volunteer versus the partial volunteer that participated within the study. This aspect is important, as the trainers who were deriving income will have had some aspect of personal cost and loss negated, in addition to the fact they would have been exposed to more professional immersion into the movement towards VET and the new training qualification. It is also important to discuss this aspect as the findings are contrasted within other volunteer studies. The trainers who have moved to receiving income for the external courses delivered have to meet trainer requirements for both volunteer trainers and paid trainers which have different requirements in order to remain accredited. From this aspect this group has very high requirements on their available volunteer time. However, for those volunteers in the first category (unpaid for training to the public) they often are also juggling paid work and volunteer demands:

- “I started as a volunteer trainer and helped out at my division and another division. Back then we would teach and our division would get a small commission for our work which would support the activities of the division. But then St John changed this system and I could no longer volunteer as a trainer for another division and expect any commission to support my own

division. Then the other division closed down. Occasionally after then St John might meet my travelling expenses but the costs involved in being a volunteer trainer really starting to bite so I asked about becoming a paid trainer because it was costing me a lot of money. The only reason I became involved as a paid trainer in the end is that the system changed and they could no longer pay any expenses like my petrol..." (I.D 13)

Throughout the study, two cultures emerged through the experiences within St John SA.: the culture of the operational volunteer and the culture of the professional paid trainer. The formal structures of St John SA were also referred to differently: training branch and operations or ops. In this respect the experiences reflected both two cultures and two structures:

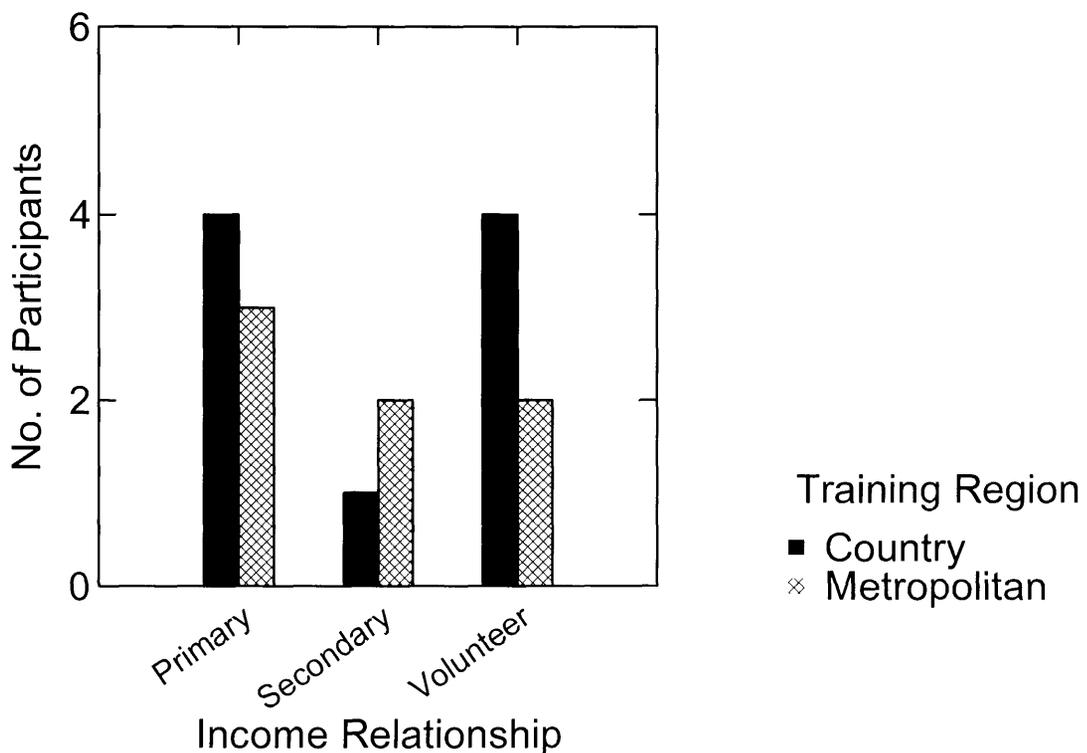
- "Very few professional trainers in my area have any connections to St John in any other way. They are paid and they train..." (I.D 8)
- "The volunteer load on top of working for the organisation teaching first aid is huge. You have to be incredibly dedicated. It leaves no time for anything else" (I.D 16)
- "All the things they are trying are good but impossible for volunteers to achieve. A volunteer trainer who has a full time job can't do this. It needs to be negotiable. They get cut off now. They are not valued..." (I.D 6)
- "I think Superintendent or officers now need something in current times. What we used to do years ago is somewhat outdated. It has never been upgraded. I think as a manager, and we are managers at our division even though we are volunteers, the training needs to be improved....Teaching to the public is easier. Your division members know you. They are quiet critical. They sometimes think they know more than you"... (I.D 9)
- "Training techniques have improved. Trainers used to be senior officers. Now trainers don't necessarily have the practical skills now at events. The majority of the trainers now are not all involved. Trainers who are not St John members are a good change. The changes to the culture because of these people are an improvement in quality. Bringing in other people with skills outside just first aid has enhanced the culture and professionalism of the

training ... The techniques and professional development we are getting as paid trainers is feeding back into the internal training at divisions. That is a positive. Internally we are still behind the paid external training side..." (ID 12)

In considering the twin cultures (paid versus volunteer) and twin structures (operational versus external training), the study participants experiences were more often aligned to the culture or structure they felt the most allegiance to. However, overwhelmingly the collective group of participants did believe that training had improved post- RTO but it had been at the expense of the St John SA volunteer.

Figure 8 depicts whether income derived from St John SA is the primary or a secondary form of income, or whether the trainer is a volunteer. Secondary source of income means that St John SA is a supplementary income as participant is employed by another employer. A volunteer receives no income for the training work provided.

Figure 8: Income Relationship of participants in regards to payment received by offering training to the public (by training region).



5.2 Components of Quality Training Pre- RTO

All of the study participants were working as trainers prior to St John SA becoming an RTO. As a volunteer, the average time of this study group spent volunteering at St John SA was in excess of 31 years. This fact gave the participant group many years pre- RTO and several post- RTO to explore aspects of training quality. The training which had been internally developed pre- RTO did appear to have two particular perceived strengths, which were discussed by several of the study participants. The work within the ambulance service (prior to this becoming a government run service in 1989) provided a very useful training ground in first-aid skill management.

However, because the current operational first-aid volunteers also access many events and duties in which first aid treatments are required, it would appear that the ability to have relevant and practical skills in which to complement the first-aid training role were still obtainable throughout the entire study period. From the participant perspective, the pre- RTO arrangement did provide more capacity to get and keep better first-aid skills. The second component of strength pre- RTO was that the internalised trainer accreditation course did give members a contextualised induction into St John SA culture and specific first-aid training skills. This was seen by some participants as a positive aspect that did give them a sense that the pre RTO model produced better quality training. The pre- RTO model had courses that ran in a different course format, were more prescriptive in teaching methodology and were assessed at the conclusion of what could be many weeks of training and course material. For some of the study participants this model produced better quality training regarding perceived retention of first aid knowledge of the participants. In addition, the first-aid skills had more technical aspects of bandaging, longer term casualty care, child birth and more in-depth knowledge on body systems and function. For some trainers, these aspects produced a better outcome regarding quality training:

- “Quality training comes from a person that has experience in what they are training. That includes death, serious injury, fractures etc. As an ambulance officer I got to treat lots of things so teaching it was enhanced for this. I knew my stuff. When you don’t have this, like many trainers now, I wonder how they can teach well. What experiences can they draw on ? How does the

theory from the book apply to real life? I really question this stuff. I wonder about that. If you read it from a book it does not always run like that in real life. That is proven by people who I have taught that come back and said what you taught me and the examples you gave were really helpful. They need quality training through practical skills and application. You need clear steps.” (I.D 2)

Not all participants shared these views. The loss of the skills from the ambulance service also correlate to the inclusion of training staff at St John SA who were not volunteers and who were not involved in volunteer first-aid duties. The known aspect of quality pre- RTO was that all St John SA members were volunteers in addition to being trainers, and this is not the case post- RTO. The internal training program was mentioned by other trainers as problematic and very political. Some participants preferred the post- RTO model where the capacity to get the national training qualification appeared to offer a less ‘clicky’ organisation:

- “Prior to becoming an RTO, because it was governed internally, there were a lot of political issues. Some people progressed as trainers, others did not. It was around who you were. It does not happen now. It seems fairer on individuals. The process is designed to build people up. It is not good if your face does not fit, and that used to occur” (I.D 10)

5.3 Missing Components to Achieve Quality Training Post- RTO

The volunteers interviewed for this study provided a consistent message that using professional trainers who had no other connections to the organisation, as volunteers, was a major weakness of the current model. This perspective was based upon the significant other training and skills development that the volunteer trainers were involved in order to enhance their capacity to offer reliable responses to questions that arose in the first-aid classroom. There was a collective view that a reliable base of information to support learner questions, in particular the experience of remote first-aid or waiting for a period of longer than 15 minutes for an ambulance, was not currently available for the paid trainers within first-aid books:

- “..the current training is assuming lots of things. Now you need to know how

to deal with things in a scenario that they might not necessarily have been taught. Not always do they do slings in courses to the stage they can know the skill. The weaker people who are new are not given any more than those who know the stuff so they get swept along not really knowing the skills....” (I.D 2)

- “I find trainers without the hands on experience are not able to relate the teaching to the real world. Resuscitation on a real person is not like it is on the light weight manikins. I worry some trainers don’t even know this themselves. They have never worked on a real person...” (I.D 14)
- “...However, some of them (trainers) have never really done any first aid, outside of the book that they teach. This is a loss. People ask questions in training. Having first aid skills, like we get by being a volunteer in the division, this knowledge supports this. Where as if you don’t have this, I think the training might be more professional but risks being very shallow. We have this now. Very few professional trainers in my area have any connections to St John in any other way. They are paid and they train. This is the worst thing (post RTO) but they are doing a good job overall. Skills maintenance might help these people I think...” (I.D 8)
- “I work with people who are not getting the practical experience and they are scared of the next real life job...” (I.D 5)
- “Some skills you really need to know, beyond senior first aid level. Oxygen and stuff. You need to be sure people know it so smaller groups is better, the way we used to do it. Your instruction needs to be step by step and stage by stage. We don’t do that now...” (I.D 11)

The issue of practical experience being a significant issue for volunteers was suggested in the study with *Fire and Emergency Service Organisations in Small and Remote Australian Towns* (Hayes et al., 2004). Volunteers do value hands on and practical experience as a critical way to enhance their functional role. The study within the Fire and Emergency Service Organisations did have numerous similarities with respect to key issues, particularly that “the ‘range of educational skills, aging volunteer profile and experience versus formal learning are producing challenges in

the National Training system” (Hayes et al., 2004:10). This study had also found that the movement toward accredited training and more formal assessments had put people off being involved. As this study does indicate that trainer accreditation may be contributing towards a decline in trainer numbers, St John SA may need to review and refine this aspect in the future to limit the impact of this on trainer numbers and willingness to undertake this critical role.

5.4 Volunteer Qualifications and Time

This study produced strong support for the proposition that the movement of volunteer trainers towards training qualifications and the training role had increased and impacted upon time that they had to volunteer themselves. Not all trainers had valued the qualifications they had been asked to get in order to train. This raises some interesting ground in which to explore the influence of trainers on others within the post- RTO model that supports nationally recognised qualifications. The connections of culture and training were suggested in previous studies by Henry and Hughes in 2003, and Simons and Harris in 2006. The volunteer culture of St John SA does appear to have difficulties in relating the relevance of VET to the unpaid training role.

The group explored the movement of nationally recognised qualifications being issued to volunteer members. This study group had a binary split of the individual perceived value of this. Eight of the sixteen valued any qualifications they might receive through their volunteering role whereas the other eight were not interested in any issuance of these qualifications at all. Of the first group of eight that would be interested in nationally recognised qualifications for their volunteering work, less than a quarter were prepared to do any additional study or workshop attendance to receive the units. This first group believed the issuance of qualifications should be as a result of the volunteering work they undertook, not an additional requirement on their time.

In the second group that stated clearly that they were not interested in any nationally recognised qualifications, many added that if this became an additional requirement of them as a volunteer they would cease their involvement as a volunteer member. More than half of this second group had only completed the minimum requirement of the Certificate IV training qualification. This does pose a cautionary message to the organisation that perhaps this aspect needs to be an optional aspect of volunteering and reward, rather than additional work or time requirement resulting in this issue.

There is a collective view of this study group that the new training qualification (TAA04) has no relevance to workplace training and assessment within the job roles undertaken by volunteer trainers. There is very strong resistance to most of the study group attempting this qualification, including those that derive primary income from training as their paid job. The new qualification that requires a technological prerequisite of connected internet service and skills in using a computer have been viewed as a strong deterrent to continuance with the organisation within a training role. There was a suggestion that many face difficulty in working within the VET environment regarding assessment practice and requirements to meet RTO guidelines.

The St John SA study data produces further information that underpins volunteer motivation within the VET sector. Although it suggests that volunteers do value the issuance of nationally recognised qualifications, it also offers the suggestion that this is conditional to it being aligned as an outcome of the work that is offered already as a volunteer, not as an additional load:

- “It value adds on the surface. But many volunteers don’t join for that. The training program does require volunteers to do training. If the qualifications are issued because of that good and well but I don’t think getting homework and assignments done by our volunteers is a thing that will be well received...” (*ID 15*)
- “I personally like to go for qualifications if they make me better at what I am doing. But there is resistance to that. It will take time to do this. A lot of people just want to do it (the volunteer duty) and get out. I picked up on this a few weeks ago...” (*I.D 5*)
- “We are getting called in more and more for administrative training. This is very hard on volunteers. It is far more now than what we ever used to do...” (*I.D 11*)

Other volunteer studies explored at the commencement of this research also found that time for travel to training or time to undertake additional training was a negative of training for volunteers (Hayes et al., 2004; Hopkins, 2000). The need to review the frequency and location of training may assist the future impact on volunteers of undertaking training accreditation. As a smaller portion of Australia’s population are

volunteering, and the hours they are doing are increasing (Zappala, 2000) it indicates that to limit the unnecessary travel where possible, and the frequency of training may be required in the future.

5.5 Impacts for the Future of Training with an Ageing Workforce and New Technologies

The youngest person that was a research participant within this study was 50 years old and the oldest was 74 (as at 2005). This group would be categorised as a mature workforce by statistical standards, nine of the sixteen being over 60 years old which was the perceived traditional retirement age for the participants. The collective organisational knowledge and commitment as a group of volunteers is high when compared to current statistical data being produced on volunteer demographic in 2007. This group discussed the many changes that they had seen as volunteers. When they considered the future, not all trainers perceived the movement into technology as a positive one. This aspect may be aligned largely to the generational dynamic of the study group and their acceptance or otherwise of computers and technology generally. Half the group had no experience with the internet or email as a communication tool (as at 2005). The same group did not own a computer at home. As St John SA had moved towards e-learning, web based storage of organisational policies, training manuals and communication, this group found the future looked grim and very threatening for them. For others in this study, the use of the same technology had been seen to improve communication, especially for trainers. This group, not surprisingly, did have a connected internet provider and computer at home. The reality of trainers within this study not being comfortable with technology appeared to have the potential to cause further attrition on this group of volunteers or members they volunteered with. The use of technology by St John SA appeared to be impacting upon the self esteem of volunteers, particularly with respect to their perceived value in the organisation. Many made comments that they felt no longer useful as a volunteer:

- “Computers might be an issue for the future. They are for me. They are in every division now. Our computer got delivered and sat in the box for 3

months. If the division has younger people that can do it, great. But this is not the case where I am. We are stuck with it. It has been suggested we might get training with it. I hope so. Our youngest member is 17, and she got it out of the box recently. Other divisions with older members, who are also computer illiterate, are also feeling like this could be a change that will also bring loss. It is a shame really, it is like we get too old to be useful anymore..." (I.D 8)

- "But computers will be a factor in keeping volunteers. Not all volunteers can turn on a computer, operate a power point. It is important. You need these skills, people expect to get this with training..." (I.D 4)
- "The aging workforce is an issue. The computer literacy will discount the older volunteer. I am not computer literate. I am being told to get a new computer to get through my next officers course. A note pad and a pen are not good enough anymore. These are all issues for volunteers..." (I.D 6)

These experiences were contrasted by:

- "The new assessor network has been useful in providing a support for each other. Technology has been a useful aspect. Email has been very good. These things have all made things better..." (I.D 14)

The introduction and the increase of new technologies are a reality now for all organisations involved in training. There appears a need to soften this impact on the existing volunteer workforce by doing more facilitation around the introduction of technology. Clear communication of the support to be offered, including optional computer training at their division, would assist volunteers who are fearful and unskilled in this area.

5.6 Gains from Becoming an RTO

There was a strong indication from the participants in this study that training quality overall had improved since St John SA became an RTO.

The group that believed that there had been gains from becoming an RTO discussed various aspects, including:

Pre RTO trainers had left or did not get qualifications to continue to train had been unsuitable to train members.

Professional trainers who had been employed by St John SA had improved the culture of the pre RTO organisation as they came in with broader life experience, training experience and new ideas.

Trainers having training qualifications had allowed for more standardised training to be delivered.

The movement of St John SA away from fixed longer courses to shorter scenario based teaching had improved trainer and learner satisfaction of training and assessment.

Trainers are allowed to use their own teaching methodology now.

Lecture is used far less as a teaching method.

Training support materials such as PowerPoint, overheads and training manuals are of higher quality.

The professional development for trainers enhances trainer's skills and knowledge.

The use of internet based communication and the e-learning site allows trainers to communicate to each other.

The organisational practice of allowing trainers to watch other trainers as a teaching tool had given trainers more ideas and approaches to try in their own classes.

The current trainers appear to be more open to change and obtaining training qualifications:

- “I think I have seen that trainers that are not dedicated to training have left the system. If they are open to getting help, PD and are more willing to get guidance they have become better. Quality is starting to happen...” (I.D 15)

5.7 Retention and Trainers

The group that had been originally offered participation in this study totalled 76

trainers. These 76 trainers met the study scoping data of being involved as a trainer pre- RTO and in the years up to 2005. This group had obtained the required training qualification and met the St John SA training accreditation model. At the completion of this study, the original 76 trainers were checked against the database to measure whether they were still the designated trainer and continued to meet the 2006 model of trainer accreditation. As shown in Table 1, there had been a marked change in profile from 2005 to 2007. The number of ‘preferred trainers’ (trainers – including volunteers – who train both St John Sa personnel and members of the public) had fallen from 76 to 42, with a further four indicating their intention to leave the organisation by 2008. two trainers were now only training the public (‘Preferred Trainers Only’) and fourteen were now volunteers only training other volunteer trainers (‘Divisional Only Trainers’). Ten of the 2005 cohort were now ‘Members Only’ (that is, volunteers who are members of St John SA but who no longer provide training) and eight had left the organisation altogether.

Table 1: Change in classification of initial survey participants (study group qualifiers)

Training Classification	2005	2007
Preferred Trainers	76	42
Preferred Trainers Only		2
Divisional Only Trainers		14
Members Only		10
Left St John		8
Total Survey Participants	76	76

With respect to the sixteen people who participated in this study, by 2007 half were no longer training to the public due to the changes of needing additional training qualifications, additional delivery hours as a volunteer trainer, and/or additional time requirements in order to attend specified training. By 2008, this group of sixteen volunteer trainers was to be further reduced to three, due to changes in accreditation requirements, attainment of the new Training and Assessment qualification, or old age had meant retirement would occur. These statistics are concerning, given that in

many cases, the replacement trainer in the division had not been identified or existing divisional members said they were not willing to undertake this role.

5.8 Accreditation and Trainers

The previous discussion point suggests that the current (c2007) accreditation model for trainers is impacting negatively in at least some ways upon volunteer trainers within their divisions. The additional requirement of these members to attain training qualifications and assessment appear to be issues that need further research in order to attain a comprehensive understanding of impact, not only on St John SA but on volunteer trainers generally. The RTO model is seeking to achieve a quality outcome that meets AQTF standards for assessment, training supervision and issuance of nationally recognised training. This model does appear to have sensitivities around it based on the participant responses in this study.

5.9 Study Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore questions such as:

How do St John SA volunteer trainers identify with training as a vocation?

What do St John SA volunteer trainers perceive to be quality training?

What components create a quality training experience and what detracts from it?

How does the current training agenda affect volunteer trainer perceptions around identity of self, a member, and a trainer?

Do volunteer trainers believe that nationally recognised qualifications value-add to their membership at St John Ambulance SA?

Are there potential links between early experiences with learning and training and the way St John volunteer trainers have adjusted to performing as a St John SA trainer?

Do volunteer trainers perceive the training at St John SA now to represent 'quality'?

This study suggests that the St John SA trainers do not all identify with training as a

vocation. When asked this question as part of the interview, many identified as a volunteer who provided training as part of this role. Others identified more strongly as the trainer, in particular those who were deriving payment for the training being offered to the public. There is evidence that the movement out of training of the public arena, no longer being listed as the divisional trainer or having left the organisation as a volunteer may indicate that there is not significant identification with the role of trainer. Numerous St John SA trainers had talked of negative experiences of skills recognition, no change to practice as a result of obtaining training qualifications, and a lack of relevance of generic training qualifications in order to undertake their volunteer training role. This group did have participants who, despite having completed other vocational qualifications, had not completed their training qualification. There had been resistance to attendance at professional development and the meeting of trainer accreditation criteria, and this had resulted in many leaving the position as trainer. The perceived lack of relevance of VET to the role of first aid trainer was a common feeling expressed by participants, and may be linked to experiences of movement towards changes that occurred when St John SA became an RTO. These changes included changes to assessment practice, course delivery style, course content, and new trainer requirements. These experiences were contrasted with participants who had turned their volunteer role into their main income source as an employed public trainer. These trainers had a stronger identification to training as a vocation, believing that the additional support and professional development that had been offered to them had made a significant difference to their perception and experiences of training within the RTO.

The study produced strong indications of what quality training was perceived to be by volunteer trainers. The strength of the relationship between the learner and the trainer was seen to be of major importance, as was the possession of 'real life' experience in the areas addressed by the teaching material. These aspects are also mentioned in numerous other studies that discuss quality training and learning, such as the study of volunteer use in Tourism by Jago and Deery (2002). In this study volunteers and paid staff had quite different views about what constituted quality service, with volunteers relating more to their 'passion' for the role, whereas paid staff related more to notions of 'professionalism'. The St John SA study found a similar situation existing.

The single major contributing factor to quality training, and conversely the major

inhibiting factor if absent, emerged as current and successful practical knowledge and skill in the relevant content area. This was seen to be essential in order to be seen as credible and professional as a first aid trainer.

An interesting aspect of this study was that many of the participants had self identified as having low self esteem or shy dispositions as younger members. They had seen training as a way to develop themselves personally and professionally in a highly supportive environment. The current training agenda does appear to have impacted on trainer's individual sense of self and perceptions of worth as a member within St John SA. Poor communication and annual changes to training accreditation were cited and appear to be affecting volunteer involvement in future training roles. For a large majority, this change appears to be invoking further attrition of volunteers from St John SA, not just from within the training role of the organisation. Many of the study participants indicated that they felt powerless and not able to inform through any identifiable channel, what impact the changes to training were having on them. This perceived lack of power has been suggested in other studies of VET staff (Harris et al., 2005). Organisations do expect a high level of capability of volunteers (Hopkins, 2000), with the delicate balance of valuing the volunteers and the need to train volunteers emerging as real challenges for volunteer organisations including St John SA. This study identified that many trainers were reconsidering their volunteer role as they were no longer feeling good about themselves or the perceived 'lack of appreciation' by St John SA. A key to retention in the future may be to explore regular positive volunteer trainer feedback as a way to sustain the difficulties faced by volunteer trainers. Training may need to explore team building exercises in addition to practical training if volunteers are to remain motivated to continue.

The study revealed a mixed response to the use of nationally recognised qualifications for volunteer training at a time when the movement towards nationally recognised qualifications is on the increase within St John SA. Some members allegedly intend to resign if this becomes a mandatory issue requiring any additional work or assignment completion on their part.

The study identified indications that for some volunteer trainers at least, assignment tasks and exposure to TAFE and other adult education providers had been predominantly viewed as a negative. Some of this negativity appeared to be linked to

the volunteers prior learning experiences, particularly at school. The increasing gap between the skills and training environment required of workplace trainer and professional trainer also appears to be a significant contributing factor. This was supported by the 2007 Training and Assessment (TAA) qualification review that noted that skill sets needed to complete and fully understand the current Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA04). There continues to be ongoing discussion around the skill sets for two common roles, enterprise or workplace trainer and workplace/enterprise trainers working under supervision arrangements within an RTO (IBSA, 2007:18). The difficulty for many within this study is that any changes will be too late to reverse those leaving these roles over the next 12 months.

The majority of the study participants believed that St John SA was now producing better outcomes around quality than the pre- RTO model. These trainers believed that new formats in course delivery and group assessments had significantly improved the teaching and learning experience.

The statistics highlighted in Table 1, however, reveal a significant change in volunteer trainer numbers and the subsequent roles of those who previously were volunteers since the commencement of this study in 2005. The study also produced data that suggests that the organisation will continue to lose volunteer members in the near future at least.

The emergence of two structures and cultures suggests that there are potential future conflicts that will impact on volunteer numbers and roles, especially for those who undertake the volunteer training role. These conflicts include time and additional qualifications and professional development attendance over and above that of the volunteer member. The full training qualification is seen by some as a major deterrent to identification of future volunteers who will undertake the trainer role. In particular the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is seen as a much more threatening and unachievable qualification for those in this study group. Other research does indicate it is possible for a number of different organisational structures to co-exist side-by-side (CURVE, 2006), however care in any restructuring process needs to be done well. Structural change may not transform or enhance the performance of the organisation, but rather the consideration of innovation may assist the organisation to meet future competitive training markets. Innovation in the future may be the key to

providing a quality training service to volunteer members outside the existing model.

The study produced clear evidence that not all volunteers, including those who train others, want nationally recognised qualifications for volunteer activity. This is a significant finding because of its potential substantial impact on volunteer numbers. The consideration of optional tasks and assessments by the RTO for volunteers who value this part of what the organisation offers may be a solution to what some view as a major negative within their volunteer member role, a suggestion also debated in other studies (Cox, 2000; Metzger, 2003).

The aging volunteer and increased use of technology contributes to perceptions of an increasingly threatening environment, and contributes to a reconsideration by several volunteers regarding the future of their volunteer role. Although new technologies are a reality for most organisations, support and training for these older volunteers would appear to be necessary and may assist in retaining them longer. Alternatively the volunteers who do not want to have technology as part of their role, need consideration by St John SA as to how these volunteers can still be utilised in a mutually rewarding capacity. The use of technology was also identified as a major emerging issue in the recent literature review by Mitchell et al. (2006a). It suggests that technology may potentially have a significant impact on the nature of future training in VET. This study suggests new skills and resources will be required to use information and communication technologies (ICT). As Mitchell et al., 2006a:16 suggest, new VET practitioner skills and capabilities are needed in order to cope with rapid changes globally in VET.: “The increased use of ICT presents a raft of challenges for VET providers, no least in terms of the changing human resources required. Specialist staff including course ware designers, call centre, multimedia, animation and technical staff will be needed in addition to teachers and trainers”.

The group of study participants did not support existing literature that suggests volunteers often volunteer in a role in which they are already skilled and employed. (Trewin, 1996). Within the St John SA group, less than 20% were employed in first-aid or education at the time of becoming a volunteer. The overwhelming motivation to become involved initially had been through a known person already involved in the organisation, supported by a strong desire to help those in their community. Volunteer activity to enhance career function was found to be the lowest motivational factor

(Clary et al., 1996). This study did not reveal any clear or significant link to career motivations to become a volunteer. Nevertheless, it did reveal that once they had joined St John SA, many volunteers had been able to use their volunteer learning to enhance their capacity to find a career in training at St John SA. This finding is in some conflict with the findings of many of the studies reported in Chapter 2. Several participants had become involved in paid training as a result of organisational changes to volunteer training activity which had in turn created a career and income with no direct or intended motivation by the trainers to do so. Many participants were remote and located in the country and the St John SA service of first-aid was seen as an essential service. With a decreasing number of current volunteers being identified in the community (Zappala, 2000), the existing volunteer workforce at St John SA confirmed stress and time implications upon their home and career lives that was increasing and of concern. This is supported by other recent studies (Hayes et al, 2004; Hopkins 2000; Metzger, 2003; Gaston & Alexander, 2001; Mitchell, 2005). There was some suggestion by those in this study that the RTO model produced significantly more administration and assessment requirements which were becoming overwhelming for at least some volunteer trainers. There was a suggestion that the compulsory requirement to attend training in Adelaide was a huge drain on finances and time for volunteers. This is a contrasting model to the pre- RTO practice of training sessions being delivered around the state on pre-set dates. For many in this study, this aspect had been contributory towards leaving training as a volunteer role. This study also does offer preliminary data to support involving volunteers in policy and decision making aspects of training in the future. Volunteering Australia, in the 2006 survey of volunteering issues, did identify that volunteers do want participation in decisions that affect them and their work as a significant issue. (Volunteering Australia, 2006:4)

This study concludes with further questions that could be undertaken by research in the future. These questions include studies that use a study group of St John SA volunteers, outside of trainers as a specific group, on training needs and support for their current role. In addition further studies of similar questions could be done within other volunteer organisations that are operating as an RTO, to contrast or build upon this study. As the VET sector reviews AQTF and training qualifications in pursuit of training quality, this study offers new data that informs the reader of impacts,

complexities and challenges for RTOs, particularly those with volunteers, in the quest of 'quality training'.

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7 APPENDIX

1. Invitation to participate in project
2. Survey tool sent to trainers (sample)
3. Letter of support for project by CEO of ST John Ambulance
4. UNE ethics approval documentation

Appendix 7

7.1

Invitation to participate in the project



School of Professional Development and Leadership

Armidale NSW 2351 Australia

Telephone (02) 6773 2581 Facsimile (02) 6773 3363

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Masters student research within St John Ambulance SA

Information to Participants – St John Trainers.

Karen Henry, a University of New England Master of Education student, is undertaking a research project during 2005/2006. You have been selected to consider being involved as a voluntary and willing participant to explore your experiences of 'Quality Training' pre and post 2000.

Karen Henry is supervised by the University of New England and is interested in undertaking the project to contribute to examination of the St John trainer's experience. Although Karen Henry is an employee of St John as a Training Officer, this project is not funded nor influenced or reportable back to any management personnel or staff of State Office. This project is being supervised by UNE staff: Professor Rob Gerber (rgerber2@pobox.une.edu.au) and Professor Larry Smith (lsmith35@pobox.une.edu.au).

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England HREC approval number is: HE05/215 valid to 23/12/2006

Your participation can involve survey completion, telephone or face to face interviews (which will be recorded and then transcribed). *Your participation and identity throughout the project is confidential.* All records are kept off site and the property of Karen Henry to be destroyed once the project is complete.

The elements of discussion within this research proposal will be based around ideas of:

- Exploration of how you identify with training as a vocation.
- Exploration of how you perceive quality training, what does quality training look like to you.
- Exploration of what components create a quality training experience and what detracts from it.
- Reflection on do Nationally recognised qualifications value add to your membership at St John Ambulance SA.
- Exploration of what other external factors contribute to quality training that are not related to the National Training framework.

- Exploration of how has the current training agenda made you feel as a trainer at St John around identity of self, a member, and a trainer.
- Reflection on potential links between any early experiences with learning and training that may have contributed to the way you have adjusted to performing as a St John trainer since 2001 onwards.
- Reflection on whether training is perceived now as producing quality.

There is no payment for your role as a research participant in any part of the project. Should you wish to discuss the project further, please contact:

Karen Henry

0438822908 Mobile.

Po Box 3083 Unley SA 5061

Please note this address is current as opposed to the address on the letter signed by Peter Gill at the commencement of 2005.

At any time during the project should you feel you need support the St John Peer Support group or your local health centre can put you in contact with someone to talk about any issues that may arise through participation in the project. Should you reconsider your position as a participant you can withdraw at any time through advising Karen Henry in writing that this is the case.

The project research and survey material is scheduled to be completed by December 2006. You will automatically be provided with a copy of the finished project if you participate in the research as an interviewed participant.

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the research ethics officer at the following address:

Research services

University of New England

Armidale, NSW. 2351

Tel: (02) 67733449 Fax: (02) 67733543

Email: Ethics@pobox.une.edu.au

Should you wish to be involved in this project please sign the attached form and return it in the SAE with your signature to commence being contacted in the future.

Please consider and return the enclosed form and survey to commence the project.



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Masters student research within St John Ambulance SA 2005/2006

Permission from Participants – St John Trainers to be involved in the project as a participant.

Your name:

Your phone numbers:
Home

Mobile

Email address:

Your details Please complete information on reverse of this form.

I hereby consent to being involved as a volunteer research participant in the research project

“Perceptions of quality training: reflections of traditional volunteers as trainers pre- and post registered training organisation accreditation at St John Ambulance SA”

I have read the information sheet and would like to be involved. I understand that participant selection in the project will occur once I have given my consent.

Participants will be then selected considering geographical, gender and age to give the project representation in all these aspects. I also understand that interviews during this project may be taped by the researcher, and I give my approval for that to occur providing the tapes are destroyed along with and at the same time as other records of interviews.

Your signature:Date:

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7.2

Survey tool sent to trainers (sample)



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Trainer Participant Survey:

How long have you been a volunteer at St John Ambulance SA ?

When did you become involved in training in any form at St John Ambulance SA ?

In what region are you living? (Metro or Country)

Are you male or female?

What age did you finish secondary school ?

Have you undertaken any training outside of being a trainer at St John ?
.....
.....
.....

What is your current role at St John as a volunteer?
.....

Are you involved as a volunteer in any other community service organisation ? If so,
which organisations are these, what is your role ?
.....
.....
.....

You have experiences around quality of training pre and post 2000 that you would
like to share and explore with the researcher ? [] Yes [] No

Many Thanks for your time in completing this survey.

Karen Henry

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7.3

Letter of support for project by CEO of St John Ambulance Aust SA Inc



St John Ambulance Australia



To: Karen Henry

From: Peter Gill

Subject: Research Proposal

I am very pleased to support your research [proposal relating to St John volunteers involved as trainers and quality training issues. This includes use of the database to obtain trainer information.

I expect that the results will not only benefit St John in SA but the other States and Territories.

It is note that in the ACOSS 1996 report the views of the volunteers were not considered in relation to ongoing training.

In particular I will be interested to see the results in relation to how volunteers perceive quality training, if they see nationally recognised training adding value to their membership and if they see training producing a quality product.

Good luck – I look forward to reading the report at the conclusion of the project.



Peter Gill
Chief Executive
30 November 04

Appendix 7

7.4

UNE ethics approval documentation

Karen E. Henry

From: Belinda Ackling [backling@une.edu.au]
Sent: Friday, 23 December 2005 10:33 AM
To: 'Larry Smith'; rgerber2@une.edu.au; Karen E. Henry
Subject: Ethics Approval

Dear Prof L Smith, A/Prof Rob Gerber and Ms K Henry

HREC has given approval for the following.

What are the lived experiences of St John volunteers involved as trainers around quality training?

Your HREC approval number is: HE05/215 valid to 23/12/2006

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years.

For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Renewal/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: http://rs-nt-10.une.edu.au/Home/V_2_1/ecforms.html

The NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.

Best Wishes,
Belinda

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Belinda Ackling  
Acting Research Ethics Officer  
Researcher Services  
University of New England  
Armidale NSW 2351  
Ph: 02 6773 3449  
Fax: 02 6773 3543  
Email: [Ethics@une.edu.au](mailto:Ethics@une.edu.au)