

# The Farm Apprenticeship Scheme in Australia: How Different Groups Look at it

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## ABSTRACT

*The reasons for the traditional position of Australian farmers against sending their sons to agricultural colleges are analyzed. This situation was changed partially when a farm apprenticeship scheme was introduced in the State of Victoria. Structured interviews with apprentices, their employers, other young farm workers and their employers who had not joined the scheme clarified their motives for joining or not joining. Opinions of apprentices, their employers and instructors, as well as those of policy makers showed different attitudes towards the training in management skills.*

## INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the controversy which accompanied the establishment of farm apprenticeship in Australia (and still does) as a major vocational-agricultural training scheme, it is necessary to give first some background on the typical features of farm apprenticeship, on the one hand, and on the history of agricultural education in Australia, on the other hand.

## THE NOTION OF FARM APPRENTICESHIP

Vocational education in agriculture can be divided into three major types, each of which consists of different forms:

(a) *Vocational agriculture in high schools.*

Vocational agriculture is offered in the formal and compulsory education system, either as subject or stream in comprehensive high schools (e.g., in the USA) or in special secondary agricultural high schools (e.g., in the Netherlands). In both these cases, agricultural education is part of a wider, liberal education program. Agricultural secondary schools can have a school farm

for practical training purposes (e.g., in Israel) or students are expected to have a rural background and to work on the parental farm (e.g., in the Netherlands). In few cases, agriculture is offered even in elementary schools, but there it tends to be rather with non-vocational objectives in mind (Blum, 1985).

(b) *Post-secondary agricultural schools and colleges.* In many countries, vocational-agricultural education is postponed to the post-secondary or tertiary level, the notion being that vocational education should come only after youngsters have left the formal secondary school system. In most cases it is assumed, that students had already practical experience in farming. More often than not, these schools have a dormitory and a school farm (Tajima, 1985).

(c) *Apprenticeship.* The idea of formal apprenticeship is an old European tradition, stemming from the Middle Ages, when people employed in the trades were organized in guilds and masters taught apprentices all they knew. In today's schemes, apprentices work under a contract which defines their

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working conditions and duties, but also the obligations of the master. These include arrangements for the release of the apprentice for specified times to attend a vocational school to receive more theoretical instruction and, if qualified, an official certification. The apprentice system was brought from Europe also to other countries, e.g., to Australia, where it is recognized as the major source for training skilled workers.

Though much more common in non-agricultural trades, most Western European countries have developed farm apprenticeship schemes, e.g., the United Kingdom (Hodgkiss, 1984, & Jones, & Peabody, 1979), Ireland (Harty, 1978), The Netherlands (LSLL, n.d.), Germany (Ausbildungsberufe im Agrarbereich, 1982), Denmark (Kristensen, 1979), France (Reboul, 1981), and Switzerland (SLV Pruefungsziele, 1984). Similar schemes exist in other parts of the world, especially in the Commonwealth, e.g. the farm cadet scheme in New Zealand (Moss, 1972) and the Green Certificate in Canada (Stinson, 1982).

### ***Apprentices in Australia***

With a mean intake of 38,000 new apprentices each year, the apprenticeship scheme is numerically comparable to the university and advanced education system (Karmel, 1979). It is widely recognized as the major source of skilled workers in Australia. The apprentice and the employer(s) enter an indenture contract binding the apprentice to that employer for a period, usually four years. State apprenticeship authorities are responsible for ensuring that apprenticeship conditions are met. The content and structure of the trade courses, for which the apprentice has to be released, are the responsibility of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) boards. The central TAFE board is advised by trade specific advisory committees with strong industry and trade union influences.

The State of Victoria has the highest percentage of apprentices among the 17-year olds, namely 28%, when compared with other states in the Australian Commonwealth (Ainley, & Clancy, 1981). While the percentage of full time students in this age bracket (47%) is slightly above national average (45%), the percentage of 17 year olds who are in the labor force without apprenticeship arrangements is the lowest (25%) among Australian States.

Although indenture is for four years, the apprentice attends courses which involve some 800 hours

during the first three years only. During the fourth year, the apprentice works full-time for an employer. The courses for apprentices are held at TAFE colleges, either by "day release" - one day each week, for 36 weeks - or an equivalent "block release" of two, 2 week periods per year.

The Commonwealth government pays a rebate to indentured employers as compensation for the apprentice's labor lost while attending courses at a TAFE college.

### ***Agricultural Education in Victoria***

Victoria was the first colony in Australia in which steps were taken in the early 1870's to establish an agricultural school (Black, 1976). Its case is typical for most Australian States. The idea came from outside the farming community. It was first proposed by an agricultural journalist by the name of Wallis who later became Victoria's first Secretary of Agriculture. In 1879 an "experimental and educational farm" was established at Dookie, the primary aim of which was to train young men in the practical branches of agriculture, and as far as possible to fit them for the profitable management of farms. Very few of the pupils were sons of farmers. When the government made use of the facilities as a farm school for wards of the state, the flow of ordinary pupils ceased. As Black (1976) points out, throughout most of the agricultural colleges' history, the majority of students came from the middle classes in cities and country towns. Typical farmers' sentiments were: "Training at a college is of little value, indeed it might be a liability, unless it is practical; but I can teach my son the practical side of farming more thoroughly and more cheaply - and, into the bargain, have the benefit of his labor - at home". It is futile to put the blame for the lack of affinity between many practicing farmers and the agricultural colleges onto either side - onto farmers who did not send their sons to college, because they believed the training given there was unsuitable, or onto the colleges that changed their aims because farmers' sons were a minority in the student population. In any case, this schism between the practicing farmers and agricultural schools became a historical fact and hindered until recently efforts by the colleges to introduce schemes which are more suitable for farmers.

Young people who wanted to become graziers or pastoralists (as the large cattle and sheep farmers are called in Australia) used to work as "jackaroos" and "jillaroos" on big "stations". There they lived with the family and learned from their hosts not only how to ride and cull, but also how to put on a tie. However, this form of training was usually restricted to big stations. No

theoretical training was provided, and no formal contract restricted either jackaroo/jillaroo or station manager.

### ***Farm Apprenticeship - A Hot Political Issue***

Farquhar (1966), who made the first comprehensive study of agricultural education in Australia, considered the training needs of future farmers and made a plea for increased diversity. He suggested that some would benefit from university and college training, if suitable courses were available. For the majority of potential farmers, Farquhar recommended a rapid development of twelve-month or even two-year courses, residential or non-residential, based on regional needs for specific agricultural branches, or an apprenticeship type of 'sandwich' courses provided by technical and agricultural colleges. He suggested also that further study be made of the training needs of future farm workers and that primary producer organizations and the appropriate trade unions be involved in such a study.

The relations between Australian graziers and trade unions who defended the interests of the shearers have never been happy. Long and bitter strikes were quite common. Thus, for many farmers, especially those belonging to the graziers' and dairy associations, the idea of an apprenticeship scheme in the farming sector, which necessitated cooperation with unions was a hot, political issue.

In spite of this, the initiative for the Victorian farm apprenticeship scheme came in 1974 from two leaders of the Victorian Farmers' Union (VFU). One was a farmer who had a former English farm apprentice working with him, under an exchange program. The farmer was impressed by the competence of this apprenticeship trainee. The other initiator was the VFU Director of Labor Relations, who had come to his job from the industrial sector and knew the value of apprenticeship training from there. On the other side, also the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) which so far had not been involved in any agricultural training, was supportive. Another group of supporters came from the ranks of agricultural teachers at technical schools who felt themselves to be "step-children", not being able to teach at a recognized trade level.

Among Department of Agriculture staff, field officers (who are equivalent to county agents in the US Cooperative Extension Service) were more enthusiastic than central staff connected with agricultural education. Actually, quite a number of regional Department of Agriculture officers became involved in the scheme as

resource persons, local curriculum developers and guest teachers, many of them as volunteers, in their own free time. They saw in this activity a natural extension of their advisory work.

After the two initiators (and the young apprentice from England) had persuaded the VFU that an indentured apprenticeship scheme was acceptable and the TAFE Board of Victoria had given its blessing, preparations for the training courses were carried out with unusual speed. A committee of progressive farmers and agricultural teachers identified the areas to be included in the curriculum and the jobs a farmhand should be able to handle unsupervised. Small working groups developed different units, the committee checked that the skills and units identified were practical, and an Executive Officer of the Curriculum and Research Branch of the State Education Department put the materials into an appropriate form. By February 1975, less than a year from the original meeting of the VFU, the Guidelines for the Development of Agricultural Apprenticeship Courses were ready and the first courses started. Apprentices who successfully complete their training were to receive a Certificate of Proficiency. A fair accompli was created.

When the first call for future farmers and their employers was published, in 1975, some 200 applicants (four times more than expected!) enrolled. Only 128 could be accommodated at eight centres. Dropout rates were small and have remained so in later years - quite unlike some other countries, e.g. Britain (Jones & Peberdy, 1979). During the following two years further centers were opened. Since then, there have been around 350-400 new enrollments annually, with 24 centres providing agricultural training. Eighty-three percent of apprentices come from a farming background, and seventy-five percent are farmers' sons. This constitutes a real breakthrough in the involvement of farmers' sons in a formal educational scheme.

### ***Practical Skills Only?***

There was consensus that the training should be practical-technical. However, trade people also need communication skills, e.g. reading manufacturers' instructions or writing letters. Such objectives were taken up by some TAFE colleges. Others were more reluctant to teach these skills to apprentices, many of whom were secondary school drop-outs and had not liked school.

Most Australian farms are run by nuclear families. A son who works as an apprentice for his father will probably take over the management of the farm. He must then have both vocational and managerial skills. Actually, the economic success of a farm depends often

more on the managerial skills than on the vocational know-how of the farmer. However, managerial training was not included in the apprenticeship program. Trade unions are not interested in training managers - "bosses". This kind of training is offered in Victoria at a Farm Management College which is usually attended by the sons of the more wealthy graziers.

Between 1978 and 1979, South Australia, Tasmania and the dairy farmers of New South Wales adapted the Victorian model. The South Australian Farm Training Scheme was at the time without indenture and trade union involvement, and some managerial training was included in the syllabus.

The strongest opposition to indentured apprenticeship in the agricultural sector was voiced by pastoralists in Western Australia, Queensland and in the Northern Territory - the States with the largest cattle stations and the most conservative grazer organizations. Their main argument was that pastoral areas often have seasonal employment requirements, especially in times of drought, which are quite common in the northern States. Thus, employers are not interested in keeping paid apprentices on their stations, when there is not much work to be done. They also argued that TAFE colleges and alternative training centers were too far away. However, the same is true for other trades, and actually, some engineering apprentices in Western Australia have been flown to their TAFE college for block training.

Representatives of the farmers and pastoralists in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory asked the Commonwealth Government in June 1982 to give them the same subsidy which employees of apprentices receive, without having to sign a contract with the apprentice. At that stage, farmer organizations in the less conservative half of the States and Territories (also on the political scene) were in favor of indentured apprenticeship, while the other half was against it. With the victory of the Labor party in the national elections of 1983, the decision became final: If farmers wanted to get money from the government for the release of their young workers to training periods (from which they also profit, indirectly), they have to sign a contract which guarantees continuity and a very minimal supervision over the on-farm practical training. (In many places in Europe, especially in Switzerland, only those employers who have passed a Master examination are allowed to employ apprentices). The Australian government went so far as to pay the agreed allowance also to farmers who sign an apprenticeship agreement with their own children.

### ***The Purpose of This Study***

Most farms in Victoria - approximately 45,000 - are family farms. If we assume that, typically, their management changes once in a generation (about every 35 years), then about 1,300 young farmers enter a farm management position every year. This figure is four times higher than the annual enrollment in the farm apprenticeship scheme. Esdale (1983), using a different method of approximation, came to a similar estimate. The number of graduates of agricultural colleges who enter farming every year is smaller than that of apprentices. This means that most young people still continue to enter farming without the benefit of any formal vocational education.

This finding led to the two central issues of this study: (a) Why do some farmers and young people join the apprenticeship scheme, while other farmers employ young workers, but not under the apprenticeship scheme, although this would give them a cash rebate? (b) What kind of training should be offered in the TAFE college, according to the opinions of the different partners in the schemes - farmers, apprentices, instructors and policy makers? Is managerial training "in" or "out"?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Populations and Samples***

In evaluation studies it is usual practice to ask those involved in a project about their experience in it. In this investigation we followed the same paradigm. However, we inquired also why those who could have joined the apprenticeship scheme but did not - had decided to refrain from taking part in it.

Five populations were sampled: employers of apprentices, their indentured apprentices, young farm workers who despite their eligibility have not joined the Farm Trade Apprenticeship Scheme, their employers and instructors in TAFE colleges. Furthermore, all 16 members of the TAFE Agricultural Trade Advisory Committee were included in the study. From the other populations, a stratified sample was planned, that took in account different types of farming and different "densities of enrollment" in the scheme. The latter term is based on Esdale's (1983) finding that the ratio between potential and actual farm apprentices differed from one TAFE college catchment area to another. Thus, seven training centres (out of the 24) were chosen as being representative for the whole population in respect to density of enrollment, geographical

and agricultural variation, and use of block or day release.

The samples consisted of:

- \* all 129 second and third year apprentices who attended a randomly chosen training day in one of the seven centres;
- \* 59 indentured farmers, chosen at random from the lists supplied by the training centres;
- \* 32 farmers living in the same catchment area, with similarly sized farms, who employed young farm workers eligible for TAFE apprenticeship, but who were not enrolled in the scheme;
- \* their 32 unindentured young farm workers;
- \* all 25 instructors in the seven TAFE training centers.

### ***The Questionnaires and Interviews***

Farmers, and above all Australian farmers, do not like to sit down at a table and write down ideas and opinions. Therefore we developed structured interview questionnaires for the different target populations, using ideas from earlier investigations, in different countries (Esdale, 1983; Lees, DaRoza, & Carey, 1982; Stinson, 1982). The questionnaires were content validated by members of the Project Steering Committee and by a panel consisting of agricultural advisors, rural sociologists and a psychologist. The questionnaires were then pretested with a sample from the various populations in order to eliminate ambiguous formulations and to finalize the categories of answers which could be quantified. The interviews were conducted where the interviewees felt most comfortable: with farmers and their young workers on their farm, with instructors in their school, and with apprentices in either of the two places. Only the TAFE committee members received a mailed questionnaire. Fifteen of the 16 members returned it.

### ***Statistical Analysis and Profiles***

Where possible, the data were quantified for computer analysis. The SPSS program was used to compute frequency distributions, means and modes of quantifiable items. Results were cross tabulated with independent variables (age, education, type of farm and region) and chi-square tests were used to measure

statistical significance. Because of the relatively small but representative samples, a significance level of  $p < 0.05$  was chosen as minimal basis for acceptance. When a very high level of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ) was reached, this is indicated in the text.

Structured interview schedules, as used in this investigation, can yield useful statistics, but they cannot catch a situation holistically. Furthermore, while apprentices, their employers and instructors could answer specific questions on the apprenticeship scheme, this was obviously not the case when we interviewed farmers and young people who did not participate in the scheme and often knew little about it. However, they held an opinion about it and commented freely, why they had not joined the apprenticeship scheme. Therefore, in the case of unindentured young farmers and their employers, the interviewers also write a one to two page profile of each situation. This made it possible to crystallize 14 typical case histories which throw light on the question, why still a large number of eligible farmers and young people do not join the apprenticeship scheme.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Who are the Apprentices?***

The first important fact that had also an important implication on the expectations of farmers and their indentured apprentices was the high percentage (77%) of apprentices who are the sons of their employers and most probably the future managers of the family farm. This is not surprising, because 90% of Victorian farms are family farms - a much higher percentage than in the USA. These farms employ only casual farm labor.

With few exceptions, farm apprentices were boys who had left school at the age of 15-17, after form four or five, the average age being 16.5 at the time of joining the scheme. Thus, transport to school becomes an issue, because most apprentices do not have a driving license and distances between farms and the closest TAFE college can be considerable. The mean distance was 49 km (31 miles).

The fact that only 4% of the apprentices had finished sixth form should not be interpreted that the rest were "drop-outs". Actually, the percentage of those who declared that they had liked school (42%) was twice as high as those who disliked it (20%). The remainder had mixed feelings about school. However, we found a highly significant relationship between apprentices' age of school leaving and their liking of high school ( $\chi^2 = 17.8, p < 0.001$ ).

While in high school, apprentices had an inclina-

tion towards vocational subjects, and 85% were enrolled in a craft subject (mainly wood - or metalwork) - more than twice as many as in agricultural link courses which were taken up by 40% of them. These figures are typical for the traditional attitudes of Australian farmers that agriculture can best be learned from one's father, on the farm, but that also other practical skills like carpeting, welding and machine maintenance had to be mastered.

### **What Made Young People Join the Farm Apprenticeship Scheme?**

To join the scheme, a youngster had to make two decisions: to start a farm career and to do this through apprenticeship. Apprentices know what farming is. Some 83% grew up on a farm, and also the remainder came from a rural environment and, with few exceptions, had worked in agriculture during vacation periods. Most farm apprentices (71%) chose farming because they like it generally (57%) or because they were attracted by specific aspects of farming (14%). These youngsters had an intrinsic motivation. However, 15% of the apprentices choose farming only because they could not get another job. Most of these had first unsuccessfully considered non-farming jobs.

Nearly all parents (93%), also those who were not farmers themselves, favored the decision of their offspring to become farmers, a sign of pride in their occupation and of a positive view for the future of farming. Although parents liked their children's decision to become farmers, only 29% of the apprentices stated that they had actually been influenced by their parents in their decision to join the scheme. "Dad" was mentioned twenty times more than "Mum" as having had an influence.

A similar division between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was found, when apprentices were asked why they had joined the scheme. Again, 71% belonged to the first group who indicated that in the apprenticeship scheme they could learn more than just by working on one farm without being exposed to other experiences. The extrinsically motivated group (22%) believed that in this way they could get a qualification and would improve their chances of finding employment. The second group was mainly made up of apprentices whose fathers had no farm, or an older brother was expected to take over the family farm.

Practically all apprentices (95%) had the ambition to become farm operators, either as owners (79%) or at least as managers (16%). The managerial aspirations of the apprentices have important repercussions on the kind of training the scheme should or should not offer

them. A similar expectation of young farm workers to become independent farmers was found also in other occupational studies.

Ambitious types seem to take up responsibilities at an early age. Some 63% of those apprentices who had held a responsible position in school (e.g., as form captain or representative on the students' council) expected to become farm managers already three to five years after completing their apprenticeship. Among those who had not shouldered any responsibility at school, only 30% foresaw such a quick promotion to a managerial position.

### **Who are the Indentured Farmers and What Made Them Join the Scheme?**

Their mean age was 46, and they had, on the average, 23 years of managerial experience. Besides the apprentice, only in 14% of the cases an unrelated farm worker assisted with the farm work. Twenty percent of the interviewed farmers had completed a course in agriculture or in a related field since leaving school. Eighty percent (80%) of the employing farmers were members of a farmers' organization, but their involvement varied from passive membership to regular participation in meetings (30% did so regularly) and to holding an office (23% had done so). Two thirds of the farmers (68%) were members in community organizations (fire brigade, church, school council, sport and service clubs), and there all of them were active, with 85% having held office at one time or another. All together, these farmers were certainly involved in their community.

Only in 12% of apprenticeship contracts, the farmers took in an unrelated young man. Even in these cases, he knew the apprentice because he had already worked for him before or he knew his family. This might be one of the reasons why a youngster outside the community would have difficulties to get into the apprenticeship scheme.

Two important questions came up: How did farmers hear about the scheme, and what made them join it? The main sources of information were friends with apprentices (24%), their sons' schools (22%) and the press (22%). In spite of the role farmers' organizations had played in the establishment of the scheme, they were the source of information in only 9% of the cases.

Two thirds of the farmers (66%) joined the apprenticeship scheme because they thought this to be important for the farmer. Some 17% thought it to be important for the trainee. Some 17% thought it to be valuable also for the farmer, and the same number of farmers agreed

more passively, because the trainee wanted to join the scheme. Although all participating farmers said the rebate they received from the government for losing their apprentices' work when these were in training at the TAFE college was important to them, this financial motivation was mentioned only in 7% of the cases as reason for joining the scheme.

The government pays the rebate only to farmers who signed an apprenticeship contract. Two-thirds of the farmers preferred this arrangement, because it gives security of both the apprentice and the employer. Those who would prefer an unindentured arrangement did so "just in case you don't hit it off with an apprentice", but none of them had any complaint about their own apprentice.

Like apprentices, also among farmers there was a majority (61%) who appreciated apprenticeship mainly because of the learning aspects, while others were motivated by giving the apprentice a formal qualification (15%) or the possibility to meet peers (5%).

Given the history of farmers' reluctance to send their sons to agricultural schools, we asked them to compare the advantages and disadvantages of apprenticeship training versus agricultural college education. Some 72% of the indentured farmers emphasized the better practical training which apprentices receive. Other advantages of apprenticeship, as seen by these farmers were mainly economic ones: (a) the possibility to work at home, while being trained, (b) the apprentice having his own income, and (c) the less costly way of training. Each of these views was expressed by 8-10% of the farmers. Asked about relative advantages of the agricultural colleges, only 18% of the farmers mentioned the better theoretical knowledge which agricultural colleges can provide.

These data reinforce the view that Australian farmers look first of all for practical training and expect to learn by attending short courses, by reading the farm press and by discussing farm issues with other farmers and to some extent, with extension agents. Actually, fully 45% of the employers state that their involvement in the apprenticeship scheme had effected their own knowledge, and half of these said they had actually implemented on their farm a new idea which the apprentice had brought back from a training session. Thus, the apprenticeship scheme was in the view of many farmers the best training available.

### ***Why did Other Farmers and Young Farm Workers not Join the Scheme?***

If the apprenticeship scheme is such a good thing (and not one indentured farmer was disappointed with it) - why did the others who were eligible not join it? Table 1 summarizes the answers given by the unindentured farmers.

There were two main reasons for not joining the scheme - lack of knowledge and the work situation on the farm. The first reason included not knowing that a farmer could indenture his own son and thus receive the rebate money which the indentured farmers so much appreciated. The lack of information can be explained partially by unindentured farmers' less involvement in farmers' organizations, compared with that of their indentured peers. Only 66% of the former were members (against 80% of the latter) and only 5% (against 23%) had held an office. In other aspects, e.g. in their educational background and in their contact with extension advisers there was no significant difference between the two farmer groups. Thus, "backwardness"

*Table 1*  
**Why Unindentured Farmers did not Join the Apprenticeship Scheme**

Reason Given by Farmers	Responses (%)
Lack of knowledge about the scheme	25
"The son works already on the farm"	19
Total knowledge related reasons	44
Unable to afford an apprentice	25
Not enough work on the farm	19
Farm is not suitable	6
Total farm related reasons	50
See no merit in the system	6
Total Responses	100

was no real reason. Only 6% of the unindentured farmers said they could not see any merit in the apprenticeship scheme.

The second main reason for not signing an apprenticeship contract was the work situation on the farm. In these cases the young farm workers (nearly always their sons) worked only temporary on the farm. This interpretation of the reasons given was reinforced by the statement of 31% of the youngsters who said they worked on the farm only temporarily because they could not find employment. Youth unemployment in Australia was quite high, at the time, and helping on the family farm seemed to be the best interim solution. Actually, 39% of the unindentured young farm workers (all sons of the farm operator) did not receive any wages.

Also unindentured farm workers did not differ significantly from their indentured peers in their educational record. Like their employers, they either did not know about the scheme or found it irrelevant because they did not intend to stay on the farm. Those who wanted to remain in agriculture were not less ambitious to become farm operators than the apprentices. Thirty percent (30%) of the unindentured farm workers took a short vocational course, mainly in woolclassing and welding.

Although the interview questions were posed as neutral as possible, 22% of the unindentured respondents indicated that having now heard about the rules governing the apprenticeship scheme, they would join it, if that was still possible, and 31 said vaguely that they "would give it some thought". However, 47% would not change, mainly because of the farm related reasons listed in Table 1.

We identified 14 profiles of farmers and young people who did not join the farm apprentice scheme. The most typical (which occurred repeatedly) were:

Both father and son had never heard about the scheme;

Both thought the farmer's son could not be indentured to his father;

Travel to the TAFE college, once a week is a problem;

The son is already too much involved in the management of the farm;

The farm is too small to have an apprentice working and learning on it;

Father and son do not believe in "theory";

The apprentice hates school.

### **What Should be Taught in the TAFE Courses?**

All the initiators and participants in the farm apprenticeship scheme agreed that the training in the TAFE colleges to which apprentices are released regularly should be devoted to skill training, that is how to master a technical task. However, skills can have both manual and intellectual characteristics. There is no clear borderline between them. Everybody expects a skilled workman to understand why it is best to do a technical job in a certain way, and not in another. However, when one moves into short run managerial decisions, e.g. when to do a job, given the need to set priorities in a work schedule, or how to communicate decisions, one moves into the area of management skills - and management training is something quite outside the apprenticeship philosophy, as reviewed in the introduction.

The 59 indentured farmers, all 25 agricultural instructors in 7 TAFE colleges who taught agricultural apprentices in their skill courses, and 15 (out of 16) members of the Victorian TAFE Agricultural Trade Advisory Committee were asked if the skill areas described above should be part of the apprenticeship curriculum. Just under half of the instructors and of the Committee members had a farm of their own. The farms of the instructors was on the average smaller, that of the Committee members was bigger than the average property of the indentured farmers. The other half of the TAFE Committee were representative of TAFE and educational institutions. The answers of the different groups are summarized in Table 2.

There was consensus among all partners on the importance of learning why and when a farming job should be done. They also quite agreed on the need to train apprentices in communication skills. However, on the place of typical managerial skills, opinions differed widely. Almost all the indentured farmers (even those who employed young people who were not related to them) thought that agricultural and financial management of the farm should be taught to apprentices. Only a minority of the TAFE Committee members agreed with this opinion. This does not mean that they did not recognize the importance of management training. Rather, as TAFE Committee members they knew the rules of the game: TAFE apprenticeship does not include managerial training. Farmers were not influ-

*Table 2*  
**Opinions About the Inclusion of Communication and Managerial Skills  
 In the Curriculum of Agricultural Apprentices**

TOPIC	RESPONDENTS IN FAVOR (%)		
	Committee	Instructors	Farmers
Why to do a job	100	100	92
When to do a job	100	96	95
Communication Skills	87	88	93
Farm Management	33	64	95
Financial Management	27	59	97
Statistical significance:			
For farm management: $X^2 = 28.9, p < 0.001$			
For financial management: $X^2 = 38.4, p < 0.001$			

enced by these rules. Most did not know that they existed. They answered according to perceived needs, without taking political constraints into consideration. Instructors were in-between these two groups, as one could expect from their position in the training system. They knew about the rules, but many of them thought these rules could be changed. The large majority of apprentices (88%) wished to receive managerial training, in accordance with their occupational aspirations.

Apprentices attend vocational courses in a trade school during the first three years of their apprenticeship. The fourth and final year is devoted entirely to practical work on the farm on which the apprentice is employed. If farmers and apprentices (and to some extent also instructors and TAFE Committee members) want to add some managerial training to the present curriculum, could that be offered in the 4th year? Table 3 summarizes the answers on the question, if appren-

tices should be released also in their 4th year of TAFE courses.

Table 3 shows that the two issues -- introduction of managerial training and regular courses in the 4th year -- do not coincide. Especially committee members are in favor of more vocational school training, but not for managerial courses. Farmers are quite hesitant to lose their apprentice's work also during release periods in the fourth year, and a majority of apprentices themselves do not want to go to school in the fourth year. Instructors' opinions are, as before, between those of farmers and TAFE committee members. Thus, there is no case for prolongation of the TAFE program for all apprentices; but those 26 apprentices who wanted to continue training at school during their fourth year, backed by their employers (37), should be encouraged to attend courses, in which managerial skills could be taught.

*Table 3*  
**Opinions on the Introduction of 4th Year TAFE Courses Into Apprenticeship**

OPINION	RESPONDENTS			
	Committee	Instructors	Farmers	Apprentices
Yes	77	64	37	26
Mixed Feelings	—	4	14	11
No	23	32	49	63
Statistical significance: $X^2 = 26.1, p < 0.001$				

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

For a century, farmers in Victoria had looked at agricultural colleges with suspicion, and the colleges blamed farmers to be anti-educational. The outcome was the same: the training of young farmers remained restricted to what they saw on the farm plus occasional short courses in practical skills. The apprenticeship scheme brought a breakthrough, because this type of training was considered by farmers to be practical enough to warrant the release of their sons and otherwise employed young people to regular training sessions.

The readiness of the government to reimburse employers for the working time lost when their apprentices are in school was important to farmers, who have little regular income. However, it was not the prime mover in their decision making. Farmers and apprentices alike had intrinsic and extrinsic motives for joining the schemes. The majority saw its value in giving better training. A minority joined it because they hoped that the Certificate of Proficiency would help youngsters to get a better job. Both farmers and their apprentices highly appreciated the value of the training courses.

In spite of the positive reactions to the farm apprenticeship scheme, many of the eligible farmers and young farm workers did not join, mainly for two reasons: (a) They saw no future in a farm career, because the young man (mostly the son of the farmer) did not want to go into farming and worked only temporarily on the farm, or the farm was too small to provide work for both. In these cases, not much could be done; (b) The other half of nonindentured farmers and young farm workers just did not know enough about the scheme. Many thought that a father could not indenture his son to work on the family farm and to cash in the government rebate. Clearly, the scheme had not got the publicity it needed. This failure certainly can be overcome through better information dissemination.

The farm apprenticeship scheme overcame the traditional mistrust between farmers' organizations and trade unions, because both sides were interested in skill training. The need to find a common ground for the two partners prevented the inclusion of management training in the scheme, although most apprentices are indentured to their fathers and will probably take over the family farm, one day. Also those apprentices who are not potential heirs aspire to become farm operators quite rapidly, either as managers or as owners. For this they need management training. Both employers and apprentices are in favor of management training, but so far policy makers in the Technical and

Further Education boards opposed managerial training as part of apprenticeship. This discrepancy could be overcome by introducing managerial skill training like record keeping into the courses, and thus creating a basis for further management courses; e.g. as option in the fourth year or as second level of proficiency.

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