Findings from the JRA Pilot Survey in Australia


Ivan Neville
Labour Supply and Skills Branch
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
OVERVIEW

• The Australian labour market
• Survey methodology
• General differences in skill use
• Selected findings
• Conclusions and policy uses
AUSTRALIAN LABOUR MARKET

Australian Economy (May 2008)

• Unemployment: 4.2%
• Participation Rate: 65.3%

Labour Market Structure

• 45.1% of employed persons are women.
• Major employing industries:
  – Retail 14.7%
  – Manufacturing 11.3%
  – Property and Business Services 11.0%
  – Health and Community Services 11.0%
METHODOLOGY

500 household and 102 primary school teacher surveys

- Both surveys reasonably representative.
- Randomly selected

Household Response:
- Gross Response Rate: 78%
- Net Response Rate: 49%
DIFFERENCES IN SKILL USE
BROAD OVERVIEW

• Managers, Professionals and Associate Professionals had the highest use of the Reading, Writing, Instructing, Self Direction, Learning and Autonomy skill domains.

• Elementary Workers had the lowest use of all skills domains except Physical and Internal Interaction skills.

• Workers in Education had the highest use of Reading, Writing, Customer Interaction, Instructing, and Self Direction skills.
  – Teacher Survey respondents also had a high use of these skills.
WORKPLACE INTEGRATION

• Australian workers generally reported working closely with others.

• Workplace interactions were positively related to business size.

• Part-time workers more likely to be disconnected from colleagues.
  – more likely to not need to interact with co-workers.

• Non-managerial staff frequently teach co-workers new things.
COMPUTER USE

• 79.4 per cent of jobs involved computer use.
  – Improved skills will improve the job performance of many

• 7.9 per cent of all working respondents likely to be limited to jobs that do not involve computer use.

• Younger workers use computers at a more complex level within every major occupation category.

Areas of possible further investigation
  – Do younger workers undertake similar tasks using more complex computer methods?
  – Do younger workers gravitate towards jobs that require greater computing skills within major occupation categories?
  – Do younger workers undertake more complex computing tasks because they are junior to their older counterparts?
Does greater use of a particular skill translate to its acquisition being a greater barrier to employment?

Information on using an Australian Survey of Employers’ Recruitment Experiences
- Asks about recent recruitment exercises.
- Data on the ability of employers to fill vacancies.
- If and why recruitment was ‘difficult’
- Information on unsuitable applicants.
SKILLS USE AND APPLICANT UNSUITABILITY

• In occupations where literacy and numeracy skills were used the most, employers most frequently found the lack of these skills to be a significant barrier to applicant suitability.

• However, inadequate Interpersonal and Self Direction skills were greater barriers to employment in occupations where they were used the least.

• Accordingly, the skills development needs of job seekers should be based on an assessment of their own skills as well as those required for their desired job.
SKILL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Managers: 14% Lower Qualifications, 13% Need Training or Development
Professionals: 15% Lower Qualifications, 13% Need Training or Development
Associate Professionals: 17% Lower Qualifications, 15% Need Training or Development
Clerks and Service Workers: 13% Lower Qualifications, 18% Need Training or Development
Craft Workers: 18% Lower Qualifications, 9% Need Training or Development
Elementary Workers: 13% Lower Qualifications, 13% Need Training or Development
Overall: 17% Need Training or Development

Legend:
- Lower Qualifications
- Need Training or Development
HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

• JRA results indicated that higher qualifications had no impact on:
  – levels of autonomy and self direction
  – the frequency with which workers helped others to learn new things; or
  – the frequency that respondents persuaded and influenced others.
CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY USES

• Cognitive testing and pilot results suggest that a JRA module would provide valuable data for PIAAC.

• The education and training of workers may influence the skills that workers use to complete workplace tasks.

• JRA provides important data on skill use.
  – Needs to be supplemented carefully by supply side data before policy decisions are made.