

# Servicing the horseracing industry: apprenticeships past and present.

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## **Abstract**

Paul Hager's aptly titled chapter 'Finding a good theory of workplace learning' (1999) exemplifies the fact that workplace learning has recently gone from a largely unnoticed topic to one that has attracted unprecedented attention. As a contribution to this exploration, and drawing on data that is being collected for an ongoing PhD thesis, this paper investigates the changing models of workplace learning and training employed by the horseracing industry. It compares the experiences of former indentured apprentices with those of modern apprentices in order to gain insights into the changing practices governing workplace learning and the relations and conditions within which it takes place. It explores whether indentured apprentices received any formal training or learnt 'on the job' 'through common sense' and being shown and asks whether the learning process was a tacit, implicit one where knowledge is gained through practice.

It suggests that indentured horseracing apprentices learnt by being part of what Lave and Wenger (1991) have identified as a community of practice. Following the abolition of indentured apprenticeships, training for 16 to 19 year olds has been made mandatory with trainees being enrolled onto the government funded modern apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship once existed to enable employers to train the next generation of skilled workers, as was the case in the racing industry, but it is now regarded more widely as a means of achieving social and economic goals as well as a significant part of education and training systems. By means of a comparison with the indentured model, a group of modern apprentices have been followed through their initial nine week training at the British Racing School and, subsequently, interviewed in their places of work. Their experiences have been charted and compared with those of former indentured apprentices. Both groups participate in communities of practice where vocational education and training combine work and learning as part

of a continuous ongoing process. Evidence presented in this paper, however, shows that both types of apprenticeship were and are restrictive in nature.

## **Introduction.**

Horseracing is, by its very nature, labour intensive, with technology of little use in providing an alternative to the physical labour and is therefore dependent on its staff to service its needs. In 2009 there are over 7000 full and part-time staff registered as working in the 755 licensed trainers' yards (British Horseracing Board, 2009) in Britain. Thirty three per cent of these are between the ages of 20 and 29 and as a group make up the largest number of staff, 10% are between 16 and 19 and 25% over 45. It is in the last two groups that my interest lies, the modern apprentices and former indentured apprentices. Whilst some of the latter group will not have served indentured apprentices (such as women who were excluded from indentured apprenticeship) some will have and it is their narratives I have been analysing. Thus the central characters for this paper are the indentured apprentices and modern apprentices who, as in Newby's description of agricultural workers, 'are a group of workers of whom most people have little knowledge or understanding...' (Newby, 1976:11).

The paper starts by giving a brief overview of the conceptual frameworks that surround the way learning is perceived as happening. It goes on to provide a snapshot of the procedures involved in becoming an indentured and modern apprentice, drawing out the differences in how an apprentice learns. By evaluating each model evidence presented in this paper will show that both types of apprenticeship were and are restrictive in nature.

## **Apprenticeship as a model of learning**

Effective apprenticeships have always been concerned with job specific (short-term) as well as personal (long-term) development. Apprenticeship has survived as an internationally understood structure although the nature and meaning of apprenticeship varies greatly according to the organisational context and the social and pedagogical relationships between participants (Fuller and Unwin, 1998, Fuller and Unwin, 2003).

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Generally speaking apprenticeship is just one kind of 'educational' environment within the broader context of workplace learning and as such, is characterised, conceptualised and promoted as advantageous for both employees and employers and the State (Boud and Garrick, 1999, Lee et al, 2004). Workplace learning as Boud and Garrick see it is,

*'... concerned not only with immediate work competencies, but about future competencies. It is about investment in the general capabilities of employees as well as the specific and the technical. And it is about the utilisation of their knowledge and capabilities wherever they might be needed in place and time' (Boud and Garrick, 1999:5).*

Workplace learning as a topic has recently gone from being largely unnoticed to one that has attracted unprecedented attention (Hager, 1999). Workplace learning theories and perspectives have emerged from what Beckett and Hager (2002) and Hager (2004) refer to as two different 'paradigms of learning, where each has different epistemological assumptions and beliefs about knowing. Knowledge can be used to differentiate between formal learning, as found in educational institutions where the best learning, following this approach, consists of abstract ideas, that are context independent and transparent to thought. It involves bringing learning to mind and an inability to do so indicates that learning has been imperfect or unsuccessful. As Hager notes, it also implies that non-transparent learning, such as tacit or informal learning is 'a second-rate kind of learning' and learning of such nature, that is commonly found in the workplace, is 'consigned to second-rate status' (Hager 2004:244). Thus, the second paradigm of learning has very different characteristics. This includes the learning of skills by apprentices which are concrete, context dependent, tacit and based on intuition (Hager, 2004). Learning from this perspective is seen

as 'doing', being engaged and involved in the action. The dominant approach within this paradigm is 'learning as participation' (Lee et al, 2004).

As part of their social theory of learning (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger, 1998) have proposed that learning is a process of participation in what they refer to as communities of practice where participation is at first legitimately peripheral but increases gradually in engagement and complexity. Their work arose out of the need, in their eyes, 'to rescue the idea of apprenticeship... as no one was certain what the term meant' from a learning perspective' (Lave and Wenger, 1991:29). The conception of 'situated learning' was being used, conventionally, to represent 'learning in situ' or 'learning by doing' (ibid,p31) but it was seen as needing a better characterisation as a theoretical perspective which resulted in their view of learning being 'an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice' (ibid, p31). It implied emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving 'the whole person... on activity in and with the world; and on the view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other' (ibid, p33) a stance that has been incorporated into the rubric of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice. Lave and Wenger give the following explanation,

*'By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of the community. "Legitimate peripheral participation" provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991:29).*

## **The study**

The research took place between 2008 and 2009 and consisted of 11 interviews with indentured and 11 interviews with modern apprentices. In addition I conducted participant observation at the British Racing School, following a cohort of trainees through their 9-weeks there and interviewing them once they were working in a yard, and ethnographic fieldwork in a racing yard during the course of a year. In what follows I draw mainly on the interviews with apprentices.

## **The indentured apprentice - occupational entry**

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the indentured system of apprenticeship was first introduced into racing. What is apparent is that racing apprenticeship was (and still is) a highly gendered affair (McClean, 1998). Apprenticeships were only for young boys not girls, thereby effectively excluding them and, almost without exception, the recruits for racing yards were from working class backgrounds and had a minimum of formal education, often with little or no knowledge of horses. As one interviewee pointed out,

*'I had a pony, but, when you go as an apprentice and you've had a pony you're six months ahead of the other kids. Some of them come in and they'd never seen a horse' (A1).*

Enrolment into the industry appears to have shown little sign of standardisation or formality in the early days yet informal procedures of recruitment were evident. Much was done through word of mouth or trainers might advertise in the local paper for apprentices.

For some, their small stature and light weight, which were essential to becoming an apprentice, provided them with a means to escape *'going down the pit because I could see what it was like for me dad and me brother'* (A3),

whereas others sometimes had relations who worked in racing and had the connections

Boys were usually taken on as apprentices and indentured to their master for three, five, and even seven years. Parents were required to pay a deposit which was refundable as long as the boy completed his apprenticeship with that particular trainer and *'you were literally signed over to your Master, and it said, in the indentures, name of master, ..., name of father and I mean, it says there, sign on the red seal'* (A2). Should the boy run away however and return home parents quite often sent them straight back for fear of losing their deposit. Some unfortunate youngsters would find themselves blacklisted if they tried to get an apprenticeship somewhere else if they left a yard, even if they had served most of their time, *'you'd not be permitted back in racing, in any description, so you couldn't go as a yard man, You couldn't go "well, I ain't gonna be a jockey, I've never had a ride, I'm never going to have one" no, you've gotta be apprenticed, and if you didn't do the five years apprenticeship you was blacklisted'* (A3)

### **How did indentured apprentices learn?**

On arrival at the racing yard a fledgling apprentice would be assigned to a 'board wageman<sup>2</sup> or 'paid lad' as they were known later. This was an individual who after 'serving his time' had stayed on to work for his former master or had moved to another yard. For the 'board wageman' conditions of employment were slightly easier than for the apprentices. Like in many other workplace settings, their role was to instruct and teach the apprentice

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<sup>2</sup> A former apprentice who received his wages and had his accommodation provided by his employer.

the ways and routines of the yard as they had once been shown. The amount of time a boy would be left with what was basically a mentor seems to have varied dependent on the yard and the boy's experience.

After a week at the most though, most boys were expected to have picked up the daily routine and be able to work, in the yard, independently. Boys would be given two horses to look after known as 'doing their two' and the day would be spent servicing the needs of these equines.

The accounts of former indentured apprentices show that they mainly learnt 'by doing', through practice, being thrown in at the deep end with little help. It was a case of sink or swim.

*'You stopped with the paid lad, probably for a few days, you knew how to tie one up for a start, how to put a head collar on and once you'd been shown how to muck out you were left to do it on your own and then, after a week, the lad would go and have a look, see how much you'd left in. They'd give em, not a two year old, an old horse for a start, for a week, to get used to the animal, how to put the head collar on, how to take the rugs off and a lot of em didn't know that, and you'd hear a commotion and he'd took, undone the front and hadn't done the back and took it off and it's a wonder half the kids hadn't got killed but when they'd done it once they soon learnt. The Head Lad used to keep an eye on them, that's what his job was I suppose?' (A1)*

The young boys who had no riding experience were allowed to go the gallops once the horses had been exercised and they would ride the horses back, with the lads walking by their side. Some yards had a pony for the boys to learn on and they would ride the pony out with the other horses on exercise.

Those with riding experience could often find themselves riding horses that were known as hard pullers, almost like an initiation process as the horse would invariably run off with them. It was a way of making the lad know his place. When asked what happened to him, Topsy, who could already ride, remembered every detail of his first canter,

*'He had a hog mane, Dunstle Castle, and he had a head like an iron pot, you know, I mean he was, a big, ugly, brute of a thing, and he said, "you can ride old Dunstle Castle", he said, "see how strong you are"' he said, "if you can't hold him", ('it was a mile and a quarter gallop , it was a big old park, on the collar'), "if he runs away with you, he won't go fast, but if you can't stop him, just keep going round the ring at the top". 'It was about, well about three furlongs round this ring, 'round the loop' they called it, anyway we set off, you know, and I thought, "well I can't stop this", 'I mean it was like pulling on a bloomin brick, there's no response and he got his old head down and away he went, so, we went all the way round and I didn't panic, I mean if I couldn't hold him I could steer him, so we went round this ring, and then we went round again, and I sat there, and then the third time round, the old man stood in the way and went, "whoa", and he stopped. Yeah, I mean he wasn't run-, running away, bolting, it's just that I couldn't stop him, but the old man, "whoaaa", he says, and the bloomin animal pulled up, I could have shot him'. (A2).*

Other apprentices recalled similar experiences but were expected to take it in their stride. They would get little sympathy from the other lads as it had been the same for them. *'You know, because they used to put you on, and they used to say, "get on with it", 'and that, that was it, if you get run away with, get run away with and you fall off, they put you back on again, you know, until you got it right, so, you know, there was, there was no namby pambying with any of them, they used to, really they would let you do it'. (A4).*

As an apprentice gained experience and if he was in a yard where apprentices were given rides, after a year or sometimes less, they would get their first ride often in an apprentice race on a sensible horse. Whilst at first it may appear quite altruistic on the part of the trainer to give these boys race rides usually it was for financial reasons. Trainers were permitted as part of the indenture agreement to half an apprentice's riding fee for what was meant to go towards feeding and clothing them, travel and subsistence. The more rides an apprentice had the more the trainer could make out of their riding so a good apprentice was worth his weight in gold.

Apprentices learnt mainly through their own mistakes and by watching others. Whilst there was some informal instruction they were expected to shut up and put up and work it out by 'doing' it. The picture described above paints a hard uncompromising picture yet the majority of apprentices said they enjoyed their time being indentured. They saw it as a 'way of life' and, when they finished their time, they felt they were experienced and accomplished horsemen. They saw themselves as having a far greater depth of knowledge than the modern apprentice of today can achieve in the time it takes them to complete their apprenticeship.

This section has sought to highlight the processes by which a young boy learnt to become an indentured racing apprenticeship. They became 'rounded experts /full participants' (Fuller and Unwin, 2003) within a restricted organisational culture. The following section will provide a similar analysis of the process involved in becoming a modern apprentice, a scheme the Horseracing Industry adopted in 1995 after a period where, following the abolition of indentured apprenticeship in 1976, there was little else on offer by way of organised, formal training within the industry itself.

### **Becoming a modern apprentice.**

- *Are you an EU citizen between 16 - 22 years old?*
- *Do you weigh less than 9st 7lbs/60kg and physically fit?*
- *Are you looking for an exciting career?*

- **If the answer is YES you are in the right place!**

**The British Racing School delivers the Foundation Apprenticeship completely *FREE* and we *GUARANTEE YOU A JOB* in racing.**

These statements form part of the promotional admissions brochure produced by the British Racing School (BRS), one of two specialist training providers for the horseracing Industry. As can be seen there are hardly any restrictions in the way of pursuing a career in horseracing. Under Instructions issued by the British Horseracing Authority (BHA, 2009) training is mandatory for all stable employees at either the BRS or the other training provider, the Northern Racing College, for anyone between under the age of 19 who wants to work in racing. The BRS try and make sure that the potential trainees invited for interview realise that the nine week foundation course forms the start of their future career in racing which is why there is a perception amongst the trainees that places are coveted. Once accepted the trainees are given an enrolment date, usually a Monday, and must register at the BRS between 11.30am and 12pm on that day.

The BRS aim to get at least 70% of the Level 2 National Vocational Certificate (NVQ) in racehorse care completed before the apprentices leave to start full time employment in a racing yard. The technical certificate, which they complete 'on line' towards the end of their stay, is taken too. Trying to do assessments in the work place is not always easy to arrange and can cause disagreements with the employer who say the staff are too busy to spare the time for such things. Fortunately this is not always the case but trainees, once out in the workplace tend to view the NVQ assessments as a bit of a chore and don't always wait behind, at the end of morning stables, to see the assessor.

### **Group profile.**

Each group consists of no more than eighteen trainees. Size is dictated by how many can be safely taught down in the stable yard and the number of horses that are available for trainees to ride.

There are, on average, 35 to 40 trainees riding out on each lot each morning so the 60 plus horses that the BRS has in its care are kept busy. The groups are mostly female and overall the annual intake is 60% female and 40% male with the annual maximum of 198 foundation students (11 courses a year x 18 students) that can be enrolled.

The group I observed during their 9-week training were from both working and middle class backgrounds and all had a mix of academic qualifications, ranging from A level, National Diplomas, First diploma to GSCE's, grade A's to F. Some saw the course as a way to achieve their goal of being a jockey, others liked the excitement of horseracing and wanted to work with racehorses, *'the money is better too than other horsey jobs'* (A10). One girl wanted to be a flat jockey, *'As we know Cumani [racehorse trainer]. I'm half Italian too, like Frankie [Dettori] who says I need to be 7 stone. He ate just peas so that's what I'm doing'* (A11).

The next section provides an overview of how the trainees found they learnt most successfully and which teaching method and environment they found most beneficial to them, as a learner.

## **How the modern apprentice learns.**

The aim of the 9 week foundation course is to replicate as closely as possible what working life in a racing yard will be. Although it is sometimes lacking the rush, bustle and speed that can be encountered in a racing yard it allows the trainees, mostly unused to physical work and working to the clock, a chance to develop the skills and embodied movement and knowledge they will need.

Much of what the trainees learn is 'by doing' and as some of them openly admit 'doing it wrong' was the way they picked things up the quickest. They saw making their own mistakes as a good way to learn because *'the practical thing was most useful, because when you're having your lectures, it feels like they're just standing there and saying a lot of things that doesn't mean*

*anything to you, until..., you can make your own mistakes and learn from it... and from watching other people' (A15). .*

Their first practical demonstration involved the instructor showing them the process of mucking out a straw bed, a task that, to do quickly and efficiently takes practice and feeling comfortable with the tools to be used. He explained, step by step, what they must do and why. They then went away and put his words and actions into practice. One instructor to 18 trainees is a big group to oversee when the trainees are quite inexperienced. To try and support him and the trainees the BRS have two experienced yard assistants, Tom and Will, who have innumerable years of experience in racing and whose role is to mentor and support trainees, helping and advising them when they were trying out a task for themselves, such as putting a bridle together or plaiting a horse's mane. The trainees viewed them in a different light to their instructor and for the quieter ones they made the difference between achieving their NVQ units or not. Sally found she learnt by, *'Asking other people. Tom. He was really good, I loved him to bits, he's brilliant and he'd demonstrate, like it was all one to one and he'd demonstrate and if you're like in a group situation, you feel a bit stupid asking questions'*. (A15). Her learning experience was *'Like, I think I learnt more by helping, like, as people helping me, like your friends, so you don't feel so much under pressure then'*. (A14). She felt more at home in a learning 'community' where they could all learn by doing things together, discussing and talking about the exercise.

Although most of the instruction is out on the yard and involves practical demonstrations there are some more formal classroom based lectures which not one of the trainees said they liked. *'The classroom, I couldn't get on there cause, every time I got in I just wanted to fall asleep, yeh, it was awful'* (A16). Others found that because they were *'Never any good in the classroom anyway so I, wasn't that interested in that side. But, if I didn't know anything I'd look at the books [NVQ manual] and then try it...well, it's better to be hands on cause you learn, learn quicker by doing, learn from your mistakes...'*. (A12).

Riding was one of the key areas they identified for learning by what they had done wrong as Stina explained after she had *'unlocked the key'* to riding one of the more difficult fillies at the BRS.

*'When I first came to the School, I had some problems to hold the strong horses, because, since I wasn't very confident, I got scared when I felt that they were picking up the pace and then I started to move my hands, and you shouldn't do that, I should just like, put my hands down and try to ignore it but and when I rode her one day in the (indoor) school I realised, ah, this is the way it should be done, and she had run away with me four times before so that was really good to learn from'.* (A15).

All the trainees were of the same opinion when interviewed out in the workplace that by watching others ride and working in their new yard they were able to gradually get better and, *'the more you do it the better it gets, if anything, the more you do it the better you should be'.* (A14). They found, on the whole working with others helped as *'they're all very experienced, they've worked for big trainers, they've taught me lots'.* (A12). That is not to discount what they learnt at the BRS as they all saw that as, *'Well, the Racing School they teach you the basic way, the basics of everything and then here you, you learn more advanced stuff'.* (A15).

One girl however found that some of her compatriots were difficult to work with and so, for her she found the best approach was, *'I think you have to choose who to listen to because they're so, a couple of guys have been to the school and they think that they're top jockeys, but I don't like the way they're riding at all, they're always shouting at the horses when they're scared and they're telling me what to do when my horse plays up or something, but then I just have to ignore them because I know it's not right'.* (A13). She found their attitude frustrating as she wanted to learn, something her trainer helped her with, *'But my trainer's really good because he, when he stands and watches us riding, if he sees something in my riding that he wants to change he just tells me so, that's really good, "oh, try to lower your shoulders just a little"...yeah, he really wants to help but I think that's because he knows that I want to learn, he doesn't say anything to the others because they would just wouldn't listen, they know it all so...'* (A15).

It is quite rare for a trainer to instruct their staff on a one to one basis as it is usually the more experienced staff members who will volunteer help. I asked Julie if, when she first got to the yard was she put with anyone, as a mentor, to work with? *'I had, the girl that's just left, I had her sort of, while I was riding out she was always chatting to me the whole way about what we were doing and, the routine and what the horses work like'* (A13). When asked about what sort of advice she had been given it was more a case of *'You only really get advice if you ask, if you're unsure about anything?'*(A15). This is not to say that trainees saw their workplaces as hostile, unwelcoming places. They are small communities where suggestions are made, and individuals reflect on what they did riding *'that horse'* or *'one just like that'*. Knowledge of what to do is not imparted formally by way of a riding lesson but is gradually transmitted in conversations, banter, arguments and on reflection when things have gone badly. Jill summed it up, *'It's just from the yard, I think it's like the older, older staff, the older people that have done it, especially like if you're riding through and, think why has he done this? Or, how? You know, they're the ones I always like. There always, seems, always to be one lad as well that'll always kind of like, be the, kind of dad, in a way, and always looks out, look over you and he'll kind of like, take, make sure you're alright Every yard I've been to there's always been that one person'*. (A13). Knowledge would appear to be imparted without the individual really being aware of the process happening.

*'When I first started racing, the horses that I found strong and then another person would go on and wouldn't, and I'm thinking, "why"?, you know, but it's just literally, it just takes time doesn't it, just to, you can't hurry it sometimes'*. (A13).

## **Comparing indentured and modern apprenticeship**

As has been highlighted there are structural and organisational differences between the two models of apprenticeship yet fundamentally the common strand they both share is that apprentices learnt and still learn through being in a community. In some cases this is the only way they get the opportunity to learn.

The main occupational differences are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>Indentured apprenticeship</b>	<b>Modern apprenticeship</b>
All male. Females excluded.	60% female. 40% male.
No state funding	70% state funded.30% from racing Industry
3-7 years in duration. Legally enforceable	6 months- 1 year completion
Paid pocket money	National agreed wage agreement
No set hours of work, day/week/yearly	Nationally agreed time in work
No overtime	Overtime available
Had apprentice licence to race ride	Apprentice licence not available
No formal instruction	Some formal instruction. Key skills.NVQ L2.
Completely work based	9-12 weeks off the job training
Career progression very limited.	Some career progression
Apprenticeship had a meaning to them	Mostly unaware they were on a modern apprenticeship and what it meant.
No pension provision	Small pension paid by trainer
No accident benefit scheme	After 3mths, Racing Industry Benefit scheme
No health and safety provision	Crash hats, body protectors mandatory

As Fuller and Unwin (2003) show, apprenticeship has a different meaning and nature dependant on the organisational structure in which it is embedded and it is their conceptual framework that highlights the restrictive approach to apprenticeship the horseracing industry has historically had, and I would suggest still has.

This is illustrated by the fact that the horseracing Industry has a 'shared participative memory and a cultural inheritance of apprenticeship' (ibid, 47) because of the nature and organisation of the racing yards within it there is rarely any 'access to learning fostered by cross company experiences' (ibid, 47). Indentured apprentices had no opportunity to gain any qualifications as none existed and the modern apprentices only have access to competence based qualifications. There is little time for off the job training although some is offered by the training providers. Funding tends to dictate when trainees must complete their modern apprenticeship therefore they are still novices although they will be participating fully in the workplace. For the indentured apprentice there was little in the way of career progression although the career structure for the modern apprentice has some structure.

From my experience many trainers are 'ambivalent... in their recognition of, and support for the apprentice's status as learner' (ibid, 47) although for the trainer with a yard full of good indentured apprentices the financial reward was high. As most of the modern apprentices had no inclination that they were registered as modern apprentices I would have to concur with the final statement on the expansive/restrictive continuum that there is 'limited reification of apprenticeship'.

One of most striking differences between the two models was the fact that the modern apprentices were not aware that they were modern apprentices or what that implied. When asked what qualification they were completing they all knew about the NVQ but had little idea about the modern apprenticeship and were not that bothered. The modern apprenticeship would appear to have very little significance in racing and has little value for career progression

A central feature of any apprenticeship system is the placing of the novice in a community of more experienced workers with whom the apprentice interacts and learns from in a variety of ways. The motivation to learn is stimulated by the recognition of the gap between their knowledge and that of their more skilful colleagues. It is through this awareness that increased learning brings benefits in terms of the development of adult identity

associated with adult status (Fuller and Unwin, 1999). Learning for both types of apprentices appears to have happened through the challenges posed through working in a racing yard and at the BRS and it has been found that experience plays a major role in building up a knowledge base that produces expertise (Griffey and Hughes, 1997). Although they were probably not aware of the fact all the apprentices could be said to have been working towards becoming 'legitimate peripheral participants' in their occupational field. Much of what is learnt in horseracing comes from observation and experiential learning, skills that are gradually acquired through experience, feel and intuition, attributes which cannot be taught.

Whilst such a situation as that described above does happen both sets of apprentices appear to have taught themselves and each other, as well as learning from *'their more experienced peers'*. Both types of apprentice learnt from their mistakes, from doing things incorrectly and asking their friends. Working in a racing yard rarely permits any time to be spent patiently guiding novices along, for both indentured and modern apprentices they have to learn to think on their feet. It would be nice to think that their journey from novice to expert is a smooth transition but, from experience, it rarely works that way. This may explain why retention rates for modern apprentices are at 75% not higher as newcomers do not get the time and opportunity to become part of a community of practice.

Apprenticeship as a form of work based learning is one that suits the practically based occupational nature of the racing industry. Trainees can learn by being placed in a 'community of practice' where they become 'legitimate peripheral participants' in their chosen field. Through communicating with each other and their peers they develop the attributes and 'second sense' that underpins their occupational position. However I would argue that they have achieved this of their own volition, not by the racing Industry investing in any specific training programme that will further enhance the long term and short term goals of their workers.

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