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Report

Developing non-permanent workers in Singapore

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About the Institute for Adult Learning, Singapore

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About the Centre for Work and Learning, IAL

Centre for Work and Learning (CWL) is a research centre of the Institute for Adult Learning. CWL specialises in research on Continuing Education and Training System design and practices. Our research employs a range of methodologies designed to deepen understanding in the challenges and opportunities for learning and development in and across different settings particularly in relation to work and work environments. For more information, please refer to www.ial.edu.sg/research .

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks to address the question of how to support the learning and development of non-permanent workers by analysing across earlier studies that were part of a multi-sector study by the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) on the identity and learning of non-permanent workers in Singapore.

Using an iterative research design, data was first collected through semi-structured interviews with non-permanent workers by sector or occupation, and then analysed in the context of the sector and occupation. Four initial reports were completed, namely in the Film & TV, Technical Theatre, Adult Education industries and Low-wage Occupations (despatch rider, removalist and F&B help). This fifth report presents findings from a second-level analysis where data from the total of 97 interviewees was systematically analysed across the cases for similar patterns, with further investigation conducted for atypical cases. This iterative research design was necessary to understand the identity and learning of the non-permanent worker within his or her work and life contexts, while still seeking to understand commonalities and differences across the cases.

Based on this second level of analysis, we found that being apurposeful non-permanent worker requires strong integration of entrepreneurialism, craft identity, and learning-to-learn skills or what we called integrated practice. The non-permanent worker is responsible for the getting and keeping of jobs that tend to occur across multiple sites, and this requires him or her to develop entrepreneurial skills to secure and sustain a stream of work assignments and perform effectively in different work teams across a range of sites. However, it is the particular combination of occupational or craft identity and entrepreneurial skills that facilitate the seeking out of meaningful work opportunities and skills development towards the powerful development of the non-permanent worker. The combination of entrepreneurialism and craft identity enables recontextualisation, reflexive and meta-cognitive learning in deeper ways that guide the non-permanent worker to seek out certain jobs, people and learning, but not others, towards building specialised skills and carve a particular niche or positioning in the marketplace.

We additionally found that the development of integrated practice – entrepreneurialism, craft identity and learning-to-learn skills – is mediated strongly by two factors, namely the individual's motivation for entry into non-permanent work that shapes the individual's approach towards the pursuit of work, and the work context that offers the space for exercising one's integrated practice. This combination, then informs the trajectory of the individual as growing, stagnating, or struggling, which feeds back into the development of one's integrated practice, motivations for continuing, and their awareness and use of work context affordances, and the cycle continues.

Based on our respondents, we identified four such categories of motivations: the **Purposeful** worker who intentionally opts for a non-permanent work arrangement to develop and dedicate time to their craft and thus tend to have strong occupational identification; the **Opportunistic** worker who falls into a non-permanent work arrangement usually because of problems navigating the permanent job market or being recruited by friends or family; the **Lifestyle** worker who has a preference for

work with low responsibility and/or daily pay; and the **Lifestage** worker who has non-work commitments such as caring responsibilities, is moving to semi-retirement or seeking work that gives him or her the flexibility to take extended time off for travel. By exploring these categories and the patterns of integrated practice and trajectory, we find that entrants with varying motivations may need different types of support to help them navigate as non-permanent workers as well as see and seek affordances to grow.

The work context provides the space for developing integrated practice, and we propose the conceptual frame of Occupational Affordances to understand this work context. From our data, four key dimensions were observed:

- **work**, referring to the availability of specialised roles on a non-permanent basis in the industry, and the quality of assignments;
- **linkages**, referring to how easy it is for workers to navigate the industry either at point of entry, across sub-sectors or across national borders;
- **learning** as part of an occupational community, linked to accessibility to peers, experts, and tools and artefacts that enable self-directed learning; and
- **voice** – linked to the organised representation of non-permanent workers within the industry institutional eco-system, as well as within the nation-state.

We find that this conceptualisation of integrated practice, motivations and work context, contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the experience of non-permanent work and non-permanent workers. First, it helps overcome the current binary conceptualisation of such workers as either 'contingent' and therefore having the opportunity and ability to exercise choice, or 'precarious' given the uncertainty associated with such work. Second, it helps counter assumptions that the precarious worker may be found in sites that are lower paid and require less formal education, while the contingent worker may be found in sites that are higher paid and require more formal education, even though many research studies have suggested a conflation of the two. Based on our data and subsequent conceptualisation - low-wage work may be stepping stones to more specialised skills if there are adequate occupational affordances. On the other hand, non-permanent work even in PME sectors may lead to precarity if there are inadequate occupational affordances.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides new ways of understanding non-permanent workers that could be important inputs into Singapore's policies related to the workforce, learning and development. The research has identified new understanding of the identities, learning and trajectories of non-permanent workers that place the individual in the context of their work and industry sector. It brings to light an often ignored or misunderstood segment of the Singapore workforce. Internationally, the research is a significant new contribution to the often contested understanding of non-permanent workers evident in the academic literature.

Specifically, in this report, we conduct a second level analysis that builds upon our earlier studies of non-permanent workers in several sectors and occupations with high prevalence of non-permanent work arrangements. These are the creative sectors (film and television and technical theatre), adult educators in the continuing education and training (CET) sector, and workers in the following low-wage occupations - food and beverage (F&B) assistants, removalists and despatch riders. For the purposes of the research, we define non-permanent workers as those who held contracts (or equivalent) of less than 12 months.

This introductory chapter explains why it is important to develop a deeper understanding of non-permanent workers, who these workers are, the methodology employed in the study, and the structure of this report.

1.1. Structure of the report

This introductory chapter first explains why it is important to develop a deeper understanding of these workers, who these workers are, provides a brief explanation of the methodology used followed by an explanation of the structure of the report. The next chapter introduces the concept of "integrated practice" within the conceptual frame developed through the analysis, which guides the proceeding chapters. The third chapter examines non-permanent workers' identification with their work through examining the relationships between motivations, integrated practice and trajectories. This is followed by a chapter on occupational affordances and its relationship with the individual's trajectories, in addition to its relation to the institutional ecosystem of the industry sector. Learning and development of non-permanent workers in our study is next and the report concludes with a set of recommendations.

1.2. Why understanding non-permanent workers is important

Non-permanent work arrangements are a growing phenomenon of the labour market globally, yet firms tend not to invest in their non-permanent workforce. The design of pre-employment training (PET) and continuing education and training (CET) programmes in Singaporetends to assume that participants will become, or are, permanent workers, that is, a "permanent work paradigm" prevails in such

programmes. Career guidance and social service support in Singaporesimilarly tend to nudge workers into permanent work, yet some workers may deliberately opt to remain in a non-permanent working arrangement. These are all compelling reasons to better understand these 'non-permanent' workers, providing the opportunity to revisit policy and learning and development practices.

1.2.1. A growing phenomenon

Studies indicate that 'non-permanent' work arrangements are set to intensify globally in an environment characterised by shorter business cycles, and the outsourcing of jobs (Brown, Lauder & Ashton 2011; Ross 2008). The OECD (2014) notes that this kind of work

- can provide flexibility for firms to adjust their workforce in changing economic circumstances, and
- has expanded in many countries as governments sought to promote flexibility in the labour market by easing regulations on non‑regular contracts while leaving in place relatively stricter conditions for those on regular contracts. (OECD, 2014, p.2).

Australia's non-permanent workers account for 33% of Australia's labour force (ABS, 2013). In the United States, it is predicted that 40% of its workforce will be non-permanent by 2020(Intuit, 2010).

In Singapore, based on the data collected by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), the statistical categories that are the closest fit to non-permanent workers are term contract[1](11.8%), andown account workers[2](8.7%).These two categories combined account for 20.5% of Singapore'sresident labour force. These figures exclude the foreign workforce who also tends to be on non-permanent work arrangements, albeit tied to the issuance of employment passes by MOM as a regulatory body. On the whole, identifying and quantifying non-permanent workers in Singapore is problematic, given the limited statistical categories.

Anecdotally, data from our respondents indicate that up to 70% of those in the creative sector and adult educators in Singapore are non-permanent workers. In

[1]Term contract workers are defined as those on fixed-term contract of employment that will terminate on the expiry of a specific term unless it is renewed, as well as workers on casual or on-call employment (i.e. where persons are employed on an ad hoc basis, as and when the company requires additional manpower). The difference between a permanent and fixed term contract worker is that there is no guarantee of contract renewal and thus of continued employment, unlike a 'permanent' worker. This definition of fixed term contract by MOM can include a wide spectrum of contracts from for example, a number of years, months or weeks.

[2]Own account workers are defined by MOM as persons who operate their own business without employing any paid workers Own account workers were evenly distributed in PMET (e.g. working proprietors, real estate agents, insurance sales agents/brokers, private tutors) (54%) and non-PMET (e.g. taxi drivers, hawkers/stall holders) (46%) occupations.

addition, our interviews indicate that in sectors such as logistics and F&B where our low wage interviewees work in, a considerable number are non-permanent workers. Non-permanent work is thus a characteristic of the Singapore labour market that to date has received limited attention. This is a form of work that is here to stay and if global trends are indicative, then Singapore can expect this segment of the workforce to grow, perhaps more so due to the hollowing out of the middle class (Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2011) and the likelihood of some of these middle class workers moving into non-permanent work.In low paid work, Singapore appears to be unique in comparison with first world economies where there is a high degree of precarity and lack of choice associated with this form of work. The tight labour market in Singapore, at this point in time, means that unlike international experiences such as in the US and Australia, non-permanent workers we interviewed in Singapore who are doing work that is traditionally low paid, *choose* this form of work as they tend to *earn a better income and in less rigid conditions than if they undertook permanent work*.

1.2.2. Minimal investment in learning and development for non-permanent workers

It is well established that firms invest minimally, if any, in the learning and development of these workers (OECD, 2014). This is another point of difference between permanent and non-permanent workers. As a result, non-permanent workers need to attend to their own learning and development rather than rely on those who employ or engage them. This is an important point as Singapore's new strategic thrust to move into facilitating workplace learning assumes participants are in permanent work, potentially leading to a policy gap in relation to 'non-permanent workers'.

1.2.1. PET & CET aligned to permanent work

PET and CET programmes likewise assume they are preparing or extending learning and development for workers who will be in 'permanent' employment. That is, education providers tend not to adequately acknowledge the unpredictable, unknown labour market and what workers will need in the future in order to get jobs and continue to learn in and for such work. Such "navigation skills" are necessary for all workers, but are amplified for those in non-permanent arrangements.

1.2.1. Career guidance and social support undervalue non-permanent work

Career guidance and social service support in Singapore have not adequately recognised this kind of work. Our evidence suggests that these types of arrangements are viewed as peripheral and shallow, and only apply to those who do not care much about work and/or social mobility. Attention could be given to the circumstances in which non-permanent work should be valued, or instances where the complexity of motivations and identification may mean moving to permanent work has drawbacks for some individuals.

1.3. Who are these workers?

Typical terms that come to mind when we talk about non-permanent workers are freelancer, consultant, casual, associate, adjunct, contract worker, part-timer, self-employed, non-standard worker, own-account worker, and sole proprietor. These are just a few of the plethora of terms used to refer to these workers, adding to the confusion about who they are. In the research literature there are two key terms used, precarious and contingent.These terms represent a division and opposing views (Smeaton, 2003) about this kind of work.

1.3.1. Precarious

Precarious workers are perceived as being exploited,experiencing anxiety because of inconsistent income, reduced benefits, and deskilling, as well asunclear career progression. The precarious workers, it is argued, experience rupture, exploitation and disadvantage in their relationship with their employer(Brophy 2006; Ross 2008; Kallerberg 2009) and as such are sometimes referred to as bulimic workers or feast and famine workers.

1.3.2. Contingent

The term ‘contingent’ suggests these workers have greater choice and ownership to deploy their skills and drive their careers at times and sites of their own choosing. They are perceived as being able to navigate the getting and keeping of work to their own advantage through the development of social and mobility capital networks, the management of work-life balance and permeability, a capacity to maintain current workplace skills and knowledge capabilities, competently pursue meaningful, creative and self-fulfilling work, and possess the aptitude to earn a ‘comfortable’ income and maintain a self-selected lifestyle(Allan 2002; Arthur & Rousseau 1996; Hall 2002 & 2004; McKeown 2005). Not surprisingly contingent work is argued to be an example of ‘emancipating workers’, also referred to in the literature as ‘boundaryless’ or ‘protean’ workers who are said to represent the direction in which workforces are heading in an age of flexible capitalism (Allan 2002; Arthur & Rousseau 1996; Hall 2002 & 2004; McKeown 2005).The terms contingent and precarious present two distinct camps of thought about this kind of work and its virtues and evils; the contingent camp is usually considered to more closely represent employer perspectives, and the precarious camp is considered to be representative of union and worker perspectives.

1.3.1. Moving away from the precarious/contingent binary

We argue that it is not black and white as described above – rather, elements of both precariousness and contingency can be experienced at the same time. It can also be argued that the precarious-contingent debate represents a binary around agency or structure. The precarious worker, for example, is described as devoid of agency, i.e. they have no choice as they are subject to the systems they are a part of, and their own experiences within those systems. Thus they are subject to the whims of the structures within which they live and work. In contrast, the contingent worker is

described as exercising considerable agency as they exercise choice over their activities and actions and thus, are not constrained by the structures and institutions they are a part of or that in some way influence their activity.

1.3.2. Implications for methodology

In the literature, many studies of non-permanent workers have focused on particular groups; it is rare to find a study that looks systematically across different groups as we did. This is the first point of difference and what contributes to the uniqueness of our study. Another critical point refers to the debate in the literature mentioned above that categorises non-permanent workers as either precarious or contingent. This debate reflects theoretically a dichotomy between structure (the precarious workers at the mercy of the structures within which they work) and agency (the contingent workers who exercise choice). In our study we privileged the concept of identity as this was core to the research questions we addressed, but we also work from a socio-cultural and socio-material perspective that meant we sought to understand the industry sector, its ways of working and what mediates the identity and learning of these workers. Consequently, from the individual respondents, we gathered data capturing their experience, their story and the context in which they work. This provided data that we analysed through multiple theoretical lenses but always letting the 'data speak'. Our theoretical lenses include practice which does not separate out agency and structure but rather embeds each in the other, identity, socio-cultural and socio-material perspectives of learning,as well as some borrowing from cultural historical activity theory, namely the concept of mediation.

However, given the strong theme in the data of precarity and contingency we also posed questions of the data in relation to these concepts, and found that in our sample, 'non-permanent' workers are neither contingent nor precarious, rather they experience aspects of contingency *and* precariousness to varying degrees, thus these labels are not helpful as binary definitions, which hide the reality of the lived experience of these workers.

1.4. Methodology

This large qualitative study used semi-structured interviews of non-permanent workers (n=97) to understand the identity, learning and development of non-permanent workers in three different sectors (see Figure 1).Our qualitative analysis was an iterative one. As each sector was completed, we built on the understandings we had gained from the previous study to inform the study in the next sector. The findings in this report are a result of further building on this iterative analysis where we undertook a systematic approach across all of our studies, explained further below. The research questions we sought to address are:

1. How does the experience of non-permanent work **contribute** to or **constrain** the **learning** of workers?

2. How do non-permanent workers **identify** with their work and how does this **influence learning opportunities**?

3. How can the **learning** of non-permanent workers be **supported and enhanced**?

In addition to the 97 non-permanent workers interviewed, we interviewed and spoke with stakeholders such as employers, policy makers, career coaches and representatives from industry bodies such as professional organisations. Stakeholder perspectives were also gathered in the reference group sessions we conducted towards the end of each study where we sought their inputs and responses to our interpretations as they explored the implications of our findings. Which stakeholders were involved in the additional interviews and in the reference groups and how many was sector-dependent. More details are provided inspecific reports.

The interviewees were selected based on purposive and convenience sampling (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) to obtain a range of job roles, gender and years of experience. As is typical of qualitative research, the sampling is not representative of the population. As the population is not currently defined or captured statistically, a representative sample would not have been possible, had we desired to draw the sample in this way. Conducting some 30 interviews per occupational group, however, resulted in "saturation" of the data where common stories and themes were being expressed by the participants. All informants were guaranteed anonymity and we used pseudonyms. We also sought out former and returning non-permanent workers to capture comparative perspectives. Participants were identified through industry contacts, personal contacts of the research team, advertisements and snowballing with an eye on our selection criteria.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed before being imported into a qualitative software package (NVIVO). Themes were developed through reading the data, referring back to the literature and multiple coding by various members of the research team. Each transcript was then coded by the established themes before being further analysed into sub-themes.

1.4.1. Profile of our non-permanent worker respondents

The profile of the non-permanent workers we interviewed is varied as indicated by the Figures 1 – 5. The breakdown of respondents by sector or occupations is at Figure 1. Our respondents were undertaking non-permanent work across the age groups (Figure 2). Notably, Adult Educators are predominantly between 40 – 64 years of age, reflecting the need to have existing work experience before becoming an Adult Educator. There were fewer creative workers beyond the age of 49, perhaps indicative of the heavy work and often gruelling hours. Low wage respondents are spread across the age groups. The ethnicity of our respondents is somewhat of the population at large (Figure 3). Notably however, is the large number of Adult Educators who are Chinese, compared to proportions in our sample who are Malay or Indian. In the creative and low wage sectors, our respondents are more evenly spread across the different ethnicities that are dominant in Singapore. In terms of gender, the larger number of males in our sample is reflective of the gender distribution in the creative and low wage industry sectors (Figure 4). Adult Educators are more evenly distributed. In terms of educational qualifications, Adult Educators in our sample are the group that holds post-graduate qualifications as would be

expected. Creative workers in our sample predominantly hold a degree, or a diploma, or O/N Levels with two holding only secondary qualifications. As would be expected low wage workers in our sample hold lower levels of educational qualification from O/N Levels to primary, although one respondent held a degree and another a diploma (Figure 5).

Figure1 Total sample of non-permanent workers (n=97)

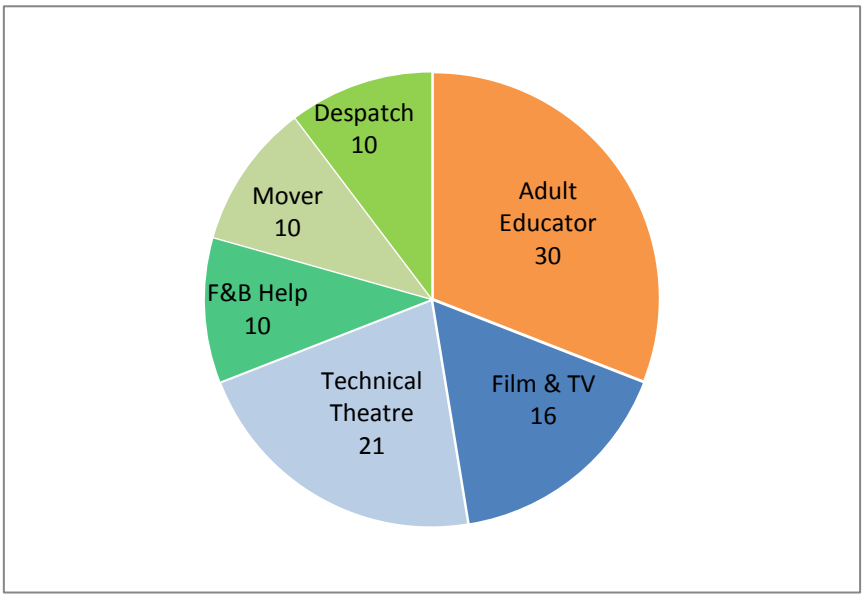


Figure2 Age of respondents

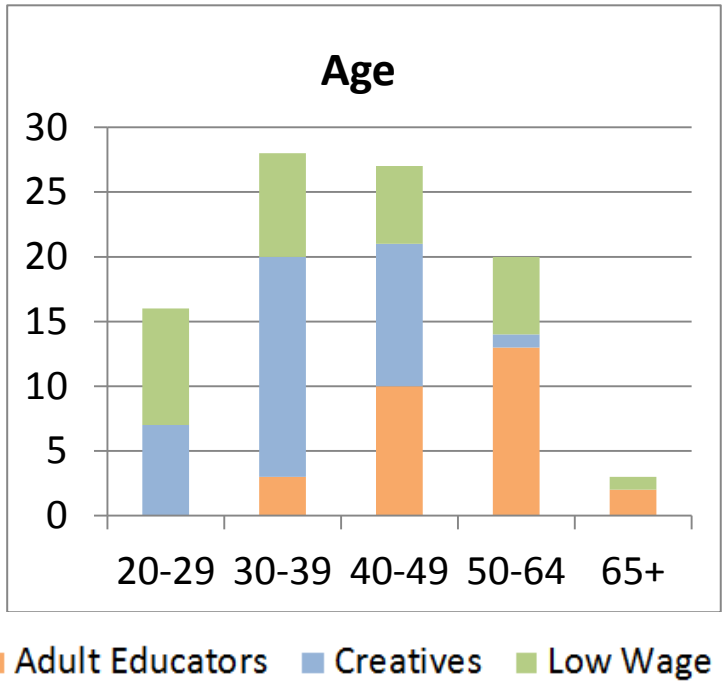


Figure3 Ethnicity of respondents

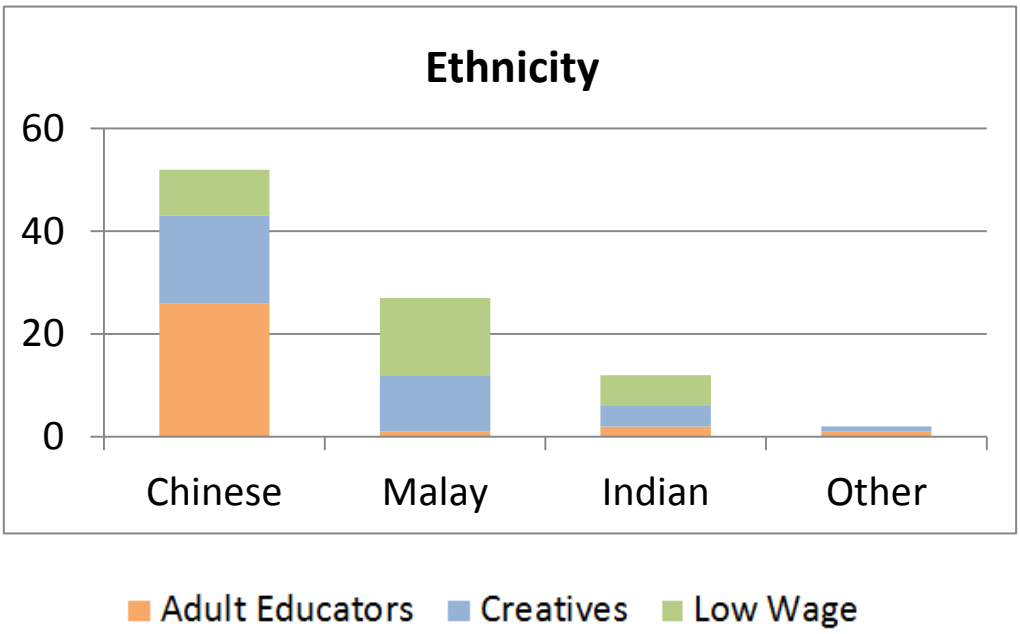


Figure4 Gender of respondents

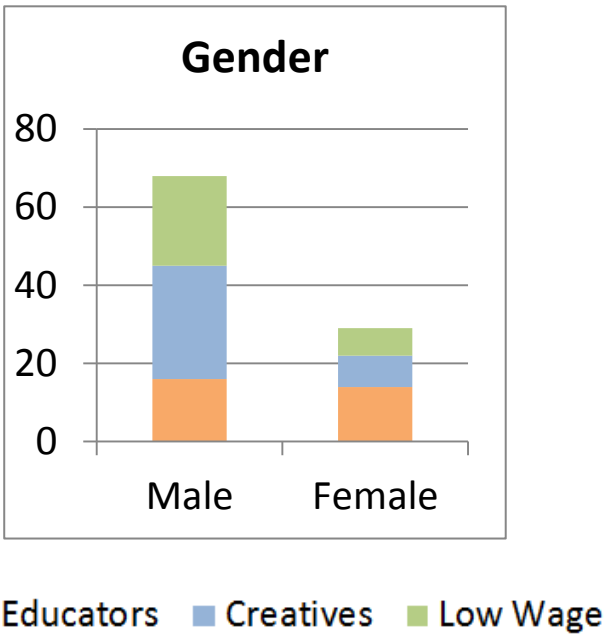
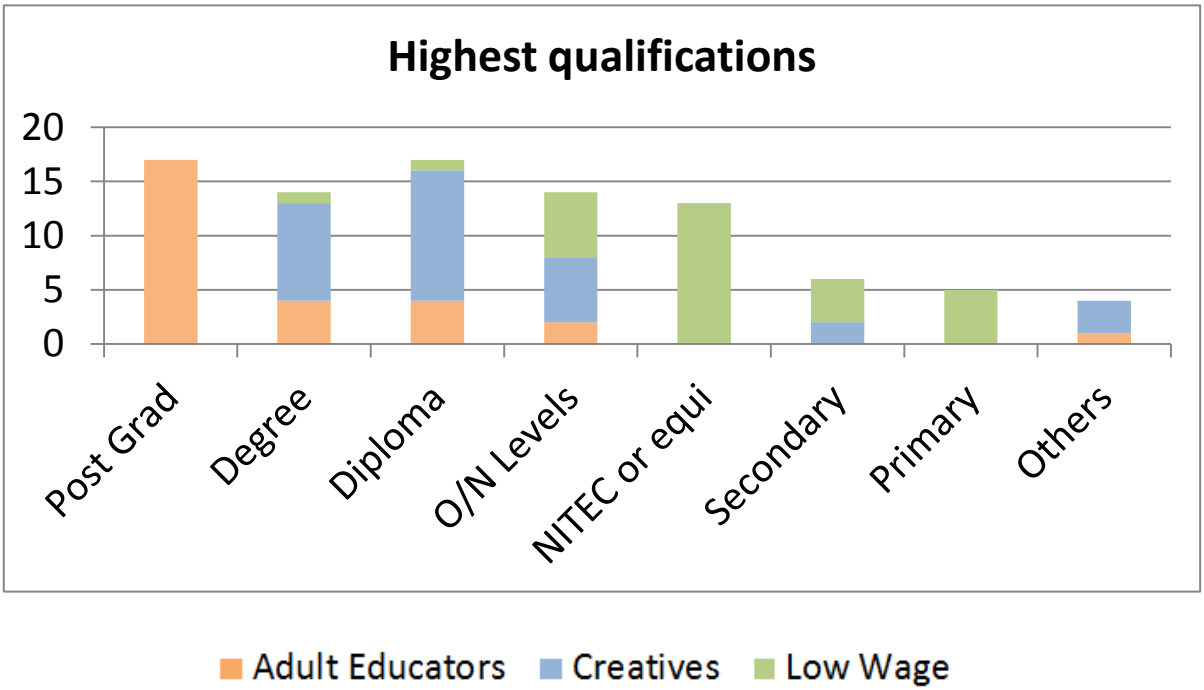


Figure5 Educational qualifications of respondents



1.4.2. Methods used in analysing across the different sectors

On completion of the specific studies in each of the three sectors (see Figure 1), we undertook a systematic analysis across the cases, drawing on the reports and also returning to the data. It is this analysis that informs this report. Firstly we undertook a systematic analysis across the sectors, and then focused on key dimensions we identified to inform our conceptual frame; namely integrated practice (entrepreneurialism, craft identity, and learning-to-learn skills), motivations, context and trajectory.

Once we focused on the dimensions listed above, we quantified aspects of our qualitative data. We used this method to confirm our interpretation, and as a means to further access deeper insights and identify dominant and divergent patterns in the data. The process of undertaking this kind of analysis requires a tighter categorisation and naming its characteristics to identify the “identity variables”, trajectories, and other characteristics of these workers. This analysis confirmed the criticality of having well developed entrepreneurial, craft and learning to learn capabilities. We then went back to the dataagain to establish why different workers with different forms of integrated practice were experiencing different trajectories. This process confirmed and deepened our conceptualisation of motivations and occupational affordances and their importance for growth.

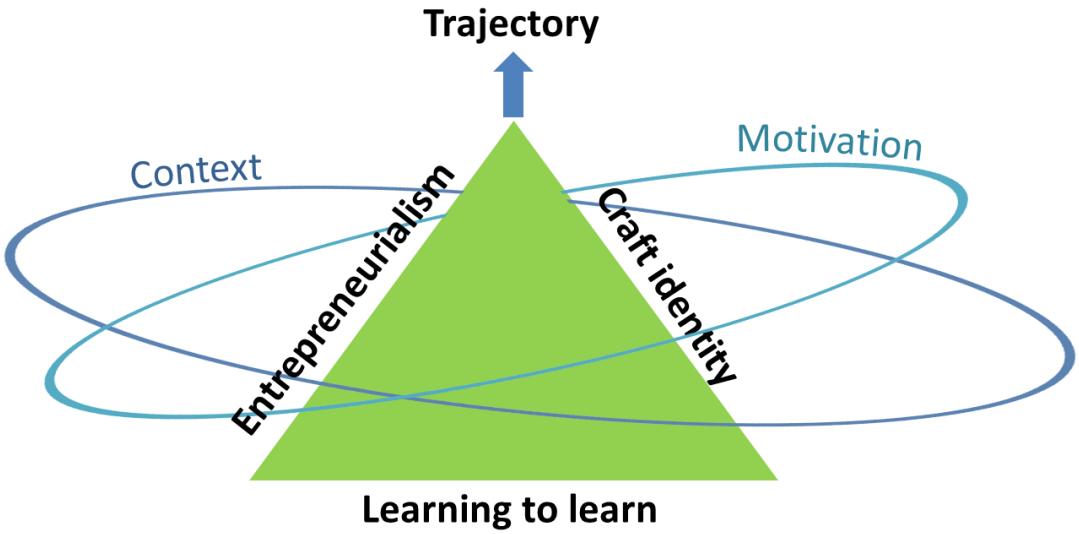
Given the large number of qualitative interviews and the multi-faceted nature of the analysis, it is reasonable to assume our findings are generalisable with two important caveats. The first caveat relates to the nation of Singapore and its developmental and policy environment, which may make the experience of non-permanent work in

Singapore distinct compared to the experience in developed nations, particularly for those experiencing lower income (across all the sectors). The second caveat relates to our sample selection as we have selected only workers with contract or employment periods of one year or less, or with no contracts. Clearly, the closer the group is to our sample, the more generalisable our findings are to that group.This particularly applies to findings that relate to motivations and trajectories. However, given findings from international studies, we consider that our contribution of well-developed entrepreneurial, craft and learning to learn capabilities, mediated by motivations and context, and resulting in different trajectories at different points in time, are widely generalisable. New concepts we have introduced to the field such as “integrated practice” and “occupational affordances” offer rich potential for further development.

2. FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-PERMANENT WORKERS

This chapter introduces our framework for understanding what mediates the learning and development of non-permanent workers. Our framework (based on the data) has a number of components as illustrated in Figure 6; *integrated practice*, consisting of entrepreneurialism, identification with the craft and learning to learn, as well as trajectory, motivations, and context. This chapter elaborates the different elements of the framework and their relations.

Figure6 Framework for understanding the learning and development of non-permanent workers



2.1. Integrated practice

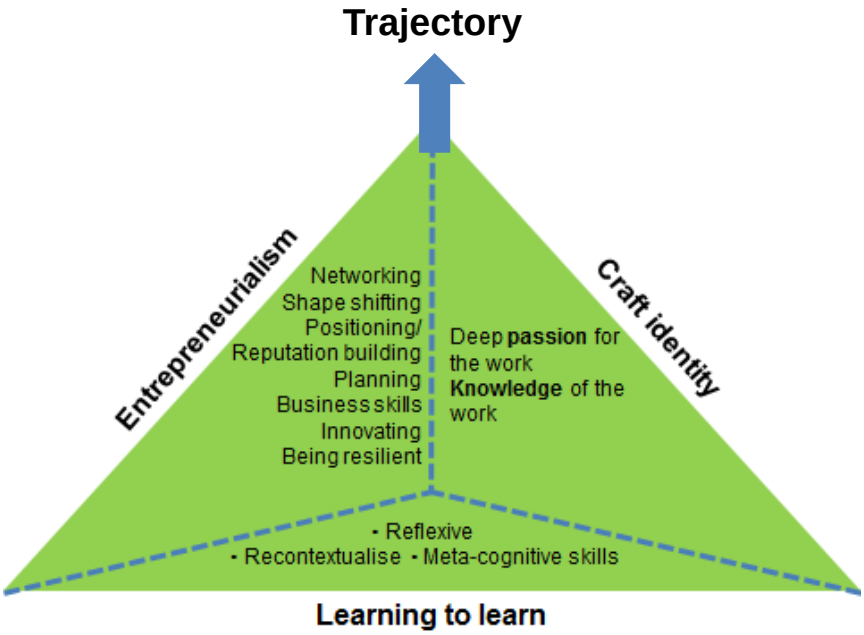
We use the term *'integrated practice'* to capture the idea that entrepreneurialism, identification with the craft and learning to learn are used not as separate entities or sets of skills and dispositions, but as a cohesive, coordinated set of actions and activities that are evident, to varying degrees, in the everyday work and practices of non-permanent workers.

Practices refers to a connected set of activities that hang together; so practices may be enacted by individuals but they are "an organised constellation of *different people's* (author's emphasis) activities" (Schatzki,2012, p.13) that belong to a particular occupational group. There are rules, understandings, doings and sayings,

ways of reasoning, emotional, moral and ethical responses particular to the occupational practices, and kinds of connections and solidarity among those involved (see Schatzki 2012; Kemmis, Edwards-Groves, Wilkinson & Hardy, 2012 for further detail). Many of our respondents spoke of all of these aspects of practice.

In the following paragraphs, we explain each of the terms in the diagram, making reference to the detail inside the triangle that represents integrated practices.

Figure7 Integrated practice



2.1.1. Craft identity

We use the term craft identity rather than occupation as our intent was never to understand the essence of the occupation, but rather the identification with this essence. Our data shows that it is the opportunities for non-permanent workers to exercise their craft; their knowledge, skills and development of a sense of mastery that was predominant over and above naming themselves as part of a particular occupation. For example, those with a strong identity with their craft spoke at length and in passionate terms about what they 'do', what the rules of engagement are, how they connect with others to learn and grow, expected ways of being, unpacked for us ways of thinking, and so on. We use the term 'craft' in the sense that it is far more than and not only about skilful use of your hands, it refers to a sense of mastery and skill in meeting challenges. Respondents who strongly identified with their craft radiated not only passion but a deep knowledge and expertise, evident also in their learning to learn and entrepreneurial capabilities. This observation highlights the integrated and embedded-ness of the three aspects of integrated practice. The identification with craft is developed where the work requires depth of expertise and through the individual's exercise of agency. When the work is task based and easily learnt, there is little to identify with, as explained in section 2.4 and expanded on in Chapter 4.

2.1.2. Entrepreneurialism

Entrepreneurialism was not as strongly identified with as the craft, but we found that being entrepreneurial is critical to survival and longevity as a non-permanent worker. Entrepreneurial abilities were embedded in the craft of these workers and thus for many of our respondents evident in their descriptions of their day to day practices. The following explains the list of entrepreneurial capabilities and illustrated in Figure 7.

2.1.2.1. Networks

Diverse networks are important for access to exchange of knowledge, a range of discourses and expectations, and ways of doing business.Non-permanent workers who experienced a glass ceiling, beyond which they found it very difficult to move had tight, close, homopholous (Fenwick, 2012) networks often consisting of family and friends. Networks are important for getting access to more challenging work and thus for learning. Gail from the film and television sector for example notes that, "networks are very important. It's really about who you know. Sometimes it's not about who is the most capable to do the job. It's about your network." Networks are also important for accessing learning opportunities, for example, access to potential mentors, to learning from and through others; engagement in diverse networks feeds passion, and can contribute to growth of mastery and expertise of the craft. For example, Ashley's qualification in Technical Theatre gave him a good grounding of skills in lighting, sound and production, but he could not access the work he wanted because his experience was not accompanied with an induction into networks beyond the venue that hosted the qualification.

2.1.2.2. Shape-shifting

The ability to make multiple transitions and to navigate the diverse worlds non-permanent workers operate in. This involves shifting between different identity roles, clients, and languages, creating a juggling act of competing contracts, demands and expectations across a variety of contexts, in which understanding the norms of various environments becomes valuable. This needs to be done while appearing fit to adapt to each client's needs and able to offer knowledge only in contexts where it is valued (Fenwick, 2008). In this sense one needs to *be* a shape-shifter and a skilled time manager, while *presenting* a coherent "professional self" for the particular client at hand. For adult educators for example, the longer a freelance trainer takes to "figure out" a client, or the less transparent a client is, the more difficult a trainer's job becomes in terms of providing something meaningful. Shape shifting is developed over time and experiences as Howard, a video editor and trainer in the film and television sector notes,

> It's definitely a state of mind that is cultivated over time. You won't be so malleable at the very beginning of your free-lancing career. But as time goes by, the more you work in different environments, the more you come to an understanding that you have to change to fit yourself into different environment. There's no point complaining that we don't have this, we don't have that. Every company you go to is very different and no company will change for a free-lancer. So you change for them and not the other way around. So it was something that took me a long, long, long

while to cultivate myself to be malleable. But it's a very precious experience definitely.

It is perhaps this ability to shape-shift that is an important contributor to freelancers being considered to be the 'best in the [creative] industry'.

2.1.2.3. Positioning and innovating

Non-permanent workers position themselves to offer knowledge that is valued differently in different contexts. Knowing your particular personal interests and commitments and being able to name and frame your expertise contributes to getting financially and/or intrinsically rewarding jobs. This sense of self has many dimensions, and informs how these workers position themselves in relation to their employment, professional development and how they undertake their work. For Adult Educators, innovation is an important part of positioning and reputation building, connected closely with a passion for their craft and their learners. Similarly for film and television, it became evident in puzzling out how to film a suicide jump within a limited budget; the key-grip on the team came up with the idea of simulating the jump by letting a camera 'fall' over the edge of the building. Positioning also affects a client's ability to judge whether you are worth engaging. Without or with limited positioning, planning for professional development becomes difficult without an area to focus on, increasing the risk of wasting resources and threatening professional integrity. Positioning is much about the way in which the non-permanent worker identifies with their craft, and names that identification and thus creates opportunities for themselves.

2.1.2.4. Reputation

Being respected and known in the sector is important for gaining ongoing work and accessing the type of work sought for. For film and television non-permanent workers, "you are only as good as your last job" was an oft repeated phrase illustrating the need to be constantly aware of how actions, relations and contributions on-set impact on reputation and standing in the industry. In addition, public exposure through artefacts such as film is critical for reputation building. For adult educators, reputation building requires a particularly conscious effort, as the work they do is not visible beyond the classroom or immediate client.

2.1.2.5. Planning and business skills

Personal (e.g. covering your own insurance, CPF contributions, etc.) and business financial planning, project management, running a business, securing bigger projects are all aspects of planning and business skills. The lack of these skills is a major contributing reason why new entrants drop out of this kind of work, even though the sector they are working in may be one that predominantly engages non-permanent workers. In these industries, as one of our respondents commented, "the best in the industry are freelancers," yet to survive you need minimally, basic planning and business skills. Others seek to move beyond basic skills to something more extensive. For example, moving from being engaged as part of a team, or operating as an individual to leading a team of core and peripheral members as happens in the film and television sector or formally setting up a business requires a greater level of business and management skills.

2.1.2.6. Being resilient

Resilience is important for coping with set-backs, the ups and downs, the doubts that especially plague beginning non-permanent workers. Getting the jobs that bring satisfaction is a result of a combination of all that has been discussed above and takes time to develop. Issues such as non-payment or very late payment and competing against international competitors whose currency is lower, call for resilience. In addition, onerous working conditions such as the demands of long hours over extended periods call for stamina and endurance. Gavin, a soundman, talked about "swallow a lot of pain. The more pain you swallow, the more popular you'll get," as part of managing social relations in the sector and on-set. Film and television interviewees used the term 'malleable' to describe the way they need to be; malleable refers to a material that can be hammered into shape without cracking or breaking. Shape-shifting is difficult without resilience. It requires a solid core and sense of identity in order to avoid feeling fragmented.

2.1.3. Learning to learn

Key aspects of learning to learn for our non-permanent workers are, being reflective, reflexive, and a strong ability to recontextualise learning, thus developing strong metacognitive skills.

2.1.3.1. Reflection and reflexivity

This involves thinking and feeling activities "in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations" (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985, p.19). Being reflexive is more than reflection; being reflexive is not only "the turning back of the experience of the individual upon [her- or himself]" (Mead, 1934: 134, in Tsekeris, 2010, p.28), it is also a consideration of the contextual processes – institutional, social, political (ibid) and particularly important for our non-permanent workers, the industry context and wider market forces.

For example, Chandra, a soundman, highlighted the capacity to think on your feet, an ability that requires reflection in action. AEs working across the WSQ and private market note that much of their learning occurred through reflection; this assisted them in constantly realigning and refining products, and drawing value out of past experiences. In addition a reflexive component is evident when they learn from contacts about how the various markets in the sector function. Similarly, Kevin, a freelance film director, talked about the challenges of making it to the top and his decision to "blow the competition out of the water by putting in 110 percent", indicating a knowledge of the industry and what it means for the strategies he has decided to employ.

Reflection and being reflexive can also contribute to a recognition of your suitability or not for this kind of work. Ashley opted for a permanent job in the shipping industry after two years of trying indicating he "didn't know the difficulty…of being a freelancer."

Limited reflection and reflexivity can also limit possibilities. Borhan for example, was keen to start a business running his own *kebab* stall but saw no need to pick up additional skills, despite struggling with numeracy skills. Nazri, working in the

furniture removal industry, sought to deliver high quality customer service but lacked information on the range of job opportunities in the removalist industry, and was unable to name the key people in the industry other than his immediate supervisor. This lack of appreciation of the importance of industry knowledge and using such knowledge to reflect on his own circumstances and possibilities, hindered his potential.

Reflection and reflexivitythen, become a 'general pedagogic stance' (Edwards, 1998, p. 386) that is vital to the effective navigation of constantly changing work;reflexivity is a key condition of flexibility. As evident from the above examples, the reflexive qualities required of non-permanent workers are exercised differently in different occupations (Bound et al., 2013; Nur, Bound, Karmel&Sivalingham, 2014; Karmel, Bound &Rushbrook, 2013).

2.1.3.2. Recontextualisation

Recontextualisationis the capacity to access knowledge and skills from diverse channels and 'recontextualise' it (Evans, et al, 2009) in a variety of work settings. That is, learn, adapt and apply from different work settings and other sources to new settings. In the process the non-permanent worker is potentially simultaneously engaging with and changing those practices, traditions and experiences.

For example, Nasser, who worked as a key grip described how he drew on and adapted his knowledge of physics in order to experiment with new camera angles (such as the suspension of the camera by a rope). On one job, a mentor taught Kevin, a freelance film director, how to shoot and meet budgets and timeframes; something he has applied with growing skill to every job since. Yati, working in the technical theatre sector says, "you need to switch your mind and not a lot of people can do that…Like I am somewhere else, I need to do it in a different manner, a different system,…different people,…a different way of doing things and you have to respect that…Because it is not the same everywhere."

Being able to recontextualise is critical to getting work, to honing one's craft, and developing mastery. It is a process where learning to learn, entrepreneurialism, and identifying with craft is synergistic.

2.1.3.3. Meta-cognition

Meta-cognition is defined as awareness and management of one's own thought, or "thinking about thinking" (Kuhn & Dean, 2004, p.270). Meta-cognition helps us to reflect on the mindsets that we have (Stack & Bound, 2012). It has two key components– cognitive knowledge and cognitive regulation (Lai, 2011).

Cognitive knowledge refers to:

- reflecting upon and understanding oneself as a learner, thinker or worker;
- knowledge of how the mind works, and ways of knowing or how learning occurs;
- knowledge of and ability to select strategies or tools that can enhance one's performance.

Cognitive regulationenables planning, monitoring and evaluating of one's thinking and performance.

Those passionate about their craft would often talk about the ways in which they learnt and how they used different opportunities for learning; they were conscious of the range of tools available to them for learning, of their ways of learning and of planning their learning.

Some of the ways non-permanent workers learn is through:

- finding a mentor
- seeking out role models
- observing and active noticing
- asking questions and through discussions
- using their networks
- obtaining knowledge independently through any of the above processes, or social media, searching the web, formal and informal gatherings
- practicing on and off the job
- trial and error
- attending seminars, workshops, short courses

For example, Mano a cameraman spoke of using strategies such as critically appraising the films of those you work closely with and/or admire to assist with developing your own style. Reza, a music technologist in the technical theatre industry indicated that she was always meeting people and deliberately asked where they were working, about their job and then about possible recommendations for work. Learning revolves around the work. Victor of the film and television industry sums this up, "I really learn on the ground with different kind of like, you know, feel of things, and that kind of condition who I am today." Nasser highlights that it is not through learning "in the books", but through his mentor that he was able to move forward,

> He's the only guy who can explain to me from A-Z and even more if I just ask him a simple question. He don't just tell you how to read, he tell you the nuance of it. He tells you all the little things that is not in the books, through his experience and through his knowledge.

The ***drive to learn is work***; non-permanent workers learn as a result of the demands placed on them through the work they do. These diverse sources and ways of learning can afford rich opportunities for reflection, reflexivity and recontextualisation. But when the work is task based and easily learnt it requires only a few learning strategies such as observation and doing the work.

The importance and strong privileging of learning through and for work is in part due to opportunity cost, but also the need for integrated practice. It is not technical skills alone that make a crafts-person, nor is it the mastery of, and identification with, craft

alone, but their combination with entrepreneurialism that creates material for learning to learn for the non-permanent worker. This has important lessons for the design and delivery of formal learning leading to accreditation through PET, CET and higher education. If there is perceived value in formal learning then non-permanent workers likely will participate.

The learning to learn dimension of integrated practice is what enables entrepreneurialism and craft identityto grow. It is an important ingredient for 'becoming'.

2.2. Trajectory

Depending on the strength or weakness of their entrepreneurial and craft identity and their use of learning to learn capabilities, our respondents' *trajectory* was one of growth, stagnation or struggle; what we mean by these terms is explained below.

- *Growing*: non-permanent workers are able to get work they are content with, read and take up opportunities afforded by the environment in which they work

- *Stagnating*: These non-permanent workers are able to get work they are content with, but have difficulty in or are not interested to recognise opportunities the environment affords and taking up these opportunities

- *Struggling*: These non-permanent workers have difficulty in getting work they are content with and appear not to be able to identify opportunities

We deliberately use the term trajectory rather than career, as traditional notions of career are more applicable to 'permanent' work. The strength of the non-permanent worker's integrated practice is but one contribution to their trajectory towards growth, stagnationorstruggle. Individual motivations impact on trajectory, as does the context in which the integrated practices are applied. Motivations and context are introduced in the following sections.

2.3. Motivations

By understanding the different reasons for entering non-permanent work arrangements, or what we refer to as 'motivations',we develop a better understanding as towhy these workers grow, and evolve their identities or not, as they navigate the terrain of this kind of work. Motivations vary according to intent and circumstances. We found four different motivations that mediate the trajectory of these workers:

- *Purposeful*: intentionally pursue the craft through this kind of work arrangements

- *Opportunistic*: the best available option of employment at that point in time

- *Life-style*: seek work with low responsibility and daily pay
- *Life-stage*: priorities lie with non-work circumstances such as caring responsibilities, retirement, and travel

Motivations change, depending on personal circumstances and also because of affordances in the circumstances of their work. This finding is reflected in the work of Evans, Kersh & Kontiainen, 2004; Billett, 2006; Hodkinson et al., 2004. These authors note that as individuals bring prior abilities and experiences to the workplace, their dispositions towards work and learninginfluence the use of workplace learning affordances. Our findings bring a more nuanced understanding to the relation between prior abilities and experiences in the form of the strength or otherwise of their entrepreneurial capabilities and craft identity and their trajectory which to some extent is a reflection of their learning to learn capabilities.

2.4. Context

Context is an amorphous term, nevertheless we use this term deliberately as our findings show that it is the nature and status of the occupation, of the affordancesof work, the industry's dominant employment arrangements, its flows of production and work organisation, and the industry markets, as well as the institutions in the sector and their relations, that contribute to the trajectory of the non-permanent worker. We introduce 'occupational affordances' as a concept to understand how context mediates an individual's work and trajectory.

2.4.1. Occupational affordances

Felstead et al. (2012) notes that analyses of how individuals engage with the learning affordances of work - what work offers them and can do for them in terms of learning and development - show that the distribution of affordances is far from benign and is associated with the occupational hierarchies that operate with different degrees of visibility in organisations. As non-permanent workers experience multiple environments over time, it is inappropriate to use terms that are reflective of more permanent work arrangements such as 'affordances of work'; instead we introduce the concept of 'occupational affordances'. The evidence for it is very strong in our data, as shown in Chapter 4. We suggest there are at least four dimensions of occupational affordances:

- *Work*: opportunities for specialisation. Work that stretches and challenges provides rich affordances for learning
- *Linkages*: ease of entry and movement across sub-sectors, job roles and networks
- *Learning*: through the strength (or lack of) occupational community platforms
- *Voice*: organised representation in the institutional eco-system

The opportunity or lack of it for non-permanent workers to access occupational affordances is critical in shaping their trajectory, as will be explained in Chapter 4.

2.5. Summary

Entrepreneurialism, craft identity and learning to learn are the foundations for non-permanent workers becoming established in this kind of work, and for their growth and development. Entrepreneurialism, strength of identity with their craft and learning to learn are enacted not as separate capabilities and dispositions but as integrated in everyday practices. The new understanding this research brings is that the strength or weakness of these components and their integration have implications for the trajectory of these workers. This does not occur in isolation. We found that the motivations of individuals in entering this form of work, not only change over time, but shape the individual's approach towards his pursuit of work and in the process, his development of entrepreneurialism and craft identity that in turn, mediates his trajectory. This form of individual agency is important, but not the only factor that impacts the trajectory of these workers. Context mediates the trajectory of these workers. Although for the ease of explanation, we have separated motivations and context, we do not see these as separate aspects, rather they act in tandem, mediating each other to impact the trajectory of the non-permanent worker.

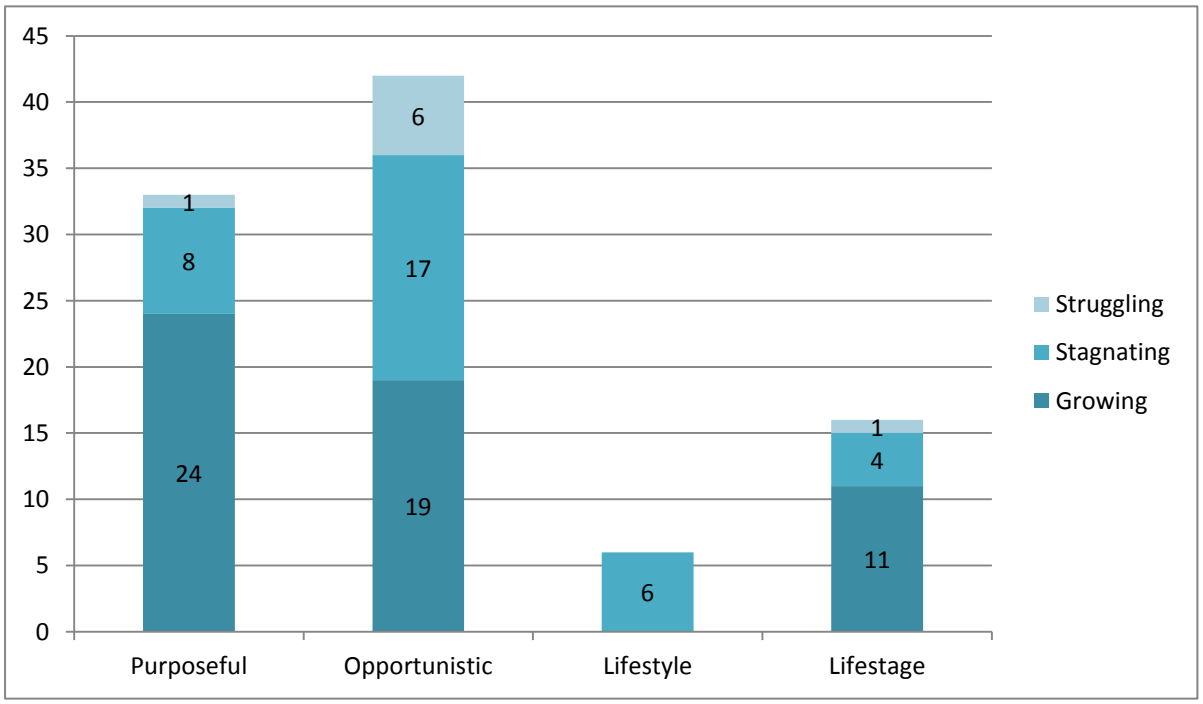
3. IDENTITY, LEARNING & TRAJECTORY

As argued in the introductory chapter, there are important relationships that can help us understand how and what a non-permanent worker identifies with and learns through and for their work. This chapter focuses on the relationship between motivations for entry and integrated practice, and what this means for the trajectory of non-permanent workers. Motivations are an initial window into our participants' identification with their work, and how they make meaning of their decisions and circumstances. From our data, motivations for entry appear important for shaping the approach towards the pursuit of work, and the development of entrepreneurialism and craft identification, held together by learning-to-learn skills, which, in turn, informs trajectory. It is also noted that motivations can change over time reflecting an individual's circumstances, the nature of the work and the further development (or not) of integrated practice.

Purposeful and opportunistic entrants make up the vast majority of our participants (n=33 and n=42 respectively), while people who entered for lifestyle (n=6) or lifestage (n=16) reasons form smaller, but interesting groups whose priorities and circumstances are important to understand when developing interventions for the workforce. As our sample is not claiming to be representative, it is important to remember that these motivations represent their *presence* rather than the size of their presence.

Figure 8 illustrates motivations by trajectory of our participants, and each sub-section of this chapter will explore this relationship which is mediated by the individual's integrated practice.

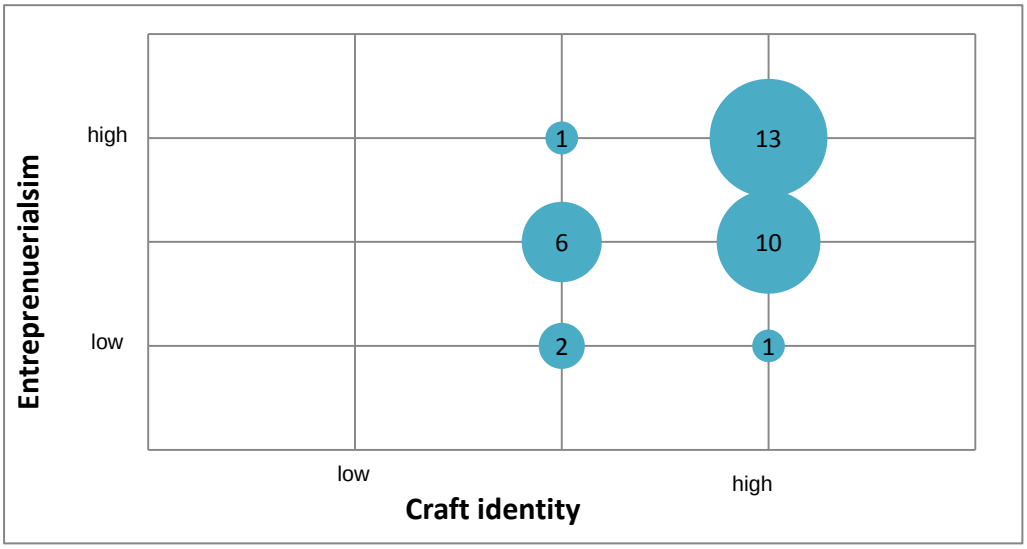
Figure8 Motivations &Trajectory



3.1. Purposeful

Purposeful entrants (n=33) are driven by their interest to pursue their craft. Our purposeful participants were either adult educators (n=12) or people working in the

Figure 9 Purposeful integrated practice



creative industries (n=21), many of whom had been in this line of work for more than five years (n=24). Most of our adult educators had strategically planned their foray into non-permanent work, ensuring they had a combination of entrepreneurialism and craft identification to be viable and seek meaningful work, before leaving permanent employment. Our creative workers leveraged their passion for their craft to drive their pursuit of work and built their entrepreneurialism over time, as a necessary component of their professional identity as non-permanent creative workers.

Those who expressed they were growing (n=24), from both occupational groups, talked about the importance of building and maintaining strong functional networks, moving across projects and clients for growth (locally and internationally), shape shifting, strategically positioning themselves in the market, recontextualising knowledge, being reflexive, and building credibility through specialisation as integral features of their growth.

> you learn the nitty-gritty, the corporate, the channel, and things like that [in permanent work]. …But you only direct one genre you see. But as a freelancer you get to experience different genres. And that is my goal. I'm not as good as them at maybe, operating the camera... You have a mentor when you are permanent. ...But I freelance I got many mentors. And I got many different jobs. I specialise, I become… I do what I can to become the best director. That's the route. (Kevin, Film director)

As illustrated by Kevin, there is strong intention in the way he works and why. Like our other purposeful entrants, he entered this field with his eye on trying to be very good in his area of interest. This drive positions him well to see, create and use

opportunities to learn. Karthik expresses this in terms of aligning work choices with your “highest goal”.

> …creativity comes only when you go beyond your passion because passion is not sustainable. You need to be grounded in your deepest goal, the highest goal and most of the time we compromise ourselves with lower goals. …My real work is based on my highest goal and what I do and what I contribute …[everything else] are means to get me there. (Karthik, AE)

While the dominant story of our purposeful workers is one of having high/medium-high entrepreneurialism and craft identity, which has developed over time (both prior to and during their non-permanent work) and helped them grow, there are also stories of purposeful entrants who struggle (n=1) or stagnate (n=8). This is particularly evident from new entrants who have high to medium craft identity, but medium to low entrepreneurial skills. The resulting implications appear to be that they either cannot get work they are content with and therefore cannot grow (struggling), or can get enough work for their rice bowl, but find it difficult to get work that they can see and make use of affordances to grow (stagnating). This latter group appears to operate like “perma-temps”. Entry was driven by the craft, but the seduction of pseudo permanent or implicitly regular work becomes more appealing than trying to find diverse experiences that can deepen craft knowledge and maintain a functional network.

> (I had this mind set), I am very well established here, so by hook or by crook, I will be staying here - to the extent that you think that it is a permanent job to you there even though it is freelance training…then realised I shouldn’t put my eggs in one basket…But just to say, I am facing the same thing now at this point…but very difficult to balance it because sometimes, how to put it, it is not that I don’t want them but … it goes against my principles because I have already given my dates … and to tell them now (that I want to take other work would be) very difficult so …”(Lata, Adult Educator, Purposeful, low entrepreneurialism, high craft identity, stagnating, established)

In this sense, identification with the craft is not bolstered by identification with non-permanent work arrangements, meaning that growth becomes limited to the assignments that a single client provides. These assignments can also feel attractive when little effort is involved in delivering them as they are often similar in nature. Weak entrepreneurialism makes the idea of constantly seeking work stressful even when it is acknowledged that heavy dependence on a single client is risky.

> I mean, they are not valuing us… we become a new trainer wherever we go because no credentials are given to us, if you are full time staff, yes, you are given credential by the employer but for us, we don’t.”(Lata, Adult Educator, Purposeful, low entrepreneurialism, high craft identity, stagnating, established)

The single purposeful entrant who then struggled, was a theatre lighting technician working at a single venue and some work at a school drama centre.

> I definitely feel I didn't know the difficulty of the job itself, of being a freelancer… when I first started out in the theatre, it definitely was passion but slowly the passion became money and money became a job…calls were getting fewer…I didn't try (getting jobs at other venues). …you feel that hey, the money is not coming in as much as before anymore. So I need to look somewhere else already (Ashley).

It seems that Ashley's weak entrepreneurialism started to override his "passion" for the craft, which took on the form of a tough day-to-day existence. In a sense the romance died and he was no longer able to stay motivated to pursue lighting as his livelihood. It also appears that he particularly struggled to network and fit in with his peers.

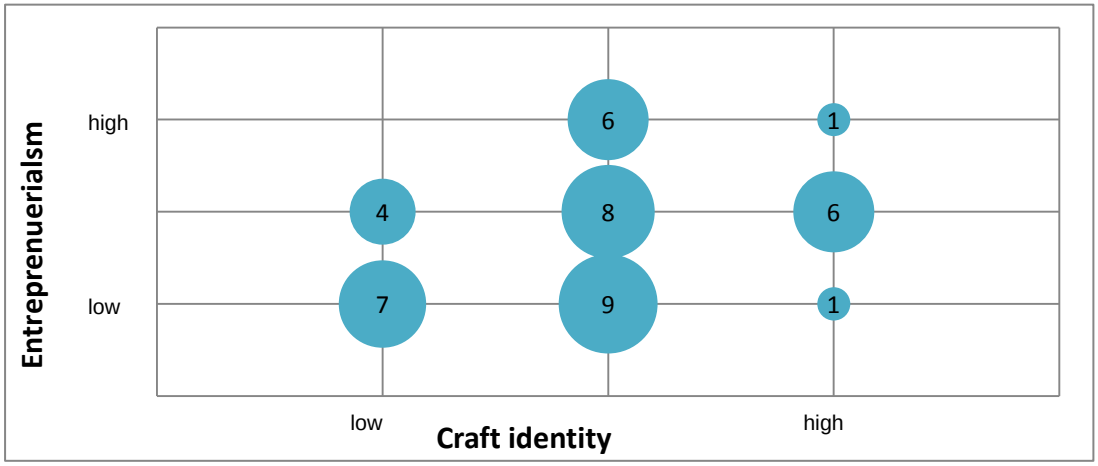
> I feel that people are quite selfish. If they kind of share a bit, they might feel threatened that more people are sharing the same piece of pie….After work, I tend to just go back home. I don't really have a friend. I know some of them hang out and drink but I don't drink so it's a bit difficult and a lot of them smoke. So I don't smoke so it's a bit, it feels weird when I tag along with them to smoke because they all go on smoke breaks (Ashley).

When a follow up interview was conducted, Ashley had found employment elsewhere and was doing just a little bit of theatre on the weekends for fun. His story illustrates that "passion" and intentional pursuit of a craft, alone, is not sufficient for maintaining or growing as a non-permanent worker. Developing an understanding of what it means to be a non-permanent worker, and also becoming purposeful about developing entrepreneurialism*in tandem* with craft identification helps an individual see and make use of affordances to grow. For some purposeful workers this is ignited prior to entry, while for others it is realised and built over time. Without addressing this, non-permanent work becomes increasingly difficult and stagnation or struggle can set in.

3.2. Opportunistic

Opportunistic entrants were made up of people who "fell" into non-permanent work arrangements.

Figure 10 Opportunistic integrated practice



These people had faced trouble navigating and maintaining a position in the permanent workforce, and/or had been introduced to non-permanent work by friends or family members. This pattern is seen in adult educators (n=8), creative workers (13), and those in low wage occupations (21). Almost half of our opportunistic entrants (n=19) are considered to be growing, with two thirds of these having been in non-permanent work for more than five years (n=13). As ten of these "established" participants have developed high entrepreneurialism or high craft identity along the way, it appears that motivations shifted through seeing and leveraging affordances and becoming more purposeful. With intention, then, entrepreneurialism (particularly for low wage workers) and craft identification (particularly for creative workers) grew.

> I joined this industry is basically when one of my friends …they said that do you want to work and I said okay what type of work are you doing? …when moving stuff and the term is called loaders…I was impressed with the other boys that are doing the work like they can run cable, they can make the lights move, they can make sound coming out from speakers…Basically I was just jealous. … So for me, it is getting the knowledge because tertiary wise I do not have anything. I want to learn new things, I want to explore what I can do, what is my capabilities by just learning the ropes of this entertainment so five years of doing lighting, another five years of doing sound and it is like really learn the in-depth things about sound and about lights. It is not just carrying lights, put there, run the cable, no, it is like learning the stuff, what is going on inside the light. So that is the passion I have for what I am doing now. So five years of sound, five years of lighting, then I get hooked on doing rigging till today." (Zac, medium entrepreneurialism, high craft, growing, established)

Here, Zac shares with us how his motivation to learn and grow played an important role in expanding his opportunities, knowledge and identification. Struggle and stagnation, however, were also loud stories of our opportunistic workers. In our total sample, eight individuals were struggling, and six of them were opportunistic entrants, all of whom had been trying this work for less than five years. This group consisted of both AEs and Creative workers with either medium entrepreneurialism and craft identification or a low combination of both.

> Because you not aware… I think to be an entrepreneur is really not very easy. I notice that among the trainers who are successful, they are already in what they want to do. … So I'm starting…So I developed that [package] on my own, basically. …it was only this year that I decided that I needed to do something concrete in terms of my job and… because I've been trying to look for a job and I couldn't find. So I thought that, just go ahead and see how it goes. … …Friends may recommend, but when you talk to the managers, you have to convince the managers. (Keegan, AE, medium entrepreneurialism, medium, craft, struggling)

Those with low craft identity also seem to move around different types of work as they search for an income. They are trying to reconcile their motivations with the work they appear to be able to get, which may not meet their expectations.

> I find that this freelance income is quite good to subsidise me for the moment when I'm still like trying to get a full-time job back… because from the beginning from visual merchandise I moved on to marketing role …I moved on because their business model they changed their business model… I also very keen to learn first aid… so I'm also a freelancer in that training part. … I don't know I'm kind of lost actually. So it depends on who I am speaking to, let's say I am in the training centre I say I'm a trainer in various training centres. So if I am in theatre… (Benny, Theatre Technician, Low entrepreneurial, low craft identity, struggling)

A feeling of being lost is strong for the opportunistic struggling people, where they are particularly unsure of how to position what they can offer in the market to get more sustainable work.

While some people were struggling to find work they were content with, almost half (48%, n=17) of our participants who were stagnating entered non-permanent work opportunistically. The remaining half was split across the other three types of motivations. Our opportunistic and stagnating group were a mix of established (n=6) and establishing (n=11) entrants, largely from the low wage occupations (n=14) with low/medium combinations of entrepreneurialism and craft identification. Income is an important priority for this group, and decisions are largely based on choosing work that does not jeopardise earnings with less focus on trying to get work along lines of pursuing a cohesive craft.

> One of them is the daily payment; $100 is enough for me. If I worked with the company, I have to have the capital. I have the freedom working as freelance. People cannot control us. If I am happy, I will work for him. If I get bigger offer, I will choose that place. The work is the same; the only different is the salary is higher. For example, other person wants to pay me $130 per day; you just follow me, take care of the workers. I have to consider that. It is because I have been following my current boss quite some time, so I feel hesitate to jump over another ship. I did received such offers and I've been out from this company once… but it also depends to the job as well. (Jefri)

There is some "pseudo perm" behaviour here, with loyalty playing an important role for continual workflow, as seen for Jefri, but there is also job hopping when staying with a single employer means getting less assignments as seen for Tisha who is in non-permanent work, with the intention to find a permanent job in a different field.

> I've been in this line, banquet, for almost 3-4 years because I'm a part time looking for a job. … My previous experience was all in admin....My boss asked me to just stop working because I'm pregnant… 2010, my first child. … then I planned to continue working and I got hard time looking for job because of my qualifications…… if possible I want admin because I can spend time with my kids after…. Because for banquet it's like long hours…. I keep on jumping hotels. Unless if I focus on one hotel maybe they will groom me... because not every day they have events right, so I just jump around… at least every day I have money with me. (Tisha, Kitchen Assistant, low entrepreneurialism, low craft, stagnating)

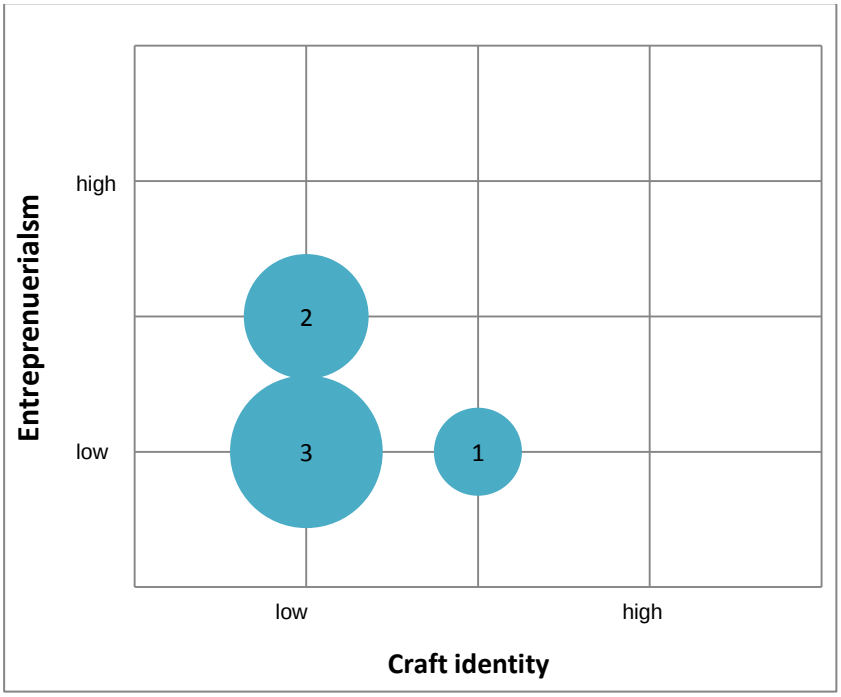
This suggests, that for people with opportunistic motivation for entry, urgency for income, and an eye towards finding a permanent job elsewhere, means that non-

permanent work does not easily translate into developing integrated practice and/or becoming purposeful in terms of “growing” a craft. In this sense, their non-permanent work appears to do little more than act as a “holding bay” and is difficult to utilise in terms of increasing their chances of permanent employment in a different field.

3.3. Lifestyle

Our lifestylers may sound similar to the opportunistic stagnating participants just introduced, but the main differences are this group is interested in low responsibility work, flexibility and with being paid daily. There is talk about moods deciding whether or not someone will work that day and a common feeling of mobility being limited by low formal qualifications or the presence of foreigners.

Figure 11 Lifestyle integrated practice



I try to go but some companies need two years of experience of car knowledge but I only graduate my automotive …they said you need to go for higher NITEC but your one is normal NITEC… I said never mind, not my luck. Then I just go for the movers…. Got try [permanent work] before, but I feel like very lazy (Luqman)

Then after, the shipping industry is worse already, that means drop already, because all the foreigners come. So after it drop already, I run out. I just go around all sorts of casual work, that’s all….sometimes I mood good, I one week work four days, if I mood no good, three days. Okay like what I say four days my pocket money all spend finish, four days.”…(Barry)

De Wei also talks about his motivation to keep his living expenses low. This interprets to limiting his interest in getting better paying or permanent work, which he feels will not necessarily last.

> You make more you have to pay more. … That's why, because of the rental, make me no confidence to work in permanent job….I doesn't want CPF. Because once I take my CPF, this job the pay is high. My rent will bounce up, but it won't come down again. So this is what the difficulty I have, you understand or not?(De Wei)

All six lifestylers are stagnating, and those over 50 years old (33%, n=2) were not intending to leave this work arrangement or look for other types of employment, citing age discrimination. The younger lifestylers were thinking about seeking different jobs or qualifications, but were either not actively trying or finding that the paper work for subsidised training is too complex and the Career Development Centres unhelpful.

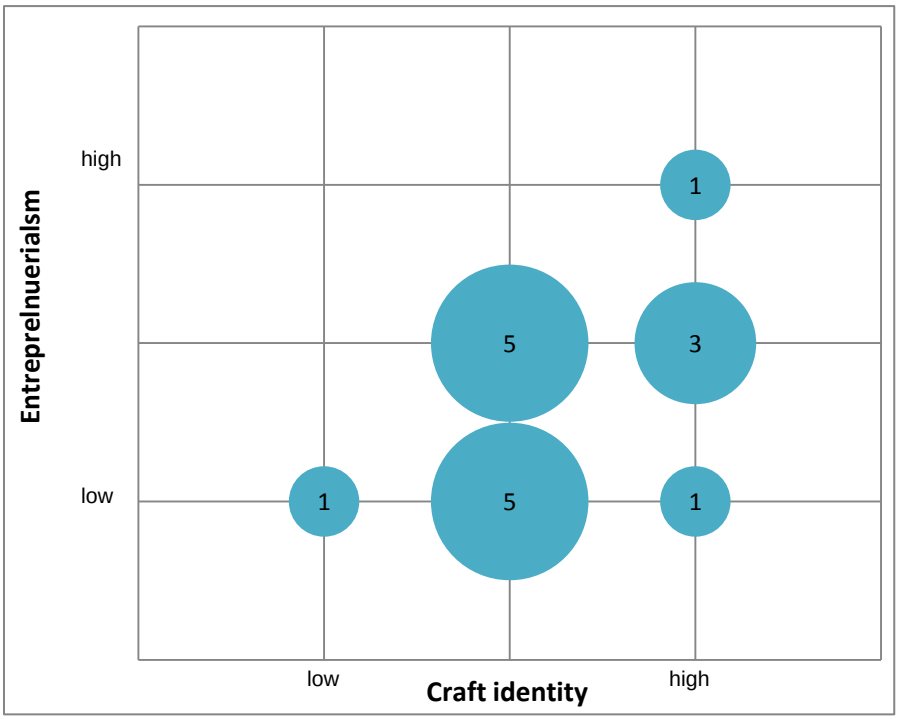
> Luqman: I want to take course, for tower crane course. That is my dream. Until now, I never get the course….
>
> Luqman's spouse: He actually tried to apply through CDC for the crane operator course but they say they already submit but there is no reply from them to say that he is selected for the course and things like that…. Because we no longer under them, we don't know how to go about it. To actually just enrol on our own, can but it costs a lot. It is 3000 for the course itself.
>
> Luqman: it is not under CDC, it is under WDA."
>
> Luqman's spouse: It is thousand plus, payable a thousand plus only."

For this group, it appears their motivations, stemming largely from socio-economic factors, do not lay a foundation to easily enable integrated practice to grow.

3.4. Lifestage

Our lifestagers (n=16) were made up of people who were prioritising non-work circumstances at the time of the interview. Many of these people had caring responsibilities for young children or aging parents (n=7), were semi-retired (n=7), or were interested in travelling (n=2). The amount of work that this group was interested in pursuing depended largely on balancing a need for income and their non-work circumstances. They were not necessarily interested in doing "easy" work.

Figure 12 Lifestage integrated practice



> I used to work with children with special needs full-time… then I stopped because I had to look after family issues, my parents were not well. But a friend asked if I wanted to…come and just help train teachers …I wasn't actively looking actually because I was juggling other things… But it was great because I have a passion for this area and it's nice to be paid to share your passion… people like us who are family people, it depends on the age of the children, how independent they get and also for me I'm also looking after the elderly as well, I'm the ham in the sandwich. Yeah, so I guess it's a matter of managing the time… So it's all a matter of juggling.(Tian Yun, AE, stagnating)

> I started to serve beer from when I was forty. It was a full-time job before. Now, I don't do full-time, but do part-time only….. I am old, and my daughter asked me not work anymore, no need to work….She knows that I will not have dementia if I work. I just work and work. (Esther, F&B assistant, stagnating)

For participants in this group who were not main breadwinners, the craft identification appears to be a more dominant feature than entrepreneurialism, largely due to low interest in having more than one client or project at a time, which requires more juggling. Entrepreneurialism, in this sense takes on less of the shape-shifting features required for moving constantly between sites, but is often more concerned with planning, scheduling, and reputation building.

The dominant trajectory for this group is growing (n=11), while a smaller group were stagnating (n=4) or struggling (n=1). The cases of Norashid and Shar are an interesting point of comparison that illustrates how motivation/agency and integrated practice can mediate trajectory. Both Norashid and Shar work in technical theatre and like to travel, Norashid is primarily interested in lighting, and Shar in sound. They are in their late 20s/ early 30s and both have medium entrepreneurialism and

medium craft identification. Norashid has been in this line of work for around five years and Shar for 8 years.

> I decided to quit SCDF. I wanted to do something that I was not under control and nobody stops me from keeping long hair, colour my hair or go holidays as and when, so I did freelance. I love to travel and that is why I choose this kind of job.(Norashid)

> If I have work, then I work. If don't have work means you get your own free time. …I'm sure like most of my friends were telling me: OK, where are you off to now? They don't ask me: how are you, how have you been? They are like: where are you off to next?(Shar)

Norashid, however, appears to be growing, while Shar appears to be stagnating.

> I think in this industry [you need to be] hard working and not shy to ask and be funny, make everyone laugh….Whoever is near to me I will just ask I don't care whether full-time or casual I will just ask….like for us we just see what they (more experienced people) are doing and take a bit from there and from here and that is where you get your own style….you got to try and try and try, you try and do this and then we learn new stuff. For me, the journey is fun. (Norashid)

> I just mix on sound…. As stuff got bigger, you just learn a bit more, like how that particular equipment works, that's all. But the general basic is still the same….if I'm working with smaller equipment… I tend to get laid-back. I think now I'm still waiting for bigger and bigger shows. Yes, I think more concert scale….I think mainly my personality that it cannot be too mundane. …The company I work for basically I'm the only soundman who knows most of the things. … If I don't know, no one knows. So what I do, sometimes I don't know whether it's right or wrong, and then I wait until someone does. If you want to learn the basics, YouTube is the easiest to learn basics. But then when you get advanced, it kind of like stops.(Shar)

While the work that Norashid and Shar do is undoubtedly different (a concept explored in chapter four) the different ways they tell their stories suggest that Norahsid has an implicit interest in creating, seeing, and making use of opportunities to develop his craft and, by working hard, he is also conscious of building his reputation and networks for further work, both of which help him grow. His motivation for entry relating to travel and autonomy means he is taking his time to consider an offer to become full-time permanent staff, but his growth is also benefitting from being strongly self-driven. Shar, on the other hand, seems more passive in his approach to furthering his trajectory. Like Norashid, he also talks about learning through equipment manuals and he clearly feels confident in having a degree of expertise, but he does not talk about reaching out to other people for help, or choosing assignments based on supervisors who are great at sharing knowledge. This enactment of autonomy/independence does not appear to make it easy to see, create, or make use of affordances to grow, but rather isolates or disengages him.

3.5. Summary

Motivations for entry are a starting point to explore non-permanent workers' identification with their work and their development. We see movement of people either becoming more purposeful and strongly self-driven, to becoming jaded, disengaged, and frustrated. This translates into the degree to which an individual is motivated to see and create affordances to grow, leveraging and building on their integrated practice or not. Such motivations are heavily influenced by an individual's circumstances and how they make meaning or understand their circumstances and prospect in relation to their employment decisions. Acknowledging the role of the individual's identification with non-permanent work is important when considering learning and development initiatives that should be sensitised to the varying motives and forms of interest in further growth or development.

4. OCCUPATIONAL AFFORDANCES

4.1. Context and trajectory

As noted in the preceding chapter, motivation is a powerful factor influencing the seeking out of work opportunities, leading to how the non-permanent worker evolves his or her entrepreneurialism and craft identity, which then informs his or her work trajectory. The Lifestyler, for instance, has particular non-work priorities that influence his work choices and patterns that usually lead to a stagnating trajectory. The Purposeful worker, on the other hand, may use his or her craft identity to guide the building of requisite entrepreneurial skills to secure the desired assignments, leading to a growing trajectory.

Our data shows that the work trajectory of the non-permanent worker is additionally mediated by the work context he or she is in. We see the effects of the work context in all the interviewees, but its effects are highly visible for workers who fit the opportunistic profile who form a sizeable proportion of our respondents (42%).

By way of demonstrating the importance of work context, we contrast here the narratives of three individuals – Jefri and Zac share similar background profiles and started out in similar job roles but in two distinct industries, while Zac and Ashley share very different background profiles but working in the same industry. Table 1 summarises the background profiles, industry, motivations and work trajectory.

Figure13 Summary of profile, motivation and trajectory of three respondents

Profile	Industry	Motivation	Trajectory
Jefri, 52, primary school qualifications	Mover	Opportunistic	Stagnating (low entrepreneurialism, medium craft identity)
Zac, 34, primary school qualifications	Technical Theatre	Opportunistic	Growing (medium entrepreneurialism, high craft identity)
Ashley, 26, diploma holder	Technical Theatre	Purposeful	Struggling (low entrepreneurialism, medium craft identity)

Jefri began as a packer in the removalist industry, and moved up to become a carrier. With his strong work ethics, it did not take him long before he was offered supervisory positions with a corresponding increase in wages. He subsequently struck a partnership with a co-worker to become a sub-contractor, taking on assignments from removalist companies and contracting workers to work under him. The partnership soured, and Jefri moved back to be a supervisor on a freelance

basis. It has now been 30 years since he first joined the industry, and Jefri spoke with pride of the responsibilities required to be a practitioner in the removalist industry such as gaining the confidence of clients, and exercising due care in handling items. However, it is immediately apparent that there are limits to his job scope. For instance, in disputes with clients, a permanent staff takes over to handle the client. In our discussions with employers, we also observed that companies tend to outsource relatively simpler jobs to non-permanent workers, while more complex work such as data centre relocation was entrusted to their permanent staff. Consequently, there is a limit to the way Jefri has been able to evolve his skills. Given the importance of maintaining the trust of employers in his work, Jefri assumes a perma-temp behaviour, working only with one or a few employers at any one time. Fatigue, because of the physically-demanding nature of his job, and income uncertainty, prompted him to opt for a permanent position in other industries. He has applied to be a cleaning supervisor and a storekeeper, but his job search has met with little success. That he is compelled to look for permanent work opportunities outside of the industry he is in suggests a certain ceiling exists in his ability to sustain his craft identity.

In contrast to Jefri's experiences, Zac benefitted tremendously from the more expansive work context in the technical theatre industry. A school drop-out, he tagged along with a friend to take on a casual assignment as a loader, working in a range of sites that include hotels, convention centres and stage companies. He enjoyed the dynamics of this work, and this spurred him to seek out more challenging opportunities. Actively learning the ropes from more experienced co-workers, he started specialising in lighting jobs. After five years, he decided to focus on sound. Subsequently, he became interested in rigging, and took it upon himself to pick up the mathematical skills required to excel in this field. In his words,

> I did my own research, I went to all the websites and I read all the books about calculations, Pythagoras theorem. And as a person without any education level, it is very hard to learn Maths especially [Additional] Maths just to accommodate my job. So I learnt from scratch, I asked my sister, I asked my friends to help me. (Zac, rigging specialist)

Zac soon became one of the top head flymen in Singapore. When a new theatre venue was set up in Singapore, he was talent spotted to join the venue. He is now a full-time technician at the theatre venue, and has also been invited to be a part-time lecturer at a post-secondary education institution. As his contractual arrangements allow him to also provide freelance services, he is involved in freelance projects from time to time and was a Technical Manager at one of Singapore's top annual youth shows.

While the work context in technical theatre was conducive for the development of craft identity, we find that it was less so for the development of entrepreneurialism. An inspiring trip to the Sydney Opera House motivated Ashley, 26, who holds a diploma in hospitality, to seek out jobs in technical theatre, and he wrote in to apply for a position in a theatre venue. Assessed as having high potential, Ashley was put on a 12-month sponsored special training programme for freelancers that gave him broad-based technical skills. He was also assigned a mentor, who was a highly-experienced permanent staff in the theatre but was a tough task-master. Ashley picked up very strong skills as a lighting programmer, but it soon become apparent

that he was unable to sustain a steady stream of jobs, relying only on the theatre venue as his only source of jobs. When calls from the theatre venue got fewer and fewer, he decided to leave the industry for a permanent position in the shipping line. When asked if he had tried getting jobs from other theatre venues, his simple reply "I did not," suggests that the need to seek out jobs from other employers to secure sustainable income was not immediately apparent to him. At one level, Ashley's narrative suggests the importance of the individual's agency in seeking and seizing opportunities, but we also observed that the affordances available to him pointed him in a different direction. For instance, the 12-month sponsored training programme required him to complete 2000 hours of work with the theatre venue, and this may have led him to focus only on jobs with the theatre venue. His mentor was also a full-timer, focusing on technical skills with little emphasis on coaching him on the entrepreneurial skills required to sustain work as a non-permanent worker.

In short, work contexts are important in facilitating integrated practice by providing the environment for the development of craft identity, entrepreneurialism and learning to learn skills. Different individuals will need different types of affordances that fit with their background profiles, and motivation of entry.

4.2. Occupational affordances as a conceptual frame

We looked into our data to understand the particular factors in a work context that facilitates or inhibits integrated practice. Frequency of mention of factors was one key approach. For instance, many of our interviewees shared experiences of how some co-workers had been instrumental in giving them vital tips and advice that then shaped their approach at work. Beyond frequency, we also looked at contrasts as in the case of Jefri, Zac and Ashley that helped to amplify the importance of certain factors within the work contexts. In essence, we were observing the presence of affordances, described as properties within an environment that furnishes the means for the actor's actions, independent of the actor's ability to perceive it or actual action (Gibson 1979, Turvey 1992). This environment was the "occupation" that is located within an industry and cuts across work organisations. As research has noted, permanent workers have opportunities to align their goals and search for personal meaning within the cultural norms and forms of conduct of the company they work for (Du Gay, 1996). Non-permanent workers, on the other hand, constantly move across organisations, work with different teams and undertake different aspects of work within their field of expertise. The cultural norms and forms of conduct reside within the occupation.

We thus put forth a conceptual frame called "Occupational Affordances" capturing dimensions as observed in our data that facilitates or inhibits integrated practice. Our view is that the concept of "Occupational Affordances" go towards helping overcome the current binary conceptualisation of non-permanent workers as either 'contingent', or 'precarious' because it gives focus on the work contexts rather than the non-permanent work arrangement in and of itself. Some research has also suggested that the precarious worker may be found in sites that are lower paid and require less formal education, while the contingent worker may be found in sites that are higher paid and require more formal education, but other research suggests a

conflation of the two (Holly & Rainnie 2012; McKeown 2005; Ross 2008; Waterhouse et. al. 1999). Our conception of "Occupational Affordances" helps to locate factors beyond the wage and formal educational qualifications to explain why workers may flourish, stagnate or struggle in non-permanent work. Based on our data, low-wage work may in fact be stepping stones to more specialised skills if there are adequate occupational affordances. On the other hand, non-permanent work even in PME sectors may lead to precarity if there are inadequate occupational affordances.

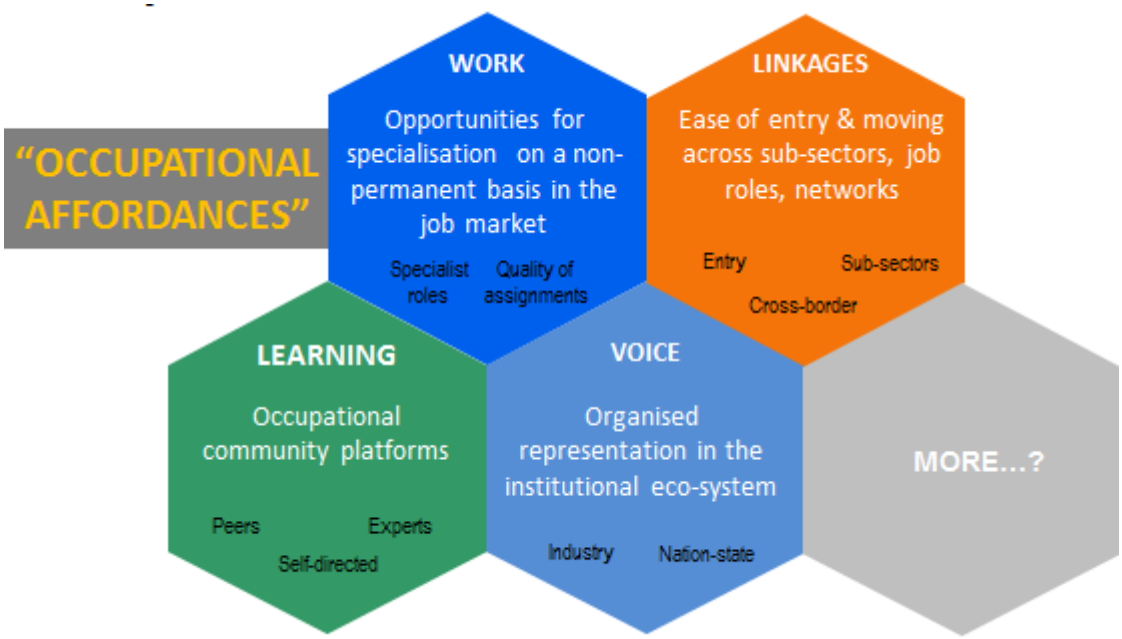
Four key dimensions were observed:

- **work**, referring to the availability of specialised roles on a non-permanent basis in the industry, and the quality of assignments;
- **linkages**, referring to how easy it is for workers to navigate the industry either at point of entry, across sub-sectors or across national borders;
- **learning** as part of an occupational community, linked to accessibility to peers, experts, and tools and artefacts that enable self-directed learning; and
- **voice** – linked to the organised representation of non-permanent workers within the industry institutional eco-system, as well as within the nation-state.

Figure 15 is a graphical representation of our conceptual frame and further work should be conducted to identify if there are more dimensions.

Sections 4.2.1 – 4.2.4 explain the key dimensions identified based on our current set of data.

Figure 14 Occupational Affordances – an Initial Framework



4.2.1. Work

We found that the opportunities to specialise on a non-permanent basis in the job market are an important structural aspect for the development of non-permanent workers. This relates to both the availability of specialist roles and the quality of assignments. In the absence of career progression structures typically available for permanent work, specialist roles that the market demands and rewards provide a signpost for the non-permanent worker to seek out work and evolve his or her skills in deeper ways. The non-availability of specialist roles on a non-permanent basis in the three low-wage occupations surveyed provided a ceiling on the development of skills, even with motivated workers. Thus, Jefri lacked the opportunities to develop his skills in a way that Zac was able to, even though both started in similar low-wage job roles. While the technical theatre industry had plenty of specialist roles on a non-permanent basis such as Head Flyman or Technical Manager that Zac evolved his skills to take up, the specialist roles in the removalist industry was only available on a permanent basis such as the positions of a quality controller or a surveyor. Non-permanent workers are deployed in the removalist industry to take on routine jobs and thus are fitted at the periphery of the total volume of jobs in the industry.

The other aspect of work relates to the quality of assignments. In Film & TV, and Technical Theatre, the low quality of assignments available locally was seen as a major barrier. This is tied to the high number of imported productions, and low budget set aside for local productions. A freelance producer explains,

> The projects are not exciting enough for us to move forward. It's always the same…The freelancers doesn't upgrade, but the projects don't require them to upgrade as well.

In the Adult Education industry, we similarly see the trend of Adult Educators seeking to be a representative of certain products developed in more established markets such as the US. The opportunities for developing and successfully marketing niche, internationally-recognised products are fewer.

4.2.2. Linkages

Given that the onus is on the non-permanent workers to meaningfully evolve his or her skills by deftly navigating the non-permanent market of skills, linkages are important enablers. From our data, we observe three types of linkages that can facilitate the development of non-permanent workers. The first relates to entry-level linkages, in terms of how easy it is for a new entrant to enter and be able to navigate the industry. On the whole, we find that the support they receive as new entrants tend to be low primarily because of the isolation they tend to face as non-permanent workers. Recruitment tends to be via networks, which the beginning freelancer typically has difficulty penetrating. As one beginning interviewee explains, what matters most are "Contacts, contacts, contacts. Then skills."

Another type of linkage relates to sub-sectoral linkages, that is, the extent to which sub-sectors within an industry are linked up either through recruitment practices or by sharing similar norms and practices. Sub-sectoral linkages are important because they expand the pool of non-permanent work assignments, and facilitate the portability of skills. In the creative industries, we find that sub-sectoral linkages tend to be relatively well-developed in that workers in technical theatre can move for

instance across venue theatres, stage companies, touring shows, local production houses, and hotel and convention centres. Informal barriers do exist. For instance, some workers highlight that because recruitment tends to be by word-of-mouth, those who enter a certain sub-sector may find it difficult to penetrate networks in another sub-sector. However, by and large, we found that many individuals are able to move across sub-sectors, albeit with some difficulty. The Adult Education industry on the other hand, faces significant challenges in terms of fragmentation linked to different status, norms and practices in the different sub-sectors. For instance, lecturers in adult education at the polytechnics and universities have vastly different organisational practices than the corporate trainers in the private market. The Workforce Skills Qualifications system, likewise, has generated a market of practitioners with distinct practices that are seen as of lower standing, such that one Adult Educator shares that even when he takes up WSQ assignments, he refrains from highlighting his involvement in assignments to future clients. In the low-wage occupations surveyed, sub-sectoral linkages are well-developed; this is partially a result of low entry requirements.

The third type of linkages relates to cross-border linkages, that is, the extent to which the local market overlaps with the international markets. We find that non-permanent workers tend to do well in developing markets, especially in the Asian region, but less so in developed economies that tend to have more sophisticated work practices. In Film & TV for instance, a freelance producer who also recommends freelance workers to production houses shared that a foreign production house once declined the local cameraman who was proposed because he lacked video editing knowledge, even though as a cameraman he was not required to perform video editing services. The rationale was that by knowing the post-production elements involved downstream, a cameraman would be better able to film shots that the post-production crew desired. However, local work practices have yet to require such sophisticated requirements. Consequently, the ability to access such jobs meant that the non-permanent workers' repertoire of skills should grow significantly. One video editor shared that she had one week to complete editing of 1 hour of footage for a local production house, compared to six weeks for an international production house where extensive discussions were held with other members of the production crew. Consequently, she learnt significantly from the exposure to such work that she could recontextualise even in the local work market should such opportunities arise.

4.2.3. Learning in an occupational community

Our respondents inform us that work drives their learning – whether through acquiring new knowledge and skills, or recontextualising the old and familiar.

What we find significant is that the non-permanent workers tend to articulate, in a more exuberant manner, the learning experiences they have had in the context of some form of informal mentoring or observation of more experienced peers at work assignments. We can understand this enthusiasm better in the context of the professional isolation faced by non-permanent workers where they are hired for a certain service and deemed as the "expert" at least for that job. The affordances for learning from more experienced peers are thus difficult to access.

For example, Yati was getting a stream of routine assignments and feeling jaded, until an established lighting designer informally took her under his wings. He needed her to cover him for assignments, trained her up including disciplining her on work ethics, and guided her through a reflection session at the end of each assignment. Yati feels her skills have since grown exponentially.

Kevin, a freelance director, shared that while he had an intuition for storytelling, he was not surviving in the industry because he was not "shooting fast and economical enough". An informal mentor "sort of" taught him "how to shoot things in a factory way". More recently, he visited an international film set. The mere conversation with the producer gave him "so much learning…about the business, about the mindset, about the economies."

Guidance from peers and experts may be experienced from near, as in the case of Yati and Kevin, or afar. The latter typically takes the form of chat rooms, YouTube videos, and books that offer opportunities for self-directed learning within a virtual occupational community.

Consequently, in the narratives of our interviewees, they speak well of PET and CET programmes only in as much as they offer the opportunities to be inducted into the norms and practices of the industry, and have discussions with more experienced workers. Yati, for instance, took up a diploma programme in audio-visual, and appreciated the programme for equipping her with theories and basic skills. However, she felt that the programme fell short in terms of preparing her to work in different teams across different sites. She explains,

> "Now if I shift you to another place, will you know how to do it? Will you use the same [techniques]? So that is where you need to switch your mind and not a lot of people can do that…Like I am somewhere else, I need to do it in a different manner, a different system,…different people,…a different way of doing things and you have to respect that…Because it is not the same everywhere."

Her current mentor provides her with guidance in terms of the work ethics and tactics to overcome such challenges, which she could not get through her PET programme.

4.2.4. Voice

A major impediment to the learning and development of non-permanent workers is that their voice, needs and preferences are not adequately recognised and established within the institutions in Singapore, be it within an industry setting or within the institutions of the nation-state.

In industry sectors, we find that non-permanent workers tend to be under-represented in many institutional arrangements. In the Arts & Cultural Manpower & Skills Training Council led by WDA, there were only two freelancers (the term used in this industry for non-permanent workers) represented among the members that also include theatre venues, local production houses, and government funding agencies. There have been attempts by freelancers to organise themselves, but the results are usually mixed because of the opportunity cost of being away from projects. For instance, the Technical Theatre Association of Singapore was set up

by a group of freelancers, but this soon became defunct because of the lack of manpower to run the association. In Film & TV, Six Degrees is a non-profit organisation that brings members together including organising special talks, but this set-up is still a long way from being an association advocating the interests of freelancers. In a reference group session for technical theatre, there were heated debates between those identifying themselves with the freelancers and the government agencies, with the latter highlighting that sufficient seed funds were available for the freelancers to set up an association, while the former highlighted that the funds were insufficient to pay for full-time staff. Regardless, our analysis suggests that it is important for dialogue to continue in this regard as a strengthening of the presence and interests of non-permanent workers in institutionalised arrangements will enhance the quality of deliberations significantly that more often than not, is aimed at benefiting the non-permanent workers as a critical pool of labour in the sector. In the low-wage occupations surveyed, we do not see evidence of any form of institutional arrangements that recognise, represent or incorporate the voices of these casual workers.

At the broader national level, the data from our interviewees suggest that they are often misunderstood, misrepresented or that existing policies have been inadequate in supporting them as non-permanent workers. Gail, a freelance producer, highlighted that when she wanted to apply for a property loan, she had to fill up a form stating her occupation and the only box remotely relevant was “odd-job labourer”. Ron, a freelance lighting designer, shared that it was more difficult for non-permanent workers to understand and navigate social policies such as the Central Provident Fund (CPF) that is a compulsory savings scheme for workers in Singapore. He shares:

> [You] don’t have CPF. You don’t have medical insurance, you cannot take sick leave and get paid, whatever you get paid, that is it. I have to buy my own insurance, I have to plan my own retirement, I have to plan for my own travels, insurance, everything is done on your own. You are a one man company. A lot of people will not have that kind of knowledge or diligence to make sure that you plan for your future.

For Kevin, a freelance director, he laments the lack of union representation that can defend the interests of non-permanent workers. He notes the prevalence of late payment in the Film & TV sector, and even non-payment.

> The payment come late…there’s no regulatory body in Singapore to help us. There’s no union.

From the data, it appears that there is inadequate support from social institutions in Singapore that tend to design programmes and policies based on a “permanent work paradigm”. Because work and life planning are so integrated in the trajectory of a non-permanent worker, addressing the need for social institutions to be more cognisant of the different ways of being of non-permanent workers will go a long way towards helping these workers manage better with the ‘precarity’ aspects of their work linked to income uncertainty and fewer social and medical benefits.

4.1. “Occupational affordances” as a conceptual frame to guide sectoral policy interventions

Assessing the quality of the different dimensions of occupational affordances may offer a new lens to guide policy-makers on interventions in sectors with high prevalence of non-permanent work.

Figure 16 provides our broad assessment of the quality of occupational affordances in the sectors surveyed. Based on this analysis, we note that improving entry-level linkages, access to experts and quality of assignments are three key areas that will help to provide greater occupational affordances for workers in the sectors. In addition, the Adult Education industry suffers from fragmentation that impedes the ease of movement of non-permanent workers in the sector. There are many historical reasons for this, but this analysis suggests that facilitating the development of shared understanding, norms and practices would go a long way towards providing better support for adult educators.

For the sectors with low-wage occupations, the analysis suggests that the lack of specialist roles on a non-permanent basis is a major impediment affecting the learning and development of non-permanent workers in these sectors, rather than low-wage jobs being a problem in and of itself. Non-permanent workers are reluctant to enter permanent work in these industries because of the lower daily pay they would get, as well as the more rigid working conditions in permanent work. The options would be to examine the viability of the industry facilitating more specialist work assignments on a non-permanent basis. If this is not viable, redesigning permanent work to make it more attractive to workers would be an alternative, while being cognisant of the workers’ aspirations in terms of higher pay. One option would be an extended work-study scheme where workers are attached to employers over a longer work period, and given increments if they meet a certain set of pre-agreed key performance indicators. Another option, in terms of career facilitation, would be to suggest that these workers take up non-permanent work in sectors with higher occupational affordances such as technical theatre, so that they have the space to develop their trajectory in more meaningful ways.

Figure 16: Occupational Affordances in the Sectors Surveyed

	Film & TV	Technical Theatre	Adult Educators	Low Wage Occupations
		Work		
Opportunity for specialisation	Yes, new entrants tend to move into specialist roles directly	Yes, new entrants take generic as well as specialist roles	Yes, but difficult to access if specialisation is not established prior to entry.	**No. Specialised roles are on permanent basis, which workers avoid**
Quality of assignments	**Local productions deemed to be of low quality. Foreign productions are difficult to access.**	**Limited opportunities for creative productions, as most productions are imported.**	**Some corporate assignments have higher quality status; WSQ is seen as low quality to many**	Low. Specialised jobs are entrusted mainly to permanent staff.
		Linkages		
Entry-level	**Limited support, except if entering through networks**	**Limited support, except if entering through networks**	**Limited support**	Good support through teams
Sub-sectors	Good linkages across Film, TV, commercial ads/videos sub-sectors	Good linkages across theatre venues, production houses etc	**Fragmented, weak linkages across WSQ, private markets, IHLs**	Nil. Workers move to a different industry e.g. F&B
Cross-border	Weak linkages; plus competition from foreign practitioners locally	Good linkages. Plentiful opportunities in the region.	Many AEs are accessing jobs in the region.	Nil.

		Learning		
Peer	Support for some (e.g. soundmen) but not others (e.g. directors)	Good support because of nature of work	Competition and isolation make peer learning difficult.	Good support through teams and at “ports”
Expert	Difficult to access – by chance	Difficult to access – by chance	Difficult to access – exploitative	Through permanent staff
Opportunity for self-directed learning	Yes, online resources, self-procured tools, artefacts	Yes, online resources (e.g. YouTube videos, chatrooms)	Books, online resources, conferences	Workers see little need for this
		Voice		
Industry	Multiple attempts to organise but fragmented	One attempt to organise itself but not sustained	Top-down through Adult Educator Network; difficult as “the industry” does not identify as a common group	Nil
Nation-state	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited

4.2. Summary

In summary, this chapter has shown the importance of the work contexts in shaping the development of the non-permanent worker's craft identity and exercise of entrepreneurialism and learning to learn capability, which then informs his or her trajectory. It puts forth an initial conceptual frame, named Occupational Affordances, which elucidates the key dimensions in a work context that facilitate or inhibit the non-permanent worker's navigation of the complex terrain of non-permanent work. Occupational Affordances point to the availability and shape of opportunities within an environment, independent of the actors' ability to perceive it. Occupational Affordances do not absolve the individual of his or her agentic involvement in seeking out and acting on the affordances, consistent with our analysis in the preceding chapter of the importance of motivations that guide actions of our actors. An understanding of the occupational affordances enables policy-makers and practitioners to leverage the existing affordances or develop new ones for the purposes of learning and development of non-permanent workers.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As non-permanent workers identify with their work differently depending on their motivations and work context, they grow by developing their craft identification, entrepreneurialism and learning-to-learn capabilities. The study also found non-permanent work arrangements contribute to or constrain learning through the availability of affordances.

This section therefore presents the implications and recommendations arising from the findings discussed in the preceding chapters. The first sub-section introduces the implications and recommendations for the learning and development needs of non-permanent workers. The second sub-section presents recommendations for a greater broad-based appreciation of non-permanent work.

5.1. Implications and recommendations for learning & development

1. Integrated practice (identification with the craft, entrepreneurialism and learning to learn) is fundamental for growth

Design and teach for integrated practice. PET programmes should introduce new entrants to the industry early in their course and offer placement and access to the industry throughout the programme.

CET programmes should ensure access to multiple sites to build entrepreneurial aspects of integrated practice, particularly networking.

PET and CET programmes to recognise and leverage industry masters as mentors and coaches.

Career agencies/facilitators to develop **deep knowledge of and appreciation for** non-permanent work and workers to inform design and delivery of career services. This includes understanding the importance of integrated work and life planning for non-permanent workers.

Career agencies/facilitators to consider **tapping on industry masters** as an adjunct pool of career facilitators who can provide personalised and contextualised tips and advice.

2. Personal motivations can enhance or inhibit seeing, creating, and utilising opportunities to learn and develop one's integrated practice and grow

There is no one size fits all. Responses must acknowledge that there are multiple considerations at play, which inform individual decisions.

Career agencies/facilitators, employers and individuals should encourage curiosity and the move towards the purposeful pursuit of work.

3. Non-permanent workers only engage in formal structured learning with a specific goal in mind

WDA and educational providers to move beyond classrooms to support opportunities to develop integrated practice through work.

4. Learning is driven through, for and by the work that non-permanent workers engage in

Funding bodies to ensure stretch assignments as part of the funding requirement.

Educational providers to design work into curriculum and delivery.

5. ***Occupational affordances can enhance learning and development through work that challenges and stretches***

Adopt a holistic approach to development of the sector to provide for occupational affordances.

Support the development of Group Training Companies.[3]

6. Ongoing work is key to longevity as a non-permanent worker and thus for learning and development opportunities

Individual non-permanent workers should constantly seek opportunities.

PET providers to design entrepreneurial capability (as part of integrated practice) into curriculum and delivery.

Industry masters to induct the NPW into or further develop ways of being (eg shape shifting, knowing the rules of engagement), reading opportunities, and networks.

7. Trajectory rather than traditional notions of career (as many of these workers move across work that has different levels of status and reward at any one point in time)

Knowledge of integrated practice, trajectories, motivation and context, what it means for different sectors and how to apply this knowledge should be part of the continuous professional development of career coaches.

5.2. Recommendations for greater broad-based appreciation of non-permanent work

[3]Group Training Organisations in Australia recruit potential and/or existing Apprentices under an Apprenticeship/Traineeship Training Contract and place them with 'host' employers while they undertake their training and provide a breadth of experience gained in a number of different enterprises. The GTO is the employer of the Australian Apprentice; this arrangement is particularly attractive to small and medium enterprises. See for example, http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/group-training, and http://www.grouptraining.com.au/

Our data shows that broadly, the experience of non-permanent work in Singapore is challenging, and in part because social institutions and players within it do not adequately understand and appreciate the unique ways of being of non-permanent work. There is thus a need to develop this broad-based appreciation of non-permanent work. The following entities are particularly important:

Ministry of Manpower

- Develop **new terms/ nomenclature** to capture the heterogeneity of non-permanent work e.g. independent contractor, casual.
- Explore this segment's **recognition & protection** under the law (with union).
- Undertake **dedicated data collection** to understand the population of non-permanent workers in Singapore.

Industry and workforce development agencies (e.g. Media Development Authority, Singapore Workforce Development Agency)

- Move beyond a "permanent work" paradigm towards understanding the **"ways of being" of non-permanent work** to guide industry development efforts.
- Understand the **heterogeneity** of non-permanent workers, the terrain they work in, and the **different types of support** they require.

National Trades Union Congress

- Facilitate the organisation of non-permanent workers where possible, including articulating common rights e.g. issue of late payment.

5.3. Summary

This is the first comprehensive study of its kind to understand the learning and development of non-permanent workers in Singapore, a workforce segment that is often ignored or misunderstood both locally and internationally. It has identified new understandings of the identities, learning and trajectories of non-permanent workers that are important as inputs into Singapore's policies related to the workforce, learning and development sector, as well as to broaden practitioners' understanding of non-permanent work to better inform the delivery and design of learning and development programmes. Internationally, the research is a significant new contribution to the often contested understanding of non-permanent workers evident in the academic literature. We encourage policy-makers, practitioners and researchers to leverage our findings and trawl them further in the various areas towards a deeper understanding of this important group of workers.

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