TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
OCTOBER 2001

TTE Management & Technical Training (formerly Teesside Training Enterprise)

ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learndirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – satisfactory
- grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of TTE Management and Technical Training was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for equal opportunities and management of training. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with equal opportunities and management of training have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

TTE provides satisfactory training in manufacturing. Off-the-job training is well organised but there is insufficient attention to individual training needs. Industrial work placements are very good. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. TTE has very effective links with local schools and is committed to ensuring that all staff and learners are treated fairly. The monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace does now take place, but is inconsistent. Learners receive a good induction and there is a strong personal development programme. Procedures for progress reviews in the workplace are not sufficiently developed. The management of training did not link on- and off-the-job training to national vocational qualification (NVQ) requirements. This problem has now been resolved satisfactory. The original self-assessment report was not sufficiently self-critical in its evaluation of training, but quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and effective.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Manufacturing	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	2

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Management of training	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- very good industrial placements
- high retention rate on modern apprenticeship programme

- strong personal development programme for learners
- comprehensive induction for trainees
- strong partnership with industry
- comprehensive and effective quality assurance arrangements
- extensive evaluation of courses and programmes
- particularly effective strategic management

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ineffective management of training in the workplace
- inconsistent monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- underdeveloped process for reviewing learners' progress in the workplace
- no account taken of initial assessment in constructing individual learning plans

INTRODUCTION

1. Teesside Training Enterprise is now formally known as TTE Management and Technical Training (TTE). It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, with two centres in Teesside and one in Scotland. The organisation was established in 1990 by ICI and British Steel, primarily to provide engineering apprenticeships. It became independent in 1999. At the time of the original inspection TTE had contracts with the Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide training in chemical processing for modern apprentices and adults on work-based learning programmes. It now has contracts with the Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide training in chemical processing and engineering for modern apprentices. TTE has a franchise from Redcar and Cleveland College to provide engineering apprenticeships. It also provides chemical process and management training on a commercial basis to local industry. TTE employs approximately 120 staff. At the time of the original inspection there were 500 engineering learners, 44 chemical process learners and 18 adult learners. There are now 25 engineering modern apprentices, 39 chemical process learners and 255 engineering learners on programmes not funded by the LSC. All off-the-job training is carried out by TTE in its own workshops and classrooms. On-the-job training takes place in local chemical processing and engineering companies. At the time of the original inspection chemical process training was managed from TTE's Wilton site in Teesside, where 15 members of staff were directly involved in modern apprenticeship training and work-based learning for adults. The organisation has been reorganised and all learner training is now managed from the Southbank site.

2. The 1991 census records that 1.9 per cent of the population of Cleveland, and 4.4 per cent of the population of Middlesbrough, are from minority ethnic groups. At the time of the original inspection, the unemployment rate was 9.6 per cent in Redcar and Cleveland and 9.0 per cent in Middlesbrough, compared with a national average of 3.5 per cent. In June 2001, the unemployment rate had fallen to 7.3 per cent in Redcar and Cleveland and 6.7 per cent in Middlesbrough, which is still above the national rate of 3 per cent. At the time of the original inspection, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 44.6 per cent in Redcar and Cleveland and 31 per cent in Middlesbrough, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In June 2000, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above was 46 per cent in Redcar and Cleveland and 35 per cent in Middlesbrough, below the national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The business manager produced a self-assessment report in preparation for the original inspection, with support from other staff. The self-assessment report contained some effective analysis and evaluations and inspectors agreed with some of its conclusions. However, the weaknesses identified were not explained and some weaknesses were missed. The group technical manager and the quality assurance co-ordinator produced a second self-assessment report in August 2001, with support from other staff. Inspectors agreed with the key strengths and weaknesses identified in the report.

4. The original inspection did not include the training of 500 engineering learners at the Southbank site. This is funded through a franchise from Redcar and Cleveland College and was inspected by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in February 2000.

5. The original inspection was carried out by three inspectors who spent a total of 12 days with TTE in September 2000. They visited eight work-placement providers, interviewed 28 learners and 12 workplace supervisors and had 23 meetings with TTE's staff. They examined learners' portfolios, training and assessment records, internal and external verifiers' reports and the TEC's documents relating to the organisation. They also observed two training sessions, two assessments and one progress review.

6. The reinspection was carried out by two inspectors who spent a total of eight days with the organisation during October and November 2001. They visited six work-placement providers, interviewed 14 learners and six workplace supervisors and had 13 meetings with TTE's staff. They examined policies and procedures, training and assessment records, TTE's business plan, external verifiers' reports and the LSC's documents relating to the organisation. They also observed two progress reviews.

Grades awarded at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Manufacturing	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**2**

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Manufacturing — Grade 3

7. TTE has 44 modern apprentices and 18 adult trainees receiving training in chemical processing. Work-based learning for adults is an in-house, 20-week

programme, which leads to an academic qualification in process plant operations, and an NVQ at level 2 in process operations. All assessments are carried out on TTE's own pilot plant. The adult trainees attend job-search sessions at the start and the end of the programme. They do not have industrial placements.

8. The modern apprenticeship programme is designed to run over three years. Trainees are employed by TTE and sponsored by a local company. There are currently 16 sponsoring companies. From September, when the training begins, to December, trainees are based at TTE's Wilton site working towards a level 1 academic qualification in process plant operation. After three months with their sponsor gaining plant experience, they attend TTE's workshops for training in basic engineering before returning again to their sponsor to carry out a project, identifying valves and pumps on the plant-site. In the second year, trainees work on the sponsoring company's premises and in TTE's workshops. They follow an open-learning programme for a level 2 academic qualification in process plant operations and start to work towards their NVQ at level 2. Trainees spend most of the third year with their sponsoring company, but attend TTE for further theoretical study. Staff have relevant and up-to-date experience in the chemical industries and most hold appropriate assessors or verifiers' qualifications. Some new staff are working towards their assessors' awards.

9. The organisation identified 17 strengths and six weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths, found some of the strengths to be no more than normal practice, and did not agree with others. They agreed with many of the weaknesses and found an additional strength. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- very good industrial placements
- good progression to employment
- good opportunities for trainees to acquire additional skills and qualifications
- high retention rates for modern apprentices

WEAKNESSES

- over-prescriptive off-the-job training
- inadequate access to equipment off the job
- failure to match on-the-job training to NVQ requirements
- delay in beginning training and assessment for NVQ level 3

10. All trainees are placed with sponsors which are national or international chemical companies. TTE's Wilton site is in the middle of a large industrial complex so that trainees are exposed to real plant equipment from the day they

start their training. In their placements, trainees carry out plant operation tasks and develop their skills as the programme progresses. Sponsors are keen to develop their trainees' potential. As trainees gain experience, they take on responsibility for supervising new trainees, writing plant operational procedures and leading teams on site in special projects to improve the efficiency of the plant.

11. Trainees have good opportunities to gain employment with their sponsors. In many instances, sponsoring companies employ their apprentices during the third year of training. The sponsorship agreement with TTE includes a statement of intent to employ the apprentice. Of the 11 trainees who started the programme in 1996, 10 got jobs with their sponsors, and of the 23 who started in 1997, 16 have obtained jobs.

12. The retention rate for the modern apprenticeship programme is 78 per cent, which is high. Of the 63 trainees starting training during the past four years, 14 have left early. However, all 14 had gained some qualifications and six of them had achieved an NVQ at level 2 in process operations. On the work-based learning for adults programme, the retention rate is lower. Early leaving rates have ranged from 39 per cent to 46 per cent over the past three years. In 1997-98, 32 per cent of adults on the work-based learning programmes gained employment in the industry.

13. TTE gives all trainees the opportunity to learn and develop additional skills and knowledge. Trainees have attended courses concerned with basic management skills, presentation skills, teamwork, level 1 computing and report writing. Sponsors are also investing in their trainees by sending them on specific operational courses, such as quality auditing, fluid mechanics and instrumentation. Sponsors are pleased with the competences and skills of TTE's trainees, and plan to train some of them for leadership roles.

14. Off-the-job training for modern apprentices is too prescriptive. It is planned ahead for the three years, with subjects and tasks outlined for each week. The programme cannot be altered or adapted to take account of trainees' individual needs. Trainees work at the same pace, irrespective of their abilities. For instance, in the second year, trainees study for process plant operations part 2 through open learning packages and at the end of each module hand in a tutor-marked assignment. However, those who complete the assignment ahead of the others are not encouraged, or given the opportunity, to move on to other modules. Trainees with a pass in general certificate of education (GCE) advanced level chemistry have had to follow the same units at the same pace as other trainees, and trainees with a pass in GCE advanced level computer science have been required to attend basic computing classes. The problem has been recognised by the TTE, which plans a more flexible approach for this year's intake.

15. Trainees cannot always have access to the plant equipment at TTE when they need it. The workshop has one batch rig and one filtration laboratory equipped with one distillation, one titration and one heat exchanger unit. One modern apprentice year group was unable to use the batch rig at a time for which they had

booked it, because priority was given to the work-based learning for adults group. This delayed their assessments and achievement of level 2 NVQ. The practical work and assessments are now being planned so that modern apprentices and adult trainees' needs to use equipment do not clash. However, TTE has no contingency planning to cover the batch rig being out of use, or the failure of units in the filtration laboratory.

16. At level 2, all the training and assessment takes place on TTE's pilot plant. Trainees' workplace tasks are not matched to requirements of the NVQ. Similarly, at level 3, there has been no attempt to relate on-the-job training plans to the NVQ's requirements. Since April 2000, TTE's staff have started to visit sponsors' plant sites to ensure that the plant the trainees are working on will give them the range of experience necessary to meet the requirements of the level 3 NVQ. Information from these visits has not yet been shared with trainees, trainees' mentors or workplace supervisors.

17. There is currently a delay for trainees progressing from level 2 to level 3. Some trainees have waited up to six months after achieving their level 2 NVQ before receiving their level 3 standards. Trainees who started training in 1996 did not start to be assessed for their level 3 NVQ until April 2000, and only two have achieved an NVQ at level 3. Similarly, trainees who began training in 1997 started to be assessed in May 2000. Some of this group have not been visited at all, and some have not been told which units they should be working on. Some trainees do not know how they will be assessed, on what plant operation tasks they will be assessed, when they will be assessed or who will assess them.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities — Grade 3

18. TTE has a nominated manager responsible for equal opportunities. TTE has developed a range of policies and procedures, including those for equality of opportunity, bullying, harassment, grievances and discipline. Most of the policies were revised in April 2001. Staff receive a copy of the equal opportunities policy. Learners have the policies explained to them at induction and can have a copy if required. Equal opportunities is covered during learners' inductions. Many staff have recently received training on equal opportunities and the implications of recent legislation. Data are collected on learners' age, gender, ethnicity and health problems. Of the current 64 modern apprentices, 3 per cent are women, none is from a minority ethnic group and none is registered as disabled.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- lack of attention to equal opportunities in the workplace
- no monitoring of equal opportunities data

- lack of awareness among learners of the complaints procedure

19. Following the original inspection improvements have been made in all areas. TTE has sent a copy of its equal opportunities policy to sponsors offering work placements and requested a copy of each organisation's own policy. Records of learners' progress reviews now include their understanding of equal opportunities policies. Equal opportunities data is collected and some analysis has been undertaken. Learners now have a reasonable awareness of the complaints procedure. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade as in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- strong overall commitment to equality of opportunity
- particularly effective liaison with local schools

WEAKNESSES

- inconsistent monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- poor access for people with disabilities at one site

20. The recruitment and selection process for modern apprentices is thorough and fair. Standard procedures are followed. Learners' induction covers equal opportunities issues.

21. TTE recognises the importance of, and is committed to, equal opportunities. Equal opportunities is a standard item on many agendas for meetings and is considered at a strategic planning level. For example, a new training rig for chemical process training has a lift to allow access for people with restricted mobility. Plans for a new reception area at the Wilton site have a strong emphasis on access for people with disabilities. TTE has a nominated staff member responsible for equal opportunities and a small group of managers who meet to discuss developments in the promotion of equal opportunities within TTE. This has resulted in training for many staff in equal opportunities. Monthly reports to senior managers include data on the number of learners recruited from under-represented groups. TTE is committed to achieving a nationally recognised award for equal opportunities and has developed an action plan to do this.

22. TTE has worked closely with schools and the wider community to promote its training programmes in engineering and chemical processing. A full-time schools co-ordinator has recently been appointed. Staff attend careers events and give presentations in schools. Particular efforts are made to encourage women to apply as they are under-represented on TTE's training programmes. TTE is involved in awareness programmes about the chemical processing industry for young people in schools. It has also hosted events such as 'women into engineering' promotions. It has produced new recruitment literature with positive images of women in the

chemical processing industry. TTE operates a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) engineering course for year 10 pupils. Fourteen groups from local schools are currently studying for units of an intermediate GNVQ in engineering. A high proportion of pupils who attend the GNVQ programme apply for training programmes with TTE.

23. The contract between TTE and the sponsors who provide work placements requires that learners are treated in the same way as the sponsors' own employees. TTE asks to see sponsors' equal opportunities policies and shares its own policy with sponsors. A new document for recording the outcome of learners' progress reviews now includes information about equal opportunities. However, this is not always effectively used. In some cases the monitoring is limited to checking that learners are aware that equal opportunities policies exist and does not extend to establishing how the learner is being treated. Discussions with sponsors about equal opportunities are at management level and do not always include those who directly supervise learners. Some workplace supervisors have a poor understanding of equal opportunities.

24. There is poor access for people with restricted mobility to some of TTE's facilities. At one site there is adequate access, parking facilities and a toilet for disabled people. However, at the other site there is a ramp at the entrance but no designated parking facilities and no toilet for people with disabilities. There are steps leading to some classrooms. TTE is aware of this and has included a new ramp and other facilities in plans to develop the facility. These plans are at an advanced stage.

Trainee support — Grade 3

25. Advertisements for apprenticeships are placed in local newspapers and respondents receive an application form and brochure. Potential trainees who meet the initial selection criteria of three GCSEs at grade C or above in English, mathematics and a science are invited to take an aptitude test. Those who pass the test are interviewed by TTE's staff and by staff from the sponsoring company or companies to which they are referred. If the sponsoring company decides to offer a place to the applicant, TTE writes to the applicant offering an apprenticeship. Some applicants are offered places by more than one sponsoring company and the applicant makes the final choice. All trainees start at the same time. They first attend an induction and a five-day residential team-building course at TTE. When they begin their on-the-job training they also receive an induction from the sponsoring company.

26. TTE's induction programme includes some informal assessment of trainees' numeracy and literacy and a more formal initial assessment of their occupational knowledge. There is no initial assessment of key skills. Trainees' progress is reviewed on and off the job. Some on-the-job reviews are conducted by TTE's staff, and some by workplace supervisors. Trainees are encouraged to talk to the

team leader or any other member of staff if they have problems. Responsibility for trainee support is not clear and no member of staff is qualified in counselling.

27. The self-assessment report identified 11 strengths and three weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths, disagreed with others and found some to be no more than normal practice. Two of the weaknesses had been rectified by the time of inspection. However, inspectors found additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- strong personal development programme for apprentices
- comprehensive induction
- well-used open access to computers

WEAKNESSES

- underdeveloped procedures for progress reviews in the workplace
- no initial assessment of key skills
- failure to reflect initial assessment and prior achievement in training plans

28. All trainees starting with TTE receive a comprehensive induction programme. It includes information on the structure of the programme, attendance requirements, health and safety and trainees' responsibilities. Details of the induction programmes and the administrative arrangements are clearly recorded. The apprentices' induction programme lasts five days and when they begin their on-the-job training they receive a further induction from their sponsor. All the apprentices interviewed by inspectors had received an appropriate induction at their workplace. However, TTE has no record of what is covered in the on-the-job induction, issues no guidance to the sponsoring companies, and does not monitor what actually occurs. Adult trainees receive a shorter induction, which is relevant to the programme they are following.

POOR PRACTICE
During one progress review observed by inspectors, the trainee complained about one of the tutors. The member of staff carrying out the review did not record the trainee's concerns and countered the complaint with his own opinion of the tutor.

29. The five-day residential course at the start of their programme is valued by trainees and provides a good opportunity for them to develop personal skills and teamwork. Other opportunities for trainees to extend their experience include a voluntary exchange visit to a process company in Germany during which they work alongside their German counterparts. Trainees are also involved in TTE's promotional work, visiting schools and attending careers events, which gives them a further chance to develop their personal skills.

30. All trainees have open access to computers at the training centre. They value the facilities and make effective use of them to produce logbook entries, generate graphs and tabulate results from laboratory work. All trainees receive training in

using computers.

31. During off-the-job training, trainees' progress is reviewed at the end of each module of training. Outcomes are recorded as written statements or as entries on a performance appraisal form. In most, but not all, cases, the recorded outcomes are the result of discussion between the tutor and the trainee. For on-the-job training the progress-review process is less clear. In some cases the performance appraisal form is sent to the workplace supervisor to complete and send back to the training centre. In other cases, the form is taken to the workplace by training staff and discussed with trainees and supervisors. Some workplace supervisors do not receive copies of progress-review records and many trainees do not have copies. Most trainees are not clear about the progress-review process on the job. It is not sufficiently focused on helping them understand the progress they are making towards their NVQs or on providing guidance on what they need to do. The frequency of progress reviews varies. Some trainees have not had a workplace review for periods of up to six months. Others have had monthly progress reviews. In the last five months, a more thorough progress-review and target-setting process has been used with third- and fourth-year apprentices and this has helped them make more progress towards their level 3 NVQ.

32. The aptitude test for applicants covers mathematics and English and some occupational knowledge. The test is primarily a recruitment tool, although the results are available for reference when trainees start their programme. Trainees receive no feedback on their performance in the aptitude test. The results of the test are recorded on the trainee's individual training plan but these are not used to identify or plan additional training, and do not affect the individual's programme. Some additional assessment in numeracy and literacy takes place informally during induction, when written work is used to identify trainees experiencing difficulties. The assessments are informal and outcomes are not recorded. During induction trainees sit a further test covering occupational knowledge. The occupational test covers chemistry and calculation and the results are used to establish a common starting point for all members of the group. Those who do well do not have the opportunity to progress at a faster rate. There is no initial assessment of key skills. All trainees attend a two-week computer literacy course, including a few who are already computer literate or hold advanced level qualifications in computer science. TTE takes no account of initial assessment or prior achievement in planning training for individuals. Some trainees receive additional literacy or numeracy training if the need for this is identified in the work produced or if individual tutors recommend the additional work. Additional support is not systematic and is not recorded.

Management of training — Grade 3

33. The managing director reports to a board of non-executive directors representing the industrial sector. At the time of the original inspection TTE employed 105 staff, of whom 32 were part time. There are now 120 staff, 29 of

whom are part time. The staff structure has been reorganised and responsibilities have been reassigned. At the time of the original inspection the chemical technician modern apprenticeship programme and the work-based learning for adults chemical processing programme were managed from the Wilton site. Since the original inspection, the three training centres have been integrated with a single delivery unit. Training centre staff are now led by a group operations manager who manages all the training staff. A team leader is responsible for industrial liaison with sponsors. Two NVQ co-ordinators report to the team leader and are responsible for the internal verification process. There are 11 full-time NVQ assessors reporting to the NVQ co-ordinators. In addition, there is a pool of part-time assessors who are available if required. Three team leaders and three senior trainers manage the separate training programmes for electrical, mechanical and chemical processing.

34. The senior management team produced a five-year business plan in 1999, which is updated annually. A summary is provided to all staff. TTE holds an annual staff conference at which board members have the opportunity to speak to staff and staff are encouraged to debate the organisation's strategic plans. The number of learners recruited each year is determined by the staffing requirements of the local chemical processing industry. TTE achieved Investor in People status in 1996 and was re-accredited in 1999. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

35. The self-assessment report for the original inspection identified 11 strengths and one weakness. Inspectors at the original inspection found many of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. They found additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report. The second self-assessment report was written in August 2001. It contained a separate action plan to deal with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the original inspection report. Inspectors generally agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the new self-assessment report and awarded the same grade.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- inadequate oversight of on-the-job training
- lack of understanding of their role among workplace supervisors and mentors
- lack of clarity over staff responsibilities and accountability

36. TTE has made progress in all these areas. A company forum has been held to inform sponsors of the need for TTE to monitor on-the-job training. There are now documents for monitoring and recording on-the-job training. A series of awareness sessions have been held to inform sponsors of the procedures and paperwork involved and the part the sponsors need to play in the training process. Considerable efforts have been made to overcome the problem of workplace supervisors and mentors not understanding their roles. TTE has produced guidelines for supervisors and mentors, explaining their roles in the modern

apprenticeship framework. TTE has offered work-placement providers a database of training needs, based on the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. The annual appraisal system is being revised to incorporate roles, responsibilities, reporting lines and target-setting, in order to clarify staff responsibilities and accountabilities.

STRENGTHS

- strong partnerships with industry
- particularly effective strategic development

WEAKNESSES

- weak management of training in the workplace
- no written agreements with subcontractors

37. TTE was formed by local industry and has maintained partnerships with local processing companies. The close relationships with the industry are a fundamental feature of TTE. The managing director is chairman of the LSC's chemical employers' advisory group. He is also a member of the CBI regional council and chairperson of the Teesside group. The chemical technician modern apprenticeship and the chemical foundation programme for adults are products of TTE's work with industry. Recruitment of apprentices is based on the manpower planning of partner companies. One of the organisation's training centres is in the heart of a complex of chemical processing companies and many staff are former employees of these companies. A local company sponsors each apprentice and TTE has a contract with each company setting out this relationship. The organisation holds an annual conference for sponsoring companies.

38. TTE has an effective strategic management plan. This includes the reorganisation of staff responsibilities and the reporting structure since the original inspection. New staff have been appointed and some new roles created. Training is managed from a single site and the training, assessment and quality assurance roles have been clarified. The board of directors has approved a number of developments, which directly affect the quality of the training progamme. Improvements are being made to TTE's building, office, classroom and workshop areas. Capital expenditure has been sanctioned to build large chemical processing plants in the training centre. For example, a chemical processing plant, including water treatment, is being constructed, taking up three floors of the training building. The learners are involved in the design, construction and maintenance of the plant. A distribution process control centre has been built to allow remote control of the plant. Learners operate and control the plant themselves. Control rooms are available at both training centres for the learners to use. A multi-media department has been created and learners are encouraged to be involved in the production of isolation procedures, work permits, instrument calibration documents and the process plant operating procedures. A drop-in learning centre

equipped with computers is under construction. An intranet is being created for both staff and learners.

39. At their sponsoring companies, apprentices work with a mentor, who is usually a shift or team leader. Each sponsor has a training co-ordinator, usually the training manager or officer, who has overall responsibility for learners. Some mentors and supervisors still do not understand the roles they are expected to play in training and providing experience for learners. TTE ensures that the job which the learner is training for is appropriate to the requirements of the level 3 NVQ. It makes some attempt to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training. For example, during the initial periods of on-the-job training, learners are provided with assignments to find out about aspects of the sponsors' equipment and operations, to help prepare them for future off-the-job training modules. However, work-based learning programmes are still not effective in some areas. The training on the job is controlled and managed by the sponsoring company. Some sponsoring companies provide comprehensive and effective in-company training programmes, but others provide very little. Not all apprentices have a clear and structured plan of training appropriate to the NVQ and the modern apprenticeship framework. TTE does not regularly visit some workplaces. A few learners have not been formally monitored for four months. Supervisors are not always aware of what happens during off-the-job training and therefore are not able to build on this in the workplace. Supervisors do not consistently attend learners' progress review meetings in some companies, but they do in others. Progress reviews are not always used as a basis for decisions, or to set targets to improve performance. The systems used to monitor progress during off-the-job training are effective, but the same effective monitoring and control is not achieved in some of the work placements. There are indications of success in some areas, but the controls and systems for training in the workplace are not fully established across all areas.

40. There are no written agreements between TTE and further education colleges subcontracted to provide off-the-job training for engineering modern apprentices. Thus, roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and service standards have not been formally agreed. The existing quality assurance system does not formally cover the quality of training given by subcontractors. Meetings with subcontractors are not held on a routine basis.

Quality assurance — Grade 2

41. TTE's quality management system is built around ISO9001, a national quality standard, which it achieved in 1992. The system consists of a policy and procedures manual, and internal and external auditing. Arrangements are overseen by a quality management system group, comprising all managers and team leaders, and chaired by the managing director. There is also a full-time quality co-ordinator. TTE's emphasis on quality assurance mirrors that found in the local

processing industry. There is a commitment to continuous improvement as well as compliance with contracts. TTE is an approved centre for NVQ awards in process operations at levels 2 and 3, laboratory operations at level 2 and engineering maintenance at level 2. Inspectors agreed with three of the four strengths recorded in the self-assessment report and identified two more. They did not agree with the weaknesses recorded in the self-assessment report but identified two other weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive and effective quality assurance arrangements
- strong commitment to continuous improvement by managers and staff
- extensive evaluation of courses and programmes
- self-critical nature of the organisation
- high standards of performance

WEAKNESSES

- no formal procedures for monitoring sponsors' compliance with contracts
- insufficiently critical self-assessment report

42. The quality assurance manual contains procedures covering all the key areas of training, including recruitment, design, teaching and work placements. The procedures define what must be done and to what standard. Procedures are audited in accordance with a detailed schedule. Auditors report using a format which includes specific questions designed to check key actions and standards in relation to each procedure. Off-the-job training is observed and reported upon. Observation does not extend to training in the workplace.

43. The quality management system group oversees the whole approach to quality. Quality assurance matters are extensively discussed at senior managers' operational meetings and at team progress meetings. Quality assurance is also a key item on the agenda for meetings of a wide range of other groups. The minutes of these show clear evidence of continuous improvements, and the involvement of staff is evident. Staff throughout the organisation are committed to continuous improvement.

44. At the end of each component of training a questionnaire is administered to trainees and staff and managers use the responses to this, together with the data on trainees' achievements, to improve the next course. Staff discuss individual trainees' progress in off-the-job training daily and charts plotting their progress are displayed on office walls. The first group of trainees to finish their modern apprenticeship programme has recently responded to a questionnaire on their overall experience of training. The questions are well focused and trainees'

answers to them contain useful information. Staff are drawing up an action plan based on an analysis of the responses.

45. By summer 2000, TTE's commercial contracts had produced such a large number of trainees that the organisation did not have enough assessors and internal verifiers to meet demands. The matter was raised at all levels of the organisation as a quality assurance issue. As a result, more resources were made available, new staff and consultants were recruited who have been, or are being, trained, and existing assessors and verifiers were asked to give priority to the groups of trainees furthest along in their programmes. There have been delays in assessment and verification for some groups of trainees, but the solutions arrived at through the organisation's quality assurance arrangements have succeeded in maintaining standards in a situation where they could have been compromised.

46. TTE's contracts with sponsoring companies focus more on financial arrangements than training requirements. The contracts outline what TTE will provide and place a strong emphasis on the sponsor's willingness to employ the apprentice at the end of the programme. However, there is nothing on the monitoring of training in the workplace and no procedure exists for monitoring sponsors' compliance with the contract. Staff often appear uncomfortable at the idea of placing demands on sponsors.

47. The self-assessment report contains some useful analysis and evaluation. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the report. However a number of weaknesses were overlooked and the weaknesses identified were not explained. The report fails to reflect the highly self-critical approach to be found in other aspects of TTE's quality-assurance activity.