

The study confirmed that there is wide variation in the extent of adoption of software development best practice in terms of the individual practices, as well as the organisations. While project management planning and customer involvement practices are widely adopted, the use of metrics for estimating and testing are barely used by the organisations that responded to the survey. Overall, practices of a technical nature are more widely adopted compared to techniques related to support and management. Organisations involved in developing commercial off-the-shelf software have higher adoption than firms which do not develop such systems, and adoption of best practice is associated with the size of the development group. The leaders in adoption have significantly better practices when compared to the laggards for 40 of the 44 practices included in the survey. Furthermore, organisations from the finance, insurance and utilities sectors exhibited higher adoption of best practice compared to organisations from other sectors. The overall adoption of 48 percent implies that the organisations which responded have adopted, on average, almost half of the best practices in the questionnaire. While this overall adoption rate places the Queensland software industry in a competitive position compared to adoption of firms in European countries, there is scope for improvement.

The process improvement assessments of 22 firms also confirmed that the capability of technical processes is higher than that of management processes; and suggested that higher capability is associated with the proportion of experienced staff and the proportion of staff with post graduate qualifications. Higher process capability is also associated with firms undertaking projects of lengthy durations. Most of the processes were rated at the lowest levels. Almost one third of all the processes were rated as *incomplete* (level 0) and 46 percent were rated as *performed* (level 1).

The evaluation of the process improvement program was conducted by analysing the 22 assessment reports, and the 20 final reports from the follow-up meetings. The extent of improvement is associated with the proportion of technical staff and the proportion of formally qualified staff. The evaluation revealed that assessment-based process improvement programs are effective for small firms, regardless of the maturity of the processes at the time of the assessment.