

11-1-1998

## Staff development in the V.E.T. sector: Case studies of two providers

Erica Smith  
*Charles Sturt University*

Tom Lowrie  
*Charles Sturt University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Smith, E., & Lowrie, T. (1998). Staff development in the V.E.T. sector: Case studies of two providers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 23(2).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1998v23n2.1>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol23/iss2/1>

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE V.E.T. SECTOR: CASE STUDIES OF TWO PROVIDERS

Erica Smith and Tom Lowrie

Charles Sturt University

### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores attitudes about and practices in staff development within two providers of vocational education and training, focussing in particular on staff development in competency-based training (CBT). A general overview of staff development in the VET sector is provided, together with a brief discussion of the nature of CBT and an indication of some of the controversy which was associated with its introduction. Staff development in the two organisations is discussed in some detail, and it is suggested that some of the differences in staff development practices may be ascribed to variations in size and in organisational culture.*

### STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE VET SECTOR

Given the diversity of providers and of teachers and trainers, staff development in the VET sector is likely to be less straightforward than staff development in the school education sector. Assumptions cannot be made about the knowledge base of VET practitioners; some have degree-level qualifications in adult or vocational education, while others may either have no teaching qualification at all or may have undertaken only a short instructional techniques course. In addition, practitioners' trade or professional background creates a culture which favours certain types of staff development (Chappell & Melville, 1995) ' National and even State initiatives may or may not

be taken up by different providers. Part-time teachers rarely have the same access to staff development as full-time teachers (*Campus Review Weekly*, April 8-14, 1998), which is important given that around 50% of TAFE contact hours are delivered by part-time teachers. The wide spread of hours over which VET programs operate makes it difficult for full-time as well as part-time teachers to access classroom-type staff development activities.

During the last decade an attempt was made to bring some order to staff development in the VET sector through the establishment by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) of the National Staff Development Committee (NSDC). This committee was designed to promote and fund staff development throughout the VET sector, but in 1996 it was disbanded and ANTA now funds staff development only in priority policy areas. Individual providers are now expected to develop their own staff.

One of the NSDC's major successes was the 'CBT in Action' scheme (National Staff Development Committee, 1996) which co-funded VET providers and used an action learning method to introduce initiatives related to competency-based training. ANTA is currently using a similar approach in staff development in its 'Framing the Future' project to explain and facilitate the introduction of the new National Training Framework (NTF), the VET

sector's most recent restructuring of competency standards and accreditation procedures (Field, 1998). The national Training Framework is based around the development of 'Training Packages' which replace accredited curricula. 'CBT in Action' and the 'Framing the Future' project both favour some form of action learning as a method of staff development. This reflects the VET sector's increased reliance on workbased learning, both as a method of delivering training to its own students and trainees, and as a method of staff development of VET practitioners (Carter & Gribble, 1991). Workbased learning has been shown to have a number of drawbacks (Smith, 1998) but appears to be becoming entrenched in the VET sector as a staff development method, increasingly in association with multi-media approaches to 'flexible delivery' (eg ANTA, 1997). However, it is probably fair to say that the majority of staff development in the VET sector is still delivered in a conventional face-to-face manner.

### **COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The last decade has seen massive change in the way in which VET curricula are developed and delivered. A series of changes collectively known as the Training Reform Agenda have been instigated at national and State level in an attempt to update VET in order to deliver better training for the rapidly changing industrial environment. The training reforms have impacted upon teachers and trainers in two major ways. First, as discussed above, the training market has been opened up. This has meant that teachers are increasingly becoming involved in winning business for their employers

and in making their courses more attractive to industry and to other purchasers of training. In addition, they may be employed by a variety of providers, each with differing traditions and culture. Second, VET teaching and training is now almost entirely competency-based. Competency-based training (CBT) is difficult to define exactly, as it practised differently across different providers and industry areas (Smith, Hill, Smith, Perry, Roberts, & Bush, 1996) but in general it is taken to incorporate three basic characteristics including:

- the focus of the training is on the outcome of the training;
- the outcome is measured against specified standards not against other students; and
- the standards relate to industry.

(Smith & Keating, 1997, p. 102)

In its current form, based on industry-derived competency standards, CBT has been progressively introduced over the 1990s. Although its initial implementation was slow (Smith *et al*, 1996), most VET courses are now competency-based. The advent of CBT has created many changes in the way in which teachers and trainers operate. In particular this is because CBT is often associated with modularisation of courses and with self-paced learning where students work through previously-prepared learning materials with assessment provided on request. Harris, Guthrie, Hobart and Lundberg (1995, p. 270-271) maintain that the role of the VET teacher now encompasses the following domains:

- liaison person;
- adviser;

- mentor;
- facilitator;
- information dispenser/skills demonstrator;
- assessor;
- materials developer; and
- evaluator.

While some teachers have embraced these changes, others have resisted them (eg Robinson, 1993; Smith, Lowrie, Hill, Bush, & Lobegeier, 1997). A number of concerns have been raised about CBT as a teaching-learning method. The most common objections to CBT have been related to its perceived educational narrowness. It has been argued that CBT is highly behaviourist. This is seen as being educationally inappropriate (eg Lundberg, 1994), ineffective in measuring true competence (Collins, 1993) and unlikely to develop the skilled and flexible workers required either by individual organisations (Field, 1996) or by the national skills pool (Porter, Rizvi, Knight, & Lingard, 1992). Other writers point to the economic rationalist ideology underlying CBT (Jackson, 1993), and to the power disparity CBT is seen to involve between managers and teachers and between teachers and students (Soucek, 1993).

Teachers' concerns about CBT, while to some extent mirroring VET commentators' concerns, also include a number of practical issues (Smith & Keating, 1997: 117). Only a small amount of research has been carried out in Australia into teachers and CBT, but its findings are consistent in painting a picture of teachers unsure about what they are supposed to be doing (frequently stating that they feared they were not 'doing it right'), wary

about the value of CBT, and feeling marginalised and undervalued by their managers (Robinson, 1993, Smith & Nangle, 1995, Cornford, 1996, Smith *et al*, 1997).

Teachers' resistance to CBT has often been ascribed to resistance to change in general and, in particular, with change fatigue following or the large number of changes in the organisation of VET in Australia. In school education literature, an excessive amount of change as it relates to teachers has been described by Fullan (1993) as overload. Fullan maintains that responding to rapid change can keep teachers seemingly busy, but puts them in a state of *dependency* where their action is controlled by others. He contrasts this to *empowerment*, which he sees as taking control of change processes.

Empowerment, however, is not easy to achieve.

It is sometimes maintained that teachers' resistance is partly due to inadequate staff development. Generally, staff development in CBT has been inadequate (Simons 1996), and where it has taken place, it began with 'big picture' staff development programs where CBT was confused with training reform in general (Smith *et al*, 1996). Teachers found it difficult to relate the big picture to their own teaching and often staff development specifically relating to CBT practice was late or non-existent. Teachers often taught from a CBT curriculum which arrived in their college or workplace so late that no preparation time was available before it was to be delivered to students. Teachers simply learned CBT 'on the job' (Smith *et al*, 1997). Whenever teachers have been asked what staff development they would like in CBT, they

have consistently requested help with practical teaching and learning issues (Choy, 1997).

## **ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The diversity of VET providers renders it likely that staff development programs will also need to exhibit diversity. Different types of providers will require different types of staff development and the same program will be received differently by staff in different providers. One important component of diversity which cannot be captured by measures such as size or location is organisational culture.

According to Daft (1995, p~ 333), culture is 'the set of values, guiding beliefs, understandings, and ways of thinking that is shared by members of an organization and is taught to new members as correct,' This definition has particular implications for staff development since it implies not only that staff development needs to be congruent with staff members' values and beliefs (since there is a 'correct' or accepted view), but also that culture is 'taught', and therefore staff development programs themselves may have some involvement in transmitting the organisational culture. In addition, staff development may serve as either a conscious or unconscious means of helping to alter the organisational culture.

Some VET providers will be large enough to have several organisational sub-cultures. Typically these derive from the trade base of different departments, which Chappell & Melville (1995) view as important in formation of VET teachers' identity. For example, in a large TAFE college, a management department will have a different culture from a fitting and machining department. As

well as the differences related to their 'white collar' versus 'blue collar' nature, there are likely to be different beliefs about learning and teaching between staff in the two departments.

Organisational culture will generally encompass certain values, beliefs and understandings about staff development. These might relate to the value of staff development itself or to beliefs about the best forms of staff development. Retallick (1997), writing about school teachers, found that in schools the culture generally favours 'practical', on-the-job learning. He found differences between schools with regards to the perceived worth of teachers' learning from students and from other teachers. Collaborative cultures, where teachers learned from each other and were more inclined to take risks, were not found in all schools. There is a lack of similar research addressing these themes explicitly in the VET sector.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The case studies reported in this paper formed part of a larger project which was funded by the National Research and Evaluation Committee of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). The project was carried out by Charles Sturt University's Group for Research in Employment and Training. The larger project examined how competency -based training had changed the role of teachers and trainers in the VET sector, with particular reference to variations among different types of provider and industry area, and had a focus upon staff development in CBT (Lowrie et al, in progress).

For this part of the project, a case study methodology (Yin, 1994) was used to investigate

the manner in which staff development activities were undertaken in two providers in the VET sector. Two diverse sites were selected for study in order to explore possible differences and commonalities among both individuals and organisations with respect to the way staff development experiences are introduced and fostered. The two case studies differed in location (two different states/territories), setting (city and rural), size of organisation, and type of provider (TAFE and community). In this way, the researchers were able to examine the extent to which the nature and culture of an organisation influenced the type of staff development experiences available to individuals and organisations. Specifically, the case studies attempted to:

1. Describe the range and type of staff development experiences available to individuals at a particular sites;
2. Encourage teachers/trainers to reflect upon the type of professional experiences they have encountered recently, and evaluate the extent to which these experiences have enhanced their teaching and learning; and
3. Identify commonalities and differences in these perceptions and understanding with respect to an individual's position in the organisational hierarchy (from teachers/trainers through to managers).

A case study protocol was established to increase the reliability of data gathered in the study. This was particularly important because interviews at the two sites were conducted by different researchers (Burns, 1997). Interviews were conducted, over a

period of about a day and a half, on both an individual and small group basis, focusing on at least eight individuals at each site.

The small groups contained between four and six members and involved semi-structured discussion about CBT and about staff development. Individual interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes, while focus groups were around an hour in duration. Although all interviews were conducted in an open-ended form, each researcher presented a range of common key questions for discussion. Specific questions were directed towards staff development and CBT. These questions included:

1. How were you taught. or how did you learn, to develop, implement and construct teaching and learning around a CBT philosophy?
2. Which particular understandings and practices about CBT have been adopted or developed at your site?
3. What techniques and strategies were used to help develop appropriate skills and understandings in order to enhance your teaching/training?
4. What types of staff development experiences have been worthwhile in helping you come to terms with new innovations?
5. How can new instructors be more adequately prepared to teach through a CBT framework?

Case Study 1: Mission Employment Services, Wagga Wagga

This case study was undertaken at a community provider in a large regional city. The college employed eight full-time and several part-time teachers' and generally catered for the needs of

unemployed people. As a result, the majority of courses were dependent on government funding.

### **Staff development of teachers**

All of the teachers had undertaken some formal teacher-training through the organisation itself, and several had completed or were presently undertaking degree qualifications in education. Most teachers believed that professional development responsibilities should be shared between themselves and the employer. The manager at this site, for example, felt that it was important for the organisation to take advantage of a number of relatively cheap training courses that were offered from time to time. He also encouraged staff to share ideas and initiatives with one another. During the case study visit, a strong sense of collegiality among teachers was detected that seemed to promote a positive learning environment.

Teachers were asked how they attempted to develop professionally and personally. Their responses included:

- an extensive amount of reading; being acutely aware of what is going on in the "real world";
- professional membership of a range of relevant organisations;
- subscribing to journals;
- membership of business enterprise centres;
- and continually updating and modifying resources used for teaching purposes.

Some of these initiatives were undertaken on a personal level whereas others involved the entire teaching team. In other instances there were similar

activities being promoted on both a group and an individual level. Several of the teachers, for example, individually subscribed to journals while the manager had subscriptions sent directly to the workplace. On a group level, resource sharing days were introduced to create opportunities for teachers to provide support for one another through discussion and modelling sessions.

Questions about what constituted a "good" teacher and what was needed to promote quality teaching and learning experiences were also explored in both group and individual sessions during the case study. These questions challenged teachers to consider the ways in which they would like to develop professionally. On some occasions these processes were actually occurring at the site, whereas others were those which they would like to occur, and included:

- talking to other colleagues;
- sharing best practice techniques with others;
- relating theoretical aspects of training courses
- to the learning needs of individuals;
- developing multisensory learning experiences;
- analysing why a particular colleague was a good teacher;
- watching other teachers teach; and
- attempting to teach the way I would like to learn.

Most of the teachers agreed that these activities were not conducted on a regular basis.

Most of those interviewed at the site maintained that some of the staff development responsibilities associated with teaching and learning should be self initiated, in the sense that personal growth and development was an important part of teaching. However it was apparent that there were different views regarding the responsibilities for staff development in CBT.

### **Teachers and CBT**

The manager said that all teachers had successfully taken up the challenge of CBT but alluded to the fact that local industry had been slow to take up, or see the benefit of, this approach. As one teacher commented:

'Industry thinks it (CBT) is a nightmare as employers generally do not care about the outcomes the student has achieved. The manager of Fosseys, for example, wants a person with a good attitude who is willing to learn and is reliable. He feels that he can teach them all the necessary skills himself.'

As a result, teachers did not really get to see how the skills and understandings introduced in modules or courses were being applied to "reallife" situations in the workforce. Employers tended to comment on how well a person was dressed, or on the person's motivational levels or enthusiasm but not on skill development or knowledge. It was therefore difficult for teachers to gauge whether students' competencies were transferable, because useful feedback on skills was not forthcoming. Personal development opportunities in CBT were also hindered by the lack of opportunity for teachers to be able to talk to a range of colleagues in their field about issues pertaining to teaching and learning. One teacher commented that since the

Skillshare component of the organisation's funding had been discontinued, she was not able to meet personally with teachers from other providers to find out what they were doing to improve their teaching. This isolation was magnified because TAFE teachers now see us as competitors and would never talk to us about the development and implementation of training modules.'

Without the opportunity to discuss CBT issues with external colleagues in their field, teachers became increasingly reliant on people in their own work environment. It was apparent that these issues were particularly significant for part-time teachers.

Several teachers argued that evaluation was difficult in a CBT environment. The manager explained that modules had to be delivered over a specified time frame, typically 15 - 30 hours, and that it was not always possible for teachers to reflect upon important elements of the teaching-learning process because another module could be commencing the following day. It would not be uncommon for a teacher to complete one course on Friday and start a different course, with a new group of students, on Monday. Another teacher commented that students were only with them for short periods of time and that this made the training process somewhat artificial and impersonal:

'It's hard to get to know the students really well because they are only here for short periods of time. Teaching strategies cannot be individualised because you haven't got time to find out how they best learn. You need to use a range of general strategies that cater for the entire group.'



One of the teachers commented that by the time he had understood "how best each student learns", the module was finished.

There was a number of reasons why teachers did not feel that CBT staff development could be adequately fostered through personal experiences alone. These experiences included:

1. Lack of quality industry feedback;
2. Fewer opportunities than previously to talk to colleagues and peers outside their immediate work environment; and
3. Lack of time to reflect upon the teaching-learning process.

### **Future staff development needs**

Staff were asked about the staff development needs they foreshadowed for teachers in their field in the foreseeable future. Two major themes emerged from these discussions. These concerned:

1. the increasingly competitive nature of training provision; and
2. the cost effectiveness of resources and time.

As might be expected, there were differences between the views of managerial staff and other teachers with respect to these issues. Managerial staff were more inclined to want staff development to involve marketing strategies that would allow Mission Employment to be more competitive in the marketplace. Having said this, it was evident that all staff were able to look at "big picture" issues that not only affected themselves but the VET industry as a whole.

Several staff mentioned that the organisation's parent body offered no inservice courses for

teachers and that they would like to see such courses made available. Teachers felt that it was important to have staff development courses that provided them with opportunities to keep abreast with general issues concerning CBT and specific issues related to their field of expertise. They felt that issues that were particularly relevant to Mission Australia could be targeted by such courses. It was pointed out that concerns about working in isolation could also be overcome if such initiatives were undertaken. One trainer reported that while she frequently requested training, financial constraints meant that she was not allowed to attend courses. Importantly, her most recent request was to attend a course on the use of Training Packages.

### **Implications**

Generally, the teachers believed that teaching-learning approaches needed to reflect students' needs and the philosophy of the organisation. As one person commented:

'Our organisation goes out of its way to help people. We not only respond to each individual student's needs-we need to spend time ensuring that we are servicing the community. We need to foster teaching and learning experiences in ways that help a diverse range of individuals to reach personal goals that fit into the broader picture of the community.'

This organisational ethos extended from the teachers' relationships with students to the way in which they liked to relate to other staff.

Co-operative learning situations and peer support seemed to be particularly congruent with this aspect of the organisational culture. Such learning methods seemed particularly appropriate to the organisation's

rural location where provisions for professional support and opportunities for interaction with other teachers were relatively limited.

### **CASE STUDY 2: CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (CIT)**

The second case study was undertaken in the Faculty of Management and Business at the only TAFE college in Canberra. This college had no major private competitors and had a steady stream of business from the public service sector. There were 400 full-time teachers in the college, and about 800 casual teachers.

#### **Staff development at CIT**

At CIT staff development appeared to be well resourced and structured, with four dedicated training staff. Each faculty was required to carry out a training needs analysis based on individual teachers' Professional Development Plan. The training department offered a well publicised range of training activities. Initial short teaching courses were offered to all new teachers, for full-timers at a higher level than part-timers. CIT was involved in many national initiatives such as 'CBT in Action' and 'Framing the Future'.

The teachers themselves nominated a number of preferred learning methods:

- Getting information about curriculum changes;
- Working, with an experienced mentor;
- Watching an experienced teacher;
- Attending a formal staff development course;
- Having a go;
- Reading; and

- Reflecting on practice.

However they had not always used these methods. For instance, watching colleagues and working with a mentor were not methods which they had actually used. In addition, they tended not to attend formal staff development activities, mainly because they felt unable to miss teaching commitments.

#### **Teachers and CBT**

The teachers in the case study worked in two separate departments within the Faculty. Teachers working in the Business and Administrative Studies (BATS) area tended to be longer serving than those in the Management area. BATS teachers were more likely to have had previous school-teaching experience, and included women as well as men, whereas all Management teachers interviewed were male. Many of the teachers, but not all, shared similar views about competency-based training: that it encouraged fragmented learning and prevented deep understanding. Their concerns about CBT included 'We have salami courses - take a body of knowledge and slice it up fine' and 'You're testing at the level that most students can pass'. There was, however, a determination to 'make it work' particularly in the Management area.

A major concern of staff was to do with assessment in a CBT system. Some staff disliked the way in which they felt CBT required more assessment and smaller assessment items. This was related to modularisation which was seen as a key part of CBT. However, it was discovered that on one campus teachers in one area taught and assessed two or three modules at the same time with holistic assessment tasks. This practice had not spread to the campus where the case study was carried out,

where the teachers seemed to assume that they were 'stuck' with the system as they understood it.

Teachers had learned about CBT through a variety of methods but mainly from informal discussions with colleagues and by 'having a go'. One teacher said that this system of trial and error had taken three semesters for him to 'get it right' - to feel that he was using CBT correctly for the benefit of his students. A few of the teachers had experienced CBT with other providers. Two said they had linked CBT back to other educational methods which they had learned about in previous employment or in university studies, these methods were the instructional systems approach and mastery learning. Although the staff development section reported that many formal workshops and seminars about CBT had been held and were still being held, very few of the teachers remembered attending formal staff development activities about CBT.

### **Future staff development needs**

Managerial staff in the Faculty saw the biggest issue for staff development as 'pressure on the dollars' with the need to decrease delivery costs without sacrificing quality. They also thought that CBT assessment was a staff development issue, along with training packages. Teachers did not mention these issues. They were interested mainly in staff development concerned with technology, related both to tools of their own work (such as email and HTML) and to the technology they were teaching their students to use (such as new software packages). Only one teacher mentioned a wish for staff development in CBT, despite the fact that most teachers found difficulty using CBT.

### **Implications**

Perhaps the most interesting outcome of this case study was that although teachers wished to debate the merits or otherwise of CBT and nearly all had difficulties with it, they did not see identify a need for staff development in CBT. It seemed that they believed they had done all they could to teach effectively with CBT and that the problems which remained could not be solved because of 'the rules' as they perceived them. This was despite evidence within their own Faculty that some of the problems could, in fact, be overcome.

There were also interesting discrepancies in staff development practice and identified needs:

- between what the college's perceptions were about the amount of staff development in CBT and what teachers' perceptions were;
- between how teachers said they liked to learn and how they in fact did learn;
- between what managers thought were important future issues and what teachers thought were important; and
- almost complete lack of awareness amongst classroom teachers of Training Packages and the National Training Framework, despite CIT's involvement in national staff development initiatives such as 'Framing the Future'.

### **DISCUSSION**

There were some consistencies in the way staff development experiences were undertaken and developed across the two organisations. At both sites, for example, the prevalent use of trial-and-error techniques-based on the notion of "having a go"-were used by teachers attempting to come to

terms with changes in the teaching-learning process. This may have been a product of either the lack of staff development opportunities accessed by the teachers, or the failure of such opportunities to deal with issues of everyday practice. In some instances, individuals used such techniques and informal learning from colleagues because inservice style courses were not meeting their needs. Some individuals maintained that if they did not adopt such strategies they would never learn how to come to terms with any new innovations. Perhaps this demonstrated their faith in their peers or a lack of confidence in the organisation providing them with supportive and ongoing staff development. Alternatively the prevalence of learning-by-"having a go" could have been a reflection of the teachers' preferred learning styles. Importantly, there were also discrepancies between the provider's view of what staff development was available and that of the teachers at both sites. On occasions, these viewpoints were related to differences in the perceived value of particular inservice courses, whereas in other situations it may have been associated with financial decisions.

Generally, however, there were distinct differences in the way staff development activities were introduced and fostered at the two organisations. Many of the differences could be attributed to the:

1. Size and complexity of the institution;
2. Degree to which knowledge was shared; and
3. Teachers' previous staff development experience.

The following table (Table 1) highlights differences in both the availability and scope of staff development experiences across the two sites. It also points to some differences in organisational culture, which are discussed below.

There were differences between the two providers in both the perceived staff development needs and the availability of staff development programs. Whilst not claiming that these differences are typical for all TAFE and community providers, it seems that the culture in each organisation favoured certain types of staff development and that the culture was in part dependent upon the type of provider. For example, teachers at Mission Employment were more aware of the 'big picture' and this awareness probably reflected their consciousness of their employer's vulnerability in the training market and the need for all staff to work towards securing their jobs. This could be related to the size of the organisation or to its funding base.

Table I

Differences in CBT perceptions and staff development experiences across the two sites.

Mission Employment	CIT
The perception that the major limitations of	The perception that the major limitations

CBT were associated with time availability, resourcing, and the lack of feedback from employers	of CBT were associated with assessment and modularisation
Almost no staff development courses available through the organisation	Staff development courses were available but not well attended because they clashed with teaching responsibilities
Teachers hoped that future staff development needs would be linked to the promotion of Mission Employment in the marketplace	Teachers hoped that future staff development needs be linked to using technology more effectively
Most teachers had an holistic understanding of "big picture" issues related to the VET industry	Generally, managerial staff were more likely than teachers to discuss "big picture" issues in the context of the VET industry
Funding for staff development courses was limited	It appeared that staff development courses were regularly available

(i) The statements in this table refer only to the two sites in the case studies and are not meant to imply any conclusions about these types of provider in general

(ii) In the case of CIT, the statements refer only to the departments researched.

Teachers at Mission Employment were more likely to seek learning opportunities in a variety of informal ways, including a focus on learning from feedback about student outcomes (although they complained that such feedback was difficult to obtain). Teachers at CIT were more likely to rely on formal opportunities, which however they rarely accessed. This difference could, again, reflect size of provider or could reflect Mission Employment's closeness to its community as a provider dealing predominantly with unemployed people and as an organisation with philanthropic origins. However all teachers placed a heavy emphasis upon learning

'on the job', supporting Retallick's (1997) research. Retallick's finding that schools varied between the degree of collaborativeness in their staff development culture was also borne out. Mission Employment exhibited a culture of collegiality, facilitated by frequent staff meetings, whereas at CIT ideas were not always shared even within the same faculty. This could simply be a result of the size of CIT or it could be due to other factors.

The availability of funds for staff development was clearly related to the type of organisation. CIT being well-resourced, whereas Mission Employment had little or no specific funding for staff development. Chappell and Melville's (1995)

point about teachers' trade background also has some relevance. Mission Employment's staff were probably drawn predominantly from a social welfare background with a focus on personal development. Within CIT there seemed to be a difference in attitude between those from a management background and those from an office administration background.

These two case studies demonstrate the need for a more complete understanding of the staff development needs of different VET providers. Staff development associated with the introduction of CBT has served as an example of the variations in staff development between providers and the differences in approaches to learning of different groups of teachers. While at CIT in particular, several teachers regarded CBT as problematic, they did not appear to regard staff development as a medium through which they could discuss their concerns and perhaps through doing so take more control over its implementation. It was not clear, but would be worth exploring, whether this lack of interest in staff development in CBT was due to the fact that they were resigned to the hegemony of CBT in current VET practice and/or whether they preferred not to learn about CBT because of their opposition to it.

The case studies suggest some general conclusions about staff development, as well as particular conclusions about staff development in CBT. The size of the organisation and its culture appear to be two important factors which planners of staff development need to take into account. In the larger organisation, where there was a large amount of staff development activity, many individual

teachers appeared to be relatively unengaged with development. In the smaller organisation, teachers appeared to be more interested in and involved with learning about their work, although there was little formal staff development. This may, however, have been affected by the teachers' professional background and cultural norms as much as by the size of the organisation.

## REFERENCES

- Australian National Training Authority. (1997). *Working towards 2010: Flexibly delivered staff development*. Brisbane: ANTA.
- Burns, R.B. (1997). *Introduction to research methods, (3rd Ed.)*. Sydney: Longman.
- Carter, E.M. & Gribble, I. (1991). *Work based learning, a discussion paper* Melbourne: TAFE National Staff Development Committee.
- Chappell, C. & Melville, B. (1995). *Professional competence and the initial and continuing education of NSW TAFE teachers*. Sydney: Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training, University of Technology Sydney.
- Choy, S. (1997). *A survey to assess students' current level of knowledge about competencybased training and recognition of prior learning and additional information they need*. Unpublished paper, Queensland Vocational Education and Training Directorate.
- Collins, C. (Ed.) (1993) *Competencies. The competencies debate in Australian education and training*. Deakin: The Australian College of Education
- Cornford, I. (1996). Experienced teachers' views of competency-based training in NSW TAFE.

- Learning and Work: The Challenges Conference*, Griffith University, Gold Coast, December, Conference Papers, Vol. 4, pp 105-116.
- Daft, R.L. (1995). *Organization theory and design*, (5th Ed.). Minneapolis/St Paul: West Publishing.
- Field, L. (1998). *Evaluation 97*. Melbourne: Australian National Training Authority.
- Field, L. (1996). Is there room for CBT in a learning organisation? *Australian Training Review*, Mar/Apr/May, pp. 24-25.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Harris, R., Guthrie, H., Hobart, B., & Lundberg, D. (1995). *Competency-based education and training: Between a rock and a whirlpool*. Melbourne: Macmillan.
- Jackson, N. (1993). Competence: A game of smoke and mirrors? In C. Collins (Ed.) *Competencies: The competencies debate in Australian education and training*. Canberra: Australian College of Education, pp. 154-161.
- Lowrie, T., Smith, E., Hill, D., Retallick, J., Brennan, R., & Smith, A. (in progress). *Evaluation of the effects that competency -based approaches have had on the role of instructors*. Project funded by ANTA's National Research and Advisory Committee.
- Lundberg, D. (1994). *Where are we? Reviewing the training reform agenda*. Adelaide: NCVER.
- Mathers, R. (1997). Trends in employment, skill and qualification requirements of training staff. In ANTA, *Research reports into professional development* (pp. 64-91). Brisbane: ANTA.
- National Staff Development Committee. (1996). *CBT in Action: Longitudinal evaluation*. Melbourne: National Staff Development Committee.
- Porter, P., Rizvi, F., Knight, J., & Lingard, R. (1992). Competencies for a clever country: Building a house of cards? *Unicom*, 18 (3), pp.50-58.
- Retallick, J. (1997). Workplace learning and the school as a learning organisation. In R. King, D. Hill & J. Retallick (Eds.) *Exploring professional development in education*. Wentworth Falls, NSW: Social Science Press.
- Robinson, P. (1993). *Teachers facing change: A small-scale study, of teachers working with competency-based training*. Adelaide: NCVER.
- Simons, M. (1996). Something old ... something new: TAFE teachers' ways of working with CBT. *Learning and Work: The Challenges Conference*, Griffith University, Gold Coast, December, Conference Papers, Vol 3, pp. 23-32.
- Smith, E., & Nangle, R. (1995). Workplace communication: TAFE teachers' experiences of implementing a national module. *Australian TAFE Teacher*, March, pp. 53-54.
- Smith, E., Hill, D., Smith, A., Perry, P., Roberts, P., & Bush, A. (1996). *The availability of competency-based training in TAFE and notiTAFE settings in 1994*. Canberra: AGPS.
- Smith, E., & Keating, J. (1997). *Making sense of training reform and competency-based training*. Wentworth Falls: Social Science Press.

Smith, E., Lowrie, T., Hill, D., Bush, A., & Lobegeier, J. (1997). *Making a difference? How competency-based training has changed teaching and learning* (ANTARAC research project). Wagga Wagga: Charles Sturt University.

Smith, E. (1998), *Staff development in VET., a critique of current practice*. *Training Agenda*, 6(3), pp. 17-19.

Soucek, V. (1993). Is there a need to redress the balance between systems goals and lifeworld-oriented goals in public education in Australia? In C. Collins (Ed.) *Competencies: The competencies*

*debate in Australian education and training*. Canberra: Australian College of Education, pp. 162-181.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and method (2nd ed)*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

We wish to record our thanks to Associate Professor Doug Hill who provided helpful comments on a draft of the article, and to the anonymous referees for their suggestions.