

Australian Journal of Teacher Education

Volume 23
Issue 2 *Vocational Education and Training*
(VET)

Article 2

11-1-1998

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Recommended Citation

Chappell, C. (1998). Changing TAFE in new times. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 23(2).
<https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1998v23n2.2>

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CHANGING TAFE IN NEW TIMES

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ABSTRACT

Teachers and managers in Technical and Further Education have experienced radical changes to their work over the last decade. They have experienced the policy driven imperative of governments to insert the market form into the operations of the public sector including education. The policies of new vocationalism have not only changed the institution of TAFE but have placed different demands and different expectations on personnel working in this sector. Debate over government reforms to VET has commonly revolved around problems to do with their implementation or have foregrounded issues to do with the professional competence of teachers in the new educational environment, with calls being made to reform the initial and continuing education of teachers. However, the position reflected in these debates can also be seen as making an overly instrumental means-ends connection between teachers' knowledge and skills and the professional practice of teaching. It fails to appreciate that when teachers are asked to 'do things differently' in their everyday teaching practices they are also being called on to become different teachers, that is, to have different understandings of their role in education, to have different relationships with students, communities and industries, to conceptualise their professional

and vocational knowledge differently, to change their understanding of who they are in vocational education and training. In short, to change their identity. This paper investigates the way TAFE teachers' identification with their educational institution is being reconstructed by the policies and discourses of government.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW TIMES

A recently completed Canadian study conducted by the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MEST), Province of British Columbia, reports that 1 major reforms of education and training systems have occurred over the last ten years in almost every nation of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (MEST 1995: 4)

The extent of these reforms appears to be unprecedented. The MEST report nominates a number of common themes that have emerged in the education and training policies of the governments of the United States, Australia, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, New Zealand and Japan. These themes include: a commitment to lifelong learning recurrent education systems, a gearing up for international competition, a commitment to excellence and effectiveness in education and training, development of closer links between education and the economy and finally encouragement of

greater efficiencies in education and training systems.

The primacy given to the economic value of education in OECD reports (OECD 1988, 1989, 1991) is justified by new economic discourses that suggest the economies of these countries are entering new and uncertain times characterised by increasing globalisation of economic activity, rapidly changing markets, increased international competition for goods and labour, new technological innovations, particularly in the area of communications, and the movement from mass production to flexible specialisation in the productive process (Castells 1993: 15-18). Given the urgency of adapting to new economic conditions, educational systems are being reformed to ensure that they fully contribute to the economic adaptations required of modern societies; societies that are variously referred to in contemporary discourses as post-capitalist societies (Drucker 1992), post-industrial societies (Block 1990), post-Fordist societies (Mathews 1989), or, as Thurow (1996:3) puts it, new societies where capitalism plays a *'new economic game with new rules requiring new strategies to win'*.

These discourses also commonly characterise new economic times as generating new work and new work organisation that require new workers with new knowledge, skills and dispositions to meet the challenges of the 'new economic order' and therefore point to the importance of education and training to meet these new challenges. (Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996:xiv).

The domination of economic discourses in the educational policy formulation of governments has been labelled the new vocationalism by a number of educationalists (Grubb 1996, Ball 1994). New vocationalism emphasises the need for all educational institutions to contribute to national economic imperatives and, for the most part, is embedded within human capital theories of economic performance. It promotes the idea that economic performance is intimately connected to the level of skill and ability of the workforce and is a common feature of the educational discourses of most OECD governments (Papadopolous 1996).

This economic turn in the educational policies of government is also revealed in government calls for greater efficiencies and effectiveness in educational provision and is linked to the domination of economic rationalism within the policy formulation of many OECD governments. Economic rationalism (sometimes referred to as market liberalism) promotes the view that government should withdraw from many of its traditional social responsibilities and should promote market-style environments and commercial business practices within state services, including education (Pusey 1991, Marginson 1994). It calls for the installation of a culture of 'enterprise and 'excellence' within the public sector (OECD/CERI 1989, Du Gay 1996:56) and advocates increased accountability, quality and competition in public sector services. It is also commonly associated with policies that involve the privatisation of state owned assets, the reining in of public spending and reduced budgetary allocations for public sector services.

In Australia, government policies have now made fundamental changes to Vocational Education and Training (VET). TAFE, the publicly funded educational institution, until recently viewed as largely being synonymous with VET, is now only one of many providers. Schools, universities, industries and private training providers are all seen as being part of VET (Maglen 1996:3). Federal and State governments have used their legislative power to change structural arrangements in education and training systems and have used their fiscal power to promote an increased focus on VET in all publicly funded educational institutions. They have encouraged the creation of a new competitive education and training market by sanctioning the establishment of private providers in VET. They have promoted a competitive ethos within publicly funded educational institutions and have extended the public accreditation processes of education and training into industry and organisational training programs.

Not surprisingly, teachers in TAFE have experienced the impact of these government policies on their everyday pedagogical practices. As recent studies have shown (Smith *et al* 1997) the implementation of competency based education and training, a central platform in the policies of the new vocationalism, is considered by many TAFE teachers as representing a radical change in the way they conceptualise and undertake their work. New curriculum designs, assessment methods, recognition of prior learning processes, the use of new learning technologies and the establishment of national curricula are all seen as not only making new demands on teachers

but altering teachers' conceptions of their role within the educational process and their relationships with their students. Teachers and TAFE managers are also experiencing the policy driven imperative of governments to insert the market form into the operations of TAFE, characterised by the establishment of private providers in vocational education and training, increased competitive practices, new tendering arrangements for supplying education and training services, an increased emphasis on fee-for-service courses and an increased emphasis on cost recovery in public sector operations.

TAFE teachers and managers have also been the focus of policy discourses to do with quality and accountability in education. A number of reports have been commissioned by governments to investigate the quality of teaching and the new skills, knowledge and attributes needed by teachers in the emerging educational environment (NCVER 1990, VEETAC, 1993, Chappell & Melville, 1995). A common conclusion reached by these reports is that teachers in TAFE need to be 'new' teachers in the educational and economic environment of the late nineteen nineties. Lepani, for example argues that

“Over the next ten years the role of the VET provider will change significantly from the 'stand and deliver' classroom based teacher to richer and more diversified roles of facilitator, researcher, consultant, strategic partner, designer, strategist, manager, communicator, career developer, assessor and accreditation specialist” (cited by Diplock 1996: 58).

and this position has been endorsed by the former Managing Director of TAFE in NSW (Diplock 1996:59). TAFE teachers have therefore experienced a set of policies and related discourses that not only insert new goals and priorities in their educational institutions but privilege new pedagogical practices, new knowledges, new skills and new relationships with students and industry

To date, the debate over government reforms to VET has commonly revolved around problems to do with issues of implementation (Sweet, 1993, Curtain 1994) or the professional competence of teachers working in the new educational environment. Teachers are positioned in these discourses as requiring new knowledge and skills in order to implement the reforms (NCVER, 1991), they are asked to work in different ways (Diplock 1996) and to undertake new roles and responsibilities in vocational education and training (VEETAC, 1993; NBEET, 1993; MACTEQT, 1994).

However, the argument pursued here is that this position makes an overly instrumental means-ends connection between teachers' knowledge and skills and the professional practice of teaching. It fails to appreciate that when teachers are asked to 'do things differently' in their everyday teaching, practices they are also being called on to become different teachers, that is, to have different understandings of their role in education, to have different relationships with students, to conceptualise their professional and vocational knowledge differently, to change their understanding of who they are in vocational education and training. In short, to change their

identity. From this perspective, the current educational policies of government can be seen as not only changing the institutional practices of TAFE but are also constructing a new identity for teachers working in this institution.

Making connections between the institutional practices of work and identity formation is based on the acknowledgement in social theory that all social practices, including work practices, must be meaningful to the people involved (Du Gay 1996:40-41). To conduct any social practice social actors must have a conception of it in order to think meaningfully about it. The production of meaning is therefore a necessary condition for the functioning of all social practices. An individual's identification with shared social meanings, understandings and sense making constructions constitute identity formation and therefore provides a process of reality construction through which social actors interpret particular events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in distinctive ways and therefore provides a mechanism by which individuals can make sense of their own social practices. The policies of government are now constructing new meaning making practices in TAFE and at the same time disrupting the previous institutional practices that formerly contributed to the formation of TAFE teachers' identities. It is the degree to which this new discursive reality has effected changes to teachers' and managers' understanding of who they are in this new institution that is the focus of this paper.

IDENTITY, EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND DISCOURSE

For the most part, conceptions of TAFE teacher identity are configured around the idea of professional practice. Teaching is regarded as professional work and teachers are positioned as belonging to a particular professional community, sharing particular characteristics (NBEET 1993, MACTEQT 1994). The characteristics that distinguish professional work from other occupations are generally configured around the idea that professions have at their base a body of specialised knowledge and, given the specialised nature of professional knowledge, society surrenders a degree of control to individual members of professions, who in turn are expected to exercise ethical responsibility and self-regulation in their professional interactions with the public (Winter & Maish, 1991). This leads to the idea that all members of a profession share a common professional identity, based on particular sets of knowledge, ethical practices and underpinning values. Professions are therefore socially constructed as a 'knowledge elite' (Etzioni-Halevi, 1985) based on their monopoly over an area of specialised knowledge.

While teachers have, in the contemporary reform process, generally been located within this definition (VEETAC, 1993; NBEET 1993; MACTEQT, 1994), the positioning here is not without problems. Contemporary discourses of postmodernism and poststructuralism have undermined the conception of knowledge that has traditionally been used to legitimise professional identity (Usher & Edwards 1994) and recent work

done in the area of cultural studies (Hall & Du Gay 1996, Du Gay 1996) has not only problematised modern conceptions of identity but also foregrounded the power of discourses to construct the social realities that ground individuals 'I sense of who they are'. This standpoint rejects conceptions of identity that either assume a knowing conscious subject at the centre of subjectivity or characterise identity as the product of the social and economic conditions that exist at particular historical moments, regarding these explanations as inadequate and incomplete. What emerges is a much more ambiguous conception of identity, one that foregrounds multiplicity, contingency and ambiguity within the concept. It takes a processual view of self-formation regarding it as always incomplete and subject to continuing re-formation. Some contemporary theorists, for example, argue that identity is a modern fiction (Rorty 1989), an invention of modernity (Bauman in Hall & Du Gay 1996) or a concept now operating 'I under erasure' (Hall 1996:1-2) and suggest that individuals are always capable of being different kinds of people in the multiple discourses that circulate within their life-worlds (Gee, Hull and Lankshear 1996: 10).

The idea of an essentialised, unified and stable core of the self is problematised by these commentators as is the notion that social reality, including the reality at work, has any a priori existence. They assert that social reality is always and everywhere an effect of the multiple discourses that circulate within the different sites of social engagement. Identity is therefore a concept always in formation, subject to the

different and competing claims of the multiple social realities constructed through discourse.

From this position the construction of TAFE teacher identity is therefore intimately connected to the discourses that circulate both in the educational policies of government and in the institutional sites where TAFE teachers work. Discourses act as powerful mechanisms of reality construction or as Foucault puts it, discourses do not describe reality but 'systematically form the objects of which they speak... 'Discourses are not about objects, they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention' (Foucault 1977: 49).

This Foucauldian perspective has been taken up by a number of policy analysts who now offer a radically different reading of the way policy operates in institutions. Traditional policy analysis generally assumes a 'realist' view of policy. Policy is regarded as the site where conscious social agents actively engage in policy formulation and implementation. Social actors contest policy, highlight contradictions, re-interpret meaning and form alliances and interest groups at all levels of the policy matrix and in this scenario the role of the policy analyst is to describe these complexities in order to provide a realistic representation of policy in practice. However, a poststructural analysis rejects this position, claiming that government policies are discursive practices and therefore, like all discourses hold within them the linguistic power of representation; the power of naming; the power to construct particular realities or as Ball (1994:21) describes it, the power by

which 'certain possibilities for thought are constructed'

This discursive approach therefore suggests that the policies of vocational education and training reform should not be seen as describing the educational world as it is but is itself a 'world-making practice'; that is a practice that creates a world discursively (Scott & Usher, 1996: 26-28). The policy discourses of government act as powerful mechanisms that construct new educational realities for teachers working in TAFE and thus are implicated in the formation of teachers' understandings of who they are in education. However, this power is never absolute, being mediated by other discourses that circulate within the institutional setting of TAFE and in the broader social, cultural and political sites that make up the life-worlds of TAFE teachers. Nevertheless the policy discourses of government have powerful effects on the formation of teacher identity in so far as they construct new meaning making practices and new institutional realities in TAFE workplaces.

The power of policy to construct particular realities for people working in the institutions of education is not only derived from its location within government but is also enhanced by wider discourses that circulate outside of government. Grubb (1996), for example, acknowledges this when he traces the emergence of new vocationalism in the educational policies of the United States. He suggests that the rationale for this development involved discourses that contained 'insistent economic rhetoric' concerning 'the threat to our country's future' and the 'rising

tide of mediocrity in the schools, causing a decline in competitiveness with the Japanese, the South Koreans and the Germans' (1996:2). This insistent economic rhetoric can clearly be seen in Australian government reports concerning contemporary education and training reform (Dawkins 1989, Australian Education Council Review Committee 1991: 6, AEC/MOVEET 1993)

These discourses construct 'un-reformed' public educational institutions in particular ways. They are positioned as incapable of preparing the present and future workforce with the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions required in the new economic times of the late twentieth century and this construction is re-inforced by discourses outside of government that quite specifically question the ability of public educational systems to contribute to the development of the contemporary workforce.

The discourses of 'workplace learning', for example, privilege learning that occurs outside of educational institutions. Notions of 'learning in the workplace' (Marsick & Watkins (1990), 'learning organisations' (Senge (ed) 1994), 'work-based learning' (Boud 1997) and 'informal learning' (Garrick 1997) now have a dominant position in the discursive world of education and training. They privilege learning outside of educational institutions and justify this position by drawing on a number of learning theories that posit experience as central to learning (Marsick and Watkins 1990:8). Other commentators highlight the 'authenticity' of the workplace as a learning setting, arguing that authenticity not only suggests

that the workplace is a rich site for learning (Stevenson 1994) but also provides a purposeful social and cultural context for learning (Pea 1987). Within these discourses the workplaces of post-industrial capitalism replace the educational institutions of the state as the privileged sites of learning (Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996: 6) and employment rather than education becomes the gateway (and barrier) to learning opportunities. Public educational institutions become marginalised players within this new learning paradigm, being regarded as incapable of providing either the 'authenticity' or the 'experience' of work that are fundamental to learning in post-industrial societies.

The policy discourses of economic rationalism also contribute to the antipathetic construction of public sector institutions, including education. They suggest that the public sector fails to meet the needs of contemporary society and must be reformed along more commercial lines.

Government policies restructure the management of public educational institutions in similar ways to those that operate in the private sector. The language of the commercial world is adopted by these policy discourses. (Pusey 1991; Marginson 1994) and this commercial turn is justified on the grounds that unless the public sector makes these necessary changes it will be incapable of providing either the quantity or quality of educational services required in contemporary societies.

Implicit in these discourses is the notion that the operation of the 'market' delivers more effective and efficient services to the public. They point to the inefficiencies of the public service and its costs

to taxpayers and commonly promote the view that the private sector is a better, more efficient system to supply society with the goods and services that it requires. Ontological priority is given to the norms, values and interests that circulate in the commercial world and public sector management now 'talk the talk' of entrepreneurialism, competitive advantage, customers, markets, profit, enterprise, value adding and bottom lines.

TAFE has not been immune from these new discursive practices. The students, communities and industries that TAFE serves have become clients and consumers within these discourses. VET is characterised as a competitive market, in which courses become flexible modularised commodities that can be bought and sold. TAFE teachers become industry consultants, marketing strategists and facilitators of learning and the private sector is encouraged to compete with TAFE in the new education and training market. All of these discourses have combined together to act as powerful 'world making' practices within the institution of TAFE.

TAFE TEACHERS AND MANAGERS 'TALKING THE TALK' OF REFORM

During 1996 a series of interviews was conducted with thirteen TAFE teachers, eight senior head teachers and seven college directors in NSW. The purpose of these interviews was to allow TAFE staff to speak about the changes that had occurred in the institution in order to identify the degree to which the new policy discourses of government had been taken up in the meaning making practices that circulated within the organisation. The interviews were all held on site and with the

exception of two interviews were taped and later transcribed. The interview protocol was semi-structured and while the interviewer was given three broad questions to cover in the conversations with interviewees they were used as prompts only. The three prompt questions asked interviewees to speak about:

- the most significant changes that have occurred in NSW TAFE in recent years
- how these changes have impacted on their work
- the qualities and values that TAFE teachers now need

The transcripts of these conversations were then analysed in order to find out the extent to which the discourses of new vocationalism and economic rationalism had entered the talk of TAFE staff when speaking of their work. The analysis involved looking for the discursive 'markers' of new vocationalism and economic rationalism that were found in the 'talk'. The 'markers' of new vocationalism were derived largely from the MEST report (1995:7) which nominated:

- work competency standards development
- competency based education and training
- the development of modularised curricula
- increased quality assurance and accountability
- in education
- reformed apprenticeships and credit transfer arrangements

- increased industry involvement in education•
- increased school to work programs
- increased focus on the quality of teachers and
- teaching

as the common characteristics of government educational reform policies in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Canada and New Zealand and the discursive 'markers' of economic rationalism were developed from a variety of sources, including federal and state government policy documents and the work of a number of economic commentators (Nevile 1993; Pusey 1991; Marginson 1994). These 'markers' included notions of:

- increased competition in the public sector
- greater commercial focus
- greater emphasis on efficiency, quality and accountability
- more responsiveness and flexibility
- reduced government funding

The results of this analysis revealed that while the policy discourses of new vocationalism and economic rationalism are now prominent features in the institutional 'talk' of teachers and managers, they are used by these groups to construct quite different institutional realities. These different groups privilege different features of these discourses in their institutional 'talk'. College directors, for example, 'talk the talk' of the commercial world, a discourse notably absent in the 'talk' of teachers and senior head teachers. The

discourses of new vocationalism appear much more prominently in the 'talk' of teachers and senior head teachers than college directors.

INSTITUTIONAL REALITIES AND ECONOMIC DISCOURSES

A number of the discursive markers of economic rationalism figure prominently in the institutional discourses of college directors. They construct TAFE as a changing institution entering a new competitive education and training market. Indeed the language of the 'market' is the privileged language of college directors. 'Competition', 'the market', 'private providers', 'quality', 'efficiency', 'commercial orientation', 'entrepreneurialism', 'fee-paying courses', 'internationalisation', 'client focus', 'customer driven', and 'the bottom line' are expressions that college directors use when speaking of the new TAFE.

College directors also speak of reduced public funding and link this to the need for greater efforts in income generation and cost cutting by the institution. *'Doing more with less', 'running as a lean machine', 'more economic thinking', 'cutting costs', 'reducing costs', 'better marketing', 'generating more income', 'selling training packages', 'greater emphasis on fee-paying courses'* and developing *'cost effective courses'* are typical of the ways in which TAFE managers speak of reduced government funding.

The discourses of economics also surface when college directors speak of the role of teachers in the 'new' institution. Teachers must be 'educational resource developers', 'market focused', 'designers of learning packages', consultants to industry, 'more responsive to clients', 'more innovative', and

'entrepreneurial' in the new institution. They need to 'liaise with industry', be more 'customer driven' and more sensitive to 'economic considerations' in their work. The qualities and values that TAFE teachers now need are also closely linked to economic discourses. Teachers must be 'more flexible', 'facilitators of learning', actively contribute to the change process', 'maintain closer links with industry', 'be more accountable', focus more on quality', 'be open to change', 'meet the needs of customers', 'be more loyal to the organisation' and 'look at ways of generating income'.

Finally, when college directors speak of this new institutional reality they link it quite explicitly to job security. Unless TAFE teachers *'lift their game'* in this new competitive world, job losses are inevitable. Teachers could not continue to undertake their work as they had in the past, because they now needed to consider *'issues of quality'* and deliver *'that little bit extra'* in order to make sure that their *'programs are as competitive as a private provider'*. Without change teaching jobs are in jeopardy: *'There are a lot more people out there who are running training courses and they are in competition with us and we won't have jobs.'*

'Teachers need to be aware that we are actually competing with other deliverers, it's the quality of the delivery often that decides who gets the jobs.'

'Look at the number of private providers, they (teachers) have to realise that they have not got a monopoly any more.'

In stark contrast to the institutional reality constructed by the 'talk' of college directors, the

language of increasing competition, income generation, entrepreneurialism and the new education and training market, are conspicuous by their absence in the talk of senior head teachers and teachers. None of those interviewed used the new language of business in their construction of the institution.

The talk of teachers and senior head teachers focused much more on the issues of reduced funding, increasing workload and the negative impact of organisational restructuring on their work. Some were highly critical of the changes speaking of them in terms of *'increasing workloads', 'fewer resources', 'more administrative work', 'less teaching time', 'shorter courses'* and an emphasis *'on training rather than education'* in the institution. Some were quite scathing in their comments suggesting that organisational restructuring had undermined the morale of teachers by changing the institutional culture of TAFE:

'TAFE always used to be a friendly and helpful place, it's not friendly anymore, it's not friendly to the teachers either so you get to the stage where you think they are going to chop courses and make teachers redundant' (Senior Head Teacher)

'There is a whole sort of culture growing out of the organisation, which wasn't there when I started with it and that is the culture of uncertainty and I guess frustration and there are varying degrees of cynicism. I think everyone is sceptical of the changes that are now occurring.' (Teacher)

Another significant difference between the talk of college directors and teachers also appeared when teachers spoke of the values and qualities needed

by TAFE teachers. Unlike college directors, teachers and senior head teachers emphasised ideas such as *a commitment to 'access', 'equity', 'fairness', 'respect for difference', 'individual need', 'personal development' and 'second chance educational opportunity'*. They also nominated qualities such as *'keeping up to date', 'maintaining credibility', 'professional commitment', 'respect for students'* and general qualities such as *'honesty', 'enthusiasm' and 'integrity'*.

The issue of job security also loomed large in the talk of teachers and senior head teachers, indeed this was a feature of institutional talk common to all three groups. Organisational restructuring was linked to job losses by teachers and senior head teachers: *'they probably won't need any of us, that is the way we feel', 'some teachers have been made redundant', 'there isn't enough work here for everybody'* with some suggesting that the reduction in courses and the increased focus on *'getting students through as quickly as possible at as little cost as possible'* not only threatened job security but reduced the quality of courses.

INSTITUTIONAL REALITIES AND THE DISCOURSES OF NEW VOCATIONALISM

In contrast to the new economic discourses of reform, the policies of new vocationalism were less prominent in college directors talk. Only three aspects of new vocationalism were spoken of including flexible delivery strategies, closer links with industry and changing student profiles. College directors generally saw these aspects of reform as primarily the responsibility of teachers in TAFE and conceded that these changes required a considerable degree of up-skilling by teachers in

order to meet the challenges that these issues presented. Flexible delivery required teachers to have *'new teaching techniques'*, to *'deliver total learning packages'* and to *'keep up with new educational technologies'*. Teachers needed to *'network with industry'*, be able to *'teach in the workplace'* and *'be prepared to move around'*. They also need to work with *'students from schools'* and be conscious that students were now more customers than students'.

The discourses of new vocationalism were, however, now very much more a part of the meaning making practices of TAFE teachers and senior head teachers. Competence, flexible delivery, open-learning, student-focused learning, modules, competency based training, facilitation, assessment, the recognition of prior learning, links with industry and school to work transition were expressions that littered the discourses of teachers. Comments such as *'There is more flexibility in courses', 'I'm involved in setting up an open learning centre', 'there will be self-paced learning units', 'the teacher will act as a facilitator', 'everything is heading the way of modules and CBT', 'the assessment associated with CBT is more specific', 'greater industry involvement is what we are aiming for', 'our students have changed, there are more young people'*, typified the discourses of teachers.

While a number of teachers and senior head teachers also spoke of the difficulties of implementing the policies of the new vocationalism, particularly at a time of decreased resources, generally their responses revealed that they supported particular aspects of the policies of

new vocationalism, including its focus on industrial relevance, workplace practice and outcomes. These were seen as consistent with their understanding of TAFE teacher identity and the role of TAFE. Tensions that did emerge were confined to a perceived over-emphasis on industry need at the expense of individual student needs and the increasing number of young people in TAFE courses which did not fit the adult education focus that many teachers in TAFE spoke of as a central feature of their professional practice. Some teachers and senior head teachers also expressed concern that the emphasis on 'training' rather than 'education' together with reductions in course time and a perceived pressure to get students through as quickly as possible reduced the quality of TAFE provision.

'Students have to learn independently- They have to do that because courses here at TAFE have been cut, the hours have been cut down and we have to push students through much faster'

CONSTRUCTING DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONAL REALITIES

The results of this study suggest that the institutional discourses of college directors, teachers and senior head teachers in TAFE NSW construct significantly different institutional realities for the organisation. As managers of the institution, the discourses of college directors, create an institutional world dominated by the norms, values and interests that circulate in the commercial world of business. TAFE management discourses now speak of entrepreneurialism, competition, customers, markets, profit, enterprise and bottom lines and TAFE teachers are

themselves constructed by these discourses as the personnel who must adopt the norms, values and interests of the commercial world in order to achieve increased efficiency and profitability for the organisation. This construction is also supported by more coercive management discourses that suggest that unless teachers adopt these new institutional many will be without jobs. These management discourses are made more powerful by being embedded within wider economic discourses that construct postindustrial societies as entering new and uncertain economic times and by educational discourses that privilege learning outside of educational institutions as the privileged site for learning. Government policy discourses that characterise the existing public sector of the economy as inefficient and in dire need of reform also contribute to the legitimisation of the new management discourses in TAFE.

However while these discourses combine together to construct a particular and powerful institutional reality for TAFE, the localised discourses of teachers and senior head teachers build a significantly different and in some ways, oppositional reality to that constructed by managers. The talk of teachers and senior head teachers reflects quite different norms, values and interests than those embedded within the discourses of business. Words such as 'equity', 'access', 'personal and social development', 'second chance education' and 'adult education' are more closely associated with the discourses of liberal education than the economic discourses of business. Indeed they are much more consistent with the language that characterised TAFE after the publication of the Kangan Report in 1974. This

Report specifically rejected an economic 'manpower' orientation for technical education and promoted TAFE as an educational institution with important social purposes (ACOTAFE 1974: xviii).

Using the principles established in the landmark UNESCO Report *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (Faure, 1972), -the right of all people to education and lifelong learning the Kangan Report (ACOTAFE, 1974) constructed a new identity for technical education, in Australia, by articulating the purposes and aims of this sector of education. For the first time, an educational philosophy was set out for vocational education in Australia, based on the principles of access, equity, the primacy of the individual learner in the learning process, the need for continuing and life-long learning, and an increased emphasis on adult education. It constructed a much broader educational and social role for TAFE conceptualising this new role as a means to 'satisfy the needs of the individual as a person and to his or her development as a member of society, including the development of non-vocational and social skills that affect personality.' (ACOTAFE 1974: xvii)

This study suggests that the discourses of the Kangan Report and the government policies that emerged after its publication, constructed an institutional reality for TAFE and its teachers, that continues to provide teachers with a sense of who they are in education. The resistance by teachers to the new institutional reality being constructed by the contemporary discourses of economics is, in no small measure, the result of the success of the

liberal education discourses of post-Kangan TAFE in constructing a particular institutional identity for this organisation.

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